

FADE IN:

From Idea to Final Draft

**The Writing of
*Star Trek: Insurrection***

by
Michael Piller





Note: When we received this submission, we were told that Michael Piller considered this book his last great gift to the fans and to aspiring writers everywhere. Unfortunately, Paramount somehow got it suppressed from being published. Michael Piller passed away in 2005, so getting this book published will never be possible (not to mention *Insurrection* is quite old now, so a book about it wouldn't be financially feasible for a publisher). It's clear Michael Piller wanted this book read, so we felt that making it available to the fans made sense. It's an amazingly detailed look at the process of writing the movie including internal memos, letters, pitches, story drafts, etc. Enjoy this unique glimpse into writing *Star Trek Insurrection*! And lastly, if anyone can provide the draft of *Star Trek Insurrection* that is missing from this document, please email us.

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Michael Piller on the Enterprise NCC-1701-E Set

TO RICK BERMAN

A writer's producer.

*So we can look back as alter kockers
with fading memories and remember how it was.*

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INTRODUCTION

Eighteen years ago, William Goldman's book *Adventures In The Screen Trade* taught me how to be a writer. Not how to write - that came later with experience as a writer-producer in television. But I learned from Goldman what would be expected of me as a writer and how to set a standard for my work. His book inspired me to set off on my own adventures. This is the story of one.

Beginning in March 1997, I worked on the screenplay for *Star Trek: Insurrection*, collaborating with producer Rick Berman on the story and then writing the script myself. If you've never heard of *Star Trek* (you must lead a very isolated life) or couldn't care less about science fiction, don't worry. No knowledge of science is required. All you'll need to follow this story is a curiosity about where movies come from. Most often, they come from screenplays. And screenplays come, more or less, from people like me - people who sit alone in dark rooms illuminated only by a computer screen talking endlessly to ourselves in the voices of strange people who live inside us - characters who want to be seen and heard. Writers are puppet masters. We are omnipotent. As long as we stay in our dark, little rooms. The moment we leave, we become mortal.

That's when our material is sent to the producer and the director and the studio and the actors and the production designer and the costume designer and the unit manager (not to mention our wives, husbands, mothers and fathers)...

And that's when the notes start coming in and the meetings are held and new ideas are tossed around and 'what-ifs' are explored... and our job is to listen and discuss and argue and collaborate and compromise and fret... and mostly, through it all, to maintain the creative vision that got all of these people interested in the first place.

Now that it's all behind me, I can smile (finally) about what we went through... all the stories we threw away, the drafts that didn't work. I invite you now to walk a couple years in my shoes. Look at the development process from the writer's point of view. Second-guess me. If you'd been writing the script would you have made the same decisions I made? Would your movie be about the girl who broke our hero's heart and the best friend he's sent to kill, the rag-tag army of space mariners, the mysterious society of alien children, the treacherous Romulans, the muties, the android squad, the holographic stand-up comedian, the lecherous three hundred year old munchkin, the masked race of Generation 'X' aliens...

...none of whom made my final draft.

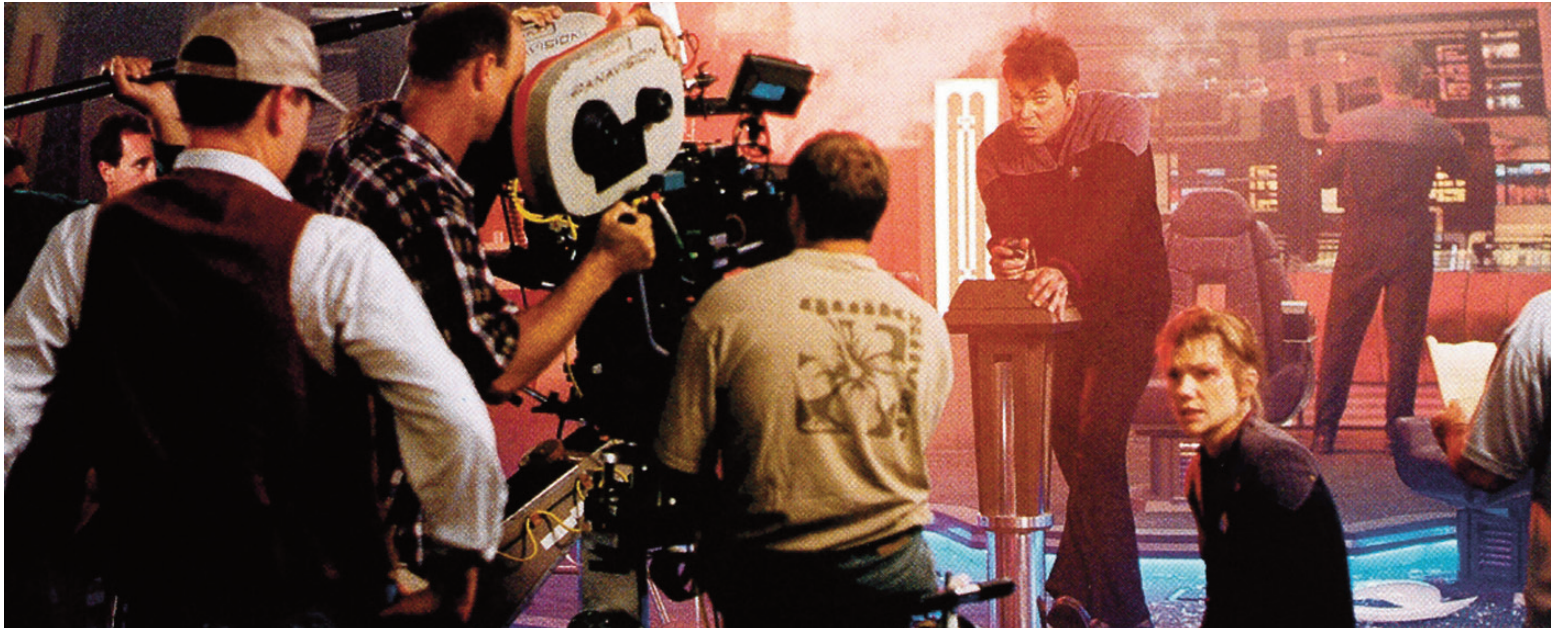
But maybe they would have made yours. Maybe your script would have been entirely different from mine. Let's find out.

With two notable exceptions, the development process of *Star Trek: Insurrection* wasn't much different from the development process of any

motion picture script. Exception number one: everyone knew from the start this picture would actually get made. Most scripts are written without that knowledge. This was to be the ninth installment of the franchise. It was not only scheduled for production before the script was written; it was scheduled for *release* before the script was written. December, 1998. So, from the moment I was hired, I heard the clock ticking.

Exception number two: I was the writer from start to finish. Many of the movies you see have been written by several writers even though their names may not appear on the screen. Writers are often brought in like tag-teams, the original writer followed by an "action" writer followed by a "character" writer followed by a "dialogue" writer and on and on. (In one major action movie last summer, after a half-dozen or so top-notch writers had worked on the screenplay, the producers brought in the entire staff of a popular television sitcom to make the dialogue funnier.) The difference here was my history with *Star Trek* as head writer for the television shows and a long working relationship with producer Rick Berman. Had it been any other circumstance, there's no question in my mind that, before the final draft was completed, I most certainly would have been fired.

Michael Piller
May 1999





SEPTEMBER 1997

FREE-FALL

That fraction of a second between nightmare and waking. Except it isn't a fraction of a second anymore, it's been days, weeks and I'm still in a free-fall, trying to snatch bits and pieces of a script that are falling with me, desperately trying to assemble them in some coherent manner before I crash.

How could I have been so wrong? Where had my instinct failed me? How do I fix it? Is it even fixable? In three months, this movie will be going into pre-production and I don't have a clue what to do.

There's no point in trying to sleep. Once I wake up to pee in the middle of the night (the curse of middle-age), my mind goes back to work. I tell it not to. Whatever you do, don't think about the script. But as I lay in the dark staring at the ceiling, my eyeballs move back and forth looking for the metaphorical daylight. There's got to be a way to make this script work.

The guards on the overnight shift at the front gate are used to seeing me arrive at dawn. They greet me by name and ask how the script's going - everyone on the lot knows I'm doing the next *Star Trek* movie - and I smile and say, fine and ask one of the guards about his new baby and I drive in under the famous Paramount arch and park in the first space in the empty producer's parking lot. I know Rick Berman will walk by that space on the way to his office and will see that I was the first one in the lot. As though that'll earn me an 'A' for effort if everything else fails.

I like being at the studio at dawn with the gardeners sprucing up the flower beds and watering the lawns. Walking alone along the brick courtyard, I feel like I'm walking with the ghosts of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and the Marx Brothers and Gary Cooper and Alan Ladd and Bing Crosby and Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, all the famous stars who worked on this lot... and of course all the famous screenwriters who worked here like... like...

There are no famous screenwriters. It's an oxymoron. I can't even think of one this morning and I'm a writer. Oh sure, Billy Wilder made great movies here and of course Preston Sturges, but we remember them first as directors. Rod Serling, my boyhood hero -- he was a famous writer, wasn't he... come on, only because we saw him as host of *The Twilight Zone*. Nobody remembers the screenwriter's name unless his name is Neil Simon and that's only because he wrote a few plays.

A guard rolls up on a bicycle at the front door to the Marlene Dietrich Building and unlocks the door for me. All the doors are routinely opened around seven but that's still an hour away.

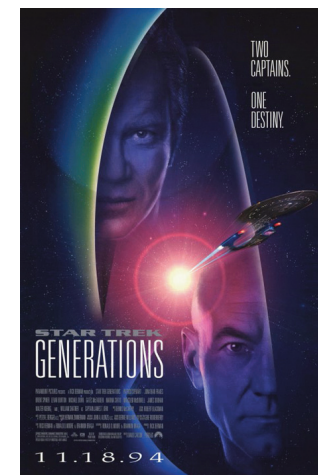
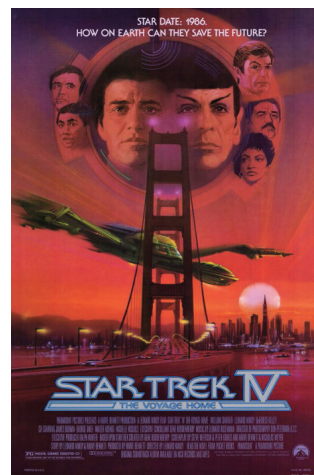
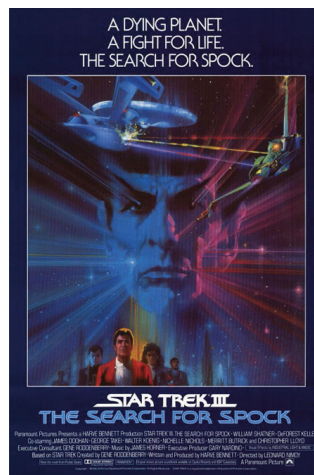
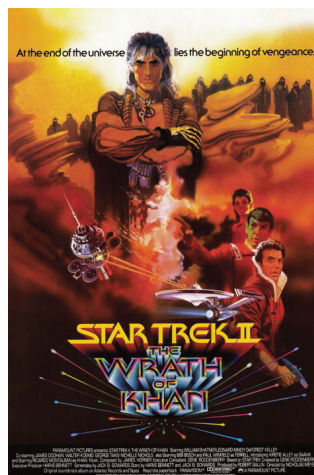
I walk into my office on the second floor and turn on the lights. The computer screen looks at me, waiting - well, are you coming? The first draft script is still on the desk where I left it last night. I pick it up to see if it feels any different this morning. It doesn't. Maybe I should read it again. Maybe it's better than I think. There're a lot of good parts I might be able to salvage. Stop lying to yourself and turn on the computer.

I pull "The Paramount Story" out of my bookshelf and start looking for writers' ghosts. Anything to delay writing. I find Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, great writers of several movies from the thirties; definite ghost material. How about Frank Butler nominated for two Oscars in 1942 for *Wake Island* (with W.R. Burnett) and *The Road to Morocco* (with Don Hartman) finally winning in 1944 for *Going My Way* (with Frank Cavett; beating Raymond Chandler and Billy Wilder, writers of *Double Indemnity*, also a Paramount film). And Michael Wilson & Harry Brown (*A Place in the Sun*) and Ian McKellan Hunter (*Roman Holiday*) and A.B. Guthrie, Jr. (*Shane*) and John Michael Hayes (*Rear Window*) and George Axelrod (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*).

All of them were right here on this lot, perhaps in this very building, who knows, maybe even this office. Doing the very same thing I'm doing. Writing a script for a movie. Or trying to...

My first draft had been a disaster. After months of internal wrangling, we finally had a story that everyone was enthusiastic about. So why didn't it turn out to be a good script? Easy answer -- the writer's fault.

I turn on the computer and look at the blank screen, type the first two words of the second draft: "Fade In" and wonder what the hell I'm going to write...



MARCH 1997

THE ASSIGNMENT

Rick Berman wasn't sure that I'd want the job. The first thing he said when he came into my office was, "Don't say 'no' until I finish talking." And when he finished talking about his hopes for the next *Star Trek* movie, he asked me if I would be interested in writing it, and I surprised him by saying 'yes.' It may seem odd that anyone would even consider passing on a chance to write a feature film, but Rick knew I'd been moving away from the *Star Trek* franchise for the last couple of years.

I had been in space with Rick for almost a decade. We first met at a lunch with Gene Roddenberry and Maurice Hurley, the head writer of *The Next Generation* during its first two seasons. Hurley was leaving the show and thought I might be a candidate to replace him. I wasn't hired at that lunch (Rick and Gene had already hired another friend of mine, Michael Wagner), but I did agree to write a script for the coming season.

My agent was furious. Writing a free-lance script¹ would look like I hadn't been able to find a staff job. No show would ever hire me as a staff writer again, he said. But I really wanted to write a *Star Trek* script so I ignored my agent's advice. Today, in his lovely new home, he's happy I did.

As I was writing that first episode, Wagner and Roddenberry were not getting along and by the time my script was turned in, Michael had decided to resign. I got a call from Rick Berman. "We love your script," he said. "You obviously know the show. Would you like to take over the writing staff?"

To this day, I don't believe there's anything particularly special about that script except for one scene that opened the door for me into the *Star Trek* universe. In the story (co-written by Wagner), a scientist has built his entire life around a stellar event that only occurs once every two hundred years and now, due to mysterious problems with the ship, it seems he is going to miss it. He expresses his bitter frustration to the youngest member of our crew, 16-year-old Wesley Crusher. Here's the dialogue exchange that got me the job:

STUBBS

I could live with failure. ...Well, maybe not. But never even to try. To miss your one chance at bat. Do you know baseball?

WESLEY

My dad taught it to me when I was little.

STUBBS

Once, centuries ago, it was the

beloved national pastime of the
STUBBS (CON'T)

Americas, Wesley. Abandoned by a society that prized fast food and faster games. Lost to impatience. But I have seen the great players make the great plays.

WESLEY

Do you recreate them on a Holodeck?²

STUBBS

No, in here...
(his mind)
With the knowledge of statistics... runs, hits and errors... times at bat... box scores. Men like us do not need Holodecks, Wesley. I have played seasons in my mind. It was my reward to myself. For patience. Knowing my turn would come. Call your shot. Point to a star. One great blast and the crowd rises. A brand new era in astro-physics. Postponed one hundred and ninety-six years on account of rain.

As it turned out, Rick Berman shared my love for baseball and that speech hit him right between the eyes. And so a partnership was formed.

Over the next eight years, we would work on 244 hours of television together. We would create a new *Star Trek* series, *Deep Space Nine*, together. And then a third *Star Trek* series, *Voyager*, with Jeri Taylor.

We'd worked so long together that we were starting to look like each other. But after eight years of writing *Star Trek*, I felt the need to stretch my creative legs. So, I accepted a role as Creative Consultant and walked away from the day-to-day operation of the two *Star Trek* shows.

There may have been another reason Rick thought I might turn down his offer. I had rejected an opportunity to write a script for the seventh *Star Trek* film — the first one to star *The Next Generation* cast. Rick had been hired to produce the movie, his first. The studio wanted to prepare two separate scripts. The best script would be filmed.

From the studio's point of view it made perfect business sense. Rick was a first-time feature producer, this was the studio's most lucrative

franchise -- why take a chance on one writer; why not have two scripts written and pick the best one? But from a writer's standpoint, there's something deeply discouraging about knowing that you're writing against someone and that one of you is wasting his or her time.

Having guided the stories and the scripts for *The Next Generation* for five years, I found it very difficult to participate in a contest and turned the offer down, recommending Brannon Braga and Ronald D. Moore, two young writers on my staff, for the job. As it turned out, they won the contest and wrote the movie, *Star Trek Generations*.

This time, the timing was right for me. It had been two years since Bill Dial and I had created the short-lived, but critically-acclaimed series *Legend* starring Richard Dean Anderson ("short-lived" is always followed by the words "but critically-acclaimed"). Since then, I'd written a feature script that Sydney Pollack had optioned, a cable movie script and a couple of television pilots. And oh yeah, *none of them had been made*. I was in a place known in this business as "Development Hell." So, Rick's invitation to write a *Star Trek* movie was like a visit from an old girl friend after you haven't had a date for a year. I was awfully glad to see him.



¹ Free-lancers are those writers who are not under contract to write on the staff of a specific show.

² A "holodeck" is a room in which people can simulate and interact with virtually any environment.

RODDENBERRY'S BOX

When I surf the net or read letters to the editor in some genre magazine, I often come across complaints from fans who say that *Star Trek* really needs to get “some new writing blood in there”.

They're absolutely right.

In fact, recruiting new talent was one of my priorities when I was producing the television shows. I scheduled pitches from free-lance writers every day and required my staff writers to do the same. Hearing new voices and fresh ideas, in my opinion, kept the franchise vital. The *Star Trek* series were the only television shows in town that encouraged amateur submissions of speculative teleplays (if they were accompanied by legal releases that protected the studio from lawsuits).

Thousands were submitted. Every one was read. I looked at every synopsis and analysis myself. Ninety-nine out of a hundred were not what we were looking for. But that last one made the search worthwhile. We discovered several writers through the process.

A writing assignment for a *Star Trek* movie would certainly attract all sorts of good writers with credentials in feature films. Why then wouldn't the studio and Rick Berman seek out “new blood” to write the next *Star Trek* movie instead of giving it to another old television warhorse like me?

The answer can be found in Roddenberry's Box.

I happen to like the box. A lot of writers don't. In fact, I think it's fair to say, most writers who have worked on *Star Trek* over the years would like to throw the box away. It may surprise you to learn that when I took over as head writer, the entire writing staff of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was so frustrated and angry with Gene Roddenberry they were counting the days before their contracts expired (and indeed every one of them left at season's end.) He wouldn't let them out of the box and they were suffocating...

My first time in Roddenberry's Box was during the very first episode I worked on as head writer. We were already in production of season three, four shows were finished, twenty-two still to do. There were no scripts and no stories to shoot the following week. Desperate, I bought a spec script that had been sent in from an amateur writer named Ron Moore who was about to enlist in the U.S. Navy. It was a rough teleplay called “The Bonding” and would require a lot of reworking but I liked the idea. A female Starfleet officer is killed in an accident and her child, overcome with grief, bonds with a holographic recreation of his mother rather than accept her death.

I sent a short description of the story to Rick and Gene. Minutes later, I was called to an urgent meeting in Gene's office. “This doesn't work” he said. “In the Twenty-Fourth Century, no one grieves. Death is accepted as part of life.”

As I shared the dilemma with the other staff writers, they took a bit of

pleasure from my loss of virginity, all of them having already been badly bruised by rejections from Gene. Roddenberry was adamant that Twenty-Fourth Century man would evolve past the petty emotional turmoil that gets in the way of our happiness today. Well, as any writer will tell you, ‘emotional turmoil’, petty and otherwise, is at the core of any good drama. It creates conflict between characters. But Gene didn't want conflict between our characters. “All the problems of mankind have been solved,” he said. “Earth is a paradise.”

Now, go write drama.

His demands seemed impossible at first glance. Even self-destructive. And yet, I couldn't escape one huge reality. *Star Trek* worked. Or it had for thirty years. Gene must be doing something right.

I accepted it as a challenge. Okay, I told the writers, I'm here to execute Roddenberry's vision of the future, not mine. Let's stop fighting what we can't change. These are his rules. How do we do this story without breaking those rules?

A day later, I asked for another meeting with Gene and Rick. And here's how I re-pitched the story:

“When the boy's mother dies, he doesn't grieve. He acts like he's been taught to act -- to accept death as a part of life. He buries whatever pain he may be feeling under this Twenty-Fourth Century layer of advanced civilization. The alien race responsible for the accidental death of his mother tries to correct their error by providing a replacement version of her. The boy wants to believe his mother isn't dead, but our Captain knows she isn't real and must convince the boy to reject the illusion. In order to do so, the boy must cut through everything he's been taught about death and get to his true emotions. *He must learn to grieve.*”

The new approach respected Roddenberry's rules and by doing so, became a more complex story. He gave his blessing. And I began to learn how Roddenberry's Box forced us as writers to come up with new and interesting ways to tell stories instead of falling back into easier, familiar devices.

The rules of behavior in Roddenberry's universe have filled books. There are more books dedicated to the personal histories of *Star Trek* characters as well as detailed cultural histories of the alien races of the Twenty-Fourth Century. And even more books written about *Star Trek*'s science and technology. Gene and his colleagues over the years have created a tapestry that is not easy for new writers to penetrate. My experience has been that our most successful new writers grew up as dedicated fans and already know the *Star Trek* world inside and out. With the notable exceptions of Ira Steven Behr, Jeri Taylor and Joe Menosky, *three writers in a decade*, I rarely had luck hiring experienced writers who could come in and understand the franchise.

I can't speak for the studio or for Rick but I can guess why they wouldn't

take a chance on a brand new writer on a major motion picture.

An epilogue.

There was a writers' rebellion of sorts on my last year as head writer at *Star Trek*, four years after Roddenberry's death. Some of the writers at *Voyager* went to Rick to say they wouldn't return if I came back. It was nothing personal, Rick told me. We were all friends. But my rules were holding them back. My creative demands were suffocating them. They wanted to be free to do the things I wouldn't let them do as writers. I had completed a cycle. Somehow, I'd become the alien replacement for Roddenberry. It had become Piller's Box.

It was time to leave. I opened the box and let them, and myself, out. And now, three years later, here I was about to climb back in again.





WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

For this ninth installment of the series, Rick thought it would be interesting to find a classic story in public domain and adapt it to *Star Trek*. His first idea was “The Prisoner of Zenda,” the novel by Anthony Hope that had been filmed several times, most memorably in the 1937 version starring Coleman. It’s a 19th Century adventure story of two men who look alike -- a common man and a king, both played in the movie by Ronald Coleman. When the king is kidnapped, the common man is recruited to take his place on the throne.

Rick suggested that perhaps the Captain of the Starship Enterprise, Jean-Luc Picard, is kidnapped and another man, cosmetically altered to look like him, takes his place as Captain. He felt that it would offer actor Patrick Stewart a unique opportunity to do a dual role. He asked me to watch the Coleman film.

As I did, I saw a big problem. The king’s role is tiny. It’s the commoner who’s the star. I felt the audience was coming to see Picard, a popular hero who’d been away from the screen for two years. How would they feel when he’s kidnapped in the opening scenes and the movie is turned over to another character who happens to be played by the same actor? If this had been a pitch for a two-part episode on the TV series, I would have jumped at it. But I felt the movie had to be about Picard. When Rick heard my concerns, he agreed.

We did, however, fall in love with *Zenda*’s villain played by Douglas Fairbanks Jr. We told ourselves that an amoral rascal who’s loyal to no one but himself might be a character worth including in any new scenario.

And so we both started thinking again, trying to find a worthy subject.

Where do ideas come from? I’m asked all the time. The only suggestion I give to young writers is to listen to the universe. The ideas are all around you – in newspapers and magazines, television, stories people tell you and most often in your very own life experiences. Sooner or later, something will resonate.

When I wrote my very first screenplay, like most writers, I wasn’t paid for it, so I chose a subject (sex) that would make the script as commercial as possible. After all, that’s the ultimate goal, right? To sell your work?

At the time, I was working for CBS Television as a censor (censors who want to be writers always write about sex). The project I was censoring was the mini-series *Blind Ambition*, the story of John Dean’s experiences in the Nixon White House. The writer was Stanley Greenberg who had written some of the finest shows in the history of television including *The Missiles Of October* and *Pueblo*. The corporate office in New York had ordered me to sanitize President Nixon’s language in the famous taped conversations by “bleeping” them from the soundtrack. I refused to do it because part of my job was to protect the historical integrity of the film. They sent my boss to do it anyway but Stanley and I became friends in the process.

One evening, as we were eating dinner with David Susskind, John and Mo Dean (she gave me a friendly kiss goodnight) and some of their friends, I asked Stanley if he would read my first script. He said, sure and asked me what it was about. I told him it was just something commercial, something that I thought would sell. And he said three words that changed my life.

“Shame on you.”



It was one of those times when you swallow your heart. He didn’t say it in a nasty way. In fact, it was the friendly throw-away manner that made it hurt so much. I don’t remember much of what else he said. Or what his comments were after he read the script. I’m sure they were kind. But I never wrote another script whose only goal was “to sell.” From that day on, I felt an obligation as a writer to add something to this life through my work. To express things I felt about our world and to explore the human condition no matter what kind of script I might be writing. More than any other reason, I credit this lesson for any success I’ve had as a writer.

As I approach a new project, my process always begins with the question: what is it about? Here’s one answer that might apply to a *Star Trek* movie...

I want it to be about the most horrible, treacherous aliens ever known to man who are about to destroy life as we know it, leading to the most spectacular thrill ride of an adventure with fantastic space battles and huge explosions and great special effects -- a white knuckle ride for the movie audience.

Yeah, but what’s it *about*?

I can write space battles with the best of them, but what makes that space battle interesting to me is: why are they fighting? What are the stakes? What does the hero lose if he loses? And what does he win if he wins? Why should we care?

I’m talking about the second level of story-telling. The level that examines what’s going on inside the characters – their moral and ethical dilemmas, their doubts, fears, inner conflicts, how they change as the story progresses. These are the things that make us, as members of an audience, get emotionally involved in a movie. I still remember how I felt when Bonnie and Clyde³ were killed. Man, I was *in that car* with them. The same thing happened most recently for me (and I’ll bet for you too) when I watched *Saving Private Ryan*⁴. It was quite late in the movie when it hit me that I was Private Ryan. That these brave men had sacrificed their lives to save me. And like Ryan, I found myself asking silently if I’d lived a life worthy of that sacrifice. That’s when the first sob escaped from my throat.

So when I start looking for ideas, I’m not worried about the plot yet. I’m asking myself what are the themes I want to explore in this script? What do I *need* to write about? Now, that may sound somewhat masturbatory because after all, I’m writing movies for an audience, not for my own pleasure.

But the simple truth of the matter is that I don’t know what you’ll like. No research or marketing study can tell me that. If it could, every movie would be a huge hit. Research tells us what you liked about the last movie you saw. It often leads filmmakers to repeat what has worked before. That’s why when a new film is successful, similar films are sure

to follow. Since I don't know how to please you, I can only try to please myself. But if it's any comfort, I'm very difficult to please.

From the outset, Rick and I agreed it was time to throw a curveball. Every big league pitcher knows you can't keep throwing your fastball if you want to be successful. The last movie had been a fastball and a good one, complete with great space monsters (the Borg) and a war to save the universe. It would be a mistake, we decided, to try in this movie to "out-Borg the Borg." Instead, we agreed, this time around we should do something quirkier, lighter, more fun.

The model Rick quoted most often was *Star Trek: The Voyage Home*⁵, the fourth and most successful film in the series -- a time-travel story in which Kirk and crew return to 20th century Earth to save an extinct species of whales. Not a single weapon was fired in that film; it was a comedy with social conscience. Times have changed and we knew there'd have to be weapons fired in the new movie. But Rick wanted a story closer in spirit to the whale movie and that was fine with me.

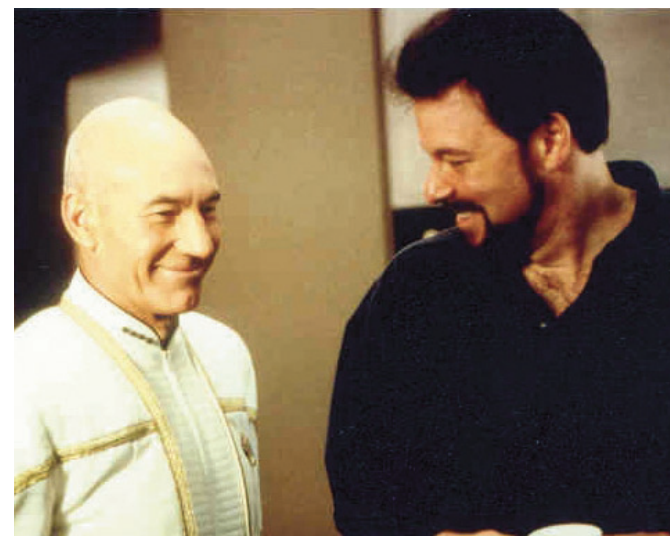
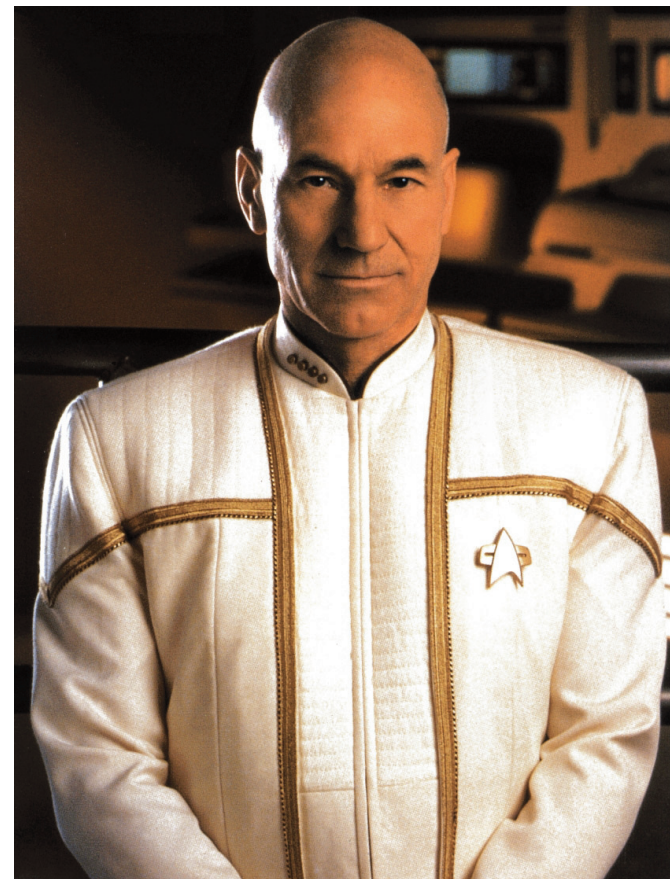
I don't know about you but I'm weary of mean films. Bad guys don't just get shot any more. They get shot and fall from buildings and crash through glass ceilings and get impaled on sharp objects before they die. I was worried there might be pressure from the studio to follow that trend in the next *Star Trek* movie (and was dead wrong, by the way).

I've always felt that *Star Trek's* greatest secret is its optimism. People watch *Star Trek* because it makes them feel hope for the future. Whoopi Goldberg who played Guinan on the TV series described it better than anyone else I know. She recalled what it meant to her as a child to see a black female officer on the bridge of the original Enterprise. "It meant there was a place in the future for me," she said. I wanted this script to tap into that unique *Star Trek* power -- to make people leaving the theater feel better than they had going in.

Now, remember what I said about listening to the universe, because when the idea came to me I wasn't even trying to think of one. In fact, I was whining to myself one morning when it happened -- a typical screenwriter whine about the rejection of a script. I'd written a pilot for ABC about the impact on our lives from the first TV set on the block in the nineteen-fifties. A wonderful script. Best work I'd ever done. It took them about an hour to reject it. The reason was simple: demographics.

The networks and their advertisers only care about people 18 to 35 years old. Once you pass 35, they figure you've pretty well settled on Crest toothpaste and Coke and are not going to switch to Ultrabrite and Pepsi just because you see the latest commercial. Obviously, none of today's 18 to 35 year olds were around in the fifties and conventional wisdom suggests they don't give a damn about anything that happened before they were born. (I'll save the arguments for another day.)

So I was in front of the bathroom mirror cursing to myself about the network's youth obsession as I sprayed Rogaine on my bald spot when my mind made an unexpected jump to the *Star Trek* assignment. We're obsessed with youth, I thought. Looking young, feeling young, selling to the young. *When was the last time anybody did a fountain of youth story?* I couldn't remember. And I smiled.



5 Released in 1986; story by Leonard Nimoy and Harve Bennett, screenplay by Steve Meerson & Peter Krikes and Harve Bennett & Leonard Nimoy.

APRIL 1997

THE PITCH

I came back to Rick with a premise I called “Heart of Lightness.” I told him we’d be using a structure based on *Heart of Darkness*, but that the trip “up the river” would lead Picard and his crew on a very different kind of adventure.

“We open at Starfleet Academy in Picard’s youth,” I told him, “Establishing Picard as a curly-haired, high-spirited cadet. We give him a best friend, another cadet who is as close to Picard as any man has ever been and ever will be.

“Flash forward to the present day and find adult Picard being given a mission by Starfleet Command. His old friend is now a wanted man -- he’s been attacking ships in an unexplored region of space and no one knows why. Picard has to track him down and if necessary, kill him.

“The Enterprise sets off through this mysterious region and the crew begins to act in unusual ways. We don’t know why yet. After several curious incidents, they finally find the hiding place of Picard’s old friend. Picard transports down to the planet and discovers that he looks *exactly the same as he did at the Academy!* We ultimately learn that this is a fountain of youth and somebody is trying to steal it from the people who live there. Picard’s friend has been defending the natives on the planet.” I waited a beat and tried to gauge his reaction. If he’d hated it, his mouth would have twisted into a frown by now. It wasn’t twisted at all. Not up. Not down. Even. He just looked at me and nodded. “I love it,” he said.

CHEAP CHICKEN & COTTAGE CHEESE

Rick and I settled back into our old collaborative rhythms. As we always had when we were creating a new television show, we met every day for lunch. I would usually order a cold chicken plate from the cafeteria which became known as “Mike’s Cheap Chicken,” because it was better than the more expensive chicken plate from the dining room. Rick would often have cottage cheese and fruit. He had a continuing struggle with his weight, the only sign I ever saw of the overwhelming stress from producing two TV series and a feature film simultaneously.

Our sessions would almost always start something like this:

Rick: Did you see the end of the game last night?

Mike: (nods) I was there.

Rick: Tommy and Eddie were so upset when they brought Worrell in from the bullpen.

Mike: Yeah, me too.

Rick: Eddie said, “Dad, he always gives up a home run.”

Mike: It was hard to believe. The Dodgers aren’t going anywhere with this bullpen.

Rick: (eating a melon ball) You think we could use a girl for Picard in this movie? We haven’t had any romance for him in the other two films.

Mike: What if a girl came between the two guys back at the Academy? They both loved her, had a big fight over her and she married the other guy. She broke Picard’s heart.

Rick: Maybe she’s the one who comes to Picard and asks him to find her missing husband who’s gone off on a crazy search to find the fountain of youth...

Mike: And they start to fall in love again as they search for him.

I would write notes down as we continued to flesh out elements of the story. Then I would compose a brief memo going over the day’s work and send it off to him to consider overnight. We would discuss that memo as a starting point of the following day’s discussion.

Over the next few weeks, our romantic triangle evolved into a story about healing old wounds. At the beginning of the film, Picard could be shown to be a lonely man a man who really has no close friends. Picard would tell you it comes with the job. A Captain cannot afford close friends, not in the way, certainly, that he did as a young man at the Academy. But in truth, the distance Picard puts between himself and others, his discomfort with intimacy, might have begun with a young man’s broken heart.

I wasn’t just making this up out of thin air. I told Rick that I was drawing from an incident in high school in which I had lost both my best friend and my girlfriend in a romantic conflict. *I always draw from my own life in my work.* It helps me bring an honesty to the characters. Having lived through it, I could understand exactly what Picard might be feeling when this man and woman come back into his life. There would be regret, perhaps some guilt, many underlying emotions to resolve. I knew how to write this.

What might Picard learn from this story? Perhaps, we suggested, the importance of staying in touch with things he let go of a long time ago -- things that at the time might have seemed impetuous and immature, but really shaped who he is today. We forget as we grow up how wonderful it was to be mischievous, lazy and how to have fun. In our story, Picard would embrace these qualities again and become a better man as a result of the experience.

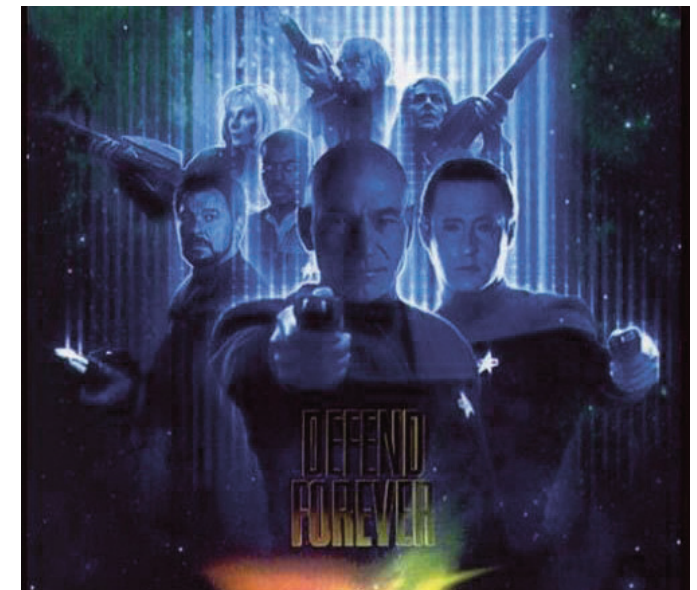
We started considering possible villains. The Romulans, an imperialistic, fascist race of aliens, had been long-standing enemies of the United Federation of Planets (the good guys) and had never been used in a movie before. Perhaps the story could be set against the threat of a new outbreak of war with the Romulans.

We also talked about the idea that someone in the Federation itself might

be involved with the Romulans in a conspiracy to steal the fountain of youth. This was no small matter. As I’ve said, a fundamental part of Gene Roddenberry’s vision is that humanity has evolved as a species by the Twenty-Fourth Century. There might be a bad apple now and then but as a rule, the humans of the Federation were pure and good. Rick and I were very protective of Roddenberry’s vision. But we liked the idea of someone in Starfleet Command sending Picard on a mission without telling him the entire truth. It would provide a continuing subtext of tension and mystery. We spent days delineating a complex web of political intrigue that would support the conspiracy. Perhaps the Federation conspirators could be a cadre of old leaders (we called them the “alter cockers”) who were willing to betray their sacred trust in order to be young again.

We began to visualize a third act in our structure that would see Picard as Robin Hood and the crew as his merry men (and women) protecting this magical world.

On April 16th, as I was driving to work, I heard Nat King Cole singing the song “Stardust,” and I wrote Rick a note telling him, “If you can sing the lyrics of ‘Stardust’ to yourself, it’s a reverie, to borrow one of the lyrics, of a man thinking about the years gone by. It might be on the nose, but a working title for the script might be *Stardust*. We might find an interesting way to use the song in the story.” For the next several months, *Stardust* was our working title.





THE ACTORS

Patrick Stewart came in to hear our ideas earlier than we would have liked because we really hadn't settled on anything yet. But Patrick was going to be in Australia to shoot *Moby Dick* for the next several months. We gave him a very brief description of the general themes of the story and he responded quite positively.

Patrick had clear personal goals for Jean-Luc Picard in the new movie. "The great all-rounders in cricket," he said, "...like Don Bradman or Tom Gravney have a whole range of shots -- fast bowling, spin bowling -- they can hit all around the field in any direction making it impossible for the defensemen to position themselves. I think of Picard as a Gravney. And Gravney's most dominating, intimidating shot, rarely played, is the one straight back at the bowler and that's what Picard should do in this next film."

Uh huh. Rick and I nodded politely as though we understood. Rick finally spoke up and said, "Is this anything like a single up the middle in baseball?"

"Why, yes, I'm sure it must be," said Patrick. And as we began to learn more about cricket, we understood that Patrick wanted his character to be a plain and simple hero in the next movie. In *First Contact*, Picard had been driven for vengeance. In *Generations*, Picard was full of self-doubts because his only family had been killed. Patrick did not want to be "haunted" in this next film. Keep it light and simple this time, he was saying. Hit it straight back at the bowler.

His wishes were not, on the surface anyway, at odds with my own feelings about Picard's character although I didn't mention them to Patrick at this meeting. I wanted to emphasize the quality of Picard that I felt made him unique among film heroes. I wanted to emphasize his mind. During the seven years of the television show, Picard had emerged as a man of great principle and moral integrity. He solved problems with his intellect and communication skills and would never fire weapons unless fired upon. This side of him had not been explored in the other two feature films.

The meeting with Patrick was very cordial and he seemed genuinely pleased that I'd been brought on board to write the script. On the other hand, actor Brent Spiner who plays the major co-starring role of Lieutenant Commander Data, an android, was not as comfortable with me. He was extremely polite about it but finally after discussing ideas for the film over lunch, he leaned forward and said, "I'm kind of worried that you don't know how to write my character." Sounds at first like an odd statement considering the fact that we'd worked together as writer and actor on *The Next Generation* for five years. But the truth is neither Brent nor Patrick knew me very well.

The demands of preparing the scripts for twenty-six episodes every season were so great that I rarely had time to visit the set and see them filming what I had written. I was always worried about the next week's script as well as the next five or six stories in development. I was happy

to let Rick be the one who took all the problem calls from the actors, the studio and the directors so that I could keep working without interruption. This arrangement allowed me to get all of the various script notes consolidated by Rick. It also, by the very nature of the process, kept me somewhat anonymous.

Brent could only judge my contribution to the series based on scripts he read that had my name on the title page as the writer. He said he'd never seen my name on any of the scripts that featured Data and he was absolutely right. But he didn't know how much rewriting that head writers do without credit. This kind of rewriting is almost always necessary in television because free-lance writers generally don't know the voices of the characters as well as the staff writers (as soon as they do, they're hired on staff). And as the head writer, I was responsible for the final draft of every script. If I saw a way to improve Data's character, for example, I'd do a rewrite, sometimes a major rewrite. I had written some of Data's most memorable scenes, but Brent never knew it. I assured him that I was capable of doing justice to Data.

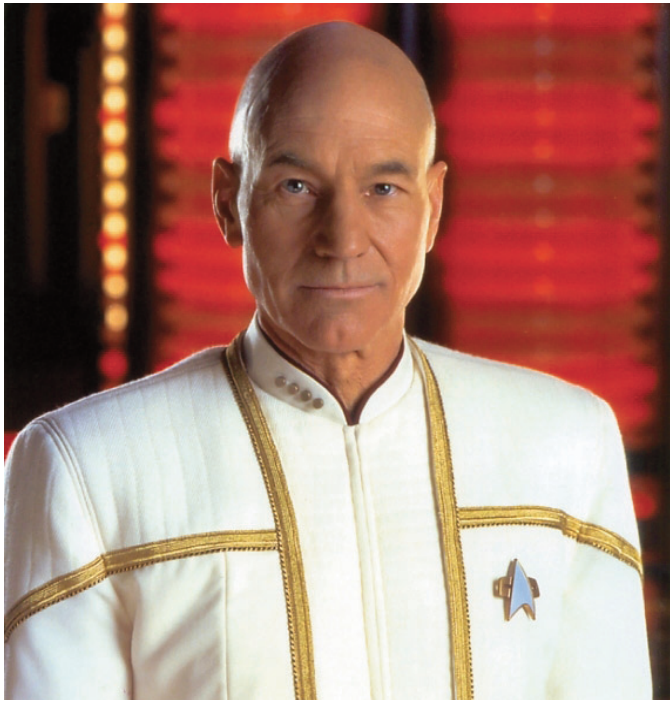
Again, I had very clear feelings about his character in the next movie but I didn't bring them up at this first meeting because I hadn't discussed them yet with Rick. Roddenberry had created Data as his Pinnocchio -- the android's greatest wish in life was to be human. During the television series, Data was always trying to discover what makes humans tick. But he was invented without the ability to feel human emotions, so his ability to understand humanity was limited to intellectual, computer-like analysis. That changed in his first feature film appearance in *Generations*. Data got an "emotion chip" in his positronic brain and suddenly he felt all the same feelings that humans feel. It was a good subplot and worked very well in the movie but I was worried about the long term consequences to the character. I feared The Rhoda Effect.

Not many of you 18 to 35 year olds will remember Rhoda Morgenstern, but she was a character played by Valerie Harper spun off from the legendary *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and the new show was rated in the top ten. Rhoda was endearingly lovelorn, always looking for the right man and could never find him. It was the source of her humor and all the empathy that we had for her as a character. And then in a famous episode, she consummated a long relationship by marrying her dream man, Joe. Rhoda's wedding was one of the top rated television shows in history. Afterwards, the series died. It crashed in the ratings. By giving her what she always wanted, the writers had taken away her defining quality. Even a divorce couldn't save the show and Rhoda was canceled.

With his new emotion chip, Data was dangerously close to getting what he'd always wanted. He was as close to being human as an android could be. I wanted to get Data back to Pinnocchio if I could.

As Rick took off for a two week vacation in Italy at the end of the month, I was ready to sit down and broad-stroke a first draft treatment that would try to connect all the story threads we'd been talking about.





MAY 1997

THE INNER GAME

There's a book every aspiring writer should read and it never even mentions writing. It's a book about how to improve your tennis game.

I read Tim Gallwey's *The Inner Game of Tennis*⁶ long before I started writing and I can't say that I started out saying, hum, why don't I adapt *The Inner Game* principles to my work as a writer. But there's no doubt in my mind that's what happened. Later I used the book with writers working for me to help free them from the tight and unsuccessful work I was getting.

In trying to counsel young writers, I actually tell them to read *The Inner Game of Tennis* to become familiar with the two selves. In the book, Gallwey suggests that within every player, there's a self (#1) that seems to give instructions and make judgements ("Dammit, you idiot, keep your eye on the ball,") and another self (#2) that seems to perform the action. The book shows you ways to get self #1 to give up control and trust self #2 to perform successfully. It's the difference between *making* it happen and *letting* it happen.

The two selves also exist in the act of writing. The worst thing a writer can do is show his hand. You see it on film all the time -- it's that moment when you turn to your friend and say, ah, c'mon, Harrison Ford wouldn't do that. The audience can feel the writer forcing the story to go a certain way.

When I write, I try to sit back and watch the movie. As I do, I listen to the characters. That's all, just *listen* and then I copy down what they're saying to each other. My control self is nothing more than a stenographer allowing my imagination to flow. The *characters*, not I, drive the story forward. If my control self wants to turn right but the characters are saying they want to turn left, I have to trust my characters and turn left and see where they take me.

When I sit down to write the first treatment of a story, I usually have a starting point. Sometimes I even know how a story might end. But I really don't know how I'm going to get there. I allow myself to enjoy the journey, as curious as my intended audience about where it will lead.

At this initial story stage, I only want to lay out the broad strokes of the plot and see how the characters change during the story. I look for the beginning, middle and end. For the moment, I ignore details... just like Gallwey counsels tennis players to do. I don't want to be overwhelmed by the challenge of identifying and solving every problem in a story this early in the process. Right now I just want to get my creative arms around the outer perimeter of the story. I'll worry about filling in the details later.

One of the peculiar techniques I've developed over the years to keep me (and the reader of the material) in the movie, is the use of ellipses

("..."). To me the three dots represent the film running through the projector... a sort of continuing stream of pictures and words and consciousness... as it runs on, I'm watching the movie. It's not all that different from Gallwey's tennis exercises that encourage a player to watch the ball spin or even climbing on board the tennis ball and pretend you're riding it over the net.

Each day as I begin to write, I'll watch the movie again. I read what I've written the last several days to see if the images are clear and logical in the light of a new day. I'll make changes as I read and then try to advance the story another half dozen pages or so.

As I sat down to write the first story of the *Star Trek* movie, there were many questions unanswered. We had not decided what kind of aliens we would find with Picard's best friend on this magical planet. We had no subplot for Data yet -- a primary consideration. Whenever I would come to a hole, I plugged it with the first thing that came to my mind, even if Rick and I had never discussed it. And I didn't hesitate to change

things that Rick and I had discussed when something new occurred to me. When I did make changes, I would pause and write italicized messages in parenthesis to Rick to explain why.

One of the biggest independent decisions I made as I was writing was to challenge the traditional Roddenberry precept that the Federation could do no wrong. It became clear to me that the stakes just weren't high enough if Picard was going against some small cadre of old people. Picard should go up against the entire Federation, I decided. I knew Rick would have a huge problem with this. But I felt it was necessary to make the picture work and I had confidence I could do it in a way that would still honor Roddenberry's vision.

As I wrote, I heard an inner voice telling me that a story about Picard reuniting with an old friend would pull the focus away from the family of characters on board the Enterprise. That might be a mistake, I heard myself say. But my control self quickly jumped in and told me to leave well enough alone...



7 Vulcans are aliens who value logic over emotion. They have always played a major part in the Star Trek universe. The most famous Vulcan is Mister Spock as portrayed by Leonard Nimoy.

STAR TREK: STARDUST (working title)

treatment dated 5/9/97

A man might do well to revisit the ideals of his youth as he gets older and settled in his ways. So might the government of man.

This is the story of the greatest crisis in the professional career of Jean-Luc Picard. And not coincidentally, the greatest crisis in the long and noble history of the Federation.

- - - - -

We fade in to a formal military ball... the young men in their dress uniforms, the pretty girls in gowns of swirling pastel colors. We might be watching the first reel of GONE WITH THE WIND except that officer over there has a blue head and a Vulcan⁷ admiral stands guard at the punchbowl, watching the glee of the young dancers with dispassion.

Finding two young male cadets not interested in dancing, but in mischief. One of them is JEAN-LUC PICARD, age 21, his head still sporting dark curly hair, although a trace of a rising forehead can be detected. The other is HUGH DUFFY, 21, not the handsomest of men but his eyes have a passion that could win any man, or woman, to his side. They both have their eye on a certain girl but she's dancing with a stiffly handsome cadet (NORTON). They spike the synthale punchbowl with 100-proof horse elixir and attempt to lure Norton to drink but unfortunately the Vulcan admiral and his wife wind up drinking the punch (and will eventually be seen leading a Conga Line). Picard and Duffy decide to make a quick exit taking the rest of the wicked punch with them...

As they move quickly away from the assembly room, trying to contain their laughter, we begin to understand that these two young men are best of friends. You've had a friendship like this. We all have. It may be light years away. From another time and place. But the memory of it still brings a smile to our lips. It's always with us, no matter how old we grow.

The spirit of swashbuckling heroes from an earlier generation still lives in the hearts of these young men. They joined Starfleet to make a difference, to bring to all corners of the galaxy all that is good about modern man. But there are strong voices already being heard in the Federation Council that are

8 Klingons are also long standing aliens on Star Trek, an aggressive warrior race and former enemies of the Federation. Lieutenant Commander Worf, played by Michael Dorn, is the sole Klingon officer in Starfleet. He served as Picard's tactical and security officer on The Next Generation.

asserting perhaps the very goal of "making a difference" is misguided. It reeks of imperial arrogance. Better not to teach the rest of the galaxy, but to learn from it. Duffy laughs at the notion, wondering what he could learn from a savage like a Klingon.⁸ Duffy, more than Picard, would be more comfortable in the Starfleet of James Tiberius Kirk than in the new Starfleet coming with the 'next generation'.

We begin to learn that Duffy is decidedly a non-conformist. He proudly claims to be a Capitalist, believes that the elimination of currency in the Federation took power away from individuals and gave it to the government. And he embraces the ancient human custom of religious worship as a Buddhist. He's trying to talk Picard into joining him in a protest against the Academy dress code. We get the impression this is not the first time these young men have ruffled the feathers of authority at the Academy. Picard is wary of the latest scheme. But Duffy argues with youthful impudence that it is dissent that keeps a society vital and vigorous and alert. Conformity breeds apathy. Picard is more conservative than Duffy... yet, he too has a youthful arrogance and he goes along.

(Okay, let me pause here to explain about Meredith. You've never met Meredith, but as recently as Tuesday of this week, she was "The Girl" in the picture and in all these scenes and many more to come. She eventually marries Duffy, goes on the trip with Picard to bring him back and as I continued to write her, a voice kept telling me she was in the way. That she was adding nothing and slowing things down. On the ship, there was arbitrary sexual tension between her and Picard while she sat around and served no other useful purpose, plus, by being there, she took Picard away from scenes with his crew (the family). On the planet, it seemed, she was just going to be a third wheel, again adding sexual tension perhaps, but if it's a love story about the two men getting back together again, I could see she was going to wind up a cheerleader. Perhaps the strongest influence on my decision came from the Kipling movies - where there really was no place in the men's lives for women, except as a brief recreational diversion. If it was only about these three (i.e. "Butch and Sundance"), it might be worth exploring more about their triangular relationship, but we have so many other characters to service, I decided we had more important things to accomplish here so I took her out. It's the right thing to do, I think.)

As Picard and Duffy walk across campus, they pass the cottage of the groundskeeper, BOOTHBY (65)⁹... and

hear music from inside... a scratchy recording of Stardust sung by a singer we recognize as Nat Cole. They know Boothby only as a solitary old man (played by Ray Walston) with a remarkable green thumb who seems to love his rhododendrons more than people.

They sneak up to the window and peek inside and see an old victrola playing a 45rpm record... and after a beat, Boothby's stern face appears at the window, startling them. If you want to hear the music, he yells at them, come inside! And so they do.

They find a remarkable study filled with odds and ends from other times and places... objets d'art or d'junk... and they find a man more remarkable than they ever previously considered. Boothby has a sly sense of humor, knows far more about the two cadets than they do about him and, once they stop being intimidated by his gruffness, learn that he has an unusual wisdom. Not interested in giving anybody any advice, mind you... but somehow he manages to lead a young guest to an insight in a conversation.

Picard impresses Boothby with his knowledge of the Hoagy Carmichael song... but wonders why he plays it on a centuries old victrola instead of the ionic pulse discriminator that's so accurate, it could make you think the singer was actually in the room. Boothby scowls: in four centuries, with all their technology, they still haven't come up with anything that sounds as good as vinyl. As he sees Picard appreciate the simple technology of the victrola, Boothby tells him, perhaps in jest and perhaps not, that he'll leave it to Picard when he passes on.

And as they listen...

"Love is now the stardust of yesterday,
"The music of the years gone by..."

DISSOLVE TO:

Twenty-eight years later.

Night. A Federation settlement on the border of the Neutral Zone¹⁰ between the Romulans¹¹ and the Federation... under attack. We see it from the ground as the Romulan ships strafe the ground... people scattering for cover... buildings exploding, streets being ripped up by the blasts from the ships passing overhead... finding one man desperately transmitting a call for help to any Federation vessel in range... but the transmission towers have been destroyed... it's not clear if their message got out in time.... more Romulan vessels move in over the city to strike

9 Boothby, the groundskeeper at Starfleet Academy, is a character (portrayed by Ray Walston) who was established several years ago on The Next Generation as a mentor who guided Picard through a crisis as a cadet.

10 The Neutral Zone is a demilitarized region of space that serves as a buffer between the Federation and the Romulan Empire.

11 The Romulans are enemies of the Federation; an ancient and warlike offshoot of the Vulcans.

12 Commander William Riker, Picard's first officer, played by Jonathan Frakes who would soon be hired as director for this film.

a final death blow, but then the ship explodes in mid-air as a photon torpedo strikes it... and as the people below cheer with relief and look to the skies for their rescuers... they see the beacon of light of a starship moving closer into the atmosphere... firing at the Romulans as it comes... and we cut to...

The Bridge of the Enterprise to see the adult Picard in action... organizing the defense efforts, calmly calling orders to his command team... which takes us around the ship to see all our regulars. Worf is already on the Bridge (we will later establish he's on a leave of absence from DS9 following increased tensions along the Romulan border. We will further establish Worf as Starfleet's leading expert on Romulan strategy... a result of lifelong study following the Romulan massacre at the Klingon outpost on Khitomer that left him an orphan.) Riker¹² is leading a squadron of Runabouts to take on the Romulan fighters in air to air combat to control the skies over the settlement. We see his ships ejecting from the Enterprise and go into action... people on the ground look up at the battle above their city with awe... searchlights comb the skies like the Battle of Britain.

During the battle, we establish one of the pilots in the Romulan fighters - a man who is half-Romulan and half-Klingon, the child of a Klingon woman who was taken at Khitomer and raped by her Romulan captors (thus he is roughly Worf's age). His name is JOSS and he is a fearless combatant in the skies, a Red Baron for the 24th century.¹³ Furthermore, from the glimpse of him we get here, he enjoys his work. Not sadistically. But as a confident competitor used to winning. Indeed, he has shot down two of our ships and now he has Riker in serious trouble...

But Worf's knowledge of the Romulans helps turn the battle in our favor and the Romulan Commander orders his troops to withdraw, much to Joss' disappointment and Riker's relief... in a last daring move, Joss pulls his ship close enough to see Riker's face through the Runabout window and 'tips his cap' to him... until next time... and zooms away...

Picard orders his people to prepare to evacuate the settlement. Beverly¹⁴ comes to the Bridge to get Picard's handwritten authorization to use additional doses of sarium

krellide radiation to treat the wounded. Due to a temporary shortage of the ore that provides regenerative radiation used in medical tools, Starfleet Medical has imposed a ration on usage. Beverly says she's been told Starfleet scientists are

13 Those of you familiar with The Prisoner of Zenda might see a great deal of Douglas Fairbanks Jr. in the villainous half-Klingon, half-Romulan character of Joss.

close to perfecting a synthetic compound that will serve as a replacement.

Space. On the way to Earth. Picard's quarters. Riker brings the Captain up to date on the medical progress of the survivors and the political tensions with the Romulans. They're claiming the attack on the settlement was in retaliation for a Starfleet incursion into the Neutral Zone in which two of their ships were destroyed. Picard reacts, unconvinced. They wonder what their longtime adversaries are after. Riker relays Worf's warning that when it comes to the Romulans, nothing is ever what it seems.

Picard doesn't need to be reminded. Riker invites the Captain to join the evening's poker game. Picard declines; admits that he just doesn't feel comfortable and he doesn't think anyone else at the table does either when their Captain is present. Riker insists it's not true. But the Captain declines anyway. And we stay with him a beat as he orders dinner for one from the computer, alone in his quarters, a reminder that it's lonely at the top.

Riker comes looking for Data in the same holodeck program he was in when we first met him in "Encounter at Farpoint." He is meditating about existence much the same way as he was in that first episode. (Die hard fans will see the parallels to the original scene; newcomers won't know the difference.) Riker has been worried about the way Data has been acting lately. He wants Data to come back and join the poker game - he's been a no-show for weeks. But Data declines, melancholy. He explains he is no longer able to bluff. Ironically, I used to be the best poker player on the ship. Now, I have the emotions I always longed for but I can't play poker any more.

Riker: You'll learn, Data. It's part of your evolution as a lifeform. Data nods as though he's considered it. Do you think, he asks Riker, that Pinocchio ever missed being a puppet after the story ended? (I'm still grappling with Data's arc but this is one way to start. I see Data caught between two worlds. His greatest restriction as an android has been lifted and yet his emotional awareness has only made him more aware of his shortcomings compared to humans. What has always made the character special has been his struggle to find his identity and I want to get him back to that. If he has lost faith in his ability to rise to the demands of humanity and finds it through Picard's courage, we have a satisfying through line for him. First, he might have to learn that he can't go back to who he used to be. There's also another significantly different idea that we might want to explore, but for that, read on...)

14 Doctor Beverly Crusher, the Chief Medical Officer aboard the Enterprise, played by Gates McFadden.

Riker arrives at the game and finds to his dismay that Worf is the only one who's shown up to play. Since two-handed poker won't do, Worf suggests darts, a game he learned to play on DS9. Darts?, says Riker exasperated. You want to play darts? Poker is a warrior's game. What's happened to you, Worf? You used to be a Klingon. We never should have let you go to Deep Space Nine¹⁵. Darts?

Earth. Picard is accompanied by Commander NORTON, Starfleet liaison to the Federation Council (and the same stiff handsome fellow from the Academy days), into the gallery of the impressive chambers... to hear the end of a vigorous debate about a response to the Romulan attack. Clearly the most enlightened man in the room is the Council President, a Vulcan named SEMARK, 55. He is a man of peace who has invested a great deal of effort in negotiating a treaty with the Romulans that would tear down the Neutral Zone and settle all outstanding territorial disputes.

It would be his crowning achievement. But this new outbreak of violence is seriously threatening all of his hopes. Picard watches Semark with admiration as he calmly responds to the angry rhetoric, trying to preserve the peace initiative. And like any citizen watching his government in action, we may sense in Picard a certain pride of being part of the process... in space, Picard is the Federation. It is his life. That he would ever give up that life, turn against his government, and in the opinion of some, the Federation itself, couldn't be further from his mind at this moment.

As Semark leads Norton and Picard into his office, Picard is informed that what he's about to be told is classified and must remain a secret due to the sensitive political implications. He is surprised to learn there may be a basis to the Romulan claims.

Somebody in a starship is creating havoc in the Neutral Zone, leading hostile alien ships in attacks against the Romulans. (The Romulans claim they went into the zone to investigate sensor readings that revealed a Federation vessel was illegally present.) But the Romulans can't find him and neither can we. We've sent in probes, hailed across every com-link bandwidth. Nothing. Whoever it is is hiding in a navigational nightmare known on Earth as The Briar Patch, named after the folk tale. A millennium ago, a group of mysterious, xenophobic aliens escaped from Romulans by fleeing into the seemingly impenetrable SPACETECH¹⁶ much like Br'er Rabbit escaped the fox in the briar patch.

The Patch is unexplored space because, frankly, no

one wants to go in there. Picard understands that he is being asked to go in, find this ship and bring it back. And he's told it must be accomplished before the end of the current session of the Federation Council. Semark explains the treaty must be voted on before the session adjourns in three weeks. If it is defeated, all of his hopes for peace with the Romulans will be defeated too.

Norton tells Picard they have a theory and some evidence to support it and it has to do with a ship presumed destroyed five years earlier in the Neutral Zone... a ship being flown by a man they both know - Lieutenant Commander Hugh Duffy.

Picard reacts, knows Duffy was reportedly killed in a fight with the Romulans after he violated orders, crossing the border trying to prove that the Romulans were building a secret installation in the Neutral Zone. That assertion was never proved, and even the Enterprise's efforts to investigate it proved futile. (Hard core fans will remember relevant episodes from the third season of TNG, others won't notice.) New evidence suggests Duffy and his ship may have survived.

They call for a holo-video from the computer... Duffy's last log. It plays right there in the office, wired as a holodeck:

Duffy, a man in his late forties, under fire, seemingly killed as he's apparently being forced into The Patch by the Romulans. But now we're beginning to think that Duffy deliberately went into The Patch to escape, just as those xenophobic aliens escaped a millennium ago. No debris was ever recovered.

Our probes have picked up a ship's signature traces that matches Duffy's. In addition, the Romulans say their sensors identified a human lifeform at the helm. We don't know if he's gone mad, gone native or what. According to his record, he was always a malcontent, says Norton. Picard interrupts: he was a man of great passion... adding that he hadn't spoken to him for years before his apparent death. And we are led to believe by Picard's manner that for some reason, the friendship didn't endure.

Before Picard leaves, Semark gives Picard a box that someone over at the Academy sent over for him the day before... Picard, curious, opens it... it's the victrola... and he realizes it means that Boothby is dead... he tells his colleagues that he must make a quick stop at the Academy before he leaves to pay his final respects to someone who meant a great deal to him...

Meanwhile, Data pays a surprise visit to the android lab at the Daystrom Institute (if it's Mars, he took the shuttle) and for the research team, it's like Michael Jordan coming back to visit his high school coaches. They are in awe of Soong's creation,¹⁷ ask to have their holo-grams taken with him. Their own androids have a program that only simulates self-awareness and, reflecting their creators' attitude, they have been programmed to aspire to become like Data. To them, Data is the superstar of androids. They can only imagine how wonderful it must be to have his abilities. And Data may remind us of the celebrity who feels empty as he is worshipped...

(Now, originally I wrote this as sort of a throw-away scene of self-exploration for Data... it seemed like an interesting counterpoint to Picard going back to the Academy. But as I wrote it, I became infatuated with the idea of Data as the object of hero-worship by other androids. I mean, all these years he's wanted to be like us. Now, the tables are reversed and their great wish is to be like him. I began to wonder if there wouldn't be fun in bringing one or more of the androids along to fuel a Data subplot. You know the old saying about the teacher learning from the pupils he's teaching [quoted in the verse to Rodger and Hammerstein's "Getting to Know You", I believe].

Still not sure what it is Data should learn however. Have to be careful that we don't retell the Lal or the exocomp¹⁸ story again. And the risk is, of course, that it not turn into the new androids' story but that the new androids serve as a catalyst to tell a Data story. Data might get weary of being a hero to these guys. Perhaps, ironically, because they have a simulated self-awareness, he doesn't take them seriously and has to learn to. Although it steps on the exocomp ending, I can see an android sacrificing himself to save Data [rather like Gunga Din].

There is a lot of potential for humor in these androids following Data around. I'm not going to develop this much further until we talk but if we go this way, and I'd like to try, then Data has come to Daystrom to pick out a few androids because the mission requires it.)

As Data examines the blank faces of the other androids deciding which to choose, cut to -

The faces of young cadets on the campus of Starfleet Academy... as Picard walks leisurely across campus... and there is no experience quite like going back like this... seeing the young people walking the same pathways that you once walked...

He comes to the home of Boothby and it seems very much as he remembers it... he lets himself in and clearly it's in a state of disarray, someone's been packing up the dear departed's belongings... but the study looks much the same as it always did... and Picard picks up a few items and looks with nostalgia at them and perhaps even utters a quiet, Rest in Peace, Boothby. Whereupon the answer comes back: The hell I will... And Picard turns with shock to see Boothby very much alive. Boothby: Didn't anyone ever teach you to knock?

Boothby tells Picard he's just been packing up some of the old junk to make more room... but we may also get the impression that he sent the victrola to lure Picard to see him. A curious scene follows in which Boothby, who almost seems to know about Picard's confidential mission, asks about young Mister Duffy. Picard lies to the old man, reminds him that Duffy is dead. Boothby, playing the old dodderer only for effect, nods as though remembering... says what a shame it was that Picard and Duffy didn't have a chance to reconcile their differences before we lost him. Here today, gone tomorrow, they say. There's always so much left unsaid in the heart and then it's too late to say it.

Picard gets the distinct impression that Boothby is telling him not to waste this opportunity. And far from the old dodderer, this is a man who, at a hundred plus, may be the youngest man Picard has ever known.

The Enterprise's departure is briefly delayed by the late arrival of their sarium krellide ration but they finally get under way. The first complication comes as the Enterprise enters the Neutral Zone... a Romulan Warbird decloaks, apparently poised for a fight. The Captain is Joss who insists that his ship will be accompanying the Enterprise.

This was not part of the arrangement, but the Romulans do not intend to let Starfleet go in and cover-up all the evidence of their own mis-deeds. As the political liaison on board, Commander Norton encourages Picard to accept the Romulan escort. Joss says he looks forward to closer relations between our peoples... and he seems to have his eye on Troi¹⁹ when he says it. Worf clearly doesn't like the fellow.

The journey is extremely dangerous and full of natural space hazards that force us again and again to retreat from this impenetrable morass that is truly worthy of the name, Briar Patch. It seems impossible that someone could ever get in there, let alone survive... Joss almost enjoys seeing the great Enterprise flounder in its efforts...

17 The reference to Data as Soong's creation is identifying the android's inventor, Doctor Noonien Soong.

18 The Lal and exocomp stories were both episodes from The Next Generation that were variations on android themes and points up one of the great problems of writing a new Star Trek story - not repeating yourself.

19 Commander Deanna Troi, ship's Counselor (therapist), an empathic alien who has the ability to sense what other people are feeling. She's played by Marina Sirtis.

At a Captain's dinner, Joss continues his overt pursuit of Troi and at the same time, goes out of his way to provoke Worf. Joss hates Klingons as much as Worf hates Romulans. And when Worf finally wonders aloud how Joss could emulate a race that gave him life as the result of his mother's rape, he calmly replies that he preferred to take after his father... instead of those cowardly Klingon jumbuck who were slaughtered at Khitomer. That is a direct insult to Worf's parents and Joss knows it and it requires satisfaction.

Despite Norton's protests, Picard is forced by his respect for Worf's belief's to allow a bat'telh fight on the holodeck... he does refuse to permit it to be a fight to the death, however. Just first blood for honor. The fight is terrific but there has never been a bat'telh combatant as good as Joss... and Worf is beaten badly. Clearly, he would have been killed but for Picard's mandate. To add insult to injury, Joss catches Troi with a surprise kiss as a reward for his victory. Picard orders him off the ship. (One of the reasons I've brought them along is to create a true villain so we can cheer when he is defeated.)

Data and Geordi²⁰ work on trying to solve the mystery of entering The Patch... and although Data doesn't want to be pestered by his android fans, they ultimately contribute the idea that helps solve the problem: the Enterprise will re-enact the exact sequence of events leading to Duffy's ship disappearing and see where it takes us...

(Two notes: perhaps in this scenario, it is smarter not to have Data miss being a puppet at the start but to learn to appreciate the value of puppets as a result of this story. Second, I have not built in stops along the river, talking to natives, etc. because I feel we need to get to the planet by page 50 and, I may be wrong, but I think there's an awful lot upfront...)

The ploy works and we enter into the core of The Patch's SPACETECH... slipping through the hazards into a dazzling hidden solar system within. Due to the unique space particles, the color of this system is almost a British racing green... it will be like the ancient explorers coming upon their first sight of the Pacific Ocean...

There is little time to appreciate the sight because almost immediately we are attacked by dozens of small alien ships... Joss, in the Romulan ship, immediately opens fire... Picard tries to open communications but there is no response... our sensors pick up a Federation starship hiding behind a moon...

Picard orders us into pursuit... and the starship is forced out of hiding... Picard tries to make contact with Duffy but the only response is a signal to withdraw from the aliens' sovereign space.

Joss launches a full-out assault on Duffy's ship... and now Picard must fly the Enterprise between the Romulan ship and the smaller Starship to protect it, all the while demanding the Romulan captain to cease fire. Finally, the smaller ship is damaged and is forced to land on an M-class planet that has a golden ring around it...

Picard is convinced by the events that it must be Duffy in there and decides to go to the planet surface to try and talk him into coming back. He takes Worf, Beverly and Geordi with him on the away team.

They beam down to find a paradise as close to a Garden of Eden as we can imagine. The village, an intriguing architecture of structures built into the natural environment of a cliff, yet extremely modern, is deserted. Worf informs them that sensors indicate that the entire population is hiding in the woods on the outskirts of the village. On the word 'village', his voice cracks. He tries again and his voice cracks again. Picard asks him if he's all right. Worf assures him that he is, although his voice seems a tad high as he says it.

Then a strange thing happens to Geordi... his neovisor suddenly malfunctions... everything is suddenly too bright for him... when Beverly checks him, she can't believe what her tricorder tells her – Geordi's optical nerve has started carrying visual impulses: Your visor isn't malfunctioning... your eyes are working! And he takes off the eye hardware: and incredibly, his eyes are just beginning to shape genuine images. Picard asks for explanations. They have none.

A beat later, they find themselves surrounded by armed resident aliens. Picard could beam out his team but he allows the capture, knowing that it is the only way to confront the man he's looking for.

They are led into the village and aliens begin to emerge from hiding, look curiously out at them. An enigmatic native host greets them and sees to it they are comfortable and well treated. They are offered fresh vegetables and fruits from the garden. There seem to be flowers everywhere. Picard presses the host for a meeting with the human who lives there. The host surprises him by saying simply – Mister Duffy will join you shortly.

They are left alone to speculate. Has Duffy set himself up as some sort of king here, or convinced these people with technology he's some sort of God? Has he gone mad? Their thoughts are punctuated by continuing odd occurrences to each of them. One of the lingering injuries that Worf suffered in his fight with Joss has disappeared. Beverly gets a pimple. All of their fingernails have grown longer. (We need a list of this kind of stuff to spread throughout; probably need a TECH advisor to tell us what might occur to the body.)

The door finally opens and a man emerges from the shadows and moves toward them...as he hits the light, we see it is Duffy. Exactly as Picard remembers him from the Academy. He can't be possibly more than twenty-one years old.

(This is the act one break.)

The exposition comes quickly: this planet is virtually made of sarium krellide (another 'Stardust' metaphor). On most humanoids, it has a remarkable regenerative effect. The first effects are particularly striking – sort of like going out in a harsh sun without a sunscreen on. But the process begins to slow as the body adapts. The natives who have lived here for a millennium do not get younger but do live for several hundred years. Duffy says he's looked like this for almost two years and does not expect to get any younger. (Why has he stayed? Maybe he's found true happiness for the first time in his life. I'm not sure.)

The relationship between Picard and Duffy is civil, even cordial but not intimate. When Picard asks him why he's been attacking the Romulans, Duffy says the Romulans have, in fact, established an illegal installation in the Neutral Zone driven by their need for sarium krellide. Their exploratory missions brought them close to this system... they'd sent probes into The Patch designed to detect the ore and were trying to follow the readings... any time they got too close, we took action to stop them.

Picard: Without consideration for the consequences to the Federation. Duffy: The Federation can take care of itself – these people can't. Picard: So you chose to ignore the Prime Directive... Duffy gets angry with Picard: I knew what the Romulans would do to this planet if they found it. And what would happen to the people who lived on it. Check your history books under Bajor or American Indians for reference. A huge boom sounds in the distance from outside. Then another. Duffy reacts: And now, thanks to you, Jean-Luc, they're here.

They go outside to see what's going on, joining aliens gathered at an overlook to see the Romulans have already started to set up mining operations on the planet. Enraged, Picard and the away team are beamed up. Picard confronts Joss from the Bridge. Joss says in a matter of days, the new treaty will yield this sector to the Romulans. We can do with it as we please.

Commander Norton urges Picard not to interfere, the most important thing is not to do anything that would endanger the treaty. Picard doesn't waste time arguing with a flack like Norton — he goes to call Semark directly. But he's told Semark is unavailable.

He returns alone to the surface to speak to Duffy; he urges Duffy to return with him voluntarily, address the Council, tell them what's happening here. They will listen. This is the Federation. They will not abandon these people. Duffy laughs sadly at Picard's blind faith. He's convinced the Federation has turned a blind eye to the Romulan activity in the Neutral Zone. During the last several months, there were Romulan ships everywhere, cloaking, decloaking, firing probes... the Federation's perimeter sensors must have picked them up... if Starfleet had done their job and responded to the incursions, we would not have had to take action ourselves. Duffy believes the Federation knew and yet permitted it to happen because they wanted the treaty to go through.

Picard doesn't believe it and it turns into an ugly quarrel. And through this fight, we get to the core of the conflict between the two men. We can infer from what is said that this is very much like the last fight the two of them had as young men. There was, we will begin to understand for the first time, a difficult period of transition between the Federation of Kirk's era and the Federation of Picard's era. The change of direction led to serious protests, especially on the part of young people. Duffy had become quite radical, challenging the leadership of the Federation and the direction they were taking us.

Picard couldn't follow him there. Duffy had accused Picard of compromising and abandoning his principles for the sake of career. Picard had accused Duffy of refusing to adapt to the needs of a new era. 'Adapt' was an anathema to Duffy.

Once again they seem to be fighting the old fight... with Duffy's wild charges about the Federation being in collusion with the Romulans. And the scene ends with the two men as angry at each other as ever. Picard returns to the ship, tries again to get to Semark, once again is frustrated when he's told Semark

is unavailable. He paces furiously trying to process what's happened. And finally, he goes to Troi and he asks her for a favor, a very difficult favor, and if she turns it down, he'll understand.

The Romulan Ship. Joss is surprised when he's told he has a guest. And it's Troi and she's dressed to kill. She does a Mata Hari number with Joss in his quarters, in a situation that almost gets beyond her control, finally sedates him with a drug under her fingernails and then penetrates the Romulan's computer system...

This is what she discovers: after the Romulan probes had found a significant source of sarium krellide, the treaty negotiations were accelerated with an understanding that the Romulans and the Federation would share the medical ore found in this sector.

Then the attacks by Duffy and the aliens began, threatening the agreement. But the Romulans couldn't find Duffy and couldn't penetrate The Patch. So, the Federation agreed to send in their flagship. Picard is horrified to learn that he was in fact being used to lead the Romulans to the ore. And no one even seemed to give a second thought to the aliens who claimed that space as their own. The communications with the Romulans had been handled throughout by Commander Norton.

Picard is angrier than we've ever seen him when he confronts Norton. Confronted with the evidence, Norton admits the truth. The Federation scientists' efforts to make synthetic sarium krellide had failed completely. We desperately needed the ore. As for the aliens to whom it rightfully belongs? Norton sounds like every other bureaucrat in history when he says, we have the Romulans word that they will be adequately compensated and moved to a hospitable location. Picard: To move them is to destroy them. Their biology depends on the environment of this planet. If you take them from the radiation or take the radiation from them, it is virtually genocide.

Norton vaguely tries to assure Picard that it won't come to that, but his empty promises are interrupted when Picard does something I don't believe we've ever seen him do. He punches Norton in anger. Looming over him like Clay over Liston, he asks Norton if this was done with Semark's approval. Norton doesn't answer as he rubs his chin, only says: I'll have you up on charges, Picard. Picard answers simply, You're damned right, you will. He orders the computer to hold Norton incommunicado in his quarters and exits.

In a surprising scene, we find the poker game in

progress as Picard enters, greeting everyone warmly and sits down to play a few hands. He has the sort of calm that people who have decided to commit suicide often have. And as he asks a few personal questions and makes eye contact with each member of his senior crew, we may understand that he wanted to see his family once more...

Picard's quarters. Four pips being laid on a counter top one at a time. Picard studies himself in the mirror, begins to remove his Starfleet uniform. It is the saddest moment of his life. He knows he can no longer represent his government as it allows the exploitation of this world and he cannot abandon the aliens as they're about to be destroyed. He is prepared to sacrifice everything he has worked for to follow his conscience to join an almost impossible fight.

In civvies, Picard enters a Runabout and is surprised to find Data waiting for him... Data, as an astute observer of human behavior, knew something was up with Picard and anticipated something like this... (This will be affected by Data's arc but it would be nice if we used emotions to advance Data a notch or two: something like Data saying to Picard: "I realized I was worried about you, Sir.")

Picard doesn't want Data to come along, telling him that there's a certain court martial in store for him. He won't let anyone share the responsibility for what he's about to do.

Data: Very well, sir. I hereby consider myself taken hostage. Or: I believe that pesky emotion chip is malfunctioning again, sir. I'm not sure I can be held accountable for my actions. Picard finally permits him to come.

As he sees the Enterprise through the window as we move away from it... Picard wonders if it may be the last time he ever sees this ship.

(End of act two)

Duffy is not surprised to hear the truth from Picard but he is surprised to see Picard, out of uniform, ready to fight the good fight. You punched him? Perhaps the environment here has already had an effect on you, Jean-Luc, he says with a slight grin. And the reconciliation begins.

They begin by sabotaging the Romulan mining operations and then disappearing into the forest like Robin Hood escaping from the Sheriff of Nottingham (using dampening field TECH to disable phasers and fool tricorders).

Joss is furious and since Starfleet can't seem to control its own officers, he leads his crew to the planet surface to find the rebels, making it clear that he intends to kill Picard and Duffy when he finds them. Norton is equally outraged and orders Riker to take an away team and arrest Picard and Duffy. Riker follows the orders, knowing that he has to get to Picard before the Romulans do. The androids who are worried about Data insist on joining the search party.

The action builds throughout the third act as Picard and Duffy use guerrilla tactics to thwart the Romulans. Joss leads breathtaking sweeps through the forest in anti-grav vehicles firing plasma discharges defoliating the landscape. Picard and Duffy stay one step ahead, go on the offensive, continuing to humiliate Joss. Their goal? The only goal an outnumbered, out-armed force can have. To make the superior force suffer such costs, they ultimately have to withdraw. Meanwhile, there's also a match of wits between Riker and Picard; as Picard manages to craftily elude his own senior officers.

As the sequence continues, we begin to realize that Picard is getting younger, first psychologically and then gradually physically as well. We see that swashbuckling spirit of an earlier era revived in his heart. At the end of a particularly satisfying victory over the Romulans, he hugs Duffy with exhilaration. In a way, Picard is embracing his own youth, feeling again the bond of his lost friendship. It turns into a deeply emotional moment for him.

After Riker and his team find themselves outfoxed and trapped by Picard, he appears and tells them to take the Enterprise back to Earth and inform the council what's happened here. We must delay the approval of the treaty. Despite his loss of faith in Semark, he still believes in the Federation; he still believes in the people. Once they know the truth, they will not allow this to continue. Beverly isn't so sure: there are a lot of people who will suffer without the medical ore. Picard disagrees. Modern medicine did not begin with the discovery of regenerative radiation. The people of the Federation will make the sacrifice, says Picard. Never underestimate the people.

Riker says Norton won't let the Enterprise leave until Picard and Duffy are captured and on board. Picard and Duffy know they can't abandon the planet to Joss and the Romulans. Picard concludes simply... we'll have to take the Romulans with us. The crew reacts: to Earth? Picard nods...

Picard and his crew, reunited, attempt to capture the Romulans, leading to a final climatic battle. Joss engages Picard in a bat'telh fight. Picard is overmatched but after several beats, he seems to gain a youthful vigor and through special effects, his

image grows younger until he almost looks twenty-one again. Still, Joss is a remarkable combatant and finally is about to kill Picard, but his bat'telh is stopped on its downward thrust in mid-air by a new weapon and he turns to see Worf has arrived to save Picard's life. Joss turns to engage Worf: This time to the death, Klingon. And if we thought the first fight was something special, well, this becomes one of the great sword fights ever put on film.

Finally, Worf triumphs and Joss falls to his death and the victory is won. The Romulans are round up for transport to the Enterprise. But Duffy has been mortally wounded.

They take him to the ship to try to save his life... and as they rush him to Sickbay, we see Picard begin to age rapidly... until he looks his real age again... In Sickbay, Duffy and Picard say a last, touching farewell between best friends. Picard promises that Duffy will not have died in vain. When he dies, Duffy also returns to his normal age.

Picard orders his crew to set a course for Earth. Norton attempts to take command and orders the Romulans released. Picard ignores him, but Riker tells him unless he's prepared to fly this ship alone, he'd do well to get out of the way. Picard gives the order to "Engage!"...

The Federation Council. The debate about the treaty with the Romulans is drawing to a close. Semark calls for a vote. And then the double doors at the rear burst open and Jean-Luc Picard enters and confronts Semark. Semark calls for the sergeant-at-arms to arrest him. But other members of the council want to hear what he has to say. Picard's speech, which I will not write here, is a passionate defense of everything the Federation stands for.

He urges the Council not to approve the treaty. Semark listens with Vulcan cool and suggests that Picard has overstated the seriousness of the situation on the planet; he has seen the reports from Commander Norton and it is clear that Picard let his emotions interfere with his duty. My duty, says Picard, is to the Federation and the fundamental principals on which it is founded. And yes I am emotional when it comes to those principles.

Semark dismisses Picard's actions as irrational: he has threatened a lasting peace with the Romulans and deprived worlds of needed medical aid by his criminal acts of sabotage. The criminal act was yours, sir, says Picard impudently, causing gasps among the assembled. And even the Vulcan is having a difficult time containing his emotions. Semark: What would you tell the mother of one of our children who may die without that ore, Picard? Picard: I will not trade the life of an alien child to save one of ours...

Semark sees he is not getting anywhere here, lists the criminal charges for which Picard will stand trial. As for his career as a Starfleet officer, as Captain of the Enterprise, that's over. His senior crew has been suspended from duty as well. Semark: I hope you can see the logic in what you've accomplished, Mister Picard. Because I cannot.

He orders the guards to take him away and calls for the vote to begin... As the guards begin to escort Picard from the chamber, someone begins to clap in the gallery... and Picard pauses to look up and sees it is Boothby applauding, standing... and as the two men's eyes connect, a second person in the gallery joins Boothby, then a third, and another and another until the whole gallery is cheering Picard by name. As he's led out, the council members look at each other understanding the people have spoken. We can infer the treaty will be defeated and that Semark may have won the battle but has lost the war.

As for Picard's future and the future of his crew, we will have to wait until the next movie to find out...

FADE OUT.

THE END

Okay, I'm sure the first topic of discussion will be the Federation's participation in the conspiracy. Picard's decision to resign becomes a far deeper dramatic turn this way. It's really what makes it work. If it were just saving the natives, heck, Picard does that every week. But now, Picard chooses to be the one who will stand up for the principles of the Federation when his leaders have failed him.

It's a much more courageous thing to do and will give the film power. The great movies are about heroes who stand alone fighting for what they believe in. Put Ian McKellan in Vulcan ears as Semark and I'll give you a final scene between him and Picard that will resonate for years to come.

Eric²¹ points out correctly that some of this comes awfully close to the Maquis arc: the nature of the political situation (new treaty with an enemy), The Patch (impenetrable space like the Badlands) plus the role of Duffy as guerrilla against the enemy encroachment of this world. Part of this will be solved when we create the unique quality of the aliens and their environment. But we need to go out of our way to find the differences. The treaty gives us a clock... but the comparison to the Maquis will end if we lose the formal treaty negotiation. What other kind of clock can we come up with?

21 Eric A. Stillwell, my loyal and trustworthy assistant who has been part of Star Trek since the first season of The Next Generation.



OLD SOLDIERS

I knew Rick didn't like it. He didn't have to tell me. I just knew. By what he didn't say. Not a word about it since he'd been back.

Rick: How about those Giants?
Michael: Dusty Baker's a great manager. (Yeah, yeah, c'mon already. Let's hear the bad news.)
Rick: (sucking up a spoonful of cottage cheese) They're gonna be tough this year.
Michael: It's a long season. (That damned poker face of his. Not even a clue.)
Rick: (picking up the treatment) I have quite a few problems with this, but not the ones you think I'll have.

I leaned back in my chair and tried to casually raise a curious eyebrow but I never could raise one eyebrow.

"It's all too political," he said. "There are politics in Picard's back story. Politics between the Romulans and the Federation. Duffy's motivations are political. Who cares?"

I nodded. Okay, I can see that. I'd set Duffy and Picard's Academy conflict against the kind of radical movement I'd known in the Sixties. Their relationship was not unlike some of my own in college. Like Picard, I chose a less radical path than many of my friends. No big deal -- I'll find another backstory. We can simplify the other politics in the story.

I waited for him to say he missed the girl, but he never got to that. He touched briefly on his unhappiness that I'd turned this into a Federation Conspiracy. I argued my point again that it made Picard a stronger hero and he gave a non-committal shrug and went on to his big note. His really big note.

"And then there's the fountain of youth thing...", he said.

What was that? What did he say? The fountain of youth thing? What is that supposed to mean?

He read from page 35 of the document: "We begin to realize that Picard is getting younger, first psychologically and then gradually physically as well. We see that swashbuckling spirit of an earlier era revived in his heart."

He looked at me. "In other words, Picard's an old man who doesn't get to buckle his swash until the planet makes him young again. But he's our hero. When the movie's over and he's back to normal again, he needs to be a vital man of action. Patrick will hate this. He'll never do it."

"But he didn't have a problem with a fountain of youth concept," I said.

"He will when he reads this," said Rick. "*You're telling our star he's an old man!*"

I sputtered looking for words to argue but I couldn't find them. "If it's a fountain of youth story, he's got to get younger," I finally said.

"Then maybe it shouldn't be a fountain of youth story. I won't be able to sell this to Patrick."

I let out a deep breath. It was hard to disagree with Rick's prediction of Patrick's reaction. For the moment, I couldn't find a way around it.

"I have an idea" said Rick, pulling me out of my despair. "What if the guy Picard finds on the planet... is *Data*."

NOTES

Okay, if you're the writer, what do you do? Your producer (and collaborator) just told you to throw out everything you've been working on and start over again. Do you argue? Stand up for your creative vision? Weep?

Look, the truth is none of us like to hear notes. We want it to be perfect the first time. It never is and we know that and we know we need those notes, but we just feel the way my nine-year-old daughter feels about swallowing a pill when she's sick.

There are many different things to do with notes. Some writers capitulate and execute whatever the notes call for. Some writers throw them in the trash can and write whatever they want to write. Some writers try to shove them up the ass of the person who gave them. One of the latter group was Eugene Piller, my father.

Dad was a screenwriter in Hollywood in the 1940s before I was born. I still find people who worked with him and say he was one of the most talented writers they knew. But Dad had a very serious problem: he couldn't take notes from anyone. And one night in the bar at Chasen's, the popular Beverly Hills restaurant, he punched out a big-time producer because he didn't like his notes. That punch ended my father's career. Shortly thereafter, my parents moved to New York and he went into business as an interior decorator. He was a fine, sad interior decorator for the rest of his life.

Dad taught me a great deal about writing as I grew up. I remember how he showed me how to add specific details to descriptive passages of a seventh grade short story about a Russian nuclear attack. Twenty years later, when I told him I was quitting my job at CBS to become a full-time writer, it was almost like I'd dropped the atom bomb. I could hear the groan at the other end of the phone. "You don't know what it's like out there," he warned. Dad never gave me any advice about taking notes. He didn't have to. Every time I ate a bowl of Chasen's famous chili, I got the message.

When I wrote my first professional script for the television series *Simon & Simon*, I turned in what I thought was a very good script. When I got the notes from the producers, the studio and the network, I was aghast. These were horrible changes! I agreed to make them because, after all, I was a first time writer and I really had no choice.

I went home and angrily worked on the script. I decided to do exactly what they told me, knowing that when I was done, everyone would see how terrible the notes had been and how the script had been hurt by them. Bad idea. I turned in my draft, they read it and said, "Thank you very much," took it away from me, and rewrote it themselves.

In time, I learned that the writer's job is to find a constructive way to address the notes and to use them to improve the script no matter how you might feel when you first hear them.

Sure, there'll be times when you have such fundamental problems with the notes that you simply have to walk away from a project. But those times are fewer than you might think. Most notes don't have to be taken literally. They're clues that convey dissatisfaction.

There are a lot of ways to solve problems and my job is to find the one that works best for me even if it strays from the original notes. If the revision works, everyone's happy. No one grades you on how well you followed the notes.

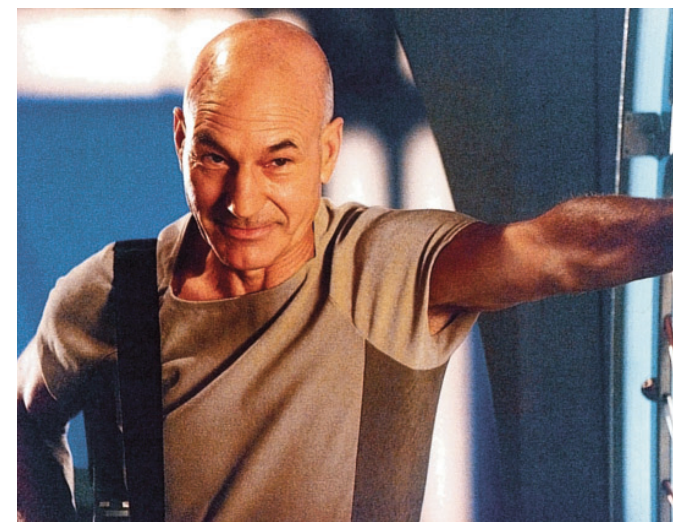
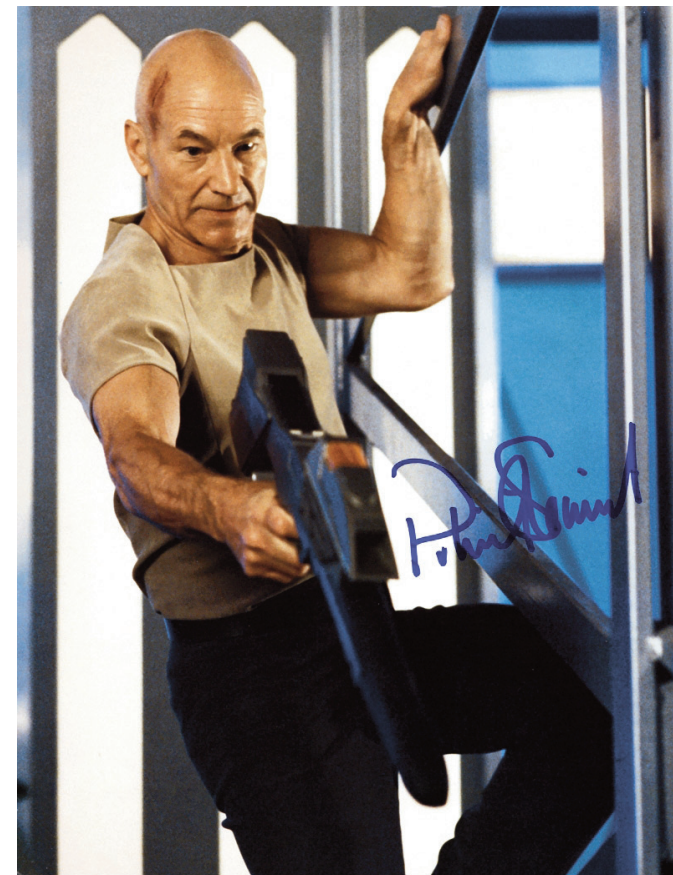
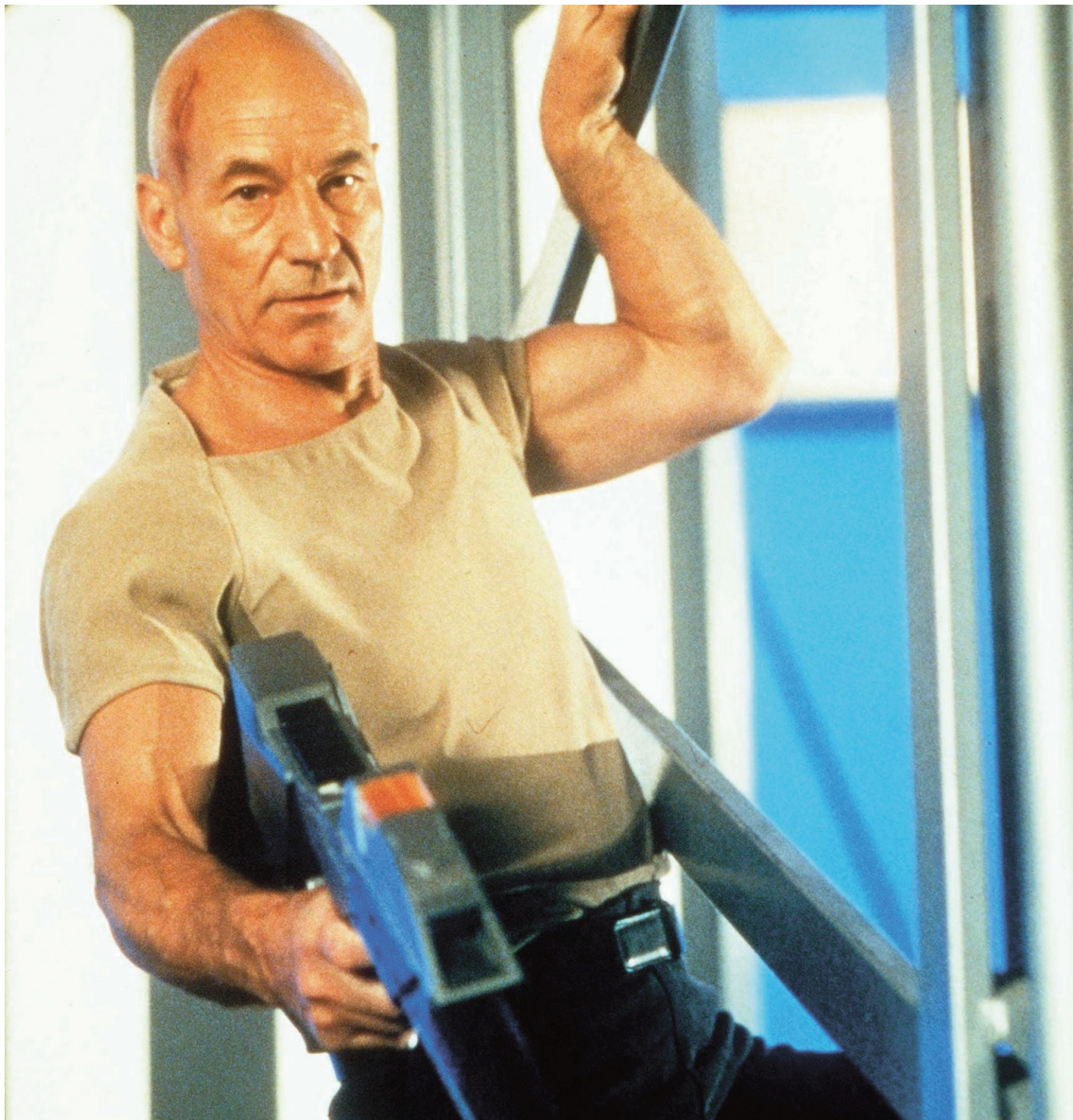
So as I sat in Rick's office hearing these very substantial notes, I sure wasn't happy, but I was thinking ahead. "What if Data was the guy Picard finds on the planet?" he'd said. And damn it, I had to admit it was a good idea. A whole new story began to unfold in my mind. Picard is sent by Starfleet to kill Data! A battle between Picard and Data — perhaps a fight to the death -- would be a major chapter in the history of *Star Trek*.

Of course, I thought, if Picard kills Data, we'd find some way to bring him back by the end of the movie. You can do that with androids.

"It keeps the drama in the family," said Rick. He was right. That inner voice worried about Picard's old friend pulling the story away from the crew was silenced. Once we put Data on the planet, he would become a wayward son. It would become a story about the Enterprise crew's commitment to him, defining the crew as a family and emphasizing its importance to the franchise.

So the only problem was my attachment to the youth culture theme. Rick assured me that there might be a way to keep the planet a fountain of youth. "Maybe it just affects the aliens but not humans," he said. It didn't make much sense to me. The fun of a fountain of youth story is seeing your heroes change.

Several days later, we jettisoned the whole fountain of youth theme, including the peek at Picard's Academy days. Ray Walston lost a job he never knew he had.



DATA AS KURTZ

Our new story was much darker, closer to the intent of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* with Data filling the shoes of the mad Colonel Kurtz. In our story, Data would "go native," protecting a small alien culture from a deadly conspiracy to steal some kind of valuable TECH from their world.

Our attention kept turning to how the Federation was going to participate in this conspiracy. It may seem remarkable that so much time was spent on trying to protect the image of a fictional entity, but we knew we were treading on sacred ground here. Rick felt it was unacceptable for the Federation to be overtly involved in a plan to massacre a small group of people.

We started talking about how governments throughout history have turned a blind eye to a distant, unseen people whose needs are not considered as important as those in power... Native Americans, for example, who'd been moved off their ancient lands by the U.S. government to make way for western expansion. Forced relocation became our conspiracy's goal. The Federation conspirators could believe their plan for relocation would be saving lives, because the Romulans intended to kill the aliens. Moving them would be the act of honorable men, an act that would "serve the greater good."

Picard would see that these leaders have chosen to do an end run around the "Prime Directive," in essence, the Federation's Constitution. And he knows that this forced relocation will ultimately destroy the alien culture just as it has destroyed cultures throughout history.

By allowing the Federation conspirators to think their motives are noble, we would be protecting Roddenberry's vision of 24th century mankind. And besides, I've always found villains who thought they were heroes more interesting to write anyway. We were excited about the social issues our film would now be able to explore.

We had to answer the question why Data would take up arms against the conspirators instead of just calling Picard for help. We finally concluded that he'd have to have some kind of technological malfunction, something that would affect his memory. Maybe there could be a kindly alien woman and her children who nurse him back to health. Rick had a strong feeling that Data and an alien kid would be a fun relationship.

We began to see a three act structure in which Picard goes up the river and finds Data in act one, kills Data at the end of act two and then in act three, discovers that he's killed a man he loves to help cover up a conspiracy. Outraged, he resigns his commission and takes Data's place on the planet. His crew soon joins him.

Picard and his six senior officers (the parallels to *The Magnificent Seven* were not lost on us) would finally be pitted against the forces of the Romulan Empire supported by the Federation. How could they possibly prevail? We came up with a unique way to victory -- the arrival of an unusual cavalry that Picard befriends earlier in the movie -- made up of

all the little ships that populate this area of space, a rag-tag army of Federation mariners. In a Capra-esque way, it's the people of the Federation who would save the day.

We still hadn't defined the aliens of this planet. This was a crucial question. The first words I ever heard Gene Roddenberry speak, actually it was a yell, were, "*There aren't enough aliens in this script!*"

And the script he was yelling about was mine. Aliens with weird makeup and intriguing powers are at the very heart of the *Star Trek* universe. And those powers always work best when they somehow serve to enlighten the human condition. For example, Spock's struggle to put logic over emotion is something that everyone can identify with.

We began to compile lists of all the aliens we'd ever used on *Star Trek* to see if any of them might provide a clue to our aliens' identities.

Rick: Maybe they could be chameleons who seem to blend into the environment...

Mike: What if we give them wings? They could fly on a feature budget, couldn't they?

Rick: You know, they could still be immortal if we wanted them to be.

Mike: Their immortality could be tied to the TECH on this planet. That would make it harder to move them off it.

What might immortality do to a culture? Our first thoughts were the aliens would be more patient, more tolerant, not necessarily wiser in terms of intelligence, but more comfortable living in the present and exploring the present rather than hurrying to get things done because of limited time. It may not have been a fountain of youth story, but the effects of time and how we treat it would certainly be an interesting science fiction concept. All that was well and good, but what about really cool alien powers?

Maybe they lived under water in an extraordinary underwater community. Maybe they could telepathically create illusions that would make it hard for a human to separate reality from fantasy. Maybe they didn't have ears or mouths. Telepathic mutes.

By the end of May, the Dodgers were still stuck in third place but I was ready to take another stab at a treatment. Rick and I polished it together and on June 23rd, it was officially published and sent to the studio.





JUNE 1997

STAR TREK IX

(Treatment dated 6/23/97)

A small Romulan vessel moves slowly through a spooky, bizarre region of space. Inside, in a setting as claustrophobic as a submarine, the tense crew makes pinpoint navigational adjustments avoiding danger at every turn. The first officer wants to turn back. The Captain orders them ahead. Suddenly, they're shaken by an attack. They can't even see the ship firing at them. Sensors are confused. Another blast and another. They hail their assailant, trying to surrender. No response. Shields collapse. Cracks form in the hull. They beg for mercy. Another blast.

The ship breaks apart around us and the last sounds we hear from the Romulan crew are their screams. And, like the dead men, we're sucked into space and only now do we see the ship responsible for this horror -- a compact Federation vessel roaring out of the mist. As it passes remarkably close-by our view, we can see the pilot through the window... is Data.

Picard is being briefed by two ranking members of the Executive Council and the Federation's Romulan envoy (MATT DOUGHERTY, 38), good men that he knows and trusts. Data, who was on a top secret mission, has been missing for six months. Now, he has apparently gone berserk and is shooting down Romulan ships. Picard's mission: find him and, if there is no other choice, terminate him.

After a short, humorous beat during which we pick up Worf at Deep Space Nine, Picard fills in the Enterprise's senior officers on the back story: Data had been recruited for a mission, co-sponsored by the Federation and the Romulans, to make first contact with a newly discovered race of aliens. They had been found by Romulan probes deep inside an unexplored region of space known on Earth as The Briar Patch.

The Patch is a navigational nightmare and is unexplored because, frankly, no one ever wanted to go in there. Located for centuries within the Neutral Zone that separates Romulan and Federation space, The Patch has recently been ceded to the Romulan Empire. The agreement ended a long territorial dispute and set the stage for a new era of cooperation. Data was chosen for the mission because his quick android skills gave him a significant advantage piloting the

scout ship. Two Romulan crewmen accompanied him. They entered the dangerous region without incident but never returned and did not respond to hails. The attacks began a month ago when the Romulans went into The Patch trying to find them. There is incontrovertible evidence that Data and Data alone is responsible for the attacks.

Worf, who has been assigned to the Enterprise because of his vast knowledge of the Romulan Empire, wonders aloud if the Romulans are telling the truth about the events. When it comes to the Romulans, nothing is ever what it seems. Picard says they'll do everything in their power to get to the truth. But he adds, for the first time in a century there is a genuine peace initiative between the Romulans and the Federation. Data's attacks have already led to renewed tensions. We don't want to make it any worse. A Romulan admiral will be joining the mission when they reach the border and Ambassador Dougherty is coming along to assist with any sensitive negotiations.

Geordi is the one who asks the question everyone wants to ask: we're not seriously contemplating killing Data, are we? Our orders are clear, says Picard. Anyone who feels they might be unable to carry out those orders should ask to be relieved of duty now. Faces are grim. But no one chooses to remain behind.

Picard may seem controlled, but later, alone as he goes over Data's mission plan and studies the android's last visual transmission, we see in his eyes the emotional connection he has to the android. Doctor Crusher interrupts him, updating him on a few sickbay matters relevant to the mission. Among them, word from Starfleet medical that there's been a delay with the delivery of a new synthetic regenerative compound. It means we'll have to stock doses of sarium krellide, the regenerative ore we've always used to heal injuries, currently in short supply. The Doctor and Picard share a personal moment in front of the frozen image of Data on the monitor.

Picard: I've been his tutor in all things human, his drama coach, his art professor... now I'm asked to be his executioner...

At the border, a Romulan Admiral, SCHALK, 55, stiff and imperial, beams aboard with his personal adjutant, JOSS, 35. From the moment we meet Joss, we realize he is not like any Romulan we've met before. Dashing and well-spoken, he has none of the pomp of

his superior, doesn't take any of this political stuff very seriously. As Worf and Troi greet them in the Transporter Room, Joss gives her an admiring once-over, tosses his backpack to Worf to carry. Worf clearly doesn't like the fellow, tosses the backpack right back at him. Joss grins at getting a rise out of the Klingon, flirts with Troi as they exit.

The initial studies of the unexplored sector are not encouraging. Although the Enterprise has been supplied with Starfleet's latest scout ship, identical to the one Data used, Geordi reports that in all the computer simulations, every standard navigational program proved inadequate to get the vessel through The Briar Patch. That's why Data was chosen to pilot the ship in the first place. We just don't know enough about the region to adequately prepare for it.

As a long time sailor, Picard knows the best information about a particular area of space can often come from Federation mariners -- traders, ferry operators, and just plain adventurers -- who traverse the quadrant. As a boy, he once even considered shipping out on the 24th century equivalent of a "tramp steamer." The Enterprise travels to an extraordinary location (TBD)²² where the mariners dock and refit.

They're quite a bunch -- spirited ex-patriots, colorful rovers and indomitable free-spirits -- hearty, well fellows and lusty women who are not impressed by Picard's uniform. Imagine the captain of an aircraft carrier in the Caribbean arriving at Margaritaville to meet with an odd assortment of free souls who don't care much for authority figures and you get the idea. In an amusing sequence, Picard must earn their trust and cooperation.

He eventually intrigues them with his plans to enter The Patch. It's not impossible, they tell him. Our old tubs might not make it, but maybe the latest Starship could. As Picard picks their brains, he begins to fashion a risky strategy (TBD) that might just work...

The night before the attempt, at a Captain's dinner on the Enterprise, Joss continues his pursuit of Troi and at the same time amuses himself by getting under Worf's skin. It quickly gets out of hand and leads to a formal insult to Worf's family that requires satisfaction.

Despite Schalk's and Dougherty's protests, Picard knows he must respect Worf's beliefs. He permits a duel to be fought on the holodeck, but refuses Worf's request that it be a fight to the death. The stakes are honor and the duel will end at first blood. Joss chooses the weapons -- brutal but fascinating Romulan weapons unlike anything we've ever seen before. The fight is breathtaking. For the first time, Joss' eyes really come alive and we can tell he's in his element. We've never seen a duelist as stylish and confident as he is. Worf is beaten badly and would have been killed but for Picard's mandate. To add insult to injury, Joss catches Troi off-guard when he helps himself to a surprise kiss as a reward for his victory.

Using the plan he hatched up with the mariners' help, Picard pilots the impressive scout ship into the Patch, accompanied by Geordi, Worf, Troi and Joss. The Enterprise follows at a safe distance, using a steady flow of technical data from the scout ship to chart the course. A tractor beam is ready in case Picard's ship gets into trouble. The Away Team is mesmerized by the beautiful but dangerous space phenomena they encounter. A close call is narrowly averted as Picard brilliantly dodges the hazard.

Then, suddenly, just like the Romulan ship, they're attacked. Sensors show it is Data's scout ship and that Data is at the helm. Joss wants to destroy the ship but in a quick confrontation, Picard puts him in his place. They try to hail Data but he continues to attack. Picard laces Data's ship with phaser fire, trying to disable it... Data is forced to withdraw, but as he disappears, he fires photon torpedoes, seriously damaging Picard's vessel. Before the Enterprise can engage the tractor beam, the scout ship rolls out of control and they lose contact.

Picard barely manages to stabilize the ship but they desperately need a place to put down. Veering out of the murk, they see a planet directly ahead, its gaseous surface engulfed in flames. Their sensor readings don't seem possible: Geordi can't find any indication of the fire they see through the windows. He's reading M-Class terra firma below. Not only that, he's picking up a humanoid population of about four thousand on the smaller continent. Do we believe our eyes or our sensors?

Picard must make a quick decision: try to find another planet or trust his sensors and ignore the fiery gases. Troi tells the Captain she's feeling some telepathic activity coming from the surface. Picard considers that... then takes the ship down, ignoring Joss' protests, setting a course toward the alien life

signs below. If he's wrong, the fire will surely destroy the ship. As they enter the upper atmosphere, dipping into the fire, it disappears like a bad dream. In its place: a beautiful tropical locale. The ship puts down roughly on a wide sandy beach.

Tricorders reveal that Data's ship is near-by and Picard and crew set off to find him. As Data leads them on a surreal cat and mouse chase through the jungle, the Away Team is confronted by more terrifying delusions. They are constantly forced to try to tell the difference between reality and delusion. Just when they think they've got it figured out, they ignore a delusion only to literally fall into a very real hole by doing so. They tumble down a long tunnel and are deposited into a containment field in the center of a small village, finding themselves beside the two Romulans who accompanied Data on the original mission.

The Romulans tell Joss in front of the Starfleet officers that the android just went crazy and turned against them. They think it had something to do with the unusual radiation in The Briar Patch. Geordi doesn't buy it; Data had surveyed The Patch before the mission; he would have been prepared for any radiation. The Romulans angrily denounce androids as unreliable anyway. They're relieved to see Joss who in his typically unflappable manner pats them on the back and tells them to relax; the great Picard will find a way out of this.

The Away Team takes in the setting. The village is built into the side of a mountain. It's a marvel of futuristic architecture with technology our people cannot begin to fathom and yet it clearly displays an appreciation for the natural habitat. The structures in the village are made of a colorful metal that has been crafted and fused into the mountainside.

The aliens slowly emerge from hiding to examine the prisoners. They're stranger than any aliens we've ever encountered... small, with wide foreheads and piercing eyes... they're mute, apparently using telepathy (which we do not hear) to communicate with one another. There is no way for us to communicate directly with these people. Our brains are simply not up to the task. Picard's efforts to make them understand us are extremely frustrating setting in motion a theme that will continue throughout the story. In time, we will come to understand them as a gentle people with an extraordinary intellect who would harm no one.

As the trapped Away Team waits to see what happens next, they observe the villagers as they go about

their daily lives. They're clearly a technologically superior people... using extraordinary anti-grav platforms to move about their vertical layout. Geordi studies them with astonishment as they operate an incredible weather shield that creates a shaft of sunlight over the village as the jungle around them is ripped by a heavy rainstorm.

One of the children is an ALIEN BOY, 11 whose face is painted gold just like Data's. The prisoners watch as the boy and a friend play mental games... creating small delusions to scare one another... one turns himself into a snake, then the other turns himself into a dragon... Troi surmises that it is a form of mass hypnosis and that these aliens have learned to use their mental abilities as a unique chameleon-like defense mechanism. Rather than blending into the real world, they create a delusional reality to confuse and disorient a potential enemy. That explains all the strange things they've seen.

Picard is finally released and taken, hands bound, into a dark and mysterious dwelling. He reacts as an alien woman with a face painted gold like Data's meets them, sends his escorts away and leads him deeper into the shadows. The boy with the gold face peeks around a corner at Picard and scampers away. They finally reach a chamber where he can see the silhouetted figure of Data sitting on the floor, motionless, his head cocked at an android angle, almost as though he's performing some kind of positronic meditation. He is dressed as the aliens dress. The woman leaves them alone. The android's head slowly moves to Picard. He opens his eyes, which show no recognition.

Picard realizes quickly that the android has seriously malfunctioned. His voice has trouble shaping words, sometimes he repeats them. He has no memory of his former Captain, and is either unwilling or unable to process Picard's attempts to explain who he is. In vague and unconnected phrases, Data speaks only of the danger Picard and the others bring to his people. Picard presses Data: what kind of danger? But Data in his confused mutterings cannot say. The scene is interrupted by a crackling on Picard's combadge. Data reacts, strips away the combadge, moves to a complex scanning device built into the rock wall...

Outside, the other members of the Away Team hear the transmission too... it's Riker... the Enterprise has almost made it to the interior of The Briar Patch and is searching for the Away Team...

Data studies his scanner and sees the Enterprise arriving... he stands and moves to exit, then pauses and decides to take Picard with him...

With the planet surface below providing a dramatic backdrop, Data attacks the Enterprise, keeping Picard in a containment field on his vessel's small bridge. He opens a channel to allow Riker to see that he's holding Picard prisoner. In a fair fight, the smaller ship wouldn't stand a chance against the Enterprise. But Riker can't use full force without risking his Captain's life. He fires phasers, trying to disable Data's shields so he can beam them out.

Data engages an auto-tactical evasive program while he loads photon torpedoes. Picard knows they will seriously damage the Enterprise. Then, one of the Enterprise's phasers connect and the blast frees Picard from the containment field. He struggles with Data for control of the ship. Even in his malfunctioning state, Data is ten times stronger. Getting his hands on a phaser rifle, Picard tries to stun Data but the android is unaffected. Picard ratchets up the power setting several times without results until he is finally forced to do the unthinkable... on maximum power, he blasts Data whose torso breaks apart, fritzes and falls at Picard's feet and then goes dead.

Picard tells Riker to cease fire and tries to take the helm but the auto-pilot program now is taking the ship back to the surface. He tells the Enterprise to follow until they can establish an orbit.

On the surface, the aliens take Data out of the ship...

stunned as they can see for the first time that he is a mechanical man. They carry him to the center of the village, ignoring Picard. He watches as the villagers make way for the boy as he moves to the broken body. There is no resistance as Picard frees the rest of the Away Team and the Romulans. Geordi goes quickly to check on Data. The Enterprise has established its orbit and Riker, Beverly and an armed Away Team beam down, react to the strange scene.

Picard again is frustrated in his attempts to communicate with the aliens. He tries to explain that we are not their enemy. But mostly he wants answers. What happened to Data? What is the danger that Data spoke about? The aliens look at him blankly, go about their business. The only one who continues to study him with curious eyes is the boy. Geordi desperately seeks some signs of life in the android's power cells. There are none. He's gone, Captain.

Picard, tight, controlling the full emotional impact of the events, tells his crew he wants to know exactly why this happened. Geordi and Beverly want to take

Data back to the ship to do an autopsy. But as Picard locks eyes again with the boy who remains beside Data, he tells his officers to leave Data here for now. Do the best you can without moving him.

During a short second act, driven by Picard's growing emotional turmoil and rage, Data's malfunction is traced to a Romulan disruptor blast which damaged his memory engrams. Schalk, speaking for the Romulan crewmen, steadfastly denies any wrongdoing. And yet we see Joss and the two crewmen making mysterious plans that clearly indicate a threat to the aliens.

As the investigation continues, Picard realizes that the boy had a particularly close relationship with Data. He forms a unique bond with the youngster, hoping to find a way to communicate with the boy and find out what happened. Picard eventually gets an idea and takes him to the Enterprise's holodeck.

He shows him how we make our own illusions there... and they begin to make illusions for each other, some of which include Data. In a sequence that may remind us of the classic breakthrough scene in "The Miracle Worker", Picard and the boy, in a joyous moment together, are finally able to begin to understand one another. This is the bridge in the communications gap that Picard has desperately needed since his arrival.

The boy, now realizing that Picard is trying to learn about Data, takes him to clearing deep in the jungle where there is evidence of a drilling site. There are also signs of disruptor burns in the grass. Picard wonders aloud if this is where Data was hurt. Through an elaborate and metaphorical delusion, the boy communicates that Data saved his life at this spot.

Picard tells his crew that someone was taking deep core samples at the site using a familiar Romulan geologic tool. This is extremely odd because there were no geologic surveys indicated in Data's mission plan. The flight manifest did not show that the Romulans were carrying geologic tools. When Picard orders a special TECH scan of the planet, they discover the crust is practically made of sarium krellide, the same medical ore that is in such short supply throughout the quadrant.

It is the first time that the ore has been discovered on a populated planet. In all other instances it had been found on uninhabited moons and asteroids, which was fortunate, because the only way to effectively excavate it was to virtually decimate the environment. Picard asks Geordi if there is any safer way to get to the ore. Geordi has studied the

Federation databanks and the answer is no. They might be able to gain access to two percent of the available ore, but to process a meaningful amount, the surface would have to be stripped off. The planet would be turned into molten rock. No life would survive.

Picard begins to piece together a possible scenario. What if the Romulans had learned about the valuable ore from their probes before Data's mission? And tricked the Federation into allowing them to use Data to get through the Briar Patch? I believe it's possible, says Picard, that this alien boy and perhaps others discovered what they were up to and that Data was damaged when he saved the boy's life.

Troi pays an unexpected visit to Joss in his quarters and using her empathic abilities as well as her most seductive manner, she cleverly gets Joss to admit that the Romulans are preparing to mine the planet. And then Joss adds something that sends a chill down her spine: he assures her that the Romulans will keep their promise to the Federation and move the aliens safely to a new planet.

Troi now realizes that the Federation is far more involved than Picard could ever have guessed. When Joss realizes that she's tricked him, he explodes with rage revealing his truly dark nature and for a moment, we're afraid he might harm her. But Worf prepared her for something like this -- she tries to use a Klingon marital arts foot maneuver but he's so good, he counters it and seems to have the advantage... whereupon Troi brings her knee up and hard in a most vulnerable spot. He sinks in pain. She exits to the sound of his groans.

Picard is angrier than we've ever seen him as he confronts Dougherty, a man in whom he's had absolute faith.

Picard: When the Council finds out what you've done...

Dougherty: I'm acting on orders from the Council.

He goes on to explain that Starfleet Medical's efforts to make a synthetic regenerative compound to replace sarium krellide have failed completely. It's been kept quiet but we desperately need the ore. Everyone in the quadrant needs the ore. Romulan probes had found significant deposits in The Patch. But since this was disputed territory, a deal had to be made before anyone could get to it. We gave the Romulans The Patch and they agreed to split the ore with us.

Picard: Without any consideration for the inhabitants of this world...

Dougherty: On the contrary, after realizing there was no alternative to stripping off the planet's surface, I negotiated the agreement myself with the Romulans to move them safely. Every effort was made to take care of them... including sending Data here to survey their living conditions to help prepare for the move.

Picard: But Data didn't know that, did he... Dougherty admits that it was decided that Data didn't need to know.

Picard understands that Dougherty and the Council have decided to shave a thin layer off Federation principles in order to get the much-needed ore. The Prime Directive says we won't interfere with the natural development of other cultures, so we cede the planet to the Romulans and it's out of our hands. To ease our conscience, we make the Romulans guarantee that these people will be moved safely.

What a perfect political solution; it's barely a compromise of our principles at all this way. Picard looks Dougherty in the eye and says, simply: horse shit.

Dougherty argues that sometimes principles collide with hard reality. Modern medicine evolved from the discovery of sarium krellide; virtually all hospital and medical equipment is designed to use it. No one is going to sit still while we turn back the clock two hundred years and return to 21st century medicine. It would be barbaric. Picard doesn't deny that there's a serious need for the ore but at what cost? It's too easy to turn a blind eye to what's happening to a small group of unfamiliar people in a land far away who are forced to suffer to satisfy our needs.

Picard argues that the unique environment of this planet has had a profound impact on the aliens' physiology. Our analysis indicates their bodies have virtually no immune system. The regenerative ore in the ground effectively protects them from most diseases and accelerates healing of serious injuries. Move them and their bodies will be vulnerable to every virus and bacteria in the universe.

Dougherty promises that we plan to do the best we can to see to all their medical needs. Picard: Pump them full of medicines. Put them on life support for our convenience...

Dougherty: For chrissakes, there are only four thousand of them and countless millions who will be helped by the ore.

Picard wonders what the cut-off point would be: Fifty

thousand aliens? A hundred thousand? A million? How big a population does it require to force open that blind eye?

Dougherty maintains there's nothing we can do now. The sector was legally ceded to the Romulans months ago. To interfere would be a violation of the Prime Directive. He deeply regrets what happened to Data.

Admiral Schalk has privately assured me that both Romulan crewmen will be appropriately punished. I understand how you feel, but our mission is complete. The Council expects you now to follow your orders and return to Federation space.

Picard sees that he, and Data, have both been pawns in a dark and terrible game. A game in which he has been forced to kill a man he loved like a brother. And he also realizes, to his horror, that he has been used to chart the course into The Briar Patch for the mining ships to follow. Jean-Luc Picard has charted the course for the destruction of an entire race.

Picard's quarters. Four pips being laid on a counter top one at a time. Picard studies himself in the mirror, begins to remove his Starfleet uniform. It is the saddest moment of his life.

On the surface, dressed in civilian clothes, Picard follows the sounds of strange percussion into a bizarre building, part cathedral, part machine shop. The ceremony he encounters inside seems to be a death ritual for Data who lies at the center of a chamber bathed in a bright light from directly overhead. The percussion comes from the movements of huge bewildering machines that tower over the people like the mammoth pipe organ in the Mormon Tabernacle. The boy sees Picard, takes his hand and leads him to sit beside him by Data. The aliens are painting their faces gold to honor the android. Picard solemnly paints his face gold too. Honoring the man he killed. Symbolically taking Data's place as the defender of these people.

The aliens seem to understand and accept him. Suddenly, Data's broken body slowly rises on an anti-grav unit, moving toward the blinding light above. As it moves higher, the boy creates a strange delusion for Picard... a surreal moment as a tree grows from the ground where Data lay. A branch of the tree grows out and touches Picard's shoulder. As Data and the anti-grav unit disappear into the light, like a casket taking a body into the fires of cremation, the image of the tree disappears too. Picard looks at the boy curiously, unable to comprehend. The percussion from the machines continues.

Above the planet, Romulan ships begin to arrive following the course that the Enterprise charted. Schalk and his men join their crews. Dougherty promises him the Enterprise will be on its way shortly. As soon as they've moved to the Romulan ships, Joss carries out the punishment against his dumbfounded Romulan colleagues, fulfilling the promise Schalk made to Dougherty. He engages them both in an impromptu duel (for his own entertainment)... and quickly kills them.

Picard's last communication from the planet tells his staff to leave as ordered. He will not allow his officers to sacrifice their careers or their lives. This was Data's fight. Now, it's his. Picard signs off and destroys his combadge.

As the action-filled third act begins, Picard, with the help of the boy, trains the aliens for a fight of resistance. It's an inspiring and humorous process as they often struggle to understand one another. Finally, combining their talent for creating delusions with the power of real weapons he has brought with him from the Enterprise, he builds an effective, albeit tiny, fighting force. He feints and punches the Romulans, disrupting Joss' Nazi-like attempts to round-up the aliens and box them for transport, then sabotaging the Romulan's first mining operations, always disappearing into the jungle like Robin Hood. Schalk orders Joss to take a Romulan search party to the surface to capture Picard, alive. But Joss, who still feels the sting of being tricked by Troi, sees this as his opportunity for revenge. When he finds Picard he intends to kill him for sport.

Dougherty demands that Riker arrest Picard and get him the hell out of there before the whole peace initiative collapses. Riker couldn't care less about the peace initiative at this point but his Captain's life is in danger. He takes the senior officers and an armed security team to find Picard before Joss and the Romulans do. Picard plays the fox, outwitting both sides looking for him.

One windy night, as he tries to catch a few minutes sleep, the percussion from the distant village suddenly stops for the first time. The silence awakens him. Curiously, he moves back toward the village to see what has happened. The wind blows through the leaves of the trees and lightning flashes from an approaching storm... and as Picard rounds a bend, the ghost of Data appears in the lightning... he is naked. Picard reacts with a short gasp and Data speaks to him rather incongruously with the words: "You are out of uniform, sir." Picard reaches out and touches the figure before him.

It's no delusion this time. "So are you, Data", says Picard. And only then does Data realizes he is walking around without clothes on. "So I am", he says, still gathering his wits.

Data has no idea how he was resuscitated but it is clear that the aliens were not performing a death ritual but one of techno-resurrection. Picard thinks he understands the vision of the tree the aliens created for him. It was their way of communicating new growth, rebirth. They must have been trying to tell him that Data would return.

Data tells Picard that the Romulans killed the boy's father when he accidentally discovered them taking the core sample. They were about to kill the boy too when Data got there and saw what was going on. They fired their disruptors but Data took the blast meant for the boy. Even though Data was severely damaged, he was still able to capture the Romulans. The woman and the boy became his "family," taking care of him after he was injured. Data has no intention of abandoning them to the Romulans. He will stay and fight with Picard. After he gets some clothes on, that is.

Their guerrilla warfare continues, Picard and Data fighting side by side now... Riker and the Away Team finally catch up to them, shocked but happy to see Data.

Riker tries to convince Picard that the Federation Executive Council will listen if he goes back and tells them what's happening here. But Picard, for the first time in his life, has lost faith in the Federation. He knows to go back is hopeless. No one will listen and once he's gone, these people will be moved, the planet destroyed. He can't leave. And he won't. You'll have to arrest me, he says. If you do, all this will be lost. Riker: This is suicide. A Romulan fleet is on the way with reinforcements. Picard: It doesn't matter. Data and I are going to stay and fight for these people.

Riker sees he's not getting anywhere with Picard. All right then, he says, I'll take the Enterprise and go for help. Picard nods, but his eyes say he does not expect any help to arrive.

Worf steps forward. The odds against you would appear insurmountable, he tells Picard. But I will fight at your side. The rest of the officers join him. Picard is unable to talk them out of it. He tries to order them away, but Riker apologizes saying, sorry, Mr. Picard but once you took off the pips, you lost that privilege. Riker promises to return, beams out.

Picard looks around at his officers, his family, reluctantly grateful that they're together again.

Joss leads the Romulans in devastating attacks that destroy the village and defoliate the jungle with plasma charges... it is a huge battle, Romulan fighters coming in over the ocean, strafing the beach... ultimately forcing Picard and his overmatched army into a defensive position.

As the Romulans assault their position, it may remind us of the Alamo. They come over the walls... the boy fights bravely by Data's side, saves the android's life with a delusion that confuses a Romulan long enough for Data to knock him out. Picard finds himself in deadly hand to hand combat with Joss. Just as Picard is about to be killed by the Romulan, Worf steps in and blocks Joss' weapon and takes up the fight. This time it will be to the death.

At first, Joss seems to toy with him, wounds him once in the shoulder, then another in the leg... but then Worf calls for strength from the Klingon gods and he rises with renewed power and finally conquers Joss, running him through with his makeshift sword. Joss looks up at him in the final shock of death. Worf bellows a Klingon victory cry.

The Romulans withdraw and prepare for one final deadly assault. Picard and his officers know their time is almost up now... their defenses won't withstand another assault... they share some personal memories that bring some smiles, even laughs... personal things are said you only say at the end... the distant sound of a low flying vessel approaching tells them their respite is over... they gird themselves for the final attack.

It's Geordi who hears it first -- that's not a Romulan engine -- I'd know those thrusters anywhere -- I never did get around to realigning the magnetic peristaltic pumps -- That's the Enterprise! And now they see the magnificent ship as it makes a dramatic pass overhead, a deafening roar announcing its presence like a B-1 bomber at an air show. And it's not alone. Behind the Enterprise is a fleet of ships.

Not from Starfleet. But the wackiest navy ever seen by man... dozens and dozens of tiny ships, those tubs we saw back at Margaritaville... and now people are beaming down to the beach... not soldiers, but families, the mariners we met in act one and all their friends, hundreds of people of all shapes and sizes, children who scamper along the beach as though on holiday. Riker caps the glorious moment as he appears. Riker to Picard: And you thought the

Federation wouldn't listen? Here's the Federation, Captain. They did listen.

Dougherty and Schalk see this scene and know they've lost. A few thousand faceless aliens is one thing. But no one is going to be able to turn a blind eye if the Romulans declare war on a few hundred Federation citizens. The Romulans withdraw.

Later, as the Federation squatters enjoy the hospitality of their alien hosts, Data bids a touching farewell to the woman and the boy. In his ready room, as Picard puts his pips back onto his uniform's collar, Dougherty enters. He informs Picard that the Romulans have agreed to a sixty day moratorium on mining and relocation operations while the matter is reviewed by the Federation and Romulan councils.

Ever the diplomat, Dougherty tries to put a spin on the events that makes everything okay. We all had the Federation's best interests at heart, he says.

The Executive Council has decided there will be no formal charges against you (he takes a little of the credit for that, having argued that it would not serve the public interest for the Council to take an adversarial position against the Captain of their flagship). He respects Picard for the stand he took and hopes that everyone concerned can now join together to help avoid making the same kind of mistakes in the future.

He's sure Picard would agree that nothing would be gained by pursuing this any further back home. Picard studies him for a beat with eyes that say: Don't count on it... then simply exits to:

The bridge. Picard takes his seat and sets a course for Earth. As he says engage... The Enterprise moves out of orbit and we...

FADE OUT.

THE END



THE STUDIO

Star Trek is the most profitable franchise in the history of Hollywood. If someone wants to challenge me on that claim, go ahead. I don't have access to the books and I can't prove it. But anyone will be hard-pressed to find another franchise, including *Bond* and *Star Wars*, that has generated income across the board -- movies, television, computer games, toys, collectibles, you name it, for as long as this one has. (Okay, maybe that mouse over at Disney could mount a pretty good challenge.)

Keeping the *Star Trek* franchise popular is crucial to the studio's economic health. Releasing a quality motion picture every two or three years plays a key role in the master plan.

Up to now, the studio had left Rick and I pretty much alone, waiting to hear what we came up with. Oh, there were a few wishes sent our way. For example, they asked us if we could fit in a cameo appearance by a popular *Star Trek* character from one of the TV series. (The holographic doctor from *Star Trek: Voyager* had been a big hit in *First Contact*.) Okay, we could do that. Marketing hoped the new film would broaden international appeal by creating a part for a well-known star like Tom Hanks or Arnold Schwarzenegger in a guest role.

Intuitively, I was afraid that would throw the film out of balance. It had worked for the *Batman* franchise where the villains were larger than life. But *Batman* created a comic book world while *Trek* tries to sell a 'realistic' vision of the future. Besides, if Tom Hanks played a guest Lieutenant, you know the film would be about him and not our regular crew. I didn't worry about it too much. It was one of those things that I figured would eventually go away and I was right.

Messages like these would never come directly to me. The studio executives would talk to Rick, as the producer, and then Rick would bring them up over cheap chicken and cottage cheese. Afterwards Rick would communicate our joint thoughts back to the studio.

The man he spoke to most of the time was the Executive Vice President of Production, Don Granger. Don is an easy man to like. He'd gone out of his way to make me feel welcome, dropping by one day when he found out my mother was the songwriter who wrote "Meet the Mets," the team's theme song. He'd spent many happy days at Shea Stadium singing the song with tens of thousands other Met fans. Don was well-versed on the *Star Trek* television shows and knew what my contribution to them had been. I could feel his confidence and I appreciated it.

Don agreed with our goals for the new film. A change of pace, he said, would keep the franchise vital. He agreed this film should emphasize character more than the last one. He'd even suggested looking for an interesting sci-fi twist on a courtroom drama, along the lines of the classic television episode, *Measure of a Man*²³, in which Picard defends Data's right to be treated as a lifeform instead of property.

Don would be the first one to read our story and then he'd pass it on to

John Goldwyn, President of Paramount Motion Pictures, Michelle Manning, President of Production, and Sherry Lansing, Chairman of the Paramount Motion Picture Group. At this point in time, I didn't know any of these people. But I did feel a certain connection to Lansing through my wife, Sandra, who had once taken acting classes with her. Hollywood is a small town.

Waiting for the studio's reactions after you've published a story is like waiting for the returns on election night. Polls are closed. Tabulations are underway. We're waiting for the first numbers, ladies and gentlemen. The phone rings. Eric, my assistant: "It's Rick." I pick up. "Granger read it, he loves it," he says. I smile. Yes! "He's a little concerned about the Federation's role in the conspiracy but he understands what we're going for. He hasn't heard from Goldwyn yet... wait a minute, he's calling me back on the other line, I'll get back to you." The heart pounds. Granger likes it. As Maine goes, so goes the nation. The intercom. Eric: "Rick again." I pick up. Rick: "Goldwyn thinks it's terrific. He has the same note about the Federation and he's not sure about Picard killing Data." It's the most dramatic scene in the picture! "Don't worry about it." What about Sherry? "They're sending it to her to read tonight." We won't have the results from the outlying districts in Illinois until morning. Rick's next call pulls me out of a deep sleep at home. "Sherry just called me. She loves it. It reminds her of saving the rain forests. She's worried about the Federation being the bad guys in the story. I explained it to her." But she likes it? "She loves it. Congratulations." Man, three for three. We're on our way.

But there was one more voice at the studio to be heard from and it belonged to Jonathan Dolgen, Chairman of Viacom Entertainment Group, the chief operating officer of the company. As a rule, Dolgen doesn't involve himself in creative decisions. But he breaks that rule for *Star Trek*. And it's not (just) the money. He happens to be a huge fan. Dare I say, a *Trekker*?

Star Trek fans are a breed apart. If we have a character say "Fire phasers!" and then show a shot of the Enterprise firing a photon torpedo by mistake, hundreds of fans, maybe thousands, will write and complain. *Star Trek* fans are passionate and eloquent and unrelenting and one of them is the boss of bosses on this lot. Jonathan Dolgen is credited by Rick for the creation of the Borg Queen in the last movie because he felt the script lacked a strong villain. Rick has to take Dolgen's suggestions seriously for obvious reasons. But he also feels that Dolgen is incredibly smart about *Star Trek* as only a true fan can be. And Dolgen had problems with our story. Big problems.

To start with, he didn't appreciate our Douglas Fairbanks Jr. approach to Joss and didn't feel he was a worthy adversary for Picard. He hated the telepathic mutes and their delusional abilities. He thought the idea of people being exploited for natural resources was old hat and that Picard needed a bigger challenge. He didn't feel there was enough action for Picard in space. He complained the story had too much internal *Star Trek* intellectualism and thought the countervailing argument by the

Federation conspirators made a great deal of sense. Picard might be perceived as being on the wrong side of the issue.

Rick and I were discussing how to respond to the Dolgen notes when we received a call from Australia. We'd also sent a copy of the story to Patrick Stewart. Patrick hated the story even more than Jonathan Dolgen.



JULY 1997

PATRICK

I wish I could have been there back in 1987 when Gene Roddenberry went to the studio and announced he'd found the perfect actor to play the new *Star Trek* captain -- a middle-aged, bald Englishman.

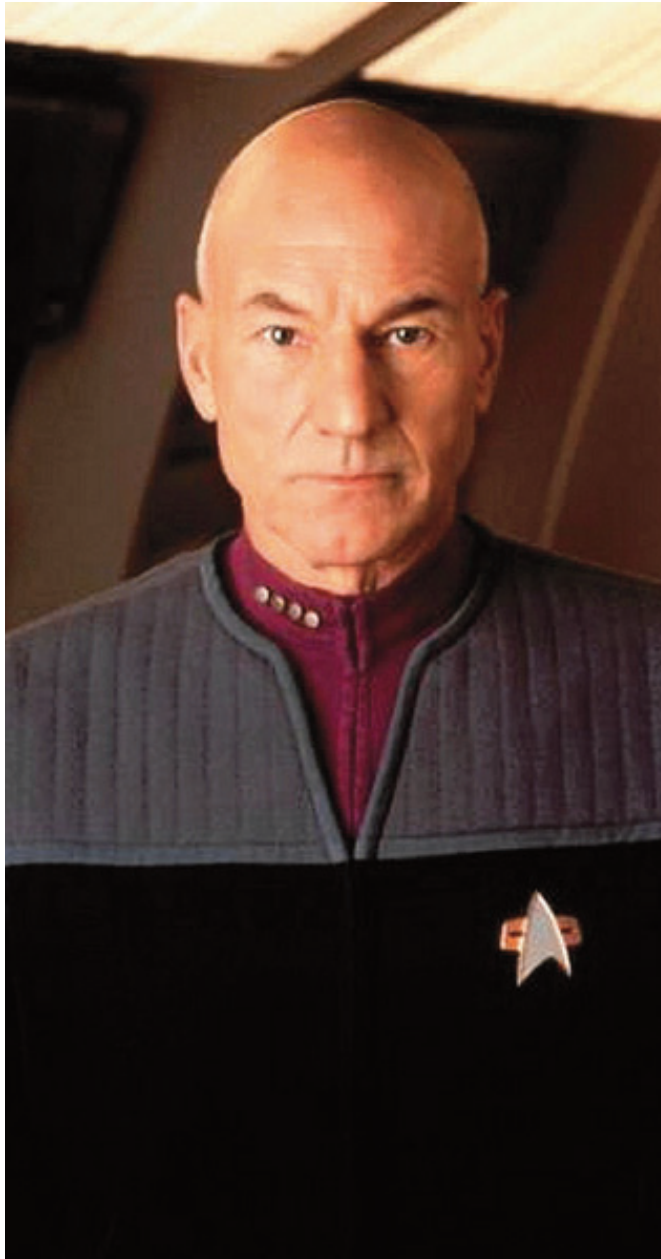
If the show had been scheduled on CBS, NBC or ABC, Patrick Stewart would never have been Picard. Give us another Shatner, they would have said. Youthful, bold, swashbuckling. Young demographics! But *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was to be syndicated, that is, sold on a station by station basis.²⁴ What that meant was that Paramount could mount the show any way they wanted to and if they wanted to cast a middle-aged, bald, Englishman, so be it.

Patrick was guest performing for an extension class in humor at UCLA, giving cold readings from Noel Coward and Shakespeare comedies, when one of the students turned to his wife and said, "I think I've found our new Captain!" That student was *Star Trek* producer Bob Justman. Justman, Berman and Roddenberry had been auditioning every male leading man in Hollywood they could find... but no one had impressed them. When Patrick read, they knew they'd found their Captain. But there was still that bald head... Paramount had Patrick's toupee overnighted from England and he returned the next day, this time with hair. Roddenberry took one look and said, "Take it off." Everyone in the room realized that Patrick's bald head carried a certain power.

I'm told that the first reaction of John Pike, the President of Paramount Network Television at the time, was "You've got to be kidding me." But after watching Patrick read a scene from the pilot, he too was sold.

More than any other single factor, in my opinion, Patrick Stewart was responsible for the success of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I remember watching the premiere at home with my family never guessing that fate would shortly have us working together. What a brilliant piece of casting, I told my wife. His controlled performance brought an instant credibility to every outrageous space scenario. There was never a dishonest moment on screen. As a viewer, you simply believed everything he said and did.

When I took over the writing staff two years later, Picard and Data's characters had been well developed. The rest of the crew seemed a little undefined so I started by concentrating on the characters of Worf, Troi, La Forge, Riker and the two Crushers, Beverly and Wesley. My goal was to strengthen the ensemble, turn it into a family unit -- a key, I believe, to many successful television series. (I think people tune in to television families to satisfy their desire for the kind of family relationships we don't always have in our real lives.) As the Enterprise family unit grew stronger, so did Picard's role as leader and protector of the family. But after a few months, Patrick complained that, while he understood my goals, he was getting tired of just being the crew's authority figure. He wanted Picard to have some fun. Fair enough.



We adjusted our story development to come up with unique Picard stories in the second half of the season. We gave the Captain his first real romance. We let him play an alien doppelganger of himself. And we started talking about *Star Trek's* first cliff-hanger, a story in which Picard would be captured by the most feared alien race in the galaxy, The Borg.

The idea of a cliff-hanger was actually a pure business decision. In fact, you could even call it a negotiating ploy. John Pike called Rick and said the studio was having a contract dispute with Patrick. "Come up with a cliff-hanger," he said. "We may have to kill him."

At the end of the last episode of the season, when Riker fires weapons apparently killing Picard aboard the Borg ship, I had no idea if Picard lived or died.

Fortunately, the contract dispute was settled and I had to come up with a way to keep Picard alive. Ironically, the final episode created enormous interest. The ratings of re-runs that summer climbed and finally exploded to record heights with the fall premiere that resolved the cliff-hanger. By the end of the fourth season, Patrick was on the cover of *TV Guide*. Soon, the magazine's readers would vote him "the sexiest man on TV." No one would ever again talk of killing Picard.

As a writer, it was a privilege and a treat to work with an actor as good at his craft as Patrick. Every writer knows what it's like to see a disappointing performance by an actor that hurts one of our scenes (and to be fair, every actor knows what it's like to get a badly written scene). But every once in a while, you're lucky enough to work with someone like Patrick Stewart who makes mediocre material good, good material great, and great material brilliant.

There's a transition that occurs when an actor becomes a star. The balance of power naturally shifts. I've been in situations when the actor behaved quite badly as this transition occurred. That was never the case with Patrick. But make no mistake about it, whether it is a Patrick Stewart or a Tom Cruise or a Julia Roberts, one of the main jobs of the writer is to satisfy the star.

Patrick was more than an actor on this film. For the first time, he would also be Associate Producer which formalized his already significant creative influence. This was a reward for his success in *Star Trek: First Contact*. In *Star Trek Generations*, he'd shared the screen with William Shatner. But as the sole lead in *First Contact*, he'd proven himself capable of carrying a feature film. He was now an established movie star with production responsibilities.

If he wasn't happy, this story wasn't going anywhere. And he wasn't happy.

²⁴ In fact, the show was originally intended to launch the new Fox network but Paramount pulled out of the deal.

In a brief letter to Rick dated July 1, he spelled out his concerns.

Dear Rick,

In Generations, Picard and the Enterprise crew fought to defeat a madman who was prepared to sacrifice planets, cultures, civilizations, millions of lives to achieve a personal nirvana. In First Contact our heroes fought to prevent the assimilation of the people of Earth, the solar system, our galaxy and beyond.

In the story I have been reading this weekend we are enmeshed in a context of Federation politics, fine interpretations of The Prime Directive and ancient history - as ancient as Star Trek - of conflict between two members of The Federation. In the middle of all this there is a vaguely defined, characterless, uninteresting civilization who seem to have attended too many performances of Siegfried and Roy.

I like the scene with Picard and the mariners and Picard functioning as a guerrilla but other than that what I have read would have hardly composed a moderately interesting episode somewhere in the middle of season five of TNG.

Other than this - what do I not like about it?

It has no sweep. (We must stop Soran²⁵; we must annihilate the Borg.) It is enmeshed in detail. The back story itself would put even ardent fans to sleep.

It deprives us of Data - the Data everybody wants to see - for most of the story and once again appears to make him the enemy of Picard.

It has Picard for the third time in emotional agony; "I must destroy my comrade."

It uses the Enterprise crew in cliched and all too familiar ways; Worf defending his honor; Troi seducing a man for information. It again and again covers territory well explored - better explored during the series.

So many of the issues and encounters have been dealt with - better dealt with - already. I can list the episodes.

It is so on the nose with the Heart of Darkness theme - and then drops it.

It has no surprises. It has no scale.

It has little humor. And what it has is cliched and tired.

It has no romance. It is not sexy.

It breaks no new ground. It under-uses our cast.

It has little fun. It is dull.

I think what dismays me most about the story is the dredging up of the Romulans - a race already unexciting in TNG - as the bad guys. It is revisionist and backward looking in a most disappointing way. After the Borg - the Romulans? Oh, my.

I have taken detailed notes on the story but really I feel that there is so little for us here to even start work on.

I am very sorry my reactions are so negative but they are so because my hopes to make this a superb film are so high.

Let's talk.

Patrick

Rick and I met again for lunch that day, but neither of us had much of an appetite. We argued with the invisible Patrick making a passionate case for our story, convincing each other that what we had was good and that Patrick had simply missed the point. He might have read the document when he was tired, at the end of a long day of being tied to a whale. We talked about the possibility of flying to Australia to meet with him. I asked Rick if I could draft a letter to Patrick that addressed his concerns. Later that day we faxed my letter to him:

June 30, 1997²⁶

Dear Patrick;

Obviously, we're disappointed with your response. I'd like to take a few pages here to discuss what some of our goals have been in the development of this story. I'm hoping it might generate some ideas for changes that will please you and perhaps convince you to look at the document from a new perspective.

Let me start by saying, yes, the document is heavy in back story; a 25 story outline for a 120 page script usually will be. It's there to show the logic to the story, nothing more. The back story would be easily interlaced into the script without being noticeable. But let me address your more important concerns. One of my personal goals was to define Picard as a hero to the motion picture audience. I don't believe the other films fully achieved that. Don't misunderstand - he performed heroic acts - but a true hero's journey is one in which a man must be willing to sacrifice everything he holds dear to stand alone and fight for his principles. To television audiences, Picard became an icon as a man of principles. This will be the first time, I believe, that filmgoers will get to see what kind of man he really is. In this story Picard shows more courage than he did against the Borg or Soran because this time his heroism could cost him his country, his ship and his family. This is "High Noon" for Picard. It will have a powerful emotional impact.

Family. That's the second theme that's important to me. When I went back to watch the best work we did on the series, I was reminded how remarkable a presence Picard was as the leader of his family. Again, I don't think film audiences have seen how important Picard's family is to him. Or how important he is to his family. With Picard at the head of the family, we feel safe. Once we made Data the man Picard is sent to retrieve, it became clear that this was a story about a threat to our family. A story in which Picard must confront and ultimately is forced to destroy a man he loves, again, will have a powerful emotional impact.

Yes, Picard will be in emotional turmoil; I strongly believe a hero's journey should create emotional turmoil that must be overcome on the way to victory. But he is not "haunted" which has been your prime concern from the last movies -- an extremely important note to us throughout the development of this story. What drives Picard in this story is the most noble of motivations.

There is no vengeance haunting him, or a family member's death to create self-doubt. No identity crisis here. He is rock solid in what he believes in. He cannot allow innocent victims to be exploited or destroyed. But it must not be an easy decision or the victory will not matter much. His emotional turmoil, I believe, provides the core of the audience's rooting interest for him to win the day.

I've always believed that Star Trek has been a successful franchise because it tells personal stories on a very large canvass (much like Shakespeare). I would ask you to look at this story with memories of your very best episodes. For me, they include "Inner Light", "Chain of Command", "Darmok", "Family", "Tapestry", just to name a few. All of them take Picard on a personal journey, a hero's journey. My inspiration comes from the epic David Lean movies. In every one, there's political maneuvering and an historical backdrop but at the core are great characters, great heroes risking everything. This story offers the same sort of thematic sweep as, say "Lawrence of Arabia".

Rick and I would like to discuss the other notes with you in more detail at a future time but allow me to touch briefly here on each of them:

Another one of my goals was to do a story in which we're explorers again. I wanted to create strange new aliens. If you find them too vague in the story document, I promise you they won't be in the script. As for their metaphorical telepathy, we have plans to make these visual effects unlike anything ever seen before on screen.

Data will be on screen more than it seems in this document. I believe in some ways the berserk Data will be closer to the original child-like Data we used to know before he got his emotion chip (which we plan to stay away from entirely). Data will be dead for, I'd guess, twenty pages in act two during which he will appear in alien illusions.

I believe there are certain things that our audiences come to

23 Dr. Soran, played by Malcolm McDowell, is the villainous madman in Star Trek Generations.

23 Although Patrick had sent his fax at 6:20 AM on July 1st (Australia time), it was still June 30th in Los Angeles when we faxed our reply.

expect and I think Worf defending his honor is one of them. As for Troi using Joss' attraction to her to gain information, it works for this story. And their relationship is the only sexual tension in the movie.

We set out from the beginning to adapt a famous story to Star Trek and we chose "Heart of Darkness" but I think, for the reasons stated at the beginning of this letter, that we've made it our own. As for abandoning it in act two, well, "Heart of Darkness" doesn't have an act three; Coppola found that out when he couldn't find a way to end "Apocalypse Now". We've simply provided a third act.

Surprises. I think the audience will be surprised when Picard kills Data. I think they'll be surprised, as Picard is, to find out in act two that nothing up to then has been what it seemed to be. I think they'll be surprised when he takes off the uniform.

Humor. You're right, there isn't much in the document and frankly in a story in which a man is sent to possibly kill a man who's as close as a 'brother', it won't be easy. But there will be humor at Deep Space Nine when we get Worf, there will be dry humor from Joss the villain, there will be humor at the mariners' sequence and I see a great deal of lightness and joy coming out of the relationship between Picard and the alien boy. Plus there will be humor with Data after he's resurrected and more as Picard tries to whip these strange aliens into a rag-tag little army.

Again, your comment about under-using our cast is, I believe, a product of the length of the story document. I intend to use "the family" more in this picture than any of the others.

Dull. Not when you see all the action that we've planned that is barely mentioned in the story document. Trust me on this one. The Romulans. We have, from the start, intended to re-invent the Romulans because we agree with you. We've been talking about a complete overhaul of their look as well as their character. If it means a great deal to you, I'd personally be willing to change it to another race. Do you have any suggestions?

In closing, I hope you know how much I respect your instincts and will never proceed with a story that doesn't satisfy you. To be entirely honest, I was shocked at your response. I was so sure you'd appreciate this story. Rick and I both felt the story we were sending you would give you your first chance in the big screen franchise to really show the full range of your talents. We thought you'd see this as not just a great Star Trek movie but a great movie. Obviously, you don't see it that way yet. But know we are all after the same thing and will work together for as long as it takes. I would only ask that you re-read the story one more time with my comments in mind.

Cordially,

Michael



On July 7th, Patrick responded.

Dear Rick and Michael,

As Jackie reported my schedule changed on Friday and I was not able to respond to your letter. However, having available a whole weekend has given me more time to think over all your points and reflect on exactly what my problems with the story really are.

In my first response I started out by referring to the first two TNG movies. I think it is worth repeating that a large measure of the satisfaction Rick and I got out of First Contact was that we had pragmatically assessed the weaknesses of Generations and strived to address them. With Brannon and Ron²⁷ I think we did pretty well. One aspect we sought to improve was a feeling we had that Generations in tone and style reflected the series rather than a movie. Issues, relationships, emphases that were appropriate in a weekly series just could not take up screen time in a movie. Often during the seven years I remarked that we were telling a story that would only be concluded when the last episode aired. In Generations we carried over too much of our series style and the film suffered for it.

One deliberate change we made was to Picard. We toughened him up, chipped away at his smooth surface, roughened and intensified his feelings. Shifted him from Captain/Diplomat/Philosopher to Captain/Rebel/Activist. He could still be thoughtful but now it came out of the action. He became more unpredictable and I felt filled the big screen in a more dynamic and interesting way. These changes were reflected in other areas of the movie. The gritty reality and humor of Lily and Dr. Cochrane²⁸, the steely, ambitious, ruthless and sexiness of the Queen. We saw a new kind of Troi and - refreshingly - Riker. Worf seemed changed by his time at DS9.

The movie raced forward, tumbling event on event. It seemed to me to take half the time to watch than Generations. I feel that, in a sense, we had reinvented ourselves - or had begun to. The 'story' of the series was over and we were now telling a different story with our movies. That is what I want to see continue.

That is the background to the unease that I feel with this new story. It seems to reflect the series much more than where we were at the end of First Contact. This compounded by Michael referring back several times to aspects of the series you want to see in this film. That is what I see as retrograde and dangerous and, ultimately, dull.

I think it is retrograde to emphases 'family' so strongly. I think that is sentimental and uninteresting and eventually leads to space heroes sitting round a camp fire singing "Row, row, row your boat..." The family building aspect of TNG is passed. Not dead, but the work is done. Most of our audience know who

these people are and how they feel about each other and our new audience - the audience the studio are so eager for us to win and hold - don't need to be told that. They will pick it up. What our new movie family need to be is individual, charismatic, intense, opinionated, brave, funny, intolerant, sexy. Larger than life.

I agree that we must tell personal stories on a very large canvas but they must be huge personal stories. I don't agree that Generations and First Contact failed to fully define Picard as a hero. Michael's definition of a hero as a man willing to sacrifice everything, stand alone and fight for his principles characterizes Picard's behavior in facing Saran alone and most particularly in staying on the doomed Enterprise to try and save Data. There Picard offered himself in the supreme sacrifice.

I don't agree about our being explorers again. I think that is series material but not movie material. Heresy though this may be, I do not think our movie duty is "to seek out new life and new civilizations..." though it still is "to boldly go..."

I think there is real danger in the mindset that "there are certain things that our audience come to expect..." We have seen Worf defend his honor so many times and exactly in the way your story plays out. Worf's 'honor' is in his every thought and gesture. He is anyway by now too big a man to rise to a jerk like Joss. But to see Worf telling his Captain he is wrong and threatening to tear him apart, there is his honor.

I have reread the story several times since your last communication and - with some exceptions - my feelings remain unchanged. The story seems bogged down in details, dialogue and back story. For me it plods along until Act 3 (on page 20 of your 25 page story) when the Guerilla training begins. Before, the 'events' have been a hand to hand fight, two ship conflicts and the delusions sequence. The first three are very familiar territory but the latter I have come to like more and more.

It is dangerous, I believe, these days to rely on tech stuff for excitement but I can see how there could be a lot of fun and danger in this sequence but it all goes very flat again after that.

I just cannot get excited about the sarium krellide story line. It is, again, a series-style concept that is too technical and remote to be the basis of our story. Isn't it going to be hard for our audience to get involved with or care about some medically significant rock. It's not exciting. Nor, I am sorry to say, (though this is a science fiction adventure movie) is the moral/political story line of uprooting a people and transplanting them. It's not exciting. Yes, all that worked in the series but not, I think, here.

My concerns about Data remain. Am I mistaken to believe that we do not see Data as fully himself until the middle of Act 3? Given that he is our most 'popular' character can we afford to lose his Data-ness for so long? I am also uneasy about another 'Data malfunctioning' story.

By surprises I meant the truly unexpected and unpredictable. It would seem that Picard has no choice but to kill Data and Picard taking off his uniforms seems, at the moment, to be inappropriate rather than surprising.

Yes, the Romulan question does mean a lot to me. I think it is a deadly idea to have even an 'overhauled' Romulan villain. After the Borg Queen it will look as if we just couldn't come up with any new bad guys. But we must. Could they be the Federation Executive Council? (Gene, stop spinning.) Or a cadre inside the Council? The bad guys are right there in the heart of the Federation. That is certainly contemporary and, God knows, depressingly relevant.

A few story details.

Isn't it improbable that the Council would choose Picard as the man to terminate Data? Not smart, surely.

Data's mission was 'to make first contact with a newly discovered race of aliens.' Just like that! Isn't this a bit premature given the [Prime Directive], etc.

Data plus two Romulans undertake the mission. Surely not adding at least one non-android Federation person is suspicious and improbable.

I didn't know Worf has a 'vast knowledge of the Romulan Empire.' Picard/Schalk/Worf would never allow this Joss provocation to get so out of control.

Picard maneuvering through the Patch we have done before. Telepathy using aliens is a much trodden ground. Ditto the communication problems, i.e. Darmok. Ditto, i.e. the woman who kept changing into devils, etc, and others. Data malfunctioning - and he seems to be malfunctioning very selectively. Ditto, Picard forming a bond with the child, Hero Worship²⁹ and another episode the title of which I can't remember where I played a sort of racquet ball with a troubled youth.

Joss is a fool - improbably - or Troi has talents we haven't yet seen to get Joss to spill his guts like this. Then, the brilliant fighter, Joss falls for the knew in the groin trick!

Picard has argued the value of one life against millions of lives at least twice before, I believe.

I have real difficulty, in this present story, believing that Picard would step out of his uniform without attempting more.

I don't believe Data's 'techno-restoration.' You ask the audience to buy an awful lot here.

I like the 'Alamo' idea. Interesting to reproduce at 24th century parallel of 19th century Texas. Also the moments before the final battle and annihilation - Zulu, Agincourt, The Longest Day. The

Enterprise should arrive while the last attack is underway, not before. We are down to our last phaser burst, etc.

I love the arrival of the 'wacky navy' - echoes of Dunkirk - and the families on the beach. Great scene.

The last scene with Dougherty should happen amongst the dead and smoldering ruin of our heroes defense, rather than in the sterility of the ready room. A visual, potent reminder of what dishonest politics has brought about.

A fundamental feeling I have about the story is that it lacks peril. Oh, yes, from time to time there is danger but the sense of a constant or growing awful threat does not exist. Isn't it true that the Enterprise and its crew could just fly away from this situation if they chose to? At almost any time? There is moral peril eventually and, of course, it is proper that a Star Trek movie should involve that. I sense that you both feel that this is the centre of the film's drama. I just don't think it is enough.

And lastly - though far from leastly - sex and comedy. Two elements of life that I have come to think as critical in the TNG movies. I tell you I think our stories have got to be sexy. I don't mean 'sex scenes,' God forbid, but a certain eroticism, a certain sexiness about our characters and situations is really helpful and fun. Let's be honest, there is an inclination to stuffiness about our crew. For the same reason humor is vital and again I don't mean set-piece scenes - though as I have said, Picard with the mariners could be a great sequence. I think our crew are adorable when they are witty, ironic, self deprecating, teasing, cheeky.

One of the great strengths of First Contact was the creation of three marvelous guest roles - and three terrific performances. James Cromwell was perfect but what really appealed to audiences and critics were the Borg Queen and Lily. Both of them sexy, provocative, dangerous, funny. There is no female role like that, or really of any significance in this story. I think that is a mistake. Lily and the Queen - yes, and even Cochran - challenged our people, challenged their actions, their beliefs - their virtue. Isn't that good?

There does not seem to be a place yet for a role that would attract a fine actor. I do think Joss is a stereotype and shallow. By the way, didn't Sherry say that we're supposed to be creating a role to offer to Tom Hanks?

I wish it were not so but I cannot agree that this story gives me the chance to show the full range of my talents. On the contrary it mostly consists of scenes and situations I have played before - and not the best of them. So far that would also seem to apply to the rest of the cast.

All the best,

Patrick

After reading and re-reading and re-re-reading Patrick's letter, I was angry and depressed. It seemed that Patrick had a problem with every one of my goals for this movie. I called my agents and said there was a chance I might not be able to continue on the project.

I finally said to Rick, "Look, he's never going to approve this story. I know you don't like it, but the only way we're going to save any of the work we've done is to go back to the fountain of youth story. That will give Patrick the fun, the humor, the sex, and the scope that he's looking for."

Rick sighed, feeling as defeated as I did. "Okay, let me call Patrick and see what he says."

Later Rick called to tell me how the conversation had gone: "...So I said to him, 'You know, Patrick, we were once talking about this planet being some kind of fountain of youth. We'd even worked out a story in which everyone on the ship gets younger...' I barely got it out," Rick continued, "...when Patrick jumped in with 'Yes, the fountain of youth -- everyone is fascinated by the youth culture. What a splendid idea.' And then I said to him, 'To be honest, Patrick, we put that story aside because I was worried about you. I thought you'd have a problem getting younger during the movie because it might make Picard seem old.' And then he

says (Rick imitating Patrick Stewart's accent), 'That's very kind of you to consider my feelings, darling, but I really have no problem with that at all. Sounds like great fun.'"

Patrick sent a brief note reaffirming his enthusiasm. "I think it has potential," it read. "Contemporary resonance includes: obsession with youth; respect/ disrespect of age; Mao, Breshnev, Ziou thing; communion between young and old; fear of death; fear of change; old betraying young and vice versa; our hero's place in all this; fun with the crew; conflict on the Enterprise. And outside it all - Data.

"Grand and heroic days down here. A week - almost over - in the whale boats. I saw the white whale - actually saw him - yesterday. Today I harpooned him and, later, was lashed to his body but the failure of a diver's equipment meant we aborted the shot. We will pick it up when I return to Melbourne.

"The Enterprise is warmer, safer, dryer.
"Patrick."

In all my anger, I had to acknowledge to myself that Patrick had moved us back to the story I wanted to tell in the first place.



CUT AND PASTE

Okay, you're back in the writer's chair. You've just been given permission to do that story you wanted to do all along. But in the meantime, you've become passionate about several of the elements of the new story. What do you keep and what do you let go of?

Despite the notes, Rick and I still had confidence in the basic premise of Picard resigning his commission to defend a small group of helpless aliens. What appeared as "internal Federation intellectualism" in the story document would, we believed, be a powerful morality play on screen. We decided to hold on to that.

We also knew in our hearts that Data versus Picard was gold and we didn't want to lose that either. Patrick had complained about the "agony" that would require him to play and the one thing that worried me the most was that he wouldn't want to play any emotional conflict at all. That would make my job almost impossible, I thought. I needed to create a "hero's journey" for Picard... one in which his deepest emotions would be tested. A hero without emotional conflicts isn't much of a hero. "It won't be a problem," said Rick with cool diplomacy. "You and Patrick are really saying the same thing but in different ways."

Yeah, sure right. Didn't he read the letters?

"You'll see. I can sell Data versus Picard to Patrick," he said.

So the renegade android stayed in. But we would send someone from Picard's cadet days on Data's mission, someone who would be young again by the time Picard reached the planet. With Data already providing the male bonding factor, it made more sense in this structure that Picard's old friend be a woman.

Ray Walston and the Academy prologue was back in. The trip up the river looking for Data would stay. Patrick liked the rag-tag army of space mariners so they made the cut. Sarium krellide would stay but turn into a mysterious natural resource that causes the de-aging process.

As for losses, the Romulans would have to go. Nobody liked them. We decided we'd create a new race of extraordinarily old aliens seeking the fountain of youth. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. was out. The aliens would be led by a strong, charismatic leader. The telepathic mutes were gone.

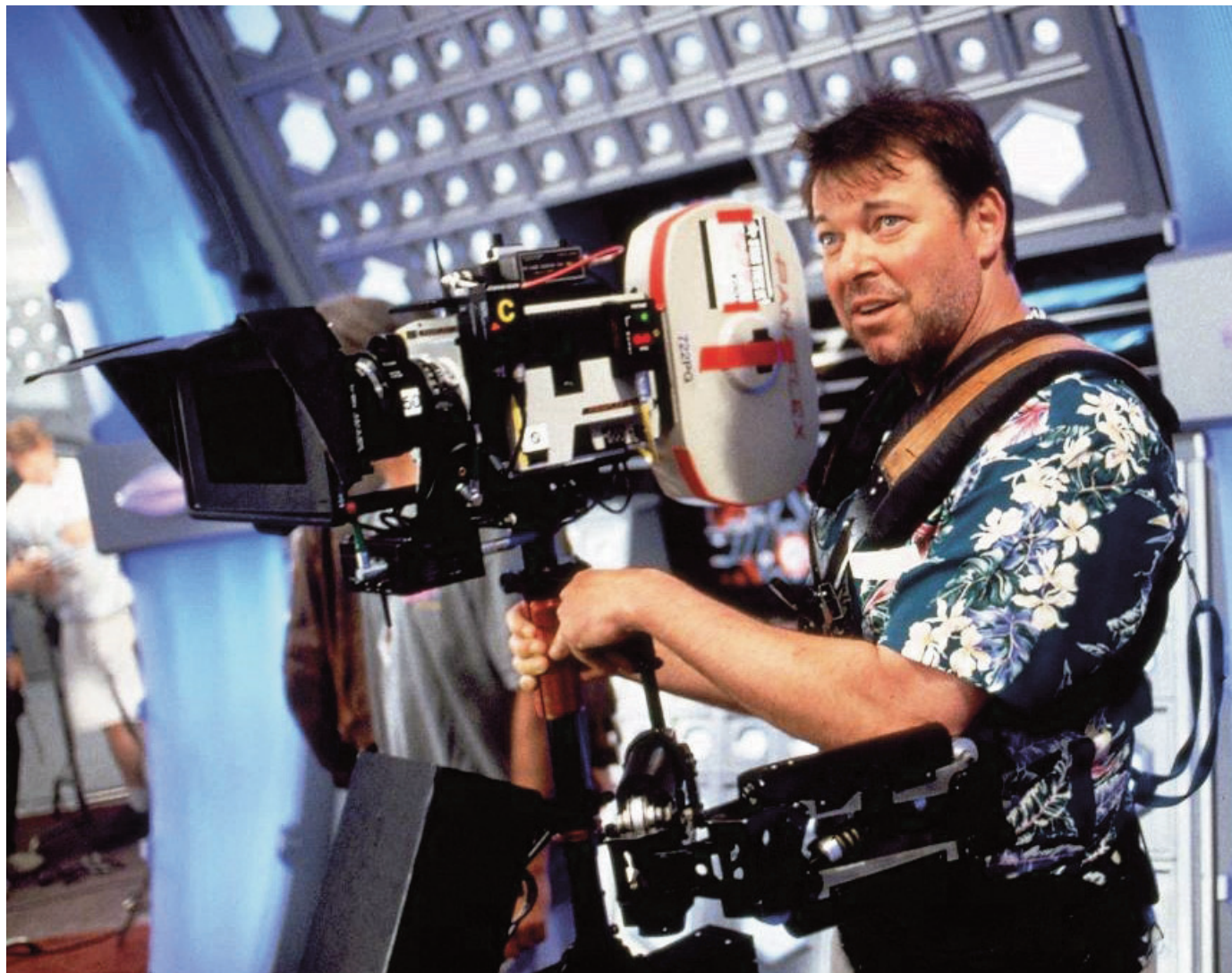
To replace them, we decided that it would be a lot of fun to make the entire alien population look like twelve-year-olds who were actually centuries old with all the knowledge and wisdom that comes with longevity. One of our female officers might even have an odd romance with one of these 300-year-old urchins. In a final irony, Picard would discover the ancient aliens are in fact the children of the "children" on this planet.

Data would still be hurt and lose his memory in the opening as before, but would be repaired quickly and would be with Picard for the rest of the picture as the Data we know and love.

Data would discover the evil plot, we decided, when he realizes the mission he's been sent on is actually a "Sorvino Switch". That's what Rick and I liked to call a deception that had been used in an episode of *The Next Generation* that had starred Paul Sorvino as Worf's human brother. Sorvino rescues a primitive alien race from a dying world by re-creating their environment on a holodeck and then transporting them to the holodeck in their sleep. Without ever realizing what's happening, the aliens are taken by spaceships to a new planet which looks very much like their old planet.

In our film, however, there would be no way to replicate the fountain of youth. And so our alien "children" would begin to age and eventually die.

Rick's office was like a vegomatic machine the next several days as we sliced and diced and finally pureed the two stories together. One day, as I arrived for lunch, Rick announced that Patrick was coming back from Australia for a public appearance in Washington, D.C. and would stop in L.A. to meet with us for a few hours on July 23rd.





FACE TO FACE

Patrick arrived looking ruggedly healthy. Obviously the sea air agreed with him. He was also brimming with enthusiasm with the new direction -- or the old direction -- the story had taken.

Rick and I briefly laid out all the changes we'd discussed and he liked every one of them including, in this new context, Data versus Picard and Picard resigning his commission to confront the Federation conspiracy. That took about thirty minutes. Then we listened as Patrick articulated some of his hopes for his role in the fountain of youth story.

"I want to be sure we don't settle just for the sexual implication of growing younger," he said, "But that we explore the emotional, intellectual benefits of being young. I think the story should celebrate the differences between people, as *Star Trek* always does so well. And in this case, the difference between ages."

Patrick felt that Picard would have a negative attitude about the fountain of youth because he really didn't have a great childhood himself and does not look fondly back on those days. I improvised a quick conversation between Data and Picard:

Data: Did you enjoy your childhood, sir?

Picard: No, I hated my childhood. A lot of people have miserable childhoods.

Data: If childhood was so bad, why do people want to be young again?

Patrick said that Picard's decision to resign should be motivated in part by the changes in his personality that the fountain of youth has created. "Adults are more complacent than youth. Young people are more impatient, more impulsive. Young people leap before they look. Picard should be far more impulsive than normal when he resigns. Data might even say, 'Aren't you being impulsive, sir?' and Picard would respond, 'No, let's go.'"

He wondered if Picard might be concerned at the darkest moment of the third act that he had perhaps been too impulsive and is about to lead his people to their imminent deaths. And then the rag-tag army of mariners arrive in the nick of time to help him turn the tables on the conspirators.

Patrick felt uncomfortable about the part of the story where he trains the alien "children" to defend themselves. He didn't like the idea of giving guns to children actors even if the "children" were centuries old. He thought Picard would say, "I'm not going to be the man who introduces violent weapons into this peaceful lifestyle. This is *our* job. This is what we do." And that the aliens could be valuable as resourceful, fast and agile compatriots.

The meeting ended in great spirits. Here was a movie that would stand apart from every other *Star Trek* film. An opportunity to show our versatility. The last film was dark and violent. This one light and funny. Moliere's name was dropped. Let's show them we can do musical



comedy, we laughed.

Two days later, I published a brief, revised story. Brevity was the key. Rick's assignment was to put down, in the most attractive terms possible,

only the broadest possible description of what we were trying to accomplish. "This is not the time to impress anyone with the quality of your prose," he said. "Just get it down on paper so everyone can sign off on it and then you can go off and write a script." Music to my ears.



7/25/97

The movie begins in the past with a colorful and funny flashback to Picard's Academy days and establishes a platonic, but affectionate relationship between young Jean-Luc and fellow cadet, ELEANOR DUFFY. Visiting the home of the Academy's groundskeeper, Boothby (played by Ray Walston), Picard and Duffy look over his remarkable collection of objets d'junk as he plays a vinyl recording of Stardust on an old victrola.

Boothby sees the potential for more in the relationship than either Picard or Duffy do. But they're too smart to let romance complicate their friendship.

We move into the present day as we see a Federation ship attacked by a small vessel piloted, incredibly, by Data. This segues into a video record of the attack being shown to Picard by two high-ranking, elderly members of the Federation Council and a senior admiral. We learn that a small Starfleet crew that included Data and Eleanor plus two aliens from a race known as the Son'i went on a routine anthropological mission six months ago to do a duck-blind study of a newly-discovered culture.

The planet was located in a remote and unexplored region of Federation space known as The Briar Patch. Data was on loan to pilot the ship through the navigational nightmare using his advanced android skills. For reasons unknown, Data has apparently gone berserk and is firing on the ships Starfleet has sent in to find him. Picard is ordered to go in, bring him back and rescue the others if they're still alive. It's clear to Picard as he leaves that if he has no other alternative, he is expected to terminate Data.

The Enterprise sets out, taking along two high-ranking officers of the Son'i. These mysterious aliens are all extraordinarily old, so ancient in fact, that they hide their faces in perpetual shadow.

As a race they have accumulated great wealth which they protect with a huge arsenal of the most advanced weaponry. Their ships are some the most formidable we have ever seen on Star Trek. And yet the leader of these intimidating aliens, whom we will call RU'AFO, is well-spoken, approachable, almost gentle... but there is the inescapable cold look in his eyes that suggest a tortured soul.

Picard studies the last visual transmissions from Data's ship and sees his android friend acting normally, just as he remembers him. Next to him, Eleanor Duffy, now fifty, is cool and professional. There is no sign of whatever trouble was to come.

To help find the way into the Briar Patch, Picard seeks out the help of a rag-tag band of civilian mariners. He hears from them about an ancient legend of a fountain of youth somewhere in The Patch.

They laugh, wondering if that's why he's going in. He assures them it's not. With their advice and using information from Data's mission, Picard plots a course and pilots one of the Enterprise's new scout ships carrying the Away Team. Suddenly, Data attacks, ignoring all hails. Picard is forced to crash land his ship on the only nearby planet.

On the surface, Geordi has a strange malfunction with his artificial eyes. Then in short order, the Away Team is surrounded and captured by a group of aliens that look to be no more than twelve years old. There is no sign of any adults.

The Away Team is led to a stockade where Picard finds Data's crew and his old friend Eleanor, but is shocked to see that she looks almost as young as she looked when they graduated from the Academy. She greets him warmly telling him that they discovered vast amounts of an unusual ore along the coastline which seems to be making them feel and appear younger.

It might also explain Geordi's malfunction. As for Data's behavior, she has no explanations. She can only report that shortly after arriving on the planet, Data went berserk and destroyed the duck-blind, revealing their presence to the inhabitants.

The natives of this planet prove not to be children at all, but a race, known as the Ba'ku, who have stayed young in physical appearance, while retaining all the knowledge and wisdom that comes with hundreds of years of life. They are guarded, taciturn and, although they have a superior technology, prefer a simple existence. They clearly don't trust outsiders and yet they will ultimately prove to be generous hosts.

They take Picard to Data, who sits on a floor in a shadowy alien dwelling, rocking back and forth in some sort of strange meditation. He does not recognize Picard. Data's speech patterns are halting; his attention seems to wander, in a way, you might say he's almost slow-witted. For some reason, that even he cannot explain to Picard, he has adopted the role,

almost on a subconscious level, as the protector of the Ba'ku.

As the Enterprise approaches looking for the away team, Data boards his scout ship with Picard as hostage and goes to attack the Enterprise. The battle is interrupted when Picard finds a way to disable him. Geordi and Beverly go to work repairing Data as Picard begins to unravel the mystery of what's happened here.

The first sign that things aren't what they seem comes from the initial examination of Data. Beverly and Geordi report there are signs in his positronic brain of a blast from an alien weapon that damaged his memory engrams, causing an android form of amnesia. Picard is able to determine the blast came from a Son'i weapon. Ru'afo coolly listens to the accusation, promises Picard he will interrogate his officers to attempt to find out what transpired.

As the investigation proceeds, word reaches the Enterprise crew of the regenerative qualities of the planet's surface and they petition the Captain for shore leave, but Picard, who has no tolerance for any of this foolishness about a "fountain of youth," declares it off limits. Troi finally coaxes him into allowing them to go for the morale of the crew. There's nothing wrong with feeling young from time to time, Captain, she says. He grumbles but accedes.

As the story continues, we will spend considerable time with various members of the crew as they're affected by this remarkable planet in unexpected ways. In addition to seeing subtle physical changes that appear to take years off their age, we'll discover what they were like when they were younger.

We'll explore the emotional, intellectual and sexual benefits of being young. For example, Riker's libido will get more active and Troi will feel jealous as she sees him soaking buck-naked in a mud bath with two female ensigns. Later, she turns the tables when he sees her soaking in the same mud bath buck-naked with five male ensigns. Worf will get in touch with his wild Klingon inner child. Beverly will have to cope with one of the Ba'ku "children" who takes a rather intense liking to her... she can't get past his physical appearance even though she knows that he's two hundred years old.

We'll see other members of the crew become impatient and impulsive, forgoing the common sense that comes with maturity. We'll see them behave bolder with the exaggerated self-confidence of youth. And, finally, we'll see ship operations suffer as the crew "misbehaves."

Picard, resisting it as he might, finds himself being affected as well... in very subtle physical ways, and also on an emotional level. There's a definite swagger as he finds himself being drawn to Eleanor, feeling the affections a young man might feel in spring. There's no question that under normal circumstances these two mature adults would be able to control their feelings, but the magical influence of this planet seems to be stripping away their inhibitions.

Data is quickly repaired and fills in some of the missing pieces of the mystery. He tells Picard he became suspicious of the Son'i's behavior after their arrival and began to realize that they had a separate agenda for the mission. One day he followed them to see them taking ore samples.

Unfortunately, the Son'i caught him observing and shot him. His memory engrams were damaged, but his ethical subroutines remained functional and they guided him to protect the Ba'ku because he felt their planet was in danger.

Meanwhile, a dangerous new threat appears as a flotilla of Son'i ships follow the course that Picard charted and move into orbit around the planet. When Picard asks to question the two Son'i officers, Ru'afo tells him that they have already been punished for their crime and are dead. Picard knows a cover-up when he sees one.

As Data works with Picard and Eleanor to find out the Son'i's true motives, he observes the behavior of the rest of the crew and begins to explore the human obsession with youth, trying to find some way to apply this to his own life. A conversation between Data and Picard: "Did you enjoy your childhood, sir?" "No, I hated my childhood," says Picard, "A lot of people had miserable childhoods." And Data asks, "If childhood was so bad, why do people want to be young again?"

Their investigation reveals that the Son'i mining process will make the entire region unliveable. It is further revealed that their mining operation has been approved by the very same Federation officers who sent Data, and later Picard, on this mission.

Picard learns that the Federation plans to move the Ba'ku to a new planet and that Data's mission was in fact designed to determine the most efficient and safe method to accomplish that. Obviously it was kept secret from Data and the crew because it is a clear violation of the Prime Directive. But one member of the crew did know, as Picard is sad to discover, and that was Eleanor.

In an emotional scene, he confronts her and she tries to argue the case for the other side, although we might sense she's feeling rather guilty about the deception by now. The Son'i had approached the members of the Federation Council, she tells Picard, with the promise of sharing the secrets of this remarkable substance. We saw the potential for a new era of medicine based on the regenerative properties of this ore. Life spans would be doubled, tripled.

It would be a quantum leap forward for every Federation culture. To the Son'i, it was a matter of survival, life and death. Without it, they would become extinct as their race quickly died of old age. They had combed the galaxy looking for the substance after their supply had run out and this is virtually the only place they could find any more of it.

Picard understands the rest. The only stumbling block was a small group of non-spacefaring people who just happened to live on top of this ore. Eleanor acknowledges, saying everyone felt it was reasonable to quietly move a few thousand people for the sake of the greater good. Picard understands that the Federation officers involved were willing to turn a blind eye to the interests of a tiny, far away culture in order to serve our own. And isn't it a coincidence he notes dryly, that the men approached by the Son'i happened to be among the oldest in the Federation government.

Eleanor is clearly uncomfortable with the ethical challenge Picard has raised. Picard tells her that Dr. Crusher's examination of one Ba'ku who had to be beamed aboard the ship strongly suggests that once removed from this planet's surface, these people begin to age. If they were moved, their entire culture would be undermined.

Picard calls Starfleet, advising the senior admiral that moving the Ba'ku would expose them to the aging process and eventually lead to their deaths. The admiral explains to Picard that the Ba'ku will die a lot faster if we don't move them. The Son'i have made it clear they will do whatever it takes to get that ore. Picard: So, as an alternative, we're allowing them to steal a planet from its inhabitants within Federation space? How do we justify such a thing?

The admiral gets angry: It was the best we could do. Was it?, challenges Picard. Or did the Son'i make us an offer we simply couldn't resist. Have we truly explored all other options? The admiral: here's the other option, Captain -- their weapons are superior to ours. If they really wanted to kill the people on this planet, frankly, we couldn't stop them.

So, I suggest you get on with the inevitable task of moving them. Picard responds that it is not our decision to make. It's theirs. I will not move the Ba'ku without their consent. The admiral orders him to withdraw, saying that other Starfleet ships will be sent to do the job and signs off.

Picard goes to the leader of the Ba'ku, a "boy" he has come to know and respect during the past several days and explains the circumstances. The Ba'ku leader speaks for his people when he says with passion that they will not move from their homeland; their lives are connected to the land, it defines who they are. Although they're a non-violent people, they would rather fight the Son'i to the death than to leave.

Picard is impressed by their courage and conviction and knows in his heart that he cannot abandon them. Quietly, he removes his pips, his uniform and says good-bye to his ship as he leaves to help the Ba'ku fight for their lives.

Data chooses to join Picard in this fight and Picard is further pleased when Eleanor changes sides and joins him as well. His arguments and her love for him have touched her conscience. She cannot bring herself to fight against him or his ideals. As they begin to prepare for battle, Picard and Eleanor finally let their passion get the better of them and enjoy the hell out of it. It turns out that old Boothby really did know what he was talking about.

The "children" have neither the aptitude nor appetite for the weapons of war and Picard is unwilling to force them to participate in the violence they have shunned as a society. But he finds them to be resourceful tacticians and agile, clever colleagues as he leads Data and Eleanor on missions to sabotage the Son'i mining operations (some of which occur in space).

Ru'afo knows his people are literally running out of time. Many have already died. The approaching Starfleet vessels are five days away. He orders his forces to begin an all-out assault. If Federation people helping the Ba'ku are killed, it's their own fault.

The admiral orders Riker to get a search party together to find Picard and arrest him before the Son'i kill him. They succeed, but instead of arresting him, the crew chooses to stay with Picard even though the odds of victory seem impossible.

Picard orders Riker to take the remaining crew and their families on board the Enterprise to safety.

It won't be long before the Son'i turn against the Enterprise in retaliation for his actions. Riker agrees to take the Enterprise out of The Briar Patch but promises to return with help. Picard says there'll be no help from the Federation.

The Son'i launch devastating attacks that destroy the village and defoliate the jungle... it is a huge battle, Son'i fighters coming in over the ocean, strafing the beach... ultimately forcing Picard and his overmatched army into a defensive position. As the Son'i continue their assault, it may remind us of the Alamo. As their defenses are worn down, Picard and his officers know their time is almost up... they cannot survive another attack.

On the night before what they know will be the final battle, they share some personal memories, some smiles, even laughs... personal things you only say at the end. But the next morning, a new glimpse of hope as Riker returns with the rag-tag fleet of mariners who have come to help Picard fight the good fight. Their arrival gives Picard an idea...

Picard plans a daring attempt to capture the Son'i leader, Ru'afo. Using a mariner's junkyard ship, he

manages to sneak through the Son'i defenses and board their lead ship. As the crew on the surface struggle to survive a few hours more, Picard fights his way past several Son'i guards and reaches Ru'afo's quarters where he lies close to death...

Picard is shocked to see Ru'afo's face clearly for the first time. It reveals physical characteristics that match the Ba'ku. He soon realizes that the Son'i and the Ba'ku are in fact the same race. He convinces Ru'afo to call off the attack.

It is quickly revealed that the Son'i are actually a group of Ba'ku who were banished hundreds of years ago for refusing to respect the society's oaths of simplicity and isolationism. They had no respect for the traditional ways. They wanted more material goods, an opportunity to explore the universe.

So they were sent away from the planet on mariner ships, their passage paid for with small quantities of the magic ore thus creating the legend of the fountain of youth. Now they have come home to collect the ore which will insure their survival... and only agreed to relocate their brethren so those who banished them could feel the slow torture of the aging process.

Picard ultimately forces the leaders of both groups to confront one another and brokers a difficult peace. They are after all in Federation space and, as it turns out, they are a warp-capable society and thus responsible to follow the protocols of the Federation. Humanity will have to do without a magic elixir of youth, because the ore is going to stay on this planet as the Prime Directive demands.

Picard makes the Ba'ku see that there is a time to let old wounds heal. Now that the word is out about the fountain of youth, and a passage through The Briar Patch has been charted, it will be necessary to defend themselves against those who would come to exploit it (like the Ferengi). They could find the weaponry and resources that their Son'i brothers have acquired to be very valuable in the near future. In the end, he leaves the two sides in a hopeful cease-fire.

The last stirring scene TBD will see Picard back in his uniform, with his crew in a triumphant moment that will leave people cheering in the aisles...

THE END





AUGUST 1997

BRENT

Inside every android, there's a song-and-dance-man trying to get out. If you don't believe me, check out Brent Spiner's performance as the song-and-dance-man-from-hell in *Out To Sea* and tell me if he doesn't steal the picture right out from under those two pros Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau. Hard to believe that's our Data. But Brent was singing and dancing on Broadway long before he ever became Data, working in shows like *Big River* and Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday In the Park With George*.

Brent had no idea that I'd once attended classes at Juilliard and was a musician myself until late one night in Washington, D.C. when the cast and the producers of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and our spouses were having a nightcap in the lobby bar of the Watergate Hotel. It had been a memorable evening. All of us had been invited to join a celebration honoring the original Mercury astronauts. As excited as we were to shake the hands of men like Alan Shepard and John Glenn, you should have seen *their* faces when they were introduced to "Captain Picard" and crew. Anyway, we were still feeling the glow from the occasion as we sat together in a quiet personal moment.

There was a baby grand piano in the lobby and I sat down and began to noodle a few songs I knew... the kind of songs you play at one in the morning at a bar, like "Angel Eyes" and "One For My Baby"... and Patrick and Brent and the others looked over with surprise. Brent came over and sat beside me at the piano and said, "Michael Piller, the mystery man of *Star Trek*".

Sadly, we'd rarely had many of those personal moments over the years and I was still a mystery man to Brent as he read the proposed story. Brent was less convinced than ever that I knew how to write his character.

We'd received quick approval from everyone at the studio. Rick described Patrick, back in Australia, as "ecstatic." Brent was in New York in rehearsals for the Roundabout Theatre Company production of "1776" in which he would star (magnificently) in the leading role of John Adams. We wanted him to see the story too so that all the key players would be on board. But Brent wasn't quite ready to join the boarding party.

Brent was unhappy about Data malfunctioning early in the picture. He had behaved abnormally in the last two movies. He was afraid it was beginning to seem like Data was an untrustworthy officer. Beyond the malfunction, Data seemed to him like an after-thought. Discouraged, he offered up a solution: kill Data off in this movie. We declined and tried to assure him that we would continue to develop Data's story on the Ba'ku planet.

As for the story itself, Brent liked the notions of the rag-tag army, the

elements from *Heart of Darkness*, *Magnificent Seven*, *The Alamo* and *Lost Horizon*. But he had a lot of questions. I mean a lot of questions. Like hundreds of them.

Why do the Ba'ku look twelve?

Do they procreate?

Are there any real children?

Why does Duffy look like she did at the Academy? If she stays there, is she going to eventually look twelve too?

Why do our crew's appearances change "subtly" but their behaviors change "drastically"? And if our people act like children, how are the Ba'ku "children" acting like adults?

The Ba'ku don't behave like children. Why do our people's behavior change?

Does the ore make people younger or just appear younger? Or does it make them behave younger?

Do the Son'i reproduce?

How old are they?

Why are they coming back now? Did they take some ore with them and are just now running out?

Why don't they just ask their relatives for some more ore?

Why doesn't anyone on the Federation Council say this plan is a violation of the Prime Directive?

Does the Federation know the Ba'ku and the Son'i are related?

Why aren't the Federation leaders punished at the end?

Many of the answers we already knew but had simply left out of the shorter story document. Others, we realized, we really hadn't thought about yet. Brent's list forced us to confront all the loose threads in our story.

Brent also said he wasn't sure what the theme of the movie was. Yes, it was about Youth but what exactly was it trying to say about Youth? Rick and I gave answers that we'd discussed with Patrick and each other for months. But as we did, a brief thought passed through my mind that we did have a lot of themes now that we had blended the two stories -

rediscovering the joys of youth, family devotion among the crew, honoring one's deepest principles -- but then my control self jumped and said, hey, that's not necessarily a bad thing. It'll give you the chance to provide layers of subtext to the screenplay. Don't worry about it. I never gave it a second thought...





A FALSE START

By this time, I felt I knew every element of this story inside out and upside down. There were scenes inside my head literally screaming to be put down on paper. They would wake me up at night and ask to be written. I just plunged in and started writing.

When I write a script, I like to write seven days a week - it helps keep me 'in' the movie - but I only ask myself to do six pages a day. Six pages don't feel like a lot, and that relieves some of the psychological pressure to sit down and perform. I've found over the years that I can easily write those six pages between eight and noon. Whenever I try to go longer my productivity drops sharply. I can do other things in the afternoon -- read, take meetings, dictate memos, discuss other material. I just can't write.

Many of the afternoon meetings in August were about new TV projects. I still had obligations to the television division of Paramount and another network series development season was rolling around. The studio asked me to do a show about alien crime fighters but I didn't like the idea. I asked them to let me do a series about a man who suddenly begins to realize that through some strange time manipulation he's living out different versions of his own life.

They didn't like the idea. One morning, working out on my Nordic Trak, I watched CNN describe the search for fugitive killer Andrew Cunanan. The word "manhunt" was repeated over and over. Two weeks later, Joe Stern, one of *Law and Order's* founding producers, and I sold *Manhunt* to CBS. In the mornings, I would be in the 24th century chasing the fountain of youth and in the afternoon, I'd be back in the 20th Century chasing a dangerous killer.

Divided attention? Sure. But that's what you have to do or you won't have a job when the script you're working on is done. Plus, I find my mind likes to let go and move on to something else for a few hours. But I don't earn the 'privilege' of afternoon diversions until my six pages are done.

Television with its commercial interruptions throw traditional narrative structure out the window. But feature-length screenplays usually have a classic three act dramatic structure. I could get long-winded here about structure but suffice to say I was looking for a provocative set-up in act one, intriguing and unexpected complications (with an emphasis on character evolution) in act two and a clever, action-filled resolution in act three.

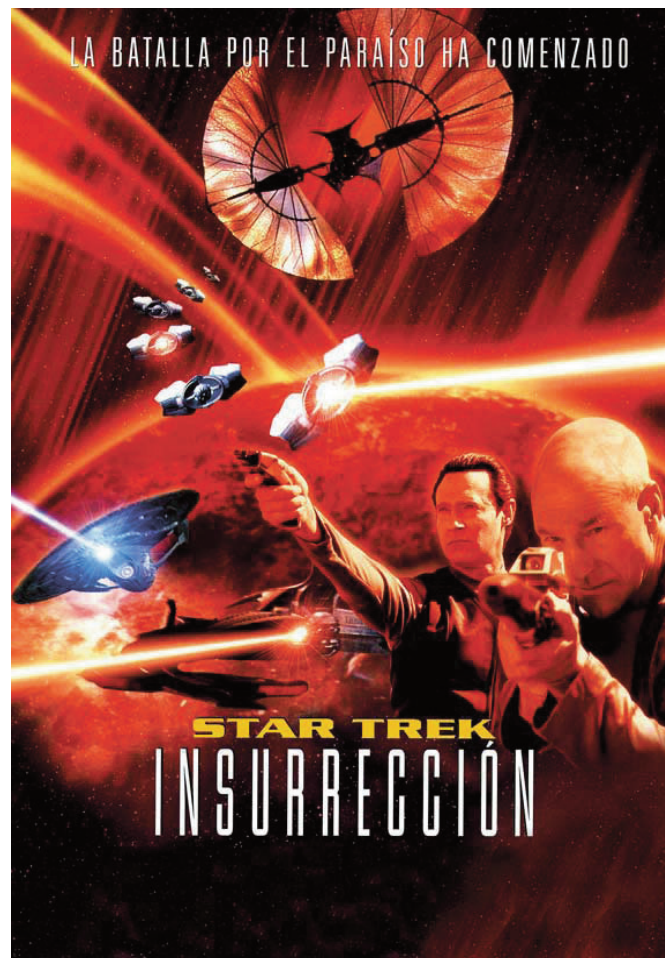
I figured that each act in this script would contain fifteen or so scenes (not including single shots or angles within scenes or individual action beats that can rack up scene numbers in a hurry)... which meant I had just *forty-five* scenes to tell my whole story. The trick was to choose the right forty-five from the hundreds available.

I approach each act as a play in itself, making sure it has a beginning, a middle and an end. Then, as I begin to write, I approach each *scene* as

a play in itself, looking for an effective beginning, a middle and end, even if it's only a page or two long. When I was starting out, I invariably started my scenes too early and ended them too late. There was excess dialogue that served no purpose. Over time, I've learned that every line of dialogue should serve some purpose, including the most casual of responses like "yes" or "no". *How* the character says "yes" or "no" can tell us a lot about what's going on inside that character.

And something has to be going on inside the characters. To quote William Goldman: "If all that's going on in your scenes is what's going on in your scenes, think about it a long time."

As a musician, I've learned that writing dialogue is like playing jazz improvisation on a melody. You never play the melody. You play around



it. You never want a character to come out and say exactly what he's feeling, just like you never want to hear the exact melody of the tune you're improvising. But you always stay within the basic structure of the song and the basic structure of the story. You learn to communicate what you want to say without ever saying it.

As any jazz musician will tell you, to improvise you have to let go, you can't think your way through an improvisational line -- you have to feel it, go with it, trust yourself. It's the same way with writing dialogue. (By the way, as a pianist, I'm unsuccessful at jazz improvisation because I've never been able to find a way to let go of the control self. For better advice on jazz, please contact Oscar Peterson.)

My goal for a first draft is to make sure the reader has a good time. When I'm producing, I hate to open someone else's script and see it crammed with descriptions and thick wads of dialogue and lots of stage directions. As the writer, I try to put myself behind the eyes of the reader. Is it as much fun to read as it is to write? It better be. You can always go back in after they love your first draft and put in all the details the director needs.

After writing this first draft for a week or so, something didn't feel right. I felt we were lacking a sense of mystery. Plus the lead villain didn't have anything interesting to do until an hour into the movie. I sent the forty pages I'd written to Rick so that we could discuss my concerns. I added an outline of the rest of the script so he could see where I was going.

A writer generally doesn't send half-baked, troubled material to the producer who hired him. But my relationship with Rick made it possible. Rick loved the first forty pages but understood my concerns. We went over the outline for two days to see if we could add some mystery.

Rick came up with an intriguing idea. Instead of old aliens, the Son'a (the 'i' had been changed to an 'a' because the original version reminded too many people of a popular electronics conglomerate) would be younger.

Much younger, in fact. We'd make them thirty-something aliens who are terrified of growing old. It was a twist on a familiar theme and we knew this would have the added benefit of attracting an audience with a *younger demographic!* We also decided to keep the fountain of youth a secret until we reached the planet.

Another thing we added was a cameo appearance by another *Star Trek* character -- Quark, played by Armin Shimerman, who owns the bar on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Quark is a Ferengi, a greedy little creature, and we thought the discovery of a fountain of youth would suggest all sorts of profitable possibilities to him.

By the last week of August, we had made all the changes I felt were necessary in the structure and I went back to work and continued writing for about three weeks until the first draft was done.

SEPTEMBER 1997

IRA

I had no idea how bad it was. I was feeling nothing but exhilaration. 122½ pages of gold. Everything we'd talked about for months was in there.

But I'd been through this enough to know you can't trust your own feelings after you type 'FADE OUT'. You're too close to the material to be objective. You want it to be *over* too much. So I always show the first draft to someone I trust before I turn it in.

When it comes to material, I trust no one more than Ira Steven Behr. Ira was there with me during my first season on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

He was with me for the launch of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and eventually took over the Executive Producer chores when I moved on.

I sent him the script. He came over at the end of the day. He took off his sunglasses. *Ira never takes off his sunglasses*. He looked at me with sorrowful eyes.

Ten minutes later, he left me alone with my 122½ pages. I sat there, leafing through it dumbly. Every page looked different now. It was a script written from beginning to end by the control self. I could see *the writers' hand* in every scene trying to cram the two stories together like two separate jig-saw puzzles whose pieces don't fit.

I called Rick and warned him that Ira felt we had serious problems. I sent him the script and asked him to consider three fundamental questions as he read it:

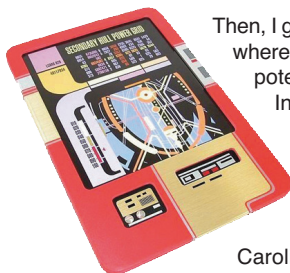
- 1) How do we make the villains worthy adversaries to Picard? Now, they are paper tigers (Ira's description). Coming off a movie about the Borg, the greatest villains in the history of *Star Trek*, this is a major problem.
- 2) Is the 'hero's journey' for Picard that I keep preaching about truly in place?
- 3) Are we getting all that we want out of the fountain of youth?

I added that I wouldn't be asking the last two questions if I thought the answer were yes. With that, I turned off my office lights and went home to bed but not to sleep.

FAILURE

I'm no stranger to failure. No writer is. In fact, there's something perversely comforting about failure. Success is the aberration. We don't trust it. Because we know our next failure can't be far behind. Ironically, I've found it takes just as much work to achieve failure as it does to achieve success. Sometimes even more.

How to deal with it? I wish I could tell you. I usually try to put a failure into a meaningful context. Like: "*Hey, that's why they call it a first draft.*" And then there's the always popular, "*What the hell ever made you think you were a writer!?*"



Then, I go back and retrace my steps, trying to see where I wandered off course, checking out other potential paths in this murky creative forest. Inevitably, I arrive again at the failure. And then I go back and do it all over again. And again.

That's what I was doing on a plane the following weekend as I flew to North Carolina. I'm on the alumni council for the Department of Communications Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Each time I visit, I talk to writing students. This time, I'd spend a few hours with them pretending to be a successful screenwriter.

I opened the book I'd bought for the trip, Neil Simon's memoirs, entitled *Rewrites*. Somewhere over Oklahoma, I reached chapter seven, page 127 and Mr. Simon spoke to me like a Rabbi:

"The brilliant is born out of a writer's pain, some divine inspiration, and a slight bit of madness," he wrote. "You can aspire to it but you can't plan on it, especially if you know your limitations. Your horizons can expand, however, if you allow yourself the possibility of failure. You must, in fact, court failure. Let her be your temptress. There must be danger in the attempt and no net strung across the abyss to break your fall."

Okay, I told myself, I could have taken an easier path and written the theme-park-thrill-ride movie. But I didn't. I tried to write a movie *about* something and by that very decision, I was courting failure. Give yourself some credit, I told myself. You're lucky. You're still in the ballgame and there's a lot of time left to score.

I brought the Neil Simon book with me when I met with the Carolina students and I read the passage aloud. We talked about failure. And how no writer can survive without it.

LOOKING FOR THE LIGHT

The next month felt like a lost weekend. Autumn had arrived, prep³⁰ was only weeks away, and I was like a fallen leaf being blown one way and then another as I tried to find some way to fix the script. These were the nights of staring at the ceiling and the dawns walking through the Paramount gates.

Even away from work, the script stalked me. I took my little girl to the Santa Monica Pier and Picard and crew waved at me from the twisting roller coaster. I watched football games on TV between the Son'a and the Ba'ku. I shared a hot dog at Pink's famous stand with Ru'afo and Duffy.

I gained five pounds. Something in my neck went out and I couldn't feel my left hand for weeks.

A strong new pair of legs joined the death march and brought new hope. Jonathan Frakes had been hired to direct the new movie. Jonathan had made a spectacular bow as a feature director with *Star Trek: First Contact* after several years learning his craft directing the television shows. Rick and I invited him into our lunchtime meetings to discuss what we were going to do next. We tore the script apart. We put it back together again. We talked about losing the entire Data arc. We talked about losing the entire fountain of youth arc. We knew that Patrick loved the fountain of youth and wouldn't want to lose it, and yet we thought that Data part of the movie was working better than the other half. In fact, the fountain of youth was nothing more than comedy relief -- bad comedy at that. I knew, for the movie to have an emotional impact, the fountain of youth had to mean something more, particularly to Picard. He had to learn something from his visit there.

Clearly, the two stories were pulling at each other. We had enough plot for a mini-series and something would have to go. And yet something would have to be added too because the movie seemed to lack an emotional core.

By the middle of September we had re-fashioned the story in a dozen different ways and all of them seemed even less interesting than the one that we started with. I didn't know where to begin to make this script better. But through it all, there was the quiet confidence of Rick. Without it, I don't think I could have gotten through this period. People ask me all the time what a producer does. A good producer is a rock. A Berman.



30 Short for pre-production, the time when all the plans for shooting have to be made.

I was certain that the emotional core we were missing had to come from Picard's story. As written, there was no hero's journey for Picard yet. I felt handcuffed by Patrick's concern about being haunted, because in order to make the fountain of youth change him as a man, I felt I needed to start the movie off with him in trouble.

It might be possible, I speculated, to create a situation in which Picard is in trouble *but he doesn't necessarily realize it*. The audience can see it but he doesn't. We talked about what kind of trouble that might be. An idea that seemed to stick was that Picard's life, like so many contemporary lives today, could be cluttered, he's become consumed with so many details that he's lost touch with the things he truly cares about. It would be a journey of *regeneration*. In fact, if not for *Star Trek Generations*, this movie would probably have been called *Star Trek: Regeneration*.

But our problems with telling a single cohesive story remained. By the end of the month, I even stopped trying to think my way out of the dilemma. *And the moment I stopped trying, the way became clear*. Don't ask me how the mind works. It's one of the great mysteries of being a writer. And one of our great fears, too. Since we can't control the creative process, how do we fix it if it ever breaks down? I only know the answer came to me on the fourth Monday in September.

September 22, 1997

To: Rick

From: Mike

I've come to grips over the weekend with how to make this picture work, at least from my point of view.

It's not taking the same road we've been talking about for the last few days; however. I simply can't see how to make that work. I don't think I can get Picard's uniform off by the end of act one credibly. This premise will seem flat and perfunctory when the last two-thirds of the film are devoted to the fight. It desperately requires a sense of mystery. I think it's terribly wrong to do a Star Trek movie that begins and ends at one planet.

I know you felt strongly the answer to our problems was to lose the Heart of Darkness. I think that's when we started to go off track.

I said last week... and I believe more strongly than ever now... that the way to fix this story was to find ways to integrate the two stories effectively... so that one doesn't end and another abruptly begins. I said what I thought was needed was to give Picard a stronger through line that would tie the elements together and to pull the fountain of youth story up to act one somehow. I think I've figured out how to accomplish both those goals. Unfortunately, for me, it will require a page one rewrite. Fortunately, my sense as a writer says it will solve the major problems of the script (and raise a few questions that we'll have to resolve.)

*The tent poles are the same. Act one ends with the fight with Data followed by the discovery of the planet. Act two ends with Picard taking off the pips. Act three is Magnificent Seven leading to the Guns of Navarone.*³¹

*The first change is the maguffin.*³² *Instead of the planet's atmosphere, the de-aging effect is a space phenomenon. We'll tech it out later but it's either the radiation from the sun or something in the nebula or the Briar Patch or whatever we choose to call it. Thus, the trip up the river is not about how do we get there (I don't see the mariners in this version)... it's about going through a mysterious region of space on our way to find Data and as we do strange things begin to happen to people aboard the Enterprise. It's the classic mystery set up - what the hell is going on here? Once we see the first de-aging effects right here in act one... act two will seem a natural evolution of the narrative instead of a new start.*

This way we don't have to stop in act two for the shore leave routine... we just skip it... this accomplishes another of your suggestions that we're in the de-aging environment because we're forced to be. It's the only way to get to Data.

This also affects act three where the Guns of Navarone can be in space. The Son'a can be setting up a huge device to implode the sun or whatever and our mission is to sabotage it. This allows for the final action to be in space....

I think it works something like this:

Teaser is the Sorvino Switch sabotage by Data.

Introduce our heroes effectively somehow TBD while we establish Picard's cluttered life... This is interrupted by a message or the arrival of Worf who says that he learned at DS9 that Data has gone berserk, sabotaged the Sorvino Switch and that Admiral Dougherty has been sent to this remote unexplored region of space to terminate him. Picard sets a heading for the remote location.

Ultimately we are attacked by Data... we are finally able to beam him out and capture him due to a extremely clever plan by Picard.

We beam down to the planet to release the prisoners being held there and find...

Well, this is where the second change takes effect. I was prepared to argue for leaving it a race of children because I think it is more interesting than the "gentle, serene people living a simple life" that we've done a dozen times before. Frankly, I don't know how to make that race physically unique.

But something about this world must tempt Picard to want to stay and yet in the end, he knows there is too much to be done... and if men like him abandon the Federation to men like

Dougherty, then his life will have no meaning.

*I don't think Picard would be tempted to live on the planet of the children, so it has to be adults.*³³ *And we must personalize the temptation with our own version of Jane Wyatt*³⁴ *with whom he falls in love. This is the first clear, emotional arc we've had for Picard and it will work. It will all work, I think. I hope when you live with it for a day or two, you'll agree with me.*

*Pray for a Dodger miracle.*³⁵

The memo provided a starting point to rebuild the script from page one.





OCTOBER 1997

STRUCTURE

Screenplays are structure, according to William Goldman. It doesn't matter how good your dialogue is or even how good your characters are. If your structure fails, you have no foundation on which to build a screenplay. A good argument could be made (and Ira Behr would be the one making it if he were looking over my shoulder right now) that I had not spent enough time on the structure of the first draft.

On our television shows, the staff of writers sit in a room, sometimes for days, writing the structure on a white board before we send the individual writer out to write the teleplay. These "story breaking" sessions have a remarkable energy about them and I always encourage newer people on staff not to censor themselves, because even if they make a suggestion that doesn't work, it might spark an idea from somebody else in the room, which could then spark another idea to keep driving the story forward.

"We have to be willing to make fools of ourselves in front of each other," I like to say to new writers before we start the break. "This room is safe." By the time the writer goes off to write the script, he (or she) has every scene analyzed in the teleplay and that beat sheet helps them feel a little less lonely at their word processor.

Rick and I had only spent two days looking at the structure for the first draft. We'd never put it up on the board. This time I insisted we go through the entire process. Jonathan joined us and the three of us spent two weeks together building a new structure in my office.

By the time we were done, I felt more comfortable about the movie we were about to make than I had felt since the day I was hired.

SECOND DRAFT

As I wrote "Fade In" on Monday, October 13th, I was immediately confronted with my first decision -- where would Picard's clutter arc begin? Where was he in his life when we find him?

On *Deep Space Nine*, the series which chronicles the continuing adventures of Starfleet, the Federation was involved in a desperate war for survival against the evil Dominion. It would be nice, I felt, to be consistent with the TV show. Picard and the Enterprise might be involved in combat when we find him. I called Ira who has guided the series for the last several years. "I know this is a hard question to answer," I said. "But where do you think the Federation will be next Christmas when this movie comes out?"

Ira, who enjoys exploring the darker side of Twenty-Fourth century life, laughed and answered, "This might surprise you, knowing me. But I think things will be looking up for the Federation. The war will linger on

but it'll reach a stalemate probably by then and our stories will be more hopeful." It made sense. *Deep Space Nine* would be in the middle of its last season -- the decision had been made long ago that it would run seven seasons -- and certainly they'd want to end the series on an uplifting note.

So, it seemed combat wasn't the answer for Picard and as I sat there, I told myself it was probably just as well. Rick was not enthusiastic about the Dominion War plotline on *Deep Space Nine* and I knew he'd be reluctant to bring it to the big screen even as a tangential element.

So, I decided Picard would be awash in mundane details of duties heaped upon him by Starfleet Command as the war was winding down. It would be a far more subtle 'regeneration' for our Captain but I thought I could pull it off and I thought I could do it with humor which would be more in keeping with the tone of the film.

Writing this script was a regeneration in itself for me. From the moment I started writing it, I felt I was on board the Enterprise with these characters.

There's nothing quite like the quiet pleasure that comes with discovering a dialogue exchange that is so *right*, it even surprises you. Like a moment I found in a scene between Picard and Anij, the 300-year-old woman he meets on the planet. He's fascinated by the Baku's ability to explore the mysteries of a single moment in time:

PICARD

I wish I could spare a few
centuries to learn.

ANIJ

It took us a few centuries to
learn that it doesn't have to
take centuries to learn.

Don't ask me how I thought up that line. I didn't. I was just eavesdropping on a conversation and I heard Anij say it.

One of the greatest challenges of this next draft was to find a way to integrate the humor associated with the fountain of youth more gracefully than I had done in the first draft. In the structure, we had identified the places that these moments of humor would best fit, but it was up to me now to execute them in a way that was genuinely funny without being silly or disruptive. I wasn't quite sure how to do it.

I went back and examined what other writers had done with similar themes. For example, I watched *Monkey Business*³⁶, starring Cary

Grant, Ginger Rogers and Marilyn Monroe. A scientific experiment goes awry and Cary and Ginger wind up acting like children. This was a well reviewed picture directed by Howard Hawks (Leonard Maltin gave it three stars) but I was surprised at how quickly the childish behavior became irritating.

I wanted the audience to laugh *with* the characters, not laugh *at* them. No stupid childish behavior, I decided. And I started making a list of all the qualities of youth that people might remember fondly. I looked at my own children to remind me what was fun about being young. I watched my nine-year-old daughter Brent skip across rocks in the backyard, singing a simple melody to herself. I wrote Picard humming a nursery rhyme to himself. My grown son, Shawn, likes to sleep late -- how he can sleep through his alarm is beyond me. I wrote Worf oversleeping and missing his duty call to the Bridge. I also started to think what it might be like for a Klingon to go through puberty.

Act two of this script scared me. The best scenes in the picture were in act two... it was full of mystery, humor, romance, character conflict... but there was no action in the middle of the script. Forty pages without action. Unheard of in an "action picture." Certainly, the studio would have a problem with this. Nevertheless, I liked what I was doing so I continued, knowing the second act was eventually going to come back to haunt me.

As I started reviewing my work, I felt a lot of things had been accomplished in this new draft. For the first time, I thought we had a solid structure and clear, compelling stakes.

I revisited the three questions I had sent to Rick after the last draft:

- 1) Are the villains worthy adversaries to Picard? I thought they were. With Duffy gone, I'd moved the admiral in charge of the nefarious mission to be aboard the Son'a ship. That would give me the power of the Federation right there to confront Picard, eye to eye. Ru'afo was broad and colorful but the moral ambiguity of Admiral Dougherty was more interesting to me. He was a decent man who thought he represented a noble cause and during the film, slowly compromises his ideals to get the job done. The trick would be for the actor cast to play his part as though he were the *hero* of the piece. In fact, I thought Dougherty was the true villain of the movie and the character who might prove to be the most memorable antagonist to Picard.
- 2) Is the 'hero's journey' for Picard in place? Yes, I said again. The clutter arc was subtle, even fragile, but I thought a lot of people in the audience would identify with a life without time for meaningful pursuits. It gave Patrick a subtext to play in several scenes without ever being 'haunted'. It was light and funny but real. I thought it could work.
- 3) Are we getting all that we want out of the fountain of youth? Again, I said yes. The effects on our crew were reading warm, funny and even touching.

One of the decisions I'd made during writing had gone against Rick's wishes. In our story discussions, he'd fought against allowing the planet's regenerative powers to cure LaForge's blindness, saying it was hokey and not consistent with the fountain of youth theme. My guts told me it was the right thing to do. I liked the emotional moment it would give us.

But I also liked the fact that it would make Picard's choices more difficult. The Admiral could point to Picard's own officer as evidence of all the good that could be accomplished by stealing the magic energy from this planet. *Would Picard ask his own officer to give up his sight?* I like to give my characters moral and ethical dilemmas and I was sure that Rick would be convinced when he read the script.

I still had doubts about some things. I felt the Ba'ku in their rural simplicity were awfully conventional. And I hadn't found alien powers that made them special in a *Star Trek* sense. They just didn't seem alien enough to me. I still felt Picard was not profoundly affected enough by this planet or the people there. The clutter arc started off promisingly, but it petered out because the story never stopped long enough for Picard to become uncluttered. I felt intuitively that the missing Ba'ku powers might ultimately provide the answer for Picard, but I didn't know what they were.

My afternoons were still occupied with television. Paramount had responded very favorably to the pilot for *Manhunt*. But all of CBS' fall police dramas had failed and they lost their taste for the genre and would eventually pass. At the same time, NBC had asked me to think about creating a show for their Saturday night "Thrilllogy" line-up. Senior Vice President of Primetime Series David Nevins said they were looking for something along the lines of a modern *Incredible Hulk* or *Kung Fu*.

Writer Jeffrey Stepakoff and I teamed up to pitch them a supernatural thriller about two brothers, one evil and one good, who are in a battle over Earth. Both have harnessed the powers of the Kabbalah – an ancient study of Jewish mysticism that I'd read about in a news magazine. As we researched the subject, we learned that students of the Kabbalah are said to have vastly increased awareness of the universe. Masters are supposed to be able to change the nature of the physical world around them. NBC passed on our pitch. But I'd found the powers I needed to make my *Star Trek* aliens special.

Finally, I still felt I hadn't quite found the right dynamic between Data and the Ba'ku boy. I liked the idea that they were in effect two "children" who overcome distrust to learn from each other. The story had the potential to reinforce one of Roddenberry's strongest themes -- that there's room in the universe for all kinds of people. The Ba'ku's rejection of technology would put Data on the defensive. I allowed the boy's father to be prejudiced against Data because he was an android. And yet the boy and Data came together too easily. I wasn't quite sure what to do yet so I just moved ahead and knew I'd have to come back to them.

I had absolutely no idea what to call the movie. Stardust didn't work any more. We couldn't use *Regeneration*. We talked about *Prime Directive*, *The Betrayal*, *Breach of Promise*, *Dereliction of Duty*, *The Dishonor*, *High Treason*, *The Enemy Within*, *The Resignation*, *Apostasy* and others. None of them appealed to us. For the moment, it was just *Star Trek IX*.

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NOVEMBER 1997

PRODUCER

Rick loved the new draft (including the La Forge eyesight scene) and for the next couple of weeks, he gave me his notes each day and I would go off to make changes.

I've always thought that working with Rick must be what it was like to work with a producer like the legendary David O. Selznick³⁷. Selznick was famous for having his hands in everything. Rick has the same reputation, and he's earned it, but he does it in a extremely effective, low-keyed manner.

He convinces, he doesn't order. He nudges, he gives a little, then he nudges again, urging, applying logic, suggesting ways that might satisfy him. His micro-managing comes not from ego, I believe, but from a dedication to quality. It's hard not to like somebody who cares as much about your work as you do.

Note sessions with Rick can be agonizing and at least one writer has confided to me that he's had nightmares about meetings in which he murders Rick. Rick is a meticulous reader. So meticulous that one of our only serious fights since our partnership started was over the fact that he was attacking my prepositions.

But I pay him the most supreme compliment that any writer can ever pay a producer when I say that in the ten years we've worked together, I've never seen Rick hurt a script. Every writer in town has had less fortunate experiences with producers. It's one reason why I became a "hyphenate" – a writer-producer.

When I was starting my career, I quickly figured out that producers hire and fire writers. It didn't take a genius to see the advantage of being a writer and a producer. On the television side, writers who are successful on staff are ultimately rewarded with producer titles. In feature films, the producer's club is harder to get into.

Some producers who are not writers feel that they bring an objective view of the entire process that a writer can't appreciate. Some of them have even formed a society for the prevention of writer-producers.

To a degree, I understand their point of view. My portrait of a good producer is a guy who wears a big red "S" on his chest and stands in front of me and my screenplay, protecting us from a hail of bullets. I like the safety of that relationship. But there's also the strong instinct to control my own destiny. So, as my agent negotiated my contract for this film, he asked for an executive producer credit.

The studio promptly turned it down without prejudice. Their policy was simply not to negotiate producing credits for writers. My agent came back and asked for it again. It was important enough to me to hold up the deal to see if I could win this concession.

Why? First of all, I felt I deserved an acknowledgement for the efforts I put in as Executive Producer of the three television shows that had earned this studio a great deal of money. Second, this might be the best chance I would ever have to get a foot in the door as a producer. I felt Rick would support me, up to a point, because of all we'd been through together and I was right. Eventually, I settled for co-producer.

Rick and I went through the script line by line. In a first draft notes session with Rick, it was almost unheard of to find a page without notes. If one came along, it represented a small triumph. Then, with each passing day, as I delivered revisions, there'd be fewer and fewer pages with notes until there were none.

Sometimes I would argue in favor of a line and he would capitulate on the first day... only to come back the next day to challenge the same line... and if it lived to see another day, he'd challenge it again.

You'd have to have a very strong conviction about that line not to give in. Often, he'd read a questionable line out loud in a way that would make any writer cringe. But he was always open to argument and if I stood my ground, he'd trust my judgment.

Rick would bring this same meticulous attitude to the technology in the script. Every technical speech had to sound right. Every technical plot point had to be logical and fully explained so no questions would remain unanswered in the audience's mind. I'd been through this routine with Rick for years. He considered solid technology essential to the credibility of the franchise.

For years, the technical consultant on *Star Trek* has been Andre Bormanis. Andre has a Bachelor of Science in Physics and a Masters Degree in Science Technology and Public Policy. I'd send him pages in advance with the technical needs noted and he'd send me memos with suggestions.

Rick and I would go over the memos and try to pick language that made sense. Rick would frequently discard dozens of suggestions until the technobabble sounded right to him.

I'd write all the technical dialogue as well as I could. The secret, I always told writers, was not to depend on the technobabble to explain anything. It's there for decoration. Make sure the audience can understand what's going on *despite* the technobabble. I knew the actors hated technical dialogue (on the TV show, they used to call it "Piller filler").

And I knew as sure as I sat there that when the picture was done that Rick would come out of the screening room, as he always did, and glare at me and say, "There's too much technobabble in this film!" And we'd try to cut some out. But at this point in the process, he always

insisted that I close every techno-hole in the script. And I did.

By November 15th, I had a draft that he felt was ready to send to the studio:

{insert Nov. 15th script}



37 Selznick's numerous production credits included "Gone with the Wind", "The Prisoner of Zenda", "A Tale of Two Cities", "King Kong", -- 73 feature films in all.

REACTIONS

This was the first draft of the script that the studio had seen and their response was very enthusiastic. Don Granger called to say he thought it had the best character work in a *Star Trek* feature script since the whale movie and a deep humanistic quality in the best Roddenberry tradition. Michelle Manning told Rick that she'd never connected emotionally to any of the *Star Trek* storylines, but she loved this one. John Goldwyn particularly liked the relationship between Data and the alien boy. Everyone's favorite scene seemed to be the one in which Geordi saw his first sunrise.

Don Granger assembled the creative notes from all the studio executives and put them into one memo that arrived about a week later:

TO: STAR TREK TEAM December 3, 1997

FROM: PARAMOUNT PICTURES

RE: STAR TREK IX - notes on the 11/15/97 draft

We are very excited by the first draft of STAR TREK IX. Easily the funniest and sexiest Star Trek story to date, the wonderful reinvention's of the central characters also make this the most human. Having the crew explore the benefits and pitfalls of youth is completely refreshing, and elevates the story beyond traditional science fiction. We finally got to see Riker's and Troi's love affair; Geordi's first sunset; and Data's "childhood." Our primary concern lies with exploring these new characterizations completely, while retaining all the excitement of the genre. As we are dealing with "sacred ground," we would like to fully service the changes in our leads so that none are shortchanged. Similarly, we want to balance the wonderful human drama with enhanced science fiction elements that appeal to our core audience. Our thoughts are organized as follows: firmly establishing the stakes for the Federation and Picard; making the Son'A a more imposing villain; enhancing some of the transformations in our lead characters; and making sense of some of the science fiction elements. Please note that we are extremely pleased with the progress so far and all these notes should be viewed in that context.

THE STAKES

We need to increase the stakes for both the Federation and Picard. As written, only six hundred Ba'Ku are in jeopardy and, in the Star Trek universe, the problems of six hundred people don't really amount to all that much. We are concerned that Picard's noble defense of this small group is not broad enough to drive the next installment in the franchise. Even in Star Trek IV, the most "human" of the Star Trek movies, Earth itself perishes if Kirk fails to capture and bring back the whales. We'll discuss below fashioning the Son'A into a more formidable threat, but we would like to start thinking of ways to expand the scope of the story. Let's discuss.

We would also like to consider tying the macro stakes of the story to Picard's personal stakes. Currently, Picard takes action primarily on principle, but it might resonate better if we feel he has more at stake personally. Perhaps, Picard and Dougherty share more of a backstory. Dougherty apparently represents a faction of the Federation who feels the Prime Directive is an antiquated concept in light of the Federation's many recent challenges. Similar to the moment when the Roman Empire began to shift towards dictatorship, the Federation stands at a crossroads. In FIRST CONTACT, Picard preserved the Federation's origins, perhaps now he is called upon to save its future. Whatever we decide, it is important that we really feel Picard's dilemma.

Let's clearly explain the extent and nature of the conspiracy within the Federation. Dougherty alludes to this unspoken agreement on behalf of the Federation's senior Council members but never specifies or articulates the breadth of the conspiracy. How many Council members are corrupt? Is it an Oliver North-CIA type arrangement? Is the Council's goal just to get the benefits from the technology or do they need to make alliances, however evil, to protect themselves against further incursions into Federation space? What are the consequences to the Federation if this experiment, and alliance, fails? Clarifying the ramifications and magnitude of the conspiracy will help further define the stakes of the movie.

We would like to better establish why the future of six hundred Ba'Ku is so important. Currently it is unclear why Picard is so passionate about the future of this particular race. The "blood feud" between a few hundred Son'A and six hundred Ba'Ku seems like nothing more than a gang fight. Numerous civilizations have been eliminated by previous Star Trek megalomaniacs, so what makes the Ba'Ku special? To be blunt, with only six hundred people in the gene pool, the Ba'Ku would inbreed themselves into extinction in a few generations. Perhaps, their settlement is larger. Or maybe, the normally passive Ba'Ku provide Picard with a fantastic new battle technology in the third act. This would make them a more active participant in the finale and more important to the story. However we proceed, the future of the Ba'Ku needs to be crucial to the big picture in a fundamental way. Let's discuss.

THE SON'A

The Son'A can be more active throughout the story. As rendered, the Son'A are not yet distinct villains and they largely disappear in the second act. Ru'Afo's agenda becomes clear in the third act but, because the Son'A play such a minor role in the middle of the story, we are not as invested in their comeuppance. Their eventual defeat needs to be visually exciting and viscerally satisfying. Let's look for moments where we can learn more about the Son'A and show them as a greater threat. This establishes the stakes sooner and gives the final conflict added tension. For example:

Can we use Riker and Troi's brief investigation (p.20) to convey more information about the Son'A? The few tidbits we get do not effectively establish the Son'A's power, capability or size. What significant battles

have they won? How have they distinguished themselves as a race? Does the entire population travel in the four ships? If so, does Riker kill half their population when he destroys the two ships? If it takes a few hundred to man a ship, how many Son'A exist? If they are only a few hundred strong, why does the Federation need them as allies? Let's use this scene to establish who the Son'A are and what they represent.

We would like Ru'Afo to take control sooner. As written, Ru'Afo does not really take charge until he kills Dougherty (p112). Up to this point, it is still unclear whether Dougherty or Ru'Afo is the central villain. Perhaps, after Dougherty is unable to subdue Picard (pp.51 and 68) Ru'Afo unequivocally takes charge. Dougherty objects but, being fully immersed in the conspiracy, his threats ring hollow. As Ru'Afo points out, the last thing the Federation needs is another conflict. This should embolden Ru'Afo to do whatever he wants. This definitive seizure of power would clearly establish Ru'Afo as a more serious threat earlier in the story.

Similarly, let's understand why Ru'Afo orders reinforcements (p.60). Currently, the three large Son'A ships appear for no apparent reason. Has Ru'Afo already decided on a course of action? Is this a contingency because Dougherty cannot control Picard? Or, is this part of the experiment that Picard was not supposed to see? Let's clarify.

Also, it is unclear why Ru'Afo apparently changes tactics when the Son'A attack Picard and the Ba'Ku (p.81)? Have his intentions changed? Is he now trying to kill Picard and his crew? At this point for Ru'Afo, death or evacuation serve the same purpose. We should know when and why he decided to change his course of action. This would help illustrate how far the conflict has escalated at this point.

The Son'A should always be aware of Picard's movements. Currently, Picard not only turns the Enterprise around without anyone noticing, but he and Data examine the cloaked ship without any interference. This lack of awareness undermines the Son'A as an adversary, and dissipates any dramatic tension these scenes might provide. Let's show that Ru'Afo is constantly mindful of Picard's movements and is very close to taking action.

The Son'A should also possess technology equal to or superior to the Enterprise. Other than the metaphasic technology, the Son'A do not seem any more intimidating (and possibly less so) than the Romulans, Klingons, or Cardassians. After the decked out Enterprise E destroyed two Borg ships in FIRST CONTACT, how much of a threat are two Son'A ships going to be? Perhaps we can establish that the Son'A have had to develop a sophisticated arsenal to survive for this long. Or perhaps, they can navigate in the Briar Patch, giving them a tactical advantage over the Enterprise. As a nomadic race, the Son'A would have to adapt to the many threats of the galaxy. Let's discover these weapons early in the movie, so that the audience knows that the Son'A are not to be trifled with.

We would also like to understand why the Son'A's ships are shielded from the effects of the star. Understandably, they need protection from the star's radiation after the experiment, but wouldn't they want the benefits in the interim? The goal of Ru'Afo and Dougherty is to extend their respective life spans. Why wouldn't they start immediately? Why does Ru'Afo continue to undergo the plastic surgery? Is their aggressive behavior enhanced by the Patch? It might make more sense if they lower their shields and start drinking from the fountain immediately. Then, their intransigence to yield to Picard would be easily understandable. Let's discuss.

DOING WHAT STAR TREK DOES BEST

Let's also look at expanding our major action set pieces and introducing the next generation of elaborate gadgets. We are thrilled that the human drama is given equal footing in this story, but we also want to have as much fun with the action sequences as possible. The cataclysmic space battles and new technologies are among "what Star Trek does best." As we only have one large ship battle in the movie, let's be sure that the other set pieces are just as exciting. For example:

Perhaps we can turn the shuttle battle sequence into a rousing dogfight (p.25). As written, this confrontation feels like many of the other shuttle battles we have seen on the various television series. Let's use this set piece to build the tension in the first act. This would be a great opportunity to see a fun, small ship battle in a Star Trek movie.

In addition, maybe Picard brings with him some great new toys when he goes to the planet (p.69). Like the phaser rifles and space suits in FIRST CONTACT, the Star Trek fans love seeing new technology. Perhaps, Picard possesses a sophisticated magnetic pulse weapon or a really intricate personal shield system. Whatever we decide, Picard should have devices that offset the numerical advantage of the Son'A.

We should make every effort to make the scooter sequence (p.98) distinctive from the Endor woods sequence in RETURN OF THE JEDI. Let's discuss changing the anti-grav scooters to some other levitated cycle or hovercraft to avoid any undue comparisons.

We would like Riker's battle with the two Son'A ships to be as riveting as any Star Trek battle to date. As mentioned above, because the Son'A are not yet much of a threat, this battle is not particularly dramatic. Also, because the ships are moving slowly, the battle does not seem that thrilling. What would happen if Riker jumped to warp, or full impulse power in the Briar Patch? Perhaps, Riker creates an ingenious navigation trick, similar to the Picard Maneuver or Kirk's defeat of Khan, that confounds the Son'A and becomes known as the Riker Maneuver. However the battle is choreographed, this should be a defining sequence for the movie.

We would also like Ru'Afo's defeat to be as cinematic as possible. As stated above, as the stakes increase and the Son'A develop into a more prominent enemy, their defeat will become more satisfying. That said, we also want to ensure that the final confrontation is as explosive as possible. Perhaps, in the holo-battle Ru'Afo not only destroys the yacht, but the Enterprise as well. Although a tried and true device, the explosion of the Enterprise is always dramatic. Similar to the Next

Generation episode, "Cause & Effect," (#118) this explosion will seem real and therefore, shocking. When it turns out to be a clever ruse, the audience will cheer Picard's ingenuity and Ru'Afo's subsequent destruction. Let's discuss.

PACE AND MOMENTUM

We are concerned that the story loses momentum in the second act. As written, the first act is engrossing but, following the shuttle battle, the story occasionally lacks a sense of urgency. What is driving this section of the story? What does Picard suspect? Where are the Son'A? We would like the tension between Picard and Ru'Afo and Dougherty to continually build in this section. As mentioned above, as the stakes and the action sequences grow, the movie will have more force but we might also look at the following areas to help drive the middle of the story:

Perhaps Picard tells the Enterprise to commence freeing the hostages after Data is retrieved (p.33). This could make for a better transition to the away team going to the planet surface and builds on the momentum of the first act. Also, let's clarify what the Enterprise crew expects on the planet surface. Do they think Data is in league with the Ba'Ku, or that he, alone, is detaining the hostages? Let's make this clear. If the crew expects confrontation on the surface, this will add to the tension.

Can we smooth the transition between Data's recollection of the events and Picard's return to the planet (p.43)? This change seems abrupt and inexplicable. What makes Picard turn around? Let's make this shift more dramatic. Let's see Picard ordering the ship about. Perhaps we could include reaction shots from Ru'Afo and Dougherty when told that Picard is heading back. The distrust between Picard and the Son'A should grow in this scene. Let's discuss.

Perhaps, we can also show alarms sounding on Ru'Afo's ship when Picard and Data approach the cloaked ship (p.46). As stated above, Ru'Afo should be aware of this intrusion. By driving Picard and Ru'Afo closer to a confrontation, the tension in the second act will remain heightened.

On a similar note, maybe we can again cut to Dougherty and Ru'Afo's reaction to Picard's investigation (p.48). Perhaps, this is when they start formulating a contingency plan to eliminate the Enterprise. If Dougherty has carte blanche from the Council, wouldn't he go to all lengths to ensure success? As we continue to see the battle lines drawn, the drama of this section increases.

Let's make Dougherty's orders to Picard more forceful (p.51). Dougherty should pull rank on Picard at this point and issue a direct order. Picard's refusal to obey then becomes even more incendiary, leading up to their confrontation.

Perhaps, Ru'Afo takes a defensive posture at this point. As mentioned above, now that Picard has directly refused Dougherty's order, Ru'Afo realizes that he must take charge. Maybe, he sends troops to the surface to guard the cloaked ship, or goes to yellow alert. Let's continue to show that the situation is escalating towards a showdown.

We would like to make Picard's conversation with Dougherty (pp.61-65)

more electric. As written, we are unsure whether Picard's decision to rebel is completely earned. Perhaps, the end of this conversation can be more emotionally charged, with Dougherty threatening to remove Picard from Command if he does not submit immediately. When Picard ultimately relieves himself of command, the gravity of the situation will be much more dramatic and understandable. Let's discuss.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Riker & Troi

We would like to fully explore Riker's and Troi's love affair. As rendered, the moments they share are funny and often sexy, but we are concerned that the more serious aspects of their relationship are never fully addressed. For years, the palpable sexual tension between them has begged for resolution, so their consummation should carry a great deal of weight. If we play this simply for laughs, the significance of their reunion might be lost. Without detracting from the humor of their scenes, let's show more of their love affair and give it a proper resolution. For example:

Let's uncover more of Troi's feelings about the resumption of their relationship. Currently, their shameless flirting at the beginning undermines Troi because she comes across like a vacuous teenager, rather than the sophisticated woman we know her to be. It might be more interesting if she resists Riker's initial advances - if only to continue the game they have played for the past seven years. Troi should be apprehensive about taking this leap. Let's show more of her perspective, so that we know she does not take this decision lightly.

Similarly, we would like Riker to work harder in seducing Troi. In Troi's office, Riker oafishly kisses Troi and a few scenes later, they are in post-coital bliss. Is Troi this easy? This moment should be earned. The Briar Patch brings out Riker's youthful exuberance, so let's see him really sweep Troi off her feet. As mentioned above, maybe Troi does not give in at first - making Riker more determined. Perhaps, this is why he shaves his beard - to literally become the man he once was. Maybe, Riker becomes more daring in an attempt to impress Troi. Riker knows that seducing Troi takes sophistication, nuance and effort. Whatever his course of action, the consummation of this relationship should be well deserved.

We should also clarify whether Riker and Troi's amorous feelings are natural or created by the Briar Patch. As written, it is unclear whether the energy fluctuations created these feelings, or if the Briar Patch simply weakened their resistance - the equivalent of an interstellar vodka tonic. Let's show that these feelings have always been prevalent, and that the Briar Patch simply undermines their previous resolve. At the end of the movie, we want to be sure this affair was meant to be.

On that note, we need a more definitive resolution to Riker's and Troi's storyline. Following their brief kiss (p.69), their affair is never again discussed. Unlike Worf's puberty or Picard's hair, the consequences of this affair do not dissipate once the Enterprise leaves the Briar Patch. After they leave, will Riker and Troi revert to their previous dynamic, or is this the beginning of the next chapter in their relationship? Let's address their future. Perhaps, we can create more moments between them in the second and third acts. Or maybe, we could include a scene

or moment at the end that clearly indicates the direction of their relationship. This affair has taken so long to materialize that it requires a definite conclusion. Let's discuss.

Worf

Let's consider giving Worf more to do. As rendered, Worf is too often an observer to the action, rather than a participant. Because he is such a popular character, we would like Worf to be actively involved in the story. Let's see more of Worf's expertise in solving problems, and take further advantage of his hilarious, yet often unintentional, moments. Worf delivers some of the best lines in this movie. For example:

Can we create more embarrassing moments from Worf's puberty than just pimples, drowsiness and hair growth? We witness a few of his innocuous bodily functions, but what are the other effects of puberty on a Klingon? While Worf's gorch is amusing, maybe we could get a bigger laugh from a more obviously teenage moment. Additionally, Worf would be perplexed by the blemish. "I haven't had one of these in years... I swear." Then, when he later experiences out of control hair growth, he grumbles out loud, "if figures that, of all of us, only I would get the downside of youth." Let's really experience the humor and humanity of this proud warrior's awkward regression.

Also, we would like to consider increasing Worf's role in the shuttle battle (p.25). As mentioned above, this scene can serve as a fun action sequence but it can also show Worf at his best. Perhaps, feeling the effects of the Briar Patch, Worf assumes control from Picard and aggressively takes the fight to Data. Or maybe Worf, and not Picard,

deduces that a tachyon burst will force Data to reset his shields (p.28). Or, on a different tone, perhaps Worf's weak stomach betrays him in the heat of battle and he is forced to excuse himself while the dogfight continues. Maybe Worf even tries to give Picard instructions while stifling the urge to get sick. Whatever we decide, we should make this exciting sequence replete with moments that are particular to Worf.

On a side note, let's provide a better explanation for Worf coming to the Enterprise. As written, Worf comes aboard to discuss security arrangements for the Manzar colonies. This seems too convenient. Let's think of a clever reason for him to be pulled from Deep Space Nine. Perhaps a celebration or a promotion of one of Worf's former ensign's. Worf's inclusion should be important and necessary.

Beverly

Like Worf, we would like Beverly to be a more significant character in the story. Beverly has played a relatively minor role in the previous two movies and perhaps we can find more for her to do in this story. As written, Beverly enjoys a few, good brief exchanges with Troi, but remains essentially in the background for most of the story. Let's increase her presence throughout. For example:

Perhaps, Beverly helps Geordi with his examination of Data (p.41). As the ship's doctor and part-time forensic expert, she could help analyze Data's recent meltdown.

Maybe, Beverly and Worf engage the Son'A in the fight sequence on the

trail (p.83). Perhaps, the energy from the Patch enables Beverly to complete some old combat training that she was never able to finish at the Academy. The reinvigorated Beverly, and the now aggressive Worf, team to dispose of the Son'A threat together.

Perhaps, Beverly helps Data with his fascination of children. As the only parent of our central characters, maybe she tells Data a brief anecdote about raising Wesley that further shows Data the unadulterated joy of being a child.

On a different tact, perhaps Beverly gets a little envious of Anij's connection with Picard. Beverly and Picard's affair used to be a great source of tension on the show. Maybe Picard's new hairline and her renewed spirit rekindle amorous feelings in Beverly. Although she tries to suppress them, maybe an occasional comment slips out.

Barclay

We would like to consider reducing Barclay's role and filling this void with Beverly, Worf, or a new character. Barclay had a great cameo in FIRST CONTACT, but his popularity is questionable. The cheers from his appearance were more of the, "hey great, they included everybody" variety than effusive Barclay support. As mentioned above, both Worf and Beverly could benefit from more time on screen. Worf, in particular, might be a more natural choice in aiding Riker in his battle with the Son'A ships. However, this might be another opportunity for Beverly to reinvent herself. Or, similar to Hawk's appearance in FIRST CONTACT, perhaps we could create an original character who would play a significant role in the next movie. Let's discuss.



MISC. TREK STUFF

Let's clarify how the aging process on the planet works. As written, it is unclear who is affected by this process, and at what age this reversal begins. How are the Ba'Ku children affected? At what rate do they grow? Is Artim really twelve? Since the plausibility of this process is crucial, it needs to be clear and make sense.

Can we provide a complete description of the pitfalls of traveling through the Briar Patch. Although Picard briefly describes the region (p.16), it is unclear why this part of space is so difficult to traverse. What happens if you go faster than one-third impulse power? How does it interfere with navigation? Perhaps, Picard gives a more thorough analysis of the Patch in this scene. Then the battlefield will be more clearly drawn in the final confrontations.

We would like to state the Prime Directive early in the story. Although most fans have heard the Directive many times before, the casual movie-go'er might be unaware of the policy. Perhaps, in Ru'Afo's first conversation with Dougherty (p.13), we can articulate the Prime Directive and explain why the duck blind is necessary. Perhaps we can also explain why such brief observation periods are mandated.

Let's start thinking about possible cameos for DS9 and Voyager cast members. These were extremely popular in FIRST CONTACT and might provide for some great moments in this movie.

A few minor Picard notes:

1. Can Picard offer a better explanation for initially disobeying orders (p.12)? As rendered, it seems out of character for Picard to have such casual disregard for procedure. In battle, Picard has been allowed some latitude to maneuver, but he should have a more plausible justification for going after Data. Picard is a stickler for duty, and we might want to alter the tone of his conversation with Geordi to reflect that, under certain circumstances, bending the rules is allowed.
2. Let's make Picard issues a more formal apology to the Ba'Ku for the intrusion (p.36). Picard has always been the vanguard for upholding the Prime Directive. It would be totally in his character to be contrite for the Federation's recent actions and leave as quickly as possible. This creates trust between Picard and the Ba'Ku, and also establishes Picard's position on the sanctity of the Prime Directive. Let's discuss.

Page Notes:

1. (p.1) - Let's make it clear how long the Federation and Son'A have been observing the Ba'Ku.
- ** We would like to see the sketches of the Ba'Ku's appearance as soon as you are ready.
2. (p.4) - Are there any signs that Data has received an external wound?
3. (p.4) - Let's make it clear that the action is going on unbeknownst to the Ba'Ku.

4. (p.11) - Let's clarify why Data is needed for this mission.
5. (p.24) - Is Dougherty telling Picard the truth, or is he intentionally misleading him?
6. (p.28) - In Picard and Worf's dialogue, let's fully explain the tachyon burst so that when they use it again in the finale, the audience clearly knows this is the correct course of action.
7. (p.31) - It is unclear why Picard and Worf must destroy Data if they do not act immediately.
8. (p.36) - are the Ba'Ku upset at being spied upon? Should there be some reference to their feelings in this situation? They might come across as soft if they have no reaction at all.
9. (p.41) - When was Geordi previously not feeling well? Let's make this more clear.
10. (p.52) - Data's punchline is great, but perhaps he should say the complete line.
11. (p.60) - Can we show the contentment on Picard's face as he shares this moment with Geordi? Seeing Picard's satisfaction at the end of this scene makes his decision to reject Dougherty's plan that much more dramatic.
12. (p.60) - Where did the Son'A ships come from? Have they been there all this time? Why does Ru'Afo call for the reinforcements? Let's clarify.
13. (p.66) - Why is Ru'Afo still getting the treatments? We need to explain why the Son'A still have their shields up against the metaphasic energy they so crave.
14. (p.67) - How is Riker aware of Picard's agenda? Picard has been in civilian clothes on other away missions, so why does Riker immediately assume command? This needs to be more clear.
15. (p. 79 & 82) - Gallatin orders the Son'A phasers on stun on p. 79, but in the battle, the Son'A seem to be shooting to kill. We need a better understanding of how intense the conflict is at this juncture.
16. (p.88) - Let's make sure to payoff Artim's fear of being ostracized later in the script.
17. (p.106) - Again, are the Son'A phasers set to stun or kill? This can be more clear.
18. (p.113) - What Starfleet personnel have quarters on the Son'A ship? Let's clarify.

Okay, here's another one of those critical moments where the decisions you make can change the entire direction of the movie. Ask yourself what you'd have done as the writer at this juncture. There are only three months left before production begins so the choices you make better be good ones.

The notes from Patrick and the studio raised several difficult questions that Rick and I had to consider. At the core was the most fundamental question of all: was this 'change of pace' of ours too much of a change of pace? Were the stakes too low? Was the story too soft? Was the action too small? Everybody had endorsed our original plan to emulate the warm and funny *Star Trek: The Voyage Home* but would it be possible to do that kind of movie without sacrificing the "position of action heroes" that Patrick felt strongly about? If so, should we abandon this latest structure and re-build it once more -- this time as a stronger adventure story?

Rick and I hated the notion of undertaking structural revisions just as we were about to begin prep. That would create chaos for all the production people. Plus we still felt we were telling the story we wanted to tell in an effective manner. But was it, as Patrick put it, "an extended episode of the series" (a description that would be repeated by others later on.) Yes, I had to admit this story would play well on television -- television shows often focus on character -- more so, I think, than contemporary action movies do. But at the same time, I continued to feel there had been many great films, some of which I've already mentioned here like *The Seven Samurai* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, that created sweeping epics from similar stakes. I believed this story could fill the big screen.

As the day ended after a long meeting, Rick, Jonathan and I decided that we would protect the basic structure of the script but that each and every action sequence would be revised until everyone was happy with the level and quality of action in the picture. And to heighten the stakes, there would be no suggestion that elderly members of the Federation council were doing this out of personal motives. We would make it clear in Dougherty and Picard's confrontation that this represented an internal crisis for the Federation -- it was an attack, Picard would say, on its very soul.

The rest of the notes would be easier to solve by comparison. Our course firmly set, I went back to my office and started making revisions. These revisions would continue until four weeks before the picture opened in theaters...





PRE-PRODUCTION

December 1997 - March 1998

PREP

As pre-production got underway, changes, large and small, were made every day. Space precludes me from taking you through each new draft of the script. Instead, I'll concentrate now on the specific sequences that required the bulk of our attention before they were ready to go before the camera.

It would take about three months to prepare the script for production. This would be the responsibility of Executive Producer/Production Manager Marty Hornstein who reported to Rick. (In features, a producer outranks an Executive Producer; in television, it's the reverse. I have no idea why.) Marty's first job was to budget the current screenplay to see how much it would cost to produce as written.

He started with a "breakdown" of the script, scene by scene -- essentially a list of everything that would be necessary to make the movie, including the number of actors, extras, costumes, wigs, props, sets, the amount of film, camera equipment, etc., as well as the number of behind-the-scenes crew necessary to make things happen -- everyone from assistant directors to food caterers. He sent the script to the department heads who needed it to prepare cost estimates. Script distribution included the production designer, the set designers, the art department staff, the costume designers, the hair and make-up designers, the construction team, the camera department, the post production and visual effects people, the transportation department, the distant location scouts, the casting personnel and many more -- eventually, over a hundred people.

As soon as the script was distributed, a synopsis of it showed up on the Internet.

Hollywood gossip isn't new but the net has brought a new and disturbing twist by creating public impressions and opinions of a product that isn't even a product yet. Some individuals who run their own entertainment web sites go to extraordinary lengths to get their hands on unfinished scripts or sneak into test screenings of unfinished films. They want the "honor" of being the first to preview the new movie.

Whoever wrote the synopsis of the script did a lousy job. Have you ever heard someone try to explain a joke? Well, that's what it was like to read his description of my script. Readers on the net responded by posting messages in *Star Trek* bulletin boards saying how unhappy they were about the new movie. I started getting angry letters. Some were from people outraged that Picard would have a romance with anyone other than Beverly Crusher (there'd been sexual tension between them in the past). One letter was even from an unhappy librarian who condemned me for perpetuating a negative stereotype of librarians.

Harmless? Up to a point. But later, *Entertainment Weekly* would quote these sentiments in an article that said fans were not enthusiastic about the upcoming "kinder, gentler *Trek*"³⁸ film. So, now an opinion on a movie that had never been seen by anyone because it didn't even exist yet was being passed on to a national readership.

We're talking about Buzz. Buzz can kill a movie before it ever opens. I don't know what to do about Buzz. But I know, in the creative process, I have to ignore it. Which is what I did.

ACTION

My first priority was to add an action beat with Picard, Data and Anij in the middle of the script. That seemed to be everyone's first note. Rick and I decided that when Data had taken the hostages on the planet, some Son'a officers at the cloaked holoship might have managed to elude him. They could still be there waiting to be rescued by Ru'afo. When our heroes find the ship, it could lead to action. But to make it unique and "original," we decided to hide the ship on the bottom of a lake instead of a meadow:

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - DAY³⁹

Picard, Data and the Ba'ku have climbed down to the lakeside where Data is exploring with a tricorder...

DATA

Captain, I'm showing a massive hydrothermal flow... it's interfering with other tricorder functions...

PICARD

Hydrothermal flow?

ANIJ

There's a network of underground aquifers running off the lake...

PICARD

Is there any access?

ANIJ

Not since the damn was constructed... there's no way to get in...

ARTIM

Yes, there is...

Off their reactions...

ANGLE BY THE WATERFALL

as Artim leads Picard, Data, Anij and Sojef along a dangerous precipice under the falls... behind them the rest of the Ba'ku watch from a safe vantage point...

ARTIM

We come down here all the time...

As they enter an open cavern, a stream of water flowing out along the bottom...

SOJEF

When we get back, you and I are going to have a talk about boundaries, Artim...

INT. CAVERN - DAY

Data and Picard use palm beacons to light the way... the walls are dripping wet and there is only a narrow path surrounded by muddy water oozing it's way toward the waterfall... stalactites and stalagmites and other dripping stones are all over... colorless crustaceans and massive beetles scatter away from the feet of the people as they move along the path...

DATA

Sir...

He moves to an odd print he sees on the ground... Picard examines it with him...

DATA

This print would have been made by the boot of one of the isolation suits.

PICARD

Like the one you were wearing that day?

DATA
Yessir.

They move deeper in...

WIDE SHOT - A GALLERIE OF A CAVE SYSTEM (MATTE SHOT - (OPTICAL)

as they move deeper in...

THE PALM BEACON BEAM

shining on the wet walls... moves to a chamber... and reflects off something metal...

PICARD

reacts, moves the group toward the chamber... as they enter...

INT. CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

to see they have been transformed into ad hoc quarters... with a couple of bunks, some high tech equipment, even a stove... the metal reflection came from a pot of beans on the stove...

ARTIM
I didn't know this was down here.

DATA
Neither did I.

PICARD
There was nothing about this in your mission agenda?

Data casually inspects the pot of beans.

DATA
Nossir. I believe we should depart the premises, sir.

PICARD
Why?

DATA
The beans are still hot.

Picard reacts and begins to move the people out...

INT. CAVERN - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

but as they come out... they are fired on by two Son'a officers... as the shots miss and hit the cave walls, water comes out of the holes they make... Picard and Data pull their phasers and fire as Sojef grabs Artim and all retreat into the darkness now punctuated by plasma charges...

NEW ANGLE - (OPTICAL)

as our group finds themselves backed into a smaller cave...

PICARD
Apparently you didn't take the entire mission team hostage when you went crazy, Commander...

DATA
A significant oversight. I am sorry, sir. As I said, the hydrothermal flow interfered with sensor...

He's interrupted by several blasts from the Son'a outside their entrance... the shots hit the wall behind them which breaks apart and water begins to fill the room...

SOJEF
Artim!

The boy disappears into the flowing water as it fills the cave... Data virtually dives in and brings him out gasping for breath... Anij struggles to keep her head above the water as it quickly rises, filling the chamber... they try to make their way to the only exit... but as they do, the Son'a outside fire at them preventing their escape... the water is up to their necks now... and Picard desperately seeks a solution... he sees...

P.O.V. - THE CEILING

A strong trickle of water coming from one spot just outside the exit to the chamber...

RESUME PICARD - (OPTICAL)

as he aims his phaser...

PICARD

Data!

Data understands, hands Artim back to Sojef and aims his phaser at the same spot... they fire together...

ANGLE - THE CEILING - (OPTICAL)

as the phaser fire hits it... it blasts open a hole that sends muddy water pouring down and then the force of that water pushes the hole wider...

THE SON'A

react as they see the hole's about to collapse... and they start to retreat but...

A LARGE SECTION OF THE CEILING

caves in... and a huge force of water falls into the cavern...

THE SON'A

disappear into a muddy deluge that swallows them up and clearly kills them...

ANGLE

as the first burst of water subsides and the flow evens out... Picard pulls Anij and Data helps Sojef and Artim out of the water... but the cavern has been turned into a raging river... yelling...

ANIJ
How do we get out now?

PICARD
Hold on to me...

She grabs on in the intimate hug that jeopardy brings... and Picard eases out into the flow of water and lets the current take him... Data follows suit with Artim and Sojef, the latter not enjoying being intimate with an android. Off his unhappy look --

DATA
I am capable of floating in the event of an emergency, sir. It would be wise for you to hold on.

Sojef knows a good idea when he hears one... and they move into the water and let the current take them...

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

as they all come out in the new river and fall over the waterfall and splash harmlessly in the water several yards below... other Ba'ku move to rescue them...

WITH PICARD AND ANIJ

bonded together by water... get their bearings... she looks to him with appreciation...

ANIJ

You can let go now.

He grins lightly and does... Data, Sojef and Artim are pulled up on shore by others... from above, at the damn --

BA'KU#2

Sojef, look at this! In the lake!

Picard and Anij look up and start to climb up to see what he's talking about...

ANGLE

as they get to the top of the damn and look to see...

THE LAKE - (OPTICAL)

is slowly draining... revealing a mud-covered cloaked ship...

Rick called me a week or so after I wrote the new sequence.

"I went to a preview of *Titanic* last night."

"Is it as good as they say?"

"It's amazing. But it's three hours of people trying to keep their heads above water."

"Ours is muddy water."

"It's still water."

"I could change it to mud. Thick, heavy mud. Nobody on the *Titanic* died from mud."

So I changed the water to mud. But the truth is, I hated the sequence. It was gratuitous action, not at all organic to the story.

Marty Hornstein returned with a preliminary budget. I'm not at liberty to discuss the final budget, but I can tell you that his estimate for the current script was tens of millions of dollars more than the studio intended to give us to produce this movie. From this moment on, all creative decisions would be affected by our need to control the budget. The studio heard the numbers and very simply said: bring it down.

There's only one way to bring the budget down and that's to cut things out. In a movie like this, that generally means action and special effects. So, at the same time the studio was telling us we needed *more* action to make the picture better, they were also telling us we needed to *lose* action to meet the budget.

If we had to lose action, I argued to Rick, then let's lose the gratuitous action that we'd just put in act two. Yes we need some kind of action there, but let's keep it simple. We'll put the ship under water, we'll have a great special effect when we reveal it, we'll heighten the mystery. Our people can go into the holoship and one of the Son'a crewmen comes out of the hologram and starts shooting and we fire back and he goes down and that's it. It's simple, comparatively cheap, and it'll give us a couple of jolts in act two.

Can you believe it? The writer suggesting they throw out the last two weeks of his work? Look, if I'd been passionate about this sequence, I would have fought for it. But if we didn't cut here, we'd have to cut something else out that I did care about.

And a surprising thing is that cutting things out of a script can be liberating. I can't tell you how often I've made budget cuts only to say to myself -- hey, you know what? It's better now.

That's how I felt about this rewrite:

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - DAY - LOOKING DOWN TO SEE A SMALL LAKE - (OPTICAL)

Picard, Data and the Ba'ku have moved toward a dam where Data is having trouble with his tricorder...

DATA

Tricorder functions are limited due to heavy deposits of kelbonite in these hills...

PICARD

How about a passive radiation scan?

Data adjusts his tricorder... reacts...

DATA

Curious, there appear to be strong neutrino emissions coming from the lake...

Staying with Data as he follows the tricorder to the edge of the lake... a brief pause... and then in a



Harold Lloyd sort of moment, he steps into the lake up to his ankles, pauses again to look at the tricorder and then continues to walk straight into the lake until he disappears under water.

ARTIM

reacts, astounded... looks to Picard...

ARTIM

Can he breathe under water?

PICARD

Data doesn't breathe.

ARTIM

Won't he rust?

PICARD

(smiles to himself)

No.

The boy turns his wide eyes back toward the lake.

UNDERWATER - DATA (OPTICAL)

An eel and a fish investigate him as he stands on the lake bottom, examining his tricorder...

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Data emerges at a distance from the others... calling --



DATA

Sir, I believe I know what is causing the neutrino emissions...

He begins to climb to the top of the earthen dam. As he does...

ARTIM

(fascinated)

Are there other machines like him in the offland?

SOJEF

The offland is no concern of yours.

ANGLE WITH DATA

He reaches the top of the dam and turns a heavy wheel that might usually require the strength of two men, opening a floodgate... the water runs off and as we push to the falling water...

TIME CUT:

WITH PICARD

reacting as he looks down at the lake...

ANGLE (OPTICAL)

a strange displacement of water appearing as the lake drains... something invisible is sitting in the water... a bird lands on top of it... and as the water sinks lower, spilling off the sides of the invisible object, the shape is revealed to be that of a cloaked spaceship.

PICARD

As Data rejoins him, holding his tricorder...

DATA

The vessel is clearly Federation in origin, Captain.

PICARD

(quoting Dougherty)

'Just a few loose ends to tie up.'

As they move to a rowboat... Artim begins to follow but Sojef puts a firm arm on his shoulder.

SOJEF

We're not interested in such things. Anij looks to Sojef...

ANIJ

I am.

And she hops on board the rowboat with Picard and Data... decidedly not trusting either of them to go alone...

PICARD

It might be wiser for you to stay on shore.

Anij's answer is to grab an oar and push them away from shore... as Data and Picard exchange a glance, Picard takes the oar from her and...

WIDE - (OPTICAL)

Picard, Anij and Data row closer to the invisible ship.

CLOSER - THE ROWBOAT - (OPTICAL)

Data presses controls on his tricorder. A hatch opens. Picard and Data draw phasers...

INT. HOLOGRAPHIC SHIP/VILLAGE - (OPTICAL)

As they climb in to find themselves in an identical image of the Ba'ku village. Anij is stunned...

DATA

(off tricorder)

It is a holographic projection.

Moving to a gap that shows the metal holo-grid...

DATA (CONT'D)

Incomplete, I might add.

PICARD

(to Anij)

What you're seeing is a computer driven image created by photons and forcefields...

ANIJ

I know what a hologram is, Captain. The question is -- why would someone want to create one of our village?

PICARD
(considering)
Data, if you were following the
children and discovered this
ship...

A beat as his mind works...

DATA
It is conceivable I was shot to
protect the secret of its
existence.

PICARD
(nods, musing aloud)
Why duplicate the village except...
to deceive the Ba'ku...

ANIJ
Deceive us?

PICARD
To move you off this planet. You go
to sleep one night in your
village... wake up the next morning
in this flying holodeck transported
en masse. Within a few days you'd
be relocated on a similar planet
without ever realizing it.

DATA
Why would the Federation or the
Son'a wish to move the Ba'ku?

PICARD
I don't know.

We may notice a look in Anij's eyes - she knows why
but doesn't intend to say. Picard and Data don't
notice her reaction...

ANGLE - (OPTICAL)

Suddenly wham! -- a plasma charge is fired from the
shadows of the "village" hologram... and then another
and another... the shots hit walls revealing portions
of the holo-grid (an effect we will see again later
during the final action). Plasma ricochets off the
walls spraying sparks over them all... as Data fires
back, Picard grabs Anij and shoves her out the hatch
for her safety...

ANGLE OUT THE HATCH - (OPTICAL)

as she falls several yards into the water making a big
splash... Picard turns back and starts firing...

INT. HOLO-SHIP - (OPTICAL)

A brief, intense exchange of shots... creating more
gaps in the holo-image... and finally a Son'a officer
falls off the roof of a holo-building, unconscious.

PICARD
Computer, end program and decloak
the vessel.

And as the holo-image DEMATERIALIZES, they're
standing on a holodeck.

EXT. HOLO-SHIP - (OPTICAL)

DECLOAKING... Anij splaying her arms to keep afloat in
the water... Picard and Data stick their heads out
of the hatch...

ANIJ
I can't swim!

Data and Picard promptly jump in after her...

PICARD
(reaching for her)
Don't panic...

He safely grabs her...

ANIJ
I've been shot at... thrown into
the lake out of an invisible ship
that's come to abduct us all...
what's there to panic about?

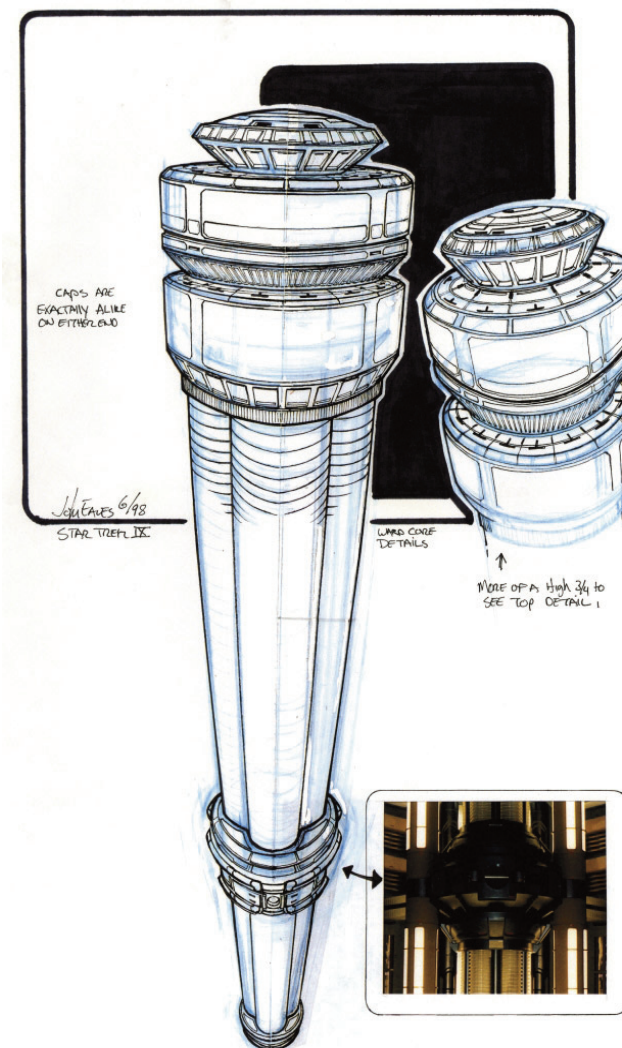
Data twists his neck a certain way and we hear a
slight technical re-alignment and suddenly he
floats...

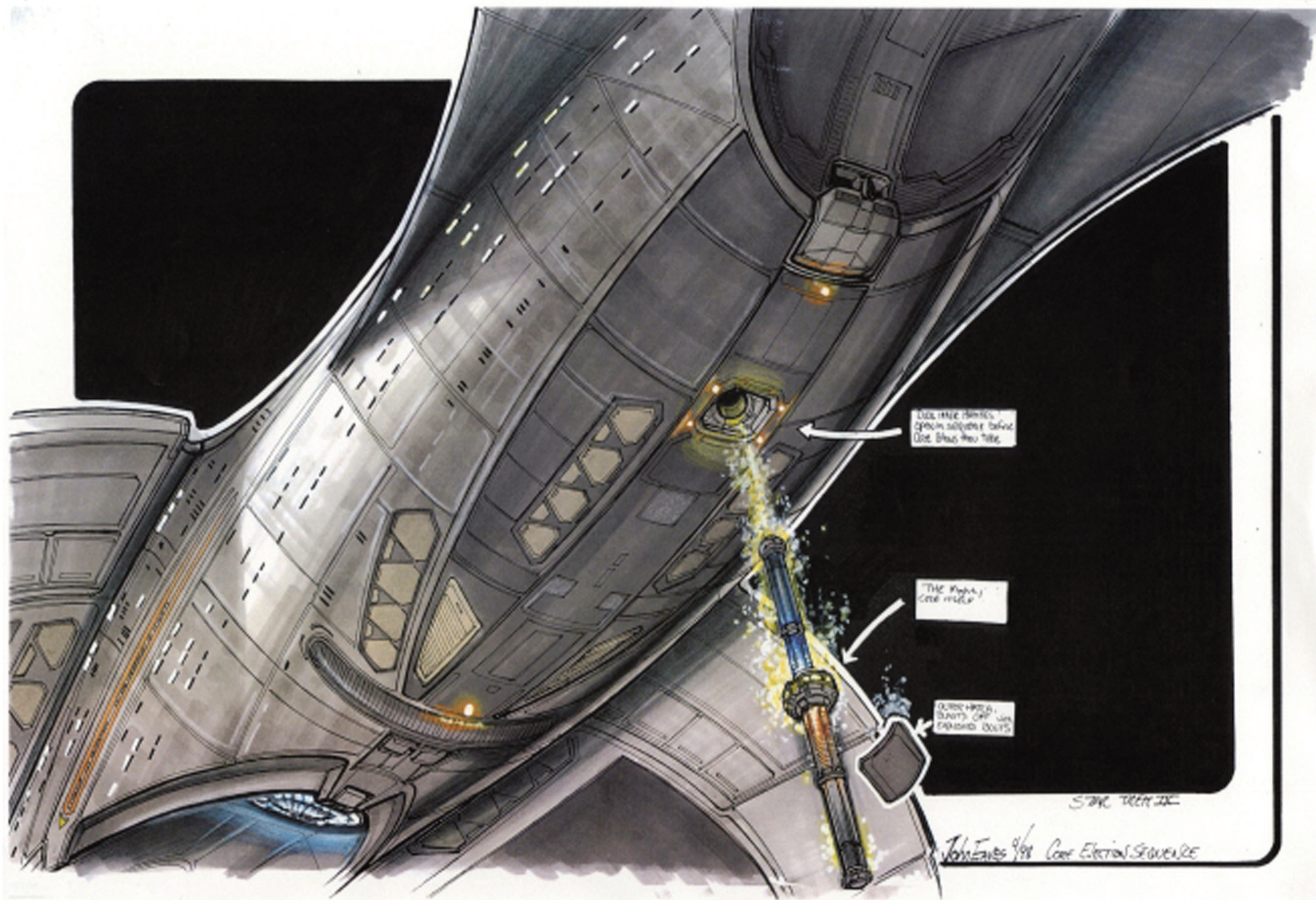
DATA
In the event of a water landing, I
have been designed to serve as a
flotation device.

Anij hangs on to Data as Picard swims over to retrieve
the rowboat...

As pre-production continued, all the sequences with visual effects
continued to go through revisions as storyboards were developed by Co-
Producer Peter Lauritson who would be in charge of the opticals⁴⁰ to be
added in post production and Jonathan Frakes whose direction had to
be coordinated with those optical effects. Until now, my imagination had
no limits, but the storyboards made clear what could be done in a
sequence like the discovery of the holoship based on the budget and
the available technology.

I'd study the storyboard, make certain it was consistent with the needs
of the story, and then I'd rewrite the action in the sequence to follow the
storyboard.





USE THREE THIRDS
OPENING BEFORE
DOT SHOWS THE TUBE

THE SHUTTLE
CUTS OFF

SHUTTLE
CUTS OFF
EXPLOSION

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

John Fries 9/01 Core Ejection Sequence

THE END

The studio wanted the final confrontation to be as explosive as possible and Patrick felt this was one of the most important places for Picard to be an action hero. I understood his concern.

We liked the idea of using a “Sorvino Switch” to fool the villains just as they had intended to fool the Ba’ku but it forced Picard to do all of his heroics off camera. In addition, the destruction of the collector seemed an afterthought and the final jeopardy that took Ru’afo to his doom felt tacked on.

The first thing I did to give Picard a more active role in the resolution was to make the Son’a first officer, Gallatin, less inclined to help. He finally turns only when confronted by the force of Picard’s personality:

INT. SON’A BRIG - (OPTICAL)⁴¹

Picard has climbed the rear wall with help from two Ba’ku, examines the forcefield generators in the ceiling.

ANIJ
(a warning)

Jean-Luc...

Gallatin arrives... armed with a hand weapon. Aiming it at Picard, he turns off the forcefield...

GALLATIN
Come with me.

Picard measures him for a moment then comes out, smiles ‘don’t worry’ to Anij... Gallatin restores the field and motions for Picard to exit...

INT. SON’A CORRIDOR

walking to a turbolift... unusually cordial considering the circumstances --

PICARD
It must have been strange for you.
(off his look)
When you were a hostage.
Surrounded by all the friends and families you knew so many years ago. All of them looking exactly as they did. Almost like... looking through the eyes of childhood again.

Gallatin presses a panel at the lift... Picard fixes his eyes on him, evenly --

PICARD
And here you are closing those eyes... trying not to see what the bitterness has done to the Son’a... how it’s turned Ru’afo into a madman... and to you.
(beat)
It’s turned you... into a coward.
(off his reaction)
A man who denies his conscience.

The turbolift arrives...

GALLATIN
Get in.

Picard enters...

INT. TURBOLIFT - CONTINUOUS

PICARD
A coward... without the moral courage to prevent an atrocity. You offend me.

GALLATIN
(incredulous)
Is this how a Federation officer pleads for his life?

PICARD
I’m not pleading for my life. I’m pleading for yours.
(beat)
You can still go home, Gal’na.

Gallatin looks at Picard a long, miserable beat, then...

GALLATIN
Computer, close turbolift doors.

The doors close. Gallatin lowers his weapon.

And then Rick and I went to work on a battle between Ru’afo and Picard on board the massive collector in space. The greatest problem was avoiding a similar climax to the movie *Star Trek Generations*. At the end of that movie, the villain was trying to launch a weapon into a sun that would destroy a planet. So was our villain. I suggested we change the sun to Saturn-like rings around the planet. The fountain of youth effect could come from metaphasic dust in the rings. (They would also give our space shots a unique look.)

But there were other problems. After watching sequences from the previous two films, I realized there was a danger that the action itself might also resemble the final fight in *Generations*:



TO: RICK & JONATHAN
FROM: MICHAEL
RE: THE ACTION FINALE

As I said, I'm really not so concerned about the hull sequence in First Contact but the similarities I saw in Generations disturb me. Let me list the ones I remember:

1. Maguffin is something to be launched and ignited that will destroy a planet.
2. Mano a mano. Picard and villain battle one on one.
- 2A. Fisticuffs, no shooting.
3. Picard disabling controls as time running out.
4. Danger of falling.
5. Villain dies at controls that Picard reconfigured.

Differences:

- A. Setting.
- B. De-aging morph.⁴²

Some of the things (like #1, & #5) can't really be changed at this point. So we should look hard at the other three.

Overnight thoughts. Everything costs time and money:

Re: #2/2A Make it three on three. Worf and Data provide covering fire for Picard. Supporting players give us a phaser battle.

Re: #3 Make it more of a climbing-race to the injector sequence instead of Picard getting to the controls so early... maybe Picard can't transport over so easily... Ru'afo has put up shields. But Worf can get him through a pinhole of some sort on a low level of the collector... and then he has to climb a long way as time is running out... the disarming process at the top is not so complicated... it's getting there that's hard... Ru'afo climbs trying to block him...

If we're three on three, Picard can be blocked by one of the Son'a on the way up the structure and knock him off to his death... if it's one on one... it can be a bungi jumping type fight between Picard and Ru'afo that Picard wins long enough to get to the injector and get the circuit before Ru'afo gets back in time to be launched.

Give Picard and anyone else 24th century ratchets and climbing tools to use in his climbing...

Make the structural elements reflective like mirrors to create multiple images of Picard and Ru'afo and others to give a weird "Lady From Shanghai"⁴³ effect to the final sequence. Make the space where Picard has to go to disarm the injector incredibly small, like room for only one and a half people, so that the final grappling is cramped and Picard and Ru'afo are virtually pressed together intimately like lovers.

Let's talk.

After much discussion and many different versions, the final action sequence looked like this:

INT. SON'A BRIDGE⁴⁴

WORF
Captain...

He motions to the digital display... the countdown has started over, counting backwards at 02:55 now... Picard reacts... Gallatin works the controls...

GALLATIN
The separation protocols have been reset on board the collector... I can't override...

PICARD
Scan for lifesigns.

WORF
One. It's Ru'afo.

PICARD
Can you beam him off?

WORF
Negative, sir. He's raised shields.

PICARD
Is there any other way to disable the injector?

GALLATIN
Perhaps.

Gallatin calls up...

ANGLE - COMPUTER DISPLAY SHOWING THE INJECTOR ASSEMBLY - (OPTICAL)

isolating the section that we saw launched into the rings in the simulation...

GALLATIN (CONT'D)

If we could get onto the collector, we could remove the ignition matrix directly from the injector assembly...

WORF

(checking panels)

Sir, there's a small opening in the shields at the base of the coupling adapter... I might be able to beam through it...

A highlighted area on the graphic identifying Worf's beam-in spot shows us it's at least a couple of hundred meters away from the injector assembly... Picard glances at the countdown... it's at 02:31... he frowns, nods, let's do it. But as Worf begins to move toward a transporter pad...

PICARD
Commander, remain at your post.

WORF
(reacts)
Sir...

PICARD
Mister Worf.

Picard doesn't pause to give reasons, moves toward the transport station, mind working... to Gallatin -

PICARD
The ignition sequence -- what can you tell me?

GALLATIN
The thrusters activate one minute before separation, you'll see the cryogenic tanks venting... don't use any laser tools or weapons after that; they could ignite the propellant exhaust. The substructure will retract fifteen seconds prior to separation.

The countdown is at 02:11 as Picard grabs a phaser rifle..

42 Morphing is an optical effect which combines a series of images, i.e. Ru'afo changing from old to young in a matter of seconds.

43 Reference to 1948 film directed and written by Orson Wells, based on a novel by Sherwood King.

44 Picard and Gallatin have just successfully taken control of the Son'a Bridge...

INT. COLLECTOR - (OPTICAL)

The weird cavernous room is left with a skeleton of structural elements now that all the sails are fully unfurled... it almost reminds of the support for an old-time roller coaster -- a cobweb of crisscrossing pipes, and conduits and planks...

SON'A COMPUTER VOICE
Separation in two minutes.

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

in a control area safely removed from the injector, working controls... the digital display moving back from 01:57... he doesn't immediately see --

ANGLE - PICARD - (OPTICAL)

MATERIALIZING... maybe two hundred meters away from the injector. This is not an area built for manned operation... so Picard has to make do with the structural elements... he's been beamed to a platform near the base of the sail substructure... his phaser rifle is strapped to his chest, commando style... he begins to climb toward the injector...

WITH RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

an intruder alarm has sounded on his console ... he reacts... looks up at -

P.O.V. - PICARD - (OPTICAL)

climbing across the crisscrossing structure toward the injector...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

fires a hand weapon toward Picard but it ricochets off the structural elements harmlessly...

PICARD - (OPTICAL)

looks down, making eye contact with Ru'afo, presses on...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

abandons the control area, begins to climb after him... the countdown has reached 01:42.

WIDE - (OPTICAL)

as the two look like spiders crawling across a web... and the trick for Ru'afo is to angle himself so he can get a clear shot at Picard...

ANGLE WITH RU'AFO IN FOREGROUND - (OPTICAL)

Picard moves into clear view several dozen meters away... Ru'afo steadies himself, fires, barely missing --

PICARD - (OPTICAL)

but hitting the plank that he's on which snaps and he falls, barely grabbing a nearby pipe...

RU'AFO

scrambles toward him...

PICARD (OPTICAL)

swings on the pipe and pulls himself Tarzan-style along the structural elements until he can get a footing... sees...

RU'AFO

closing the distance between them...

PICARD

grabs his phaser rifle and...

WIDE - THE SPIDER WEB SHOT - (OPTICAL)

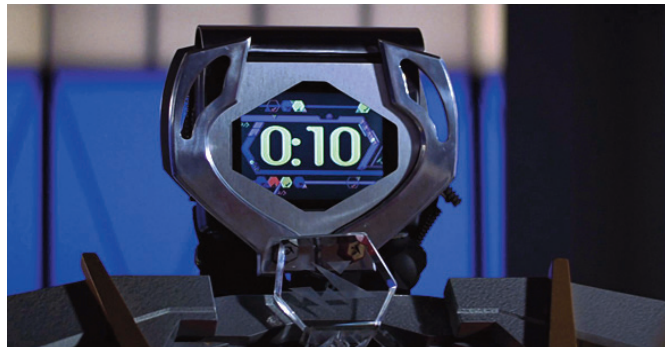
sprays shots to force his pursuer back and then scrambles the last few yards toward the injector assembly...

ANGLE - RU'AFO IN THE FOREGROUND

gets Picard in his sights again and is ready to pull the trigger when suddenly the beam fusion reactors activate the cryogenic tanks vent nitrogen gas, pre-launch ice falls away from the injector...

SON'A COMPUTER
Separation in one minute.

Ru'afo pulls back the weapon, knowing he can't fire without igniting the fumes now... he climbs in a hurry, tired and out of breath...



ANGLE IN THE INJECTOR ASSEMBLY (OPTICAL)

where another digital display shows the countdown at 00:55... Picard, breathing hard, moves to a wall of circuits where he finds the ignition matrix... but before he can pull it out...

RU'AFO

Stop.

Picard turns to see Ru'afo on the support structure, climbing up toward him, his gun trained on Picard... Picard glances again at the countdown which has reached 00:42... both men are exhausted, sweaty and out of breath... fumes billow between them...

PICARD

We're getting too old for this,
Ru'afo.

RU'AFO

After today, that won't be a
problem. For either of us.

SON'A COMPUTER VOICE

Separation in thirty seconds.

RU'AFO

Just step off the injector.

PICARD

Are you really going to risk
igniting the exhaust?

Their eyes are locked. Picard smiles.

PICARD

No? All right. Then I will.

Ru'afo reacts as Picard grabs his rifle and fires a single shot at the fumes as he dives for cover behind a standing console...

RU'AFO

No!

There's a tremendous flash and smoke... Ru'afo is knocked back by the impact, his hood thrown off, revealing the stretched skin stapled to his head... he scrambles to his feet. Picard is no longer visible through the smoke... Ru'afo climbs onto the injector, moves quickly to the spot where Picard was standing... Picard is gone... Ru'afo looks at the circuit board - the ignition matrix has been pulled out...

PICARD

Looking for this?

He spins to see Picard holding the ignition matrix, standing where he just came from -- on the support structure which has begun retracting from the injector..... the countdown is at 00:10.

ANGLE FROM THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE AS IT RETRACTS

Picard, moving slowly away from Ru'afo who's still on the injector. As Ru'afo sees the countdown, he looks for a way to get off, can't find one... his eyes, filled with panic, connect with Picard's...

PICARD

Take my arm!

Picard reaches out his hand.

RU'AFO

hesitates... then reaches out...

THEIR HANDS

stretch to within inches but the support structure has retracted too far away...

THE DIGITAL DISPLAY - 00:00

TWO SHOT: PICARD AND RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

as Ru'afo slides away with the injector as it's launched... a protective forcefield zaps into place as it enters space... Picard watches as it moves toward the rings...

EXT. COLLECTOR - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

As we saw in the simulation, the injector continues to move toward the rings...

INT. INJECTOR - ANGLE THROUGH THE FORCEFIELD - (OPTICAL)

to see the rings getting closer and closer... and as we burst into them... the bright colorful metaphasic dust and gases swirling around us like a hurricane...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

begins to change... growing younger and younger... face-lift falls into middle-age... then taking on the Ba'ku facial skin pattern as he reaches young adulthood... then adolescence... then childhood. White out.



UP THE MOUNTAIN

Patrick really missed the Alamo and wanted to change the story so Picard would have to defend the village instead of leading the people up a mountain. I tried for weeks but I just couldn't find a credible way to keep the Ba'ku in their village. Unlike *The Seven Samurai* where the village and the crops must be saved, the village in our film was of little consequence. It was the people who must be protected. The last thing Picard would want to do, it seemed to me, was to keep all of the people in one central location. He'd spread them as far apart as he could to delay the Son'a abduction.

None of us liked the idea of spending a great deal of time in caves. We'd used caves a lot on the TV series. We talked about creating ancient Alamo-like structures in the mountains for Picard to defend, but the budget ultimately defeated that idea. Caves, it would have to be, so I tried to create caves that were unlike any we'd seen before. I filled them with mud and mineral hot springs. In one version, I had an exhausted Doctor Crusher about to take a rejuvenating mud bath in one of the mineral-rich caverns until she sees a llama urinating in the mud. After reading that, Rick went home and told his wife, "I think Michael's starting to lose it. He wrote a scene today in which a llama pees on Beverly Crusher." The scene didn't stay in the picture.

We hadn't made much progress in cutting the budget and I was beginning to come to the conclusion the trek up the mountain would play better if we tightened it. So we started taking dollars out of the mountainside.

The first thing to go was the phaser fight on the trail and all the ground troops associated with it. Then, to my regret, we lost the flying motorcycles with the enemy troops firing weapons in ride-by attacks. Not only was the sequence terribly expensive, it reminded a lot of people of the Stormtrooper speeder-bike chase in *The Return of the Jedi*. I argued that every western has people riding horses; why couldn't more than one science fiction movie have people riding anti-gravity devices? It was a moot argument. Again, the budget made the decision for us. The flying motorcycle gang was replaced by automated drones.

At the same time we were cutting back the ground action, the studio was asking for a bigger space battle for the Enterprise. And because the studio felt that the character of Barclay was getting more attention than some of our regular characters, we decided that La Forge would join Riker on the ship.

With the changes to both sides of the action, this is what the new sequence looked like:

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

Moving at one-third impulse through The Briar Patch...

INT. BRIDGE

Riker at Command, Perim at Ops, La Forge at Conn, Daniels at Tactical, supernumeraries...

PERIM

Commander, I'm showing two Son'a ships on an intercept course.

RIKER

How long 'til they reach us?

PERIM

Eighteen minutes....

LA FORGE

We're not going to be able to get a transmission out of here for at least another hour...

DANIELS

They're hailing us.

RIKER

Tell them our transceiver assembly is down, that we can send messages but not receive them.

Daniels sends the message... a beat...

DANIELS

I don't think they believe us.

RIKER

Why not?

Boom... a small explosion well off target... the ship shakes gently...

RIKER

(off sensors)

A photon torpedo.

(dry)

Isn't that the universal greeting when communications are down?

LA FORGE

I think it's the universal greeting when you don't like someone.

Another boom shakes them slightly...

RIKER

Full impulse.

LA FORGE

The manifolds can't handle full impulse in The Patch, Commander.

RIKER

If we don't outrun them, the manifolds will be the only thing left of this ship.

LA FORGE

(nods)

I'll be in Engineering.

La Forge exits. A supernumerary quickly replaces him.

RIKER

Red alert! All hands, battle stations!

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Troi and Beverly are sitting. As Data comes over and delivers Starfleet rations... mid-conversation...

TROI

And have you noticed how your boobs have started to firm up?

CRUSHER

(dry)

Not that we care about such things in this day and age.

TROI

Uh huh.

Data glances at their breasts as he hands them plates...

CRUSHER

Thank you, Data.

We stay with him as he takes the tray to Worf who looks at the plate with disdain...



WORF
I have an odd craving for the blood
of a live Kolar beast.
(off Data's look)
The environment must be affecting
me again.

DATA
(agreeing)
And have you noticed how your boobs
have started to firm up?
(Worf reacts)
Not that we care about such...

He's interrupted by the distant sound of approaching
thrusters...

ANGLE - TWELVE SON'A SHUTTLES (OPTICAL)⁴⁵
coming over the horizon...

WORF
(hits combadge)
Take cover!

PICARD AND ANIJ
running back to join the others, reacting to the
approaching shuttles... they look up to see --

THE SHUTTLES - (OPTICAL)
overhead, dropping dozens of...

FLYING DRONES - (OPTICAL)
the size of footballs with parts rotating, blinking,
scanning...

EXT. DRONE POV - FLYING ABOVE THE TRAIL - (OPTICAL)
The Ba'ku scattering as drones fly over them...

DATA AND ARTIM - (OPTICAL)
react, Data firing at the drones as Artim crawls
behind a rock...

PICARD AND WORF - (OPTICAL)

open fire with phasers destroying two, but the third
fires a new kind of weapon hitting --

CLOSE ON A BA'KU WOMAN'S BACK
as it's tagged with a tiny device fired from the
drone...

ANGLE - THE BA'KU WOMAN - (OPTICAL)
DEMATERIALIZES... a fraction of a beat later, Picard
blasts the drone... more people DEMATERIALIZE as the
drone attack continues...

WORF
Isolinear tags. Their transporters
can lock on to them.

PICARD
We have to find shelter...

ANIJ
There's a cavern at the base of the
next hill...

PICARD
(signaling to the others)
This way!

VARIOUS - (OPTICAL)
on our principals providing covering fire as the Ba'ku
move quickly ahead... more drones fly in, firing
their tags, more Ba'ku are hit and DEMATERIALIZE...
our people fire repeated bursts destroying several of
them...

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)
exchanging fire with the two Son'a ships in pursuit,
a trail of hot exhaust coming from the Enterprise...

INT. BRIDGE
Seriously damaged... plasma leaks, smoke... Perim
still at Ops... a supernumerary at Conn...

DANIELS
Shields at sixty percent...!

LA FORGE'S COM VOICE
Engineering to Bridge. We're
burning deuterium down here...

INT. ENGINEERING
Impulse engines smoking... engineers spray coolant
foam over them to keep the temperatures from red-
lining...

LA FORGE
We're going to blow ourselves up...
we won't need any help from the
Son'a...

INT. BRIDGE INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN - (OPTICAL)
A huge nebula cluster up ahead...

RIKER
What's inside that nebula cluster?

PERIM
Cometary debris, pockets of
unstable metreon gas... we don't
want to go in there, sir...

RIKER
Yes, we do.
(moves to Conn)
I'll take it from here, Ensign.

The supernumerary rises and moves away... Riker
sits...

RIKER
Time to use "The Briar Patch" like
B'rer Rabbit did...

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)
making a hard turn and disappearing into the
cluster...

EXT. PLANET SURFACE/TRAIL - (OPTICAL)
The Ba'ku run for their lives toward the mouth of a
cavern, steam coming up from the hot mineral waters
within it...

PICARD
Into the cavern! Move!

⁴⁵ Eventually the twelve ships were cut back to two in post production.

And our people continue to blast the swarming drones above but there are so many of them... several Ba'ku are tagged and DISAPPEAR...

WITH WORF - (OPTICAL)

as his phaser jams, he turns his rifle around and with Klingon howls, swings it like a bat'leth at the drones... missing one but then connecting with another and a second one knocking them out of the park like Hank Aaron... glancing to Picard...

WORF
Definitely feeling aggressive
tendencies...



ANGLE WITH DATA AND ARTIM - (OPTICAL)

surrounded by Ba'ku as they move quickly along a very steep trail, Data firing at drones as they go... suddenly just in front of them, an assault team appears over the ridge... a Son'a officer with two Tarlac⁴⁶ foot soldiers ready to take prisoners... Data lunges, like a running back hitting a defensive line and his power throws them back and they fall...

OFF THE CLIFF - (OPTICAL)

the long terrible fall beginning...

DATA - (OPTICAL)

thinks fast, snatches a passing drone out of the air and aims it at...

THE THREE FALLING ALIENS - (OPTICAL)

and as they're tagged, they DEMATERIALIZE in free-fall.

DATA - (OPTICAL)

looks down, satisfied, then he crushes the drone with his bare hands and provides more cover fire as the Ba'ku move quickly to the cavern...

EXT. NEBULA - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

Flying through dark matter clouds and stellar debris which light up as Son'a torpedos explode all around them... suddenly there is a different kind of blast off the Enterprise's stern -- a bright implosion, sucking up everything around it, literally ripping subspace apart as it cascades toward the ship...

INT. BRIDGE

Terribly rough ride...

DANIELS

Sir, they've detonated an isolytic burst... a subspace tear is forming...

RIKER

On screen.

ANGLE TO INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN - (OPTICAL)

As Riker sees the tear coming at them...

PERIM

I thought subspace weapons were banned by the Khitomer Accord...

RIKER

Remind me to lodge a protest...

LA FORGE'S COM VOICE

Commander, our warp core is acting like a magnet to the tear.

INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi on the move to a new control panel...

LA FORGE (CONT'D)

We're pulling it like a zipper across space...

RIKER'S COM VOICE

Options?

LA FORGE

We could eject the core.

INTERCUT:

INT. BRIDGE - (OPTICAL)

As the viewscreen shows the tear getting closer...

RIKER

Will that stop the tear?

LA FORGE

You got me, Commander.

RIKER

That's your expert opinion?

LA FORGE

Detonating the warp core might neutralize the cascade... but then again it might not. Subspace weapons are unpredictable. That's why they were banned.

DANIELS

The tear is closing on us... impact in fifteen seconds...

RIKER

Eject the core.

LA FORGE

I just did.

DANIELS

Impact in ten seconds...

RIKER

Detonate!

INT. ENGINEERING - GEORDI

presses the panels to detonate and...

EXT. NEBULA - THE SUBSPACE TEAR (OPTICAL)

rips toward the Enterprise as the ejected warp core explodes. The subspace disruption that follows --

INT. ENGINEERING

throws everybody down. Consoles explode...

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Panels are blown off, fires break out, lights fail, people thrown to the ground. As it subsides, Riker crawls back to Conn...

DANIELS

It worked, Commander... the tear's been sealed...

INT. ENGINEERING

LA FORGE

There's nothing to stop them from doing it again... and we're fresh out of warp cores...

INT. BRIDGE

PERIM

We're still thirty-six minutes from transmission range, sir.

RIKER

(nods, deciding)

We're through running from these bastards.



INT. HYDROTHERMAL CAVERN - DAY - (OPTICAL)

A large, steamy, wet environment... pools of mineral water drizzle along the floor... Picard and the last of the Ba'ku and their llamas rush in, sloshing through the mud... Worf promptly activates a forcefield blocking the entrance... an instant later several drones try to follow but are blocked by the field; they hover menacingly outside...

NEW ANGLE - DATA

moves to Picard from the interior of the cave...

PICARD
(to Data)

How many?

DATA
Another forty-three people reported taken, sir...

Picard frowns, sighs, takes in their new surroundings... suddenly, the caverns are shaken by the sound of overhead explosions... reactions, fearful murmurs, skittish llamas...

ON ARTIM

sitting with other Ba'ku... they look up at the frightening sound... sand drifting dangerously from the ceiling...

CLOSE ON ARTIM'S POCKET - (OPTICAL)

The palm-pet crawls out...

EXT. FOOTHILLS - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

As the Son'a shuttles fly over firing torpedoes, explosions across the terrain...

INT. HYDROTHERMAL CAVERN - (OPTICAL)

As Picard et al react to the aerial assault... ground continually shuddering... Picard and Worf exchange a grim look...

WORF

They're trying to force us out so their drones can tag us...

Picard nods, agreeing. As dust falls from the ceiling and the blasts continue to rock them... Data studies his tricorder...

DATA

With all the hydrothermal vents in the substrata, the structural integrity of this cavern is not going to hold for long, Captain...

Picard glances out at a half-dozen drones hovering outside...

PICARD

Is there any other way out of here?

Anij shakes her head, grim...

DATA

Tracking the water's course may reveal another exit...

As the cavern continues to shake with the explosions overhead, they use tricorders to follow the water flow deeper into the cavern...

NEW ANGLE - NARROWER PORTION OF THE CAVE - (OPTICAL)

The flow of water disappears under a wall... the air assault continues...

DATA
(off tricorder)

I am showing a nitrogen-oxygen flow behind this calcite formation, Captain...

PICARD

Will the structure hold if we blast through?

DATA
(examines walls with tricorder)
I believe it is safe, sir.

Using their phasers, they blast the wall away, walk through the new hole into a brighter cave area with a natural opening (hereafter referred to as "Second Exit") to the outside...

INT. BRIGHTER CAVE -- LOOKING OUT SECOND EXIT - CONTINUOUS (MATTE/OPTICAL)

to see several paths up to rocky mountains not far away, distant cave openings in view... above them, the aerial assault continues...

PICARD

(to Worf and Data)
Get everyone into those caves, set up forcefields once you're inside...

Data and Worf move back into the main chamber to gather up the Ba'ku...

EXT. NEBULA - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

coming about...

INT. BRIDGE - ANGLE TO INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN - (OPTICAL)

Riker at Conn as messed up as we've ever seen him, his face a study in determination. The bridge is barely functional. Pockets of colorful gases are visible on the screen.

RIKER

Geordi, are those pockets of metreon gas...?

INT. ENGINEERING

Off an Okudagram⁴⁷ --

LA FORGE

Aye, sir. Highly volatile... I recommend we keep our distance...

RIKER'S COM VOICE

Negative. I want to use the ramscoop to collect as much of it as we can...

LA FORGE

The purpose being...?

INT. BRIDGE

RIKER

The purpose being I intend to shove it down the Son'a's throats.

DANIELS
Commander, if one of their weapons
hits that gas...

RIKER
It's our only way out of here,
Mister Daniels.

INT. ENGINEERING

as Geordi goes to work, nods with admiration...

LA FORGE
I wouldn't be surprised if history
remembers this as the Riker
Maneuver...

RIKER'S COM VOICE
If it works.

LA FORGE
Even if it doesn't, they'll be
teaching kids at the Academy not to
do this for years to come.

EXT. NEBULA - CLOSE ON THE RAMSCOOP - (OPTICAL)

as it begins to sweep up the gases... compressing them
into a critical mass...

INT. ENGINEERING

Close on La Forge as he feverishly works the
consoles... his head moving to all sorts of read-outs
and panels... to a nearby supernumerary --

LA FORGE
How do you people get anything done
with such limited eyes? I'm ready
to get my implants back.
(hits combadge)
Bridge...

INT. BRIDGE - INCLUDE THE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

LA FORGE'S COM VOICE (CONT'D)
Storage cells are at maximum
capacity -- five thousand cubic
meters of metreon gas...

RIKER
Computer, access manual steering
column.

In an instant, a joystick pops up from the control.
He grabs the stick... a computer gamester's dream...

RIKER
Transfer helm controls to manual.

The computer bleeps. As the fog clears, we can see
on the screen that we're closing fast on the Son'a
ships...

PERIM
They're powering their forward
weapons array.

RIKER
Blow out the ramscoop. Stand by
full thrusters.

LA FORGE'S COM VOICE
Ramscoop released!

Riker hits panels and the ship lurches...

EXT. NEBULA - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

turning away as the Son'a ships fire and wham, the
gases erupt... the Enterprise careens away out of
control as the Son'a ships are hit by the explosion's
full force. Both catch seriously on fire. After a
beat, one explodes into bits... the other one sits
there, helplessly on fire...



DATA VS PICARD

Patrick was uncomfortable using Shakespeare in the ship battle with Data. "I don't think the *Lear* quotes work," he'd said in his notes. "It will be meaningless to most of our audience and I'm not sure I believe in what it is meant to do."

The idea harkened back to the television series when Picard had taught Data about humanity by directing him in fully-recreated scenes from Shakespeare's plays on the holodeck. We'd actually built one memorable episode around the themes of *Henry V*. In addition, I thought the King's madness in *Lear* would provide a metaphor for Data's erratic behavior.

Losing Shakespeare didn't really bother me. But I felt we needed something like it. I argued that Picard would try every trick to safely capture Data before ever firing a weapon that might harm him.

Patrick suggested, "Well, couldn't I tell him some jokes that we both know or perhaps sing something from Gilbert and Sullivan?" And a new sequence was born:

EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE - SCOUT/SHUTTLE - DAY (OPTICAL)⁴⁸

The scout launches a pair of torpedoes from its stern, the shuttle is forced to veer away to avoid them... one touches the shields, explodes... the shuttle is thrown briefly out of control...

INT. SHUTTLE

Picard works hard to stabilize the ship...

WORF
Scanners are off line!

PICARD
(trying to make visual contact)
I've lost him... where the hell did he go?

Then, wham... wham... WHAM! Gas shoots from the ceiling... Worf tries to stop it...

THROUGH THE WINDOW - (OPTICAL)

to see the Scout zooming past, so close that Picard and Data can even make eye contact...

PICARD
He can fly a ship, he anticipates tactical strategies, his brain is

obviously functioning...

(beat)
We've seen how he responds to threats. How might he respond to...

With an intriguing idea, he hits the companel again...

PICARD
Data... Two women in Miami Beach. One says to the other, "That's a lovely diamond you're wearing, Mrs. Klopman." The other says, "Thank you, it's the famous Klopman Diamond, but it comes with a curse..."

Worf looks at him curiously...

INT. SCOUT

Data pauses in his attack to listen...

PICARD'S COM VOICE (CONT'D)
..."A curse?", says the first...
"What's the curse?" The second looks at her and says...

DATA
PICARD'S COM VOICE
(to himself)
"Mister Klopman!"
"Mister Klopman!"

Data's programming clicks back to the fight. He fires again.

INT. SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

Wham! Picard makes another evasive maneuver...

WORF
Sir, with all due respect, this is no time to be telling jokes...

PICARD
That's one of Data's favorite jokes...

Another shot lands.

WORF
He's not laughing.

PICARD
(beat, a new idea)
Do you know Gilbert and Sullivan?

WORF
No sir, I haven't had a chance to meet all the new crew members since I've been back...

PICARD
They're composers, Worf, from the nineteenth century. Data was rehearsing a part in H.M.S. Pinafore before he left...

PICARD
(singing to com)
"A British tar is a soaring soul,
As free as a mountain bird, His energetic fist should be ready to resist A dictatorial word..."

Picard looks at Worf, nods, join me! Worf gives him an exasperated look... Picard begins to enter commands into the computer as he continues to sing...

INT. SCOUT

PICARD'S COM VOICE (CONT'D)
"His nose should pant and his lip should curl, His cheeks should flame and his brow should furl..."

Data reacts. From somewhere inside his damaged brain, he recalls this song. He starts to sing to himself...

DATA/PICARD'S COM VOICE
(together)
"His bosom should heave and his heart should glow, And his fist be ready for a knock-down blow..."

INT. SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

The lyrics are scrolling on a monitor now... a bouncing ball making it easier for Worf to follow...

PICARD
(to Worf)

Sing!

PICARD & WORF

"His nose should pant and his lip
should curl, His cheeks should
flame and his brow should furl..."

INT. SCOUT

And Data sings in unison --

DATA/PICARD & WORF'S COM VOICES
"...His bosom should heave and his
heart should glow..."

DATA/PICARD & WORF'S COM VOICES
And his fist be ready for a knock-
down blow..."

INT. SHUTTLE

Picard catches his breath, turns off the companel.

PICARD
He's stopped firing.

Suddenly from the speaker --

DATA'S COM VOICE
"His eyes should flash with an
inborn fire, His brow with scorn be
wrung; He never should bow down to
a domineering frown, Or the tang of
a tyrant tongue..."

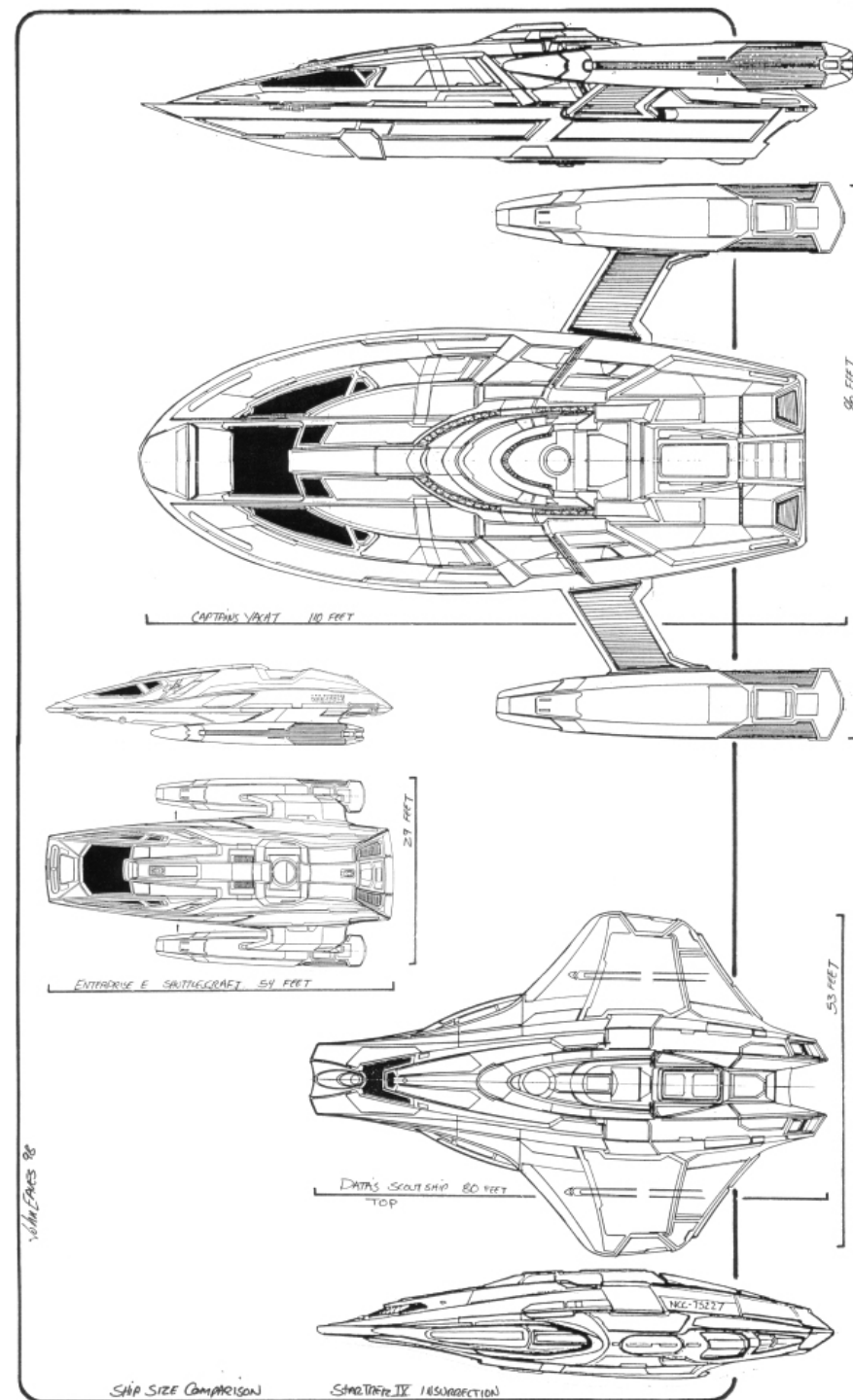
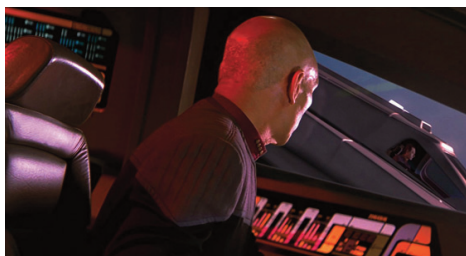
PICARD
(smiles, triumphant)
Prepare the docking clamps.

Worf moves to a rear panel as Picard sings with
Data...

PICARD/DATA'S COM VOICE
"...His foot should stamp..."

INT. SCOUT (OPTICAL)

Data, mesmerized by the song, is not paying attention
to his sensors and doesn't notice the shuttle through
the window behind him moving closer...



DATA/PICARD'S COM VOICE

"...and his throat should growl,
His hair should twirl and his face
should scowl..."

EXT. SCOUT AND SHUTTLE - DAY - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

As the shuttle moves within yards, even feet, of the
scout... sliding under the belly of Data's craft...

DATA/PICARD'S VOICES

(muffled)

"...His eyes should flash and his
breast protrude, And this should be
his customary attitude --"

CLOSE - THE DOCKING CLAMP - (OPTICAL)

on the roof of the shuttle extends and with a magnetic
jolt attaches itself to the scout.

DATA/PICARD'S VOICES

...His foot should stamp and his
throat should growl..."

INT. SCOUT

Data feels the jolt, reacts, stops singing, his
programs clicking back into a defense mode...

PICARD'S COM VOICE

"His hair should twirl and his face
should scowl..."

Data checks his sensors, hits a panel and...

EXT. SCOUT AND SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

as the scout rocks back and forth trying to shake the
shuttle loose...

INT. SHUTTLE

Picard and Worf hold on for dear life...

WORF

Sir, inertial coupling is exceeding
tolerance... if we don't release
him, he may destroy both vessels...

PICARD

I'm not letting go of him.

EXT. SCOUT AND SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

They begin to spin and spiral downward...

INT. SCOUT - (OPTICAL)

Data still trying to free his ship... the surface
spinning and looming closer through the window...

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Impact with surface...

INT. SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

The same view of the surface through their window...

COMPUTER VOICE

...in twenty seconds.

PICARD

Reroute emergency power to inertial
dampers!

WORF

The damping sequencer was damaged
by phaser fire!

PICARD

Transferring controls to manual.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Impact with surface...

INT. SCOUT - (OPTICAL)

As before.

COMPUTER VOICE

...in ten seconds.

INT. SHUTTLE - (OPTICAL)

WORF

Damping field established!

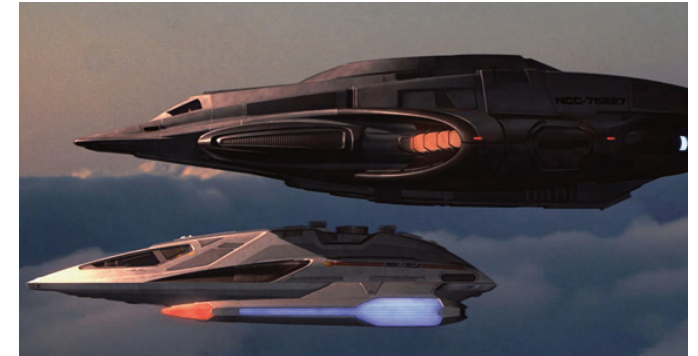
PICARD

Maximum power!

EXT. SCOUT AND SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

The shuttle gains control sweeping both ships into a
hard arc parallel to the surface, only a dozen yards
above the surface.

Eventually, because our script was getting too long, we cut out -- to many
people's regret -- the Myron Cohen joke about Klopman.





MORE REVISIONS

As production neared, the script expanded and contracted like an accordion. Every time it started heading toward 130 pages, I'd have to cut it back to get it as close to 120 as I could. Page count also contributed significantly to budget control. On a feature like this, the director would generally average about two to three pages per day. Thus, the shorter the script, the fewer the days of production. I'd try my best to keep the page count down as notes for changes continued to pour in.

Our location manager reported we might have problem with fog in the morning if we shot along the coast, so our ocean-side Ba'ku village became a lakeside community. Jonathan Dolgen felt that a couple of hundred Son'a would not provide a strong enough adversary for Picard, so I added two primitive races to the Son'a crew from planets they'd conquered in the past.

When actress Terry Farrell, who played Worf's wife on *Deep Space Nine*, decided to leave the show at the end of the sixth season, a change in the dialogue between Picard and Worf at their first meeting had to be made. The storyline of *Deep Space Nine* was going to kill her character. Our first thought was to have Worf still in mourning when he arrives:

PICARD

I've thought so much about you
since we heard the terrible news
about your wife.

WORF

I received your condolences sir.
Thank you. She was a remarkable
woman. She died an honorable
death.

Rick ultimately decided that it would be confusing to audience members who were not regular viewers of *Deep Space Nine* so we ignored the death of Worf's wife.

As time went on, Anij's death felt artificial and clichéd to me. Besides, I said to myself, Picard would be more heroic if he could save her life. Since the earliest days of development, I'd wanted Picard to learn something from the fountain of youth planet. This would be the climax of his personal journey through the film:

(SCENE IN PROGRESS)

PICARD

Stay with me... don't let go of this
moment, Anij... give me the power to
help you live in this moment...

He takes --

HER HANDS IN HIS

ANIJ

weakly opens her eyes one last time and looks at
him...

PICARD (CONT'D)

Just one more moment... and then
one more after that... and one more
after that...

PICARD - (OPTICAL)

unwilling to let her go... searching for powers within
himself that he never knew he had... like the father
who tries to lift a car when his child is caught
underneath... and with the force of his inner will,
suddenly time seems to slow...

TWO SHOT

The camera begins to circle them as her heartbeat
pounds slower and slower; the sound of air moving in
and out of her lungs getting progressively smoother,
calmer... the dust still in the air from the collapse
falling ever more slowly almost like snowflakes...
moving through the settling dust which slows to almost
a complete stop in mid-air... the nature of the light
changes around them... and it's almost as though her
life connected to his is illuminating the cavern...
and then... we never complete the circle because the
moment is interrupted by a blinding explosion of
sunlight cracking through as the rescuers get
there...

There was still one note from Patrick I didn't know how to handle.
"Please," he'd said, "don't let's start growing hair on Picard's head.
Something else, eh?"

I agreed that Picard's bald head was a defining physical characteristic of our hero. And Patrick had earned his status as a leading man with that head. But wouldn't the entire audience be waiting for Picard's hair to start growing? Wouldn't the first line of every review say something like: "The fountain of youth works on everything except Captain Picard's head?"

In addition, the scene when he looks in the mirror *and sees hair* is a big moment. It reveals the truth of the fountain of youth to him for the first time. What would he see in the mirror if not hair?

Would he consider finding a *single* new hair growing on his head? He could even pluck it out and we'd never see it again. No, came the answer. No new hair.

He did agree to consider letting the hair on the back of his head get darker. But after doing some makeup tests, that idea was abandoned too.

We finally went with Patrick's suggestion: his *waddle* could get younger. Through the magic of Michael Westmore's make-up, the flesh under Picard's chin would become firmer as the fountain-of-youth effect took hold.

Brent Spiner was still concerned about Data's role. The story with Artim seemed to be taking his character backwards, he said. He felt his character had evolved past the issues of learning how to play. To him, it was almost like the last two movies didn't even exist for Data.

Patrick and Brent were saying the same thing -- that I was writing their characters like they'd been on the television show. Truth is, they were probably right. But I had my reasons which I defended, after a meeting with Brent, in a note to Rick:

It's been my feeling that theatrical audiences have never been treated to the heart-warming Data as Pinocchio. I wonder if Brent realizes how his fans miss that about Data. Patrick and Brent would say by definition that it's wrong to go back to those qualities of the character when he seems to have grown beyond them. I don't think that's necessarily true. In TOS⁴⁹, Spock still depends on logic. The Doctor is still a curmudgeon. Kirk is still a rascal. The idea that the TNG⁵⁰ characters need to fundamentally move away from what made them popular in the first place is a doubtful proposition, at least to me.

No, I don't want to play the same beats that we've played in the television show, but I don't think this movie does. And I've tried hard not to be inconsistent with Data's character in the last two movies.

There was, however, no question in my mind that Brent was accurate when he said that, "Data seems to be teamed with the boy merely to give him charming scenes with a child. The child doesn't really have a problem. He seems to be a normal, functional child. What's interesting about this relationship?"

It was time to finally address that issue. Sometimes, small changes can yield big results. I simply made Artim afraid of Data. It made sense. The boy had been brought up to fear technology. By making Artim afraid,

it gave Data a greater challenge to reach and ultimately help him understand that an android need not be feared. This small revision in the first meeting between Artim and Data set the tone for the entire relationship:

ANGLE ON DATA

who notices Artim still glancing at him with fear.
To reassure him --

DATA

There is no reason to fear me. I am
now operating within normal
parameters.

ARTIM

What?

DATA

They fixed me.

The android's manner only seems to frighten Artim more. Before Data can say anything else, Sojef comes and leads him away, giving Data a cool smile that says, in effect, I don't want any artificial lifeform talking to my son. Data reacts. After a thoughtful beat, moves to walk with Picard.

DATA

The boy is... afraid... of me, sir.

PICARD

It's nothing personal Data. You
have to remember these people have
rejected technology.

DATA

(understands)

And I am the personification of
everything they have rejected.

PICARD

Until this week, that young man
probably never saw a machine, let
alone one that walks and talks...

DATA

I do not believe I made a very good
first impression.

It clearly bothers Data to be the object of fear. The boy glances over his shoulder once more at the android, looks quickly away...



Also, I eliminated Artim's mother and arranged for his father to be abducted by the Son'a, which forced Artim and Data together. I was finally satisfied with the arc of their relationship.

Casting began in February, and I wrote character descriptions on the guest stars for casting directors Junie Lowry Johnson and Ron Surma:

ANIJ

A beautiful, charismatic woman of quiet strength, about 40 years old, healthy, trim and in the prime of life. She takes a special pride of taking contrary positions to the status quo of her people, who are known as the Ba'ku. They are a humanoid race who look a great deal like humans, and live on an idyllic planet. She is suspicious and antagonistic to Picard when he arrives on her world, but ultimately falls in love with him as he defends her people facing overwhelming odds against a terrible conspiracy that will destroy them. She has special powers of inner awareness that will help change Picard's life.



RU'AFO

One of two primary villains, he is an alien leader, 52 to 70 years old, of a race known as the Son'a. All Son'a people look as if their faces are about to snap, as if they have had too many cosmetic surgeries. They are a dying race and have come to the Ba'ku world to steal the magic of the environment, which will help them survive.

Ru'afo has formed an uneasy alliance with the Federation in order to accomplish this, but he and his people are far more willing to do anything, including total destruction of the environment, to get what they need.

ADMIRAL DOUGHERTY

Human male Starfleet Admiral in his 60's. He has been assigned to help Ru'afo and the Son'a for what seem to be the most noble of reasons, or at least he has convinced himself that the reasons are noble. But as Picard begins to interfere with their plans, he begins to make moral compromises that lead him into making tragic errors.



ARTIM

A 12 year old Ba'ku boy. Smart and inquisitive. He has been taught to be prejudiced against all technology as his people have rejected machines in their lives. When he encounters Data, he has a built-in fear that comes with this kind of prejudice.

Through the affection and attention Data gives him during the adventure, they are able to bridge the gap between the two worlds, and Artim learns to appreciate Data for what he is and overcomes his prejudice at the same time he helps Data learn a little bit about what it's like to be a humanoid child.

SOJEF

A Ba'ku man, about 40 years old, healthy, trim and in the prime of life. He is the leader of the Ba'ku and Artim's father. He is more diplomatic and gentler than Anij, but devoutly pacifist and distrusting of all outsiders who would come to his world.



Rick, Jonathan and I made wish lists of stars we'd love to have, but many of the names had to be crossed off the list because of the budget. We didn't have any cameo appearances from the *Star Trek* universe in this draft yet, so I wrote Quark back into the final scenes of the movie:

⁵¹Sojef considers Picard, shakes his hand with an unstated but deep appreciation for all that this offlander has done. He moves away to join Gallatin and his mother. Worf approaches...

WORF

Captain, the Ticonderoga has moved into orbit.

QUARK'S VOICE

Worf!



They turn to see a Ferengi (QUARK) approaching in a bathing suit with a beach umbrella and two barely dressed Dabo girls...

WORF

What are you doing here, Quark?

QUARK

The same thing everyone else in the quadrant is going to be doing here... as soon as I build the greatest spa in the galaxy...

(sotto)

...these people don't have any religious thing about casinos do they...?



PICARD

There will be no spas on this planet.

QUARK

Do I know you?

PICARD

(ignoring the question)

This world is about to become a Federation protectorate, which will end any and all attempts at exploitation.

QUARK

Explain to me how five thousand time-share units... right there along the lake... would be 'exploiting' anyone.

PICARD

Mister Worf, have this uninvited... offlander and his guests beamed to the Enterprise. We'll deposit them at Deep Space Nine.

WORF

Must you, sir?

Worf takes Quark away by the arm... his disappointed babes follow... trailing away --

QUARK

You'll hear from my Nagus.

They're gone.

We still had no title for the movie. *Star Trek: Where Time Stands Still*, *Star Trek: Forever*, *Star Trek: Beyond Paradise* were a few of the titles we rejected. The marketing people at the studio felt it was important to have an action title, especially for foreign release.

My favorite title, *Star Trek: Sacred Honor* (using the last two words of the Declaration of Independence) was rejected because the marketing people were afraid audiences might think it was a religious movie.

When production was set to begin on March 30, the press releases referred to the movie simply as *Star Trek IX*. We would shoot the film without a title.

BUDGET CRUNCH

Shooting was only days away and we still hadn't brought the picture down to budget. We asked Marty Hornstein to suggest every possible cut.

6 MARCH 1998

TO: RICK BERMAN, JONATHAN FRAKES

FROM: MARTY HORNSTEIN

RE: SUGGESTED SCRIPT/BUDGET REVISIONS

Jerry Fleck⁵² and I reviewed the 2/20/98 script looking for possible savings. Please find below our recommendations.

SC. 29 BANQUET

If Geordi stops Picard before he reaches the Banquet Room, he could send Riker or Troi ahead to handle Regent Cuzar. His viewscreen to Dougherty could remain in the AnteRoom which overlooks the empty Observation Lounge (we own the glass case, conference table and Enterprise models from "First Contact".) The Observation Lounge or the Ready Room are also available for the viewscreen call if you prefer.

Savings:

Pts. Ensign Sc. 28, Regent Cuzar, Bolian Scientist	\$5,000
Above the Line Fringe ⁵³	\$3,640
Atmosphere: 8 Stand-ins, 20 Starfleet,	
8 Small Aliens, 8 Sideline Musicians	\$13,564
22 Additional Makeup	\$13,200
7 Additional Hair	\$4,200
2 Additional Wardrobe	\$666
1 Additional AD ⁵⁴	\$453
Banquet Set Dressing	\$34,200
Prop Food	\$1,000
Wardrobe - Dress Uniform Mfg.	\$47,750
BL ⁵⁵ Fringe	\$6,845
Shoot Day	\$125,000

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$255,518

SCS. 47 THRU 78 - SHUTTLE CRAFT VS. SCOUT DOGFIGHT

This 7 6/8 Page sequence is scheduled for 2 Days in the Shuttle (5 2/8) and 1 Day in the Scout (1 7/8). There are additional shots scheduled on the Green Screen⁵⁶ Days. Some cuts in the Shuttle could possibly save 1 shooting day. **POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$125,000.**

This might result in a reduced number of Opticals now included in the Santa Barbara Studios Estimate. **Savings TBD.**

Herman⁵⁷ has also suggested substituting the Yacht for the Shuttle. This would save \$95,000 plus construction labor fringe of \$18,620. **POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$113,620.**

SC. 108 - TRANSPORTER ROOM

This is scripted as 6/8 pgs. I understand Jonathan intends to have them step down from the Transporter platform and exit to the Corridor. He thinks 3/8 pgs will remain in the room. Suggest playing entire scene in the Corridor.

Construction revamp and restoration	\$30,804
Construction labor fringe	\$6,038
Set Dressing	\$16,300

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$53,142

SC. 111 - SICKBAY

Could Crusher be any place other than Sickbay for this 3/8-page scene? This is her response to a com call from Picard regarding the hostages refusing medical attention. Could she be in the new Engineering set (Geordi's office) checking out Geordi?

Construction revamp and restoration	\$20,000
Construction labor fringe	\$3,920
Set Dressing	\$32,750

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$56,670

SCS. 117 THRU 127 - EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

This is the sequence where Picard visits Anij's House up through where Patrick and Geordi share the sunrise. It is 7 pages. Any trims in this scene could help, as our schedule couple it with SCS. 138 THRU 150 - EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT, the evacuation sequence of 4 3/8 pages. It's busy and there's action. My concern here is to complete all this work in the 5 scheduled nights.

SCS. 242, 243 & 249 - INT. BRIG

These scenes are 3 4/8 combined page count and scheduled for 2 Days. If we can trim a page here, we could possibly save:

Shooting day	\$125,000
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75 extras	\$6,825
2 Son'a Guards	\$312
14 additional makeup	\$8,400
7 additional hair	\$4,200
4 additional wardrobe	\$1,332
2 additional assistant directors	\$906
Below the Line Fringe	\$6,153

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$153,128

SC. 305 THRU 310 EXT. VILLAGE

This tag scene is 4 5/8-pages with 13 cast and several different beats. It is scheduled for 2 Days. We don't know how important this 1 2/8-page beat is with Quark and Dabo girls. However, if it were cut we could save:

Shooting day	\$125,000
Quark & Dabos	\$2,312
77 Extras	\$7,007
12 Additional Makeup	\$7,200
10 Additional Hair	\$6,000
3 Additional Wardrobe	\$999
2 Assistant Directors	\$906
2 Additional Production Assistants	\$200
Below the Line Fringe	\$6,699

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$156,323

GREENSCREEN

Can we review all Greenscreen scenes in hopes of saving one or our 3 scheduled days? This was the day we added to the last schedule.

POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$125,000.

FINALLY - THE LLAMAS

Llama Rental and Buyout for cutting fur	\$35,800
Animal Trainers	\$28,514
Feed	\$1,000
Below the Line Fringe	\$7,984

TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS \$73,298

I hope this helps.

3/6/98

TO: RICK BERMAN & JONATHAN FRAKES

FROM: MICHAEL PILLER

Here's a quick response to Marty's ideas, all of which have some merit.

Scene 29, Banquet: I feel very strongly that we have to protect this sequence in general. However, I believe you can make this work with five small aliens and four musicians, which should have some savings in the make-up, hair, wardrobe, etc.

The dress uniforms is a toss-up. I would put it on a B List, but frankly if it costs fifty grand to put twenty-eight people into those uniforms, then I don't know if it's worth it. What if it's only Picard and Riker?

Scenes 47-78: I've made some cuts in this sequence already, which you'll see early next week, that might trim a couple more opticals out. But the issue here is really to make sure that we record enough of the song so that we can cut it to fit the sequence. I wouldn't make this a complicated shoot, Jonathan, but I just think we need to have enough singing to play with when you get into the editing room.

Scene 108: I'd leave the Transporter Room in the picture. It's a Star Trek signature.

Scene 111: We could put Crusher into the Engineering set if necessary. However, is there any savings to be gained by putting the two of them into a small corner of Sickbay and not revamping the entire set?

Scenes 117-127: I've made some cuts in this already and have also made some cuts in scenes 138 thru 150.

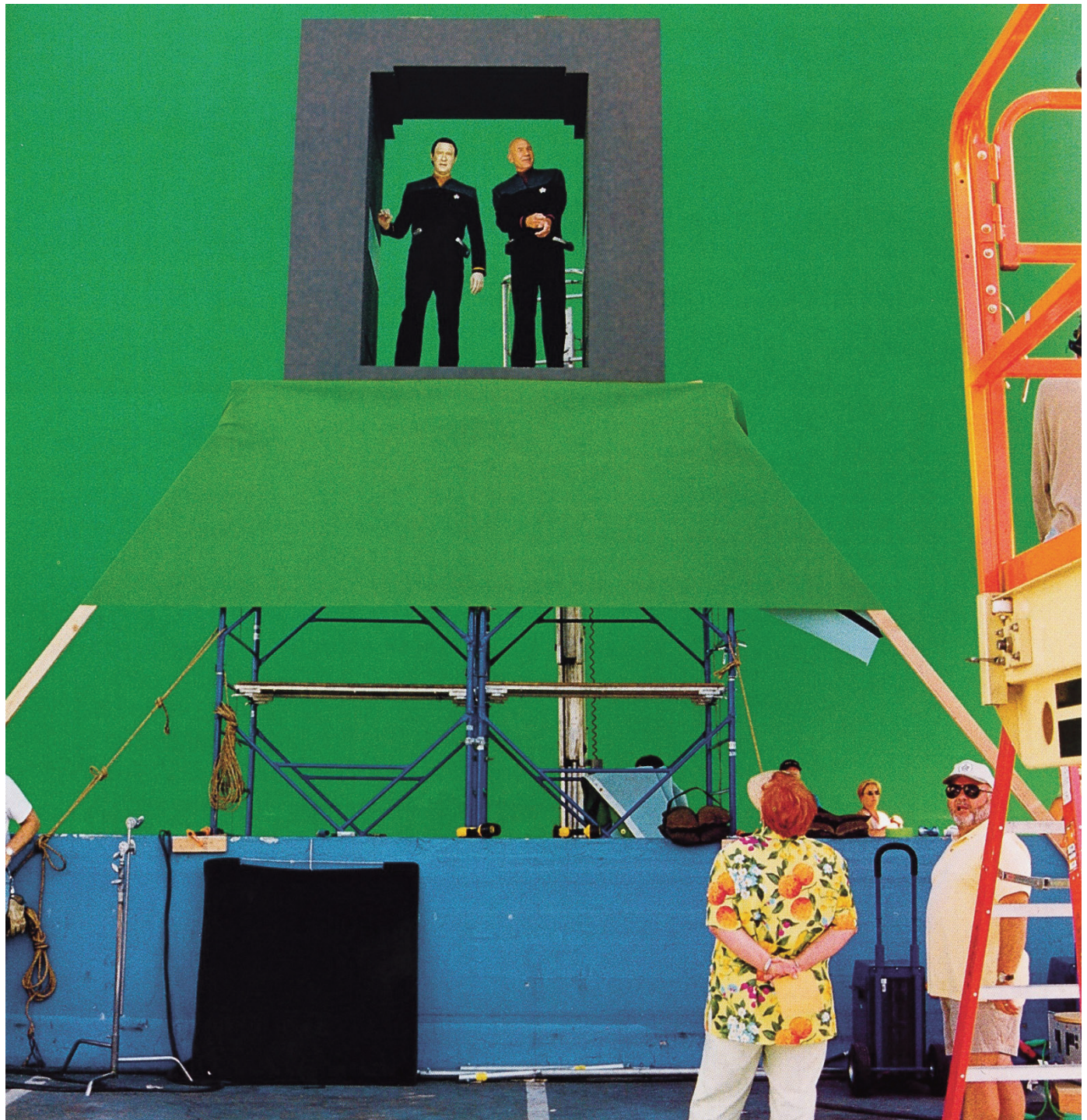
Scenes 242, 243 & 249: I will look for trims when I get there.

Scene 305 thru 310: I would leave Quark in the picture. I'll try to find trims in the tag, but there's a great deal to be accomplished.

Finally, the llamas: We could do everything we need to do with four llamas, and when Jonathan sets up a new shot, he can use the same llamas. The memo doesn't say how many llamas we're considering employing, but in terms of value, I think the llamas bring a lot to the atmosphere. But I don't think we need many. In the big Moses scene, you're very likely going to be adding people optically down the hill anyway, and there's no reason why you can't add some llamas optically. Nevertheless, we obviously have to put this on a B List.

In the end, we cut the banquet in half. We cut a few opticals out of the dog fight between the shuttlecraft and the scout. We shortened the scene in the Son'a brig. But, for now, Quark, the Dabo girls and the llamas stayed in.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The Quark scene felt jarring in context and was eliminated by Jonathan Frakes during the director's cut of the film.



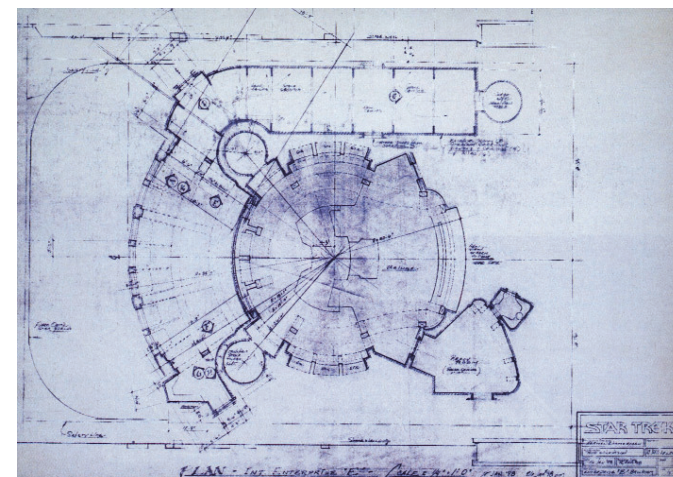
PRODUCTION DESIGN

Herman Zimmerman studied to be actor. He happens to be an Emmy Award-winning Production Designer, but that didn't stop him from reading for the part of the Doctor when we were casting *Star Trek: Voyager*. He didn't get to play the role but Herman does bring an actor's mentality to the creation of his designs.

His biggest job on this film was the Ba'ku village which was to be constructed, as soon El Nino allowed, at Lake Sherwood in Agoura Hills. But as he mused over his design choices, he tried to be a Ba'ku in his mind. To think as they would think. To construct a lifestyle as they would construct it.

On March 7, he sent me a memo to make sure he and I were on the same wavelength.

I realized he was building that village the same way I try to write my scripts -- from the inside out. Herman was playing the Inner Game too!





THE LAST MEETING WITH PATRICK

A terrible mistake had been made.

When the “final” draft of the script was sent to the entire cast (the first draft they got to see), they forgot to send it to Patrick.

Rick was livid. Some poor production assistant must have been sweating blood over this. Giving the rest of the cast the latest material before Patrick could lead to a disaster. If the other actors had problems, the first person they’d probably call would be Patrick. And he’d have to say, well, gosh, I don’t know. I haven’t read it. But I’ve been telling them all along that...

And that’s almost what happened.

LeVar Burton read the script and immediately called Patrick who had to admit, embarrassed, that it hadn’t arrived on his doorstep yet. Except LeVar loved it. He told Patrick that this was really a story that had something to say. “I started reading my own lines,” LeVar told me later, tongue in cheek, “... which is what all us actors usually do -- ‘bullshit, bullshit, bullshit, my line, bullshit, bullshit’... and suddenly I realized, ‘hey, I’m actually getting involved in this story...’ The atrocity of forced relocation, he said, was a theme that any African-American could understand.

Still, after belatedly receiving the script, Patrick called Rick and said he wanted another meeting to suggest changes. We braced ourselves for the worst.

He came in and I saw it in his eyes. He liked the new draft. The meeting lasted twenty minutes. He asked for seven or eight lines of dialogue to be adjusted.

Then we had lunch and talked about his next play.





POST-PARTUM

Much of the last week of pre-production was spent trying to figure out exactly what I thought the altered reality sequences should look like. Jonathan and Peter wanted to create storyboards and asked me to lay out specific shots they could follow.

TO: Rick Berman

CC: Jonathan Frakes

FROM: Michael Piller

I came up with a different idea this morning on the altered reality sequences that I rather like... so, I apologize for the radical revision but here it is:

SCENE 156 ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE

Anij takes his hand in hers, guides both hands...

ANGLE FAVORING Picard's POV: hands moving to his cheek and as they touch him... something remarkable happens, it's as though he's been touched by a magic wand... with one touch, the world around them seems to slow down... they remain in normal time – it's the world that changes... perhaps the first cue is the sound of the wind, the high whistle falling in pitch, a change in color... (isn't there more magic in seeing two different speeds in the same frame rather than simply slowing everything down?)

ANIJ smiles gently, turns her look and he follows it to see —

Swirling dust from the mountain seems like a rippling scarf...

Picard reacts... exchanges a look with Anij who is like an experienced woman taking a young man carefully to his first orgasm...

Her hand leads his into the water of the creek beside them... it flows through their fingers incredibly slowly in a tactile pleasure... as it slows even more as the camera moves in and around it...

And maybe we do a pan around a two shot for a complete 360 degrees to see this new world that Picard is experiencing for this first time... birds fly overhead in slower motion... and a hummingbird drifts nearby, we can hear its languid wing motion... the movement of trees in the wind... a falling leaf... an insect... and as the perception of time continues to slow, he begins to see the world in literally a new light... images now begin to change because we are actually starting to see the movement of light itself...

Her eyes fill the screen. (Something about her eyes might be special... perhaps an optical enhancement, nothing too corny... I'm thinking of something that translates into heightened perception... a brightness of a special life force within her.)

Maybe we intercut between our 360 degree pan as the nature of light and image virtually slow to a crawl... sunlight breaking into a shower of light streams cascading over them... and the following ECUs...

ECU: Her fingers touching the hairs at the top of his chest... hearing the touch of her fingertips against his flesh...

ECU: His cheek... her lips enter frame and brush the cheek...

ECU: His lips... a beat later, her lips enter frame, her teeth nip gently on his lower lip and as they kiss... (all the ECUs would be in real time in this version)...

WIDE: THEIR TWO HEADS almost motionless in a furious deluge of sunlight, a true orgasmic moment...

The whole sequence probably is less than a minute.

During that last week, Rick and I also went through the script scene by scene with Jonathan to make sure we all agreed on tone. I jotted down a few extra notes the following day:

March 20, 1998

TO: Jonathan Frakes

CC: Rick Berman

From: Michael Piller

A couple of tone thoughts left over from yesterday: One, because there's a lot of dialogue in this picture, and much of it on the planet surface, I just want to caution not to let the pastoral setting slow down the actors delivery of those lines. I think the pace is critical to making this thing move comfortably through the big dialogue scenes.

Two, the scene between Picard and Dougherty in Act II should be played like a heavyweight boxing match -- a battle of Titans. Don't let the exposition in that scene distract us from the drama. The future of the Federation is at stake here. It is, by definition, a highly charged confrontation and should be the centerpiece of this act.



The cast came in for read-through that yielded a few changes in lines that sounded awkward. Then, finally, time ran out. I gave my script to the director. He took it to raise as his own child.

Goldman writes of a depression that always sets in for him after he lets go of a screenplay. That's something I never experienced in television. As soon as I finished one script, it was on to the next. No time to mourn the last one. But I felt it here. I wasn't quite sure what to do about it.

I went down to the stage occasionally but frankly, I felt useless there. Besides, the only thing I could expect anyone to say to me when I was down there was, "*Can I change this?*"

There are always minor revisions in dialogue on set as the scene gets up on its feet. But I'm not very good at improvising on the spot. So, Rick would observe rehearsals and call me with requests for changes. That gave me a little time to study the script and make sure the changes weren't confusing or inconsistent. I caught a few errors, but most of the time the changes were harmless.

Rick and I went to dailies⁵⁹ with Jonathan and the crew. I feared the scene in which Picard drops the salad in his lap made him look clumsy instead of cluttered. The library scene which had become the repository of much exposition seemed endless now that it was on film. Rick had never found a satisfying alien look for the Ba'ku (the make-up had to be simple because there were so many of them), so he'd decided they would look, for all intents and purposes, like humans. Most of the extras cast were blond and I was afraid they might appear like Wisconsin milk farmers.

But these kinds of problems were exceptions. Jonathan was getting excellent performances from the entire cast. No matter what doubts Brent Spiner might have had, his work was terrific. They shot the gag where Data feels Riker's bare chin three ways. The first, requested by the studio, in which Data says: "No, sir. It is not as smooth as an android's bottom." Another in which Data simply says, "No, sir. It is not."

And finally, Brent asked for the chance to do it without dialogue at all. There was no question the silent version was by the far the best and that's the one we used. His comic timing was amazing.

Marketing had to have a title. They wanted to name it *Star Trek: Revolution*. Rick said there was only one problem -- our movie wasn't about a revolution. Jonathan Dolgen agreed and the title went away. A writer pal of mine, Alan Spencer, who'd been providing much emotional support to my efforts through his e-mails, suggested *Insurrection*. I showed it to Rick. Someone else had independently come up with the same title. The final run-off was between: *Star Trek: High Treason*, *Star Trek: Act of Treason*, *Star Trek: Rebellion* and *Star Trek: Insurrection*. You know the winner.

There just wasn't much more for me to do. And I finally threw myself into writing a new feature script with my son. A comedy. I had to let go of this one. I knew my job was finished.

I was wrong.



59 Screenings of film footage shot the previous day.

POST PRODUCTION

TEST SCREENING

There was an omen.

It was October 14th, less than two hours before we would show the unfinished film for the first time to a real audience, carefully recruited by a firm⁶⁰ the studio hires to test-screen movies. My wife and I were in a quirky little Mexican Restaurant on Third Street about three miles from the studio. I went to wash my hands and there, in the men's room of this Mexican Restaurant, was a large painting of Mr. Spock giving his familiar "Live Long and Prosper" hand signature. On a toilet wall.

I'd been worried a long time about this screening. For one thing, everything had been going too well and that always makes me uneasy. Everybody at the studio who'd seen a cut of the work-in-progress had raved about it. Don Granger called me after he saw it to say it was everything he'd hoped for -- one of the best *Star Trek* movies ever. John Goldwyn was equally effusive in his praise to Rick. There were tears in his eyes when the lights came up, he admitted. He was particularly impressed with Jonathan's growth as a director.

I'd seen the film a couple of times, once to give Rick and Jonathan notes on points of confusion. For example, in the opening sequence, it was hard to tell which of the figures in isolation suits was Data and where he was in relation to the village. Rick and I finally decided we needed to add a couple of "wild lines" -- recorded by actors in a studio and added to the soundtrack to make it absolutely clear:

MALE SON'A COM VOICE

(distressed)

...the android, he's out of control...

GALLATIN

Report!

MALE SON'A COM VOICE

(struggling)

...he's coming toward the village... we're trying to stop him...

I had also viewed a cut of the film another time with Patrick who was pleased by what he saw. "It works on so many more levels than anything we've done before," he said. I was also invited to attend (to receive "my share of the accolades" as Rick put it) when it was finally screened for Sherry Lansing. The film had very rough, temporary special effects and a temp music score borrowed from other movies. Afterwards, Lansing spoke highly of the film but wondered if the balance between action and

romance wasn't a little off. She admitted she wasn't sure and wanted to see how it played to a test audience, something the studio does with every film. But she encouraged us to go through the film and see if we could find trims.

Lansing's thoughts were not dissimilar to my own. I thought the picture worked. But I told Rick there was a lot of talk for an action film. "I know", said Rick, "But it's not the romance. It's all that technobabble." I looked at him and declined comment.

I went through the film and found about a minute and a half of dialogue that could easily be lost. Jonathan also decided, with my blessing, to lose the big stunt in which Data pushes three enemy soldiers off a cliff and then uses a drone to transport them to safety before they hit the ground. It just didn't seem to play very well on film.

Losing two minutes would help the pace of certain sequences, I felt, but I had greater concerns about the test screening. "I wonder if Hollywood hasn't conditioned modern audiences," I said to Rick. "Will people coming to the test screening be expecting wall to wall action? What'll happen to the test scores when they see a movie that's warm and funny and depends a great deal on romance and character conflict?" I wasn't sure.

I'm ambivalent about testing. My first introduction to it was when I was Assistant News Director at WBBM-TV News in Chicago in the seventies. We used to test viewers' reaction to our on-air news talent. The research company would recruit a test audience and hook them up to wires that measured their galvanic skin response (GSR) to TV clips. I have no idea if anyone still does this, but in its day GSR testing was thought to be a completely objective way to determine if a news anchorman was "reaching" the audience. The test always began with film of Adolph Hitler to get a base-line comparison. Hitler always got the highest GSR. None of our anchors matched Hitler's scores, although one got close. His job would be secure for another year. It didn't matter in this test if he was popular or not. It only mattered if people would watch. The emerging trend toward attractive young female news readers was also driven by similar research.

As I moved away from news and into entertainment programming, first as a network executive in CBS Current Programming and then later as a writer-producer, I saw how research impacts dramatic television. Testing can be valuable. It helps answer questions you've been asking yourself. But test audiences aren't always sure what to make of something that's unique or different - it's simply not as comfortable as something they're used to. TV shows that risk being different often test lower than those that are familiar.

When testing was done on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, the results told us that audiences were unhappy that the characters on board the space station didn't always get along. And they complained that the "station doesn't go anywhere." In other words, they were asking for more of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. We made a few adjustments to *Deep Space*

Nine, but the real impact of that research was on the creation of *Star Trek: Voyager*. It was decided early on that it would be a ship-based show and there were to be no serious conflicts between the characters because *that's what the fans wanted*.

I knew very little about testing for features as the day of our test approached. But I did know the test audience was going to be seeing a film designed from the very start to be different than the last one. *Star Trek: First Contact*, full of dark, gritty action, had received test scores that set new records for the studio. We couldn't hope to match those results. The question was how much lower would we be? The audience would be composed of about 60% *Star Trek* fans. If those people came in expecting another picture like the last one, they were going to be surprised. On top of that, we were still missing most of the special effects and none of the permanent music had been scored yet. You bet I was worried.

The screening was held on the Paramount lot in the studio theater. Two hundred and fifty people had been recruited from street corner solicitation mostly in West Los Angeles. The house was full. Everyone knew they were there to see the new *Star Trek* film. The room buzzed with anticipation. All the studio executives were present including Jonathan Dolgen who would be seeing the film for the first time. I sat beside Jonathan Frakes and Rick in the back row. I had never attended a test screening of a feature film before.

I knew when the screening was over, everyone would promptly fill out a card with questions about the movie. They would be asked to give scores to various creative elements, and then all but a few people would be sent home. The ones invited to stay compose a "focus group" and they would discuss their opinions of the film with the research people for about a half-hour. The scores on the cards would be added up and averaged and broken down into demographics and analyzed. Some of the results would be ready in minutes. A more detailed report with recommendations would arrive the next day.

The lights went down and the Paramount logo faded in on the screen and the familiar sound of Jerry Goldsmith's *Star Trek* theme began. The audience didn't make a sound. Patrick Stewart's name appeared on the screen. The audience watched in rapt silence. Rick leaned forward. "We're in trouble," he whispered. Already?

Later, he'd explain that in every other test screening for *Star Trek* films, the audience cheered when they heard the music and applauded when Patrick's name appeared. Not this time. It was, everyone would agree, an "anomalous audience."

For the most part, however, I just sat back and listened to the audience laugh at the very first joke as Beverly adjusts Picard's tight collar. They laughed so loud the next three jokes couldn't be heard. I made a note to myself to ask Rick if we could delay Riker's entrance a beat so we wouldn't lose his line about the guests eating the floral arrangements.



I relaxed into the picture and I sensed the audience did too. They laughed at most of the jokes. Just as I was saying to myself that the second act still felt a bit leisurely, one woman got up to leave. Omigod, is she walking out? Does she hate the film? No, obviously a bathroom break, she came back after a few minutes and stayed to the end. There were no walk-outs.

An hour and forty-six minutes later, the lights came up and the audience applauded. I was feeling pretty good. I thought there were a few spots that needed adjustment but it seemed to play pretty well.

Outside, with adrenaline rushing, I turned to hear Rick murmur with concern, "The audience was dead." Dead? Was he in the same room I was in? "They didn't cheer once," he added.

That hadn't registered yet when I turned to see Don Granger coming out of the theater and he was pale. Don had been sitting beside Lansing and Dolgen. He lit a cigarette. John Goldwyn emerged with a long face. "We've got problems. It didn't play well at all."

Lansing came out, walking with a purpose. "Shall we talk?" she said to Rick and Jonathan without smiling, moving directly across the walkway to her office. I wasn't sure if I was supposed to be there but Rick nodded for me to join them. Somehow, I didn't think it was to get my accolades.

Lansing allowed each of the executives to give their impressions before she spoke. Michelle Manning who had seen the movie for the first time had a very positive response but added, "I'm not your audience." The others tried to identify what hadn't worked and what edits we might want to make.

When Lansing spoke, it was with firm conviction. "I don't care what the cards say -- you've got two major problems," she said. "Pacing, and there's no boom at the end." Dolgen nodded from his seat as she continued. "You have a wonderful film here, but you've got to go through it and be brutal. Brutal. Cut out everything you can. There's too much romance. Picard and Anij walk and talk forever. I kept saying, come on, already." Dolgen nodded again.

As she finished, the initial test results arrived. The scores were above average but only barely, and well below *First Contact*. Not the scores the studio expected from a *Star Trek* movie. There were a lot of positives: Riker-Troi, Data and the boy, the humor. Women liked it as much as men which was unusual for a *Star Trek* movie and non-*Trek*-fans liked it as much as fans, also unusual. I thought (quietly to myself) both were hopeful signs. There hadn't been a *Star Trek* "date movie" since the whale film. But the overall audience reaction to Picard's romance was disappointing. And there was a general consensus that the ending lacked excitement. I thought the ending was hard to judge because many opticals were missing. But I had to admit that one big visual effect that *was* in the picture didn't really work very well. Ru'af's doomed degaging morph that I hoped would pack a wallop, didn't. Some members of the focus group weren't even sure he'd been killed.

"We'll fix it" said Jonathan Dolgen with confidence. "You've got to do what *Star Trek* does best. We need to add a space battle in the climax."

Dolgen understood that his suggestion was an expensive one. With new scenes and new optical effects (that would have to be rushed in time to make our release date), it would eventually wind up costing a few million dollars to revise the ending. I couldn't help thinking that we were fortunate that the man with the keys to the vault was a *Star Trek* fan.

The day after the screening, reviews started appearing on the Internet by people who had lied their way into the test group. Some of the postings were scathing. A few were positive. I was informed by a science fiction journalist that "an amazing amount of industry people I know weaseled their way into the screening. It was almost a professional audience." Anomalous, indeed. His sources reported generally good things about the screening. But he said there were some people who "went in gunning" for *Star Trek*.

Enough positive feedback began to come from people who were legitimately at the screening and that seemed to neutralize the buzz. In the meantime, a second test screening was quietly scheduled for October 26th. The research company was informed that they had to take stronger security measures this time.



I proposed a new ending to Rick and we broke it down on a white board. As I went to work, Rick, Jonathan and film editor Peter Berger did a "brutal" pass through the picture and cut out over seven minutes.

I've been asked if I mind when things I've written are cut out of a film and my answer might surprise you. I'm not. I mean if the guts are cut out of my script, sure. But a cut of a movie and a script are two different animals. You never know how a film will play until it's assembled. I'm all for losing anything that will help make the movie better.

Out went the salad scene in Picard's quarters that I'd been concerned about. No loss there. The library scene including massive doses of exposition was gutted. Yes, we were leaving some technical questions unanswered, but was anyone really asking them? (And my angry librarian no longer had anything to be angry about -- the Enterprise librarian wound up on the cutting room floor.) The sequence in the caves was crunched together and a scene where Anij goes to look for Artim was cut. Romantic interludes between Picard and Anij were trimmed back. I thought all the cuts were sound.



There was a lot of conversation about the long walk and talk scene between Picard and Anij. This was the one place I knew I would feel the pain of losing something. Many of the trims had begun to eat away at the Picard “clutter” arc and this was the scene where we begin to see him consider the attractions of a simpler lifestyle. In addition, I thought Patrick gave his most endearing performance in the entire film here. But the walk was four minutes long and it was followed almost immediately by another long scene between Picard and the Admiral.

Jonathan, Rick and Peter tried half-a-dozen different versions of the scene. Ultimately they decided the only choice was to cut it in half, picking it up after Picard sees the quilt. But when they watched it in context with the entire film’s narrative, the relationship seemed rushed and artificial. Peter Berger made a passionate case for restoring the entire walk and talk and Lansing finally agreed. As a trade-off, we lost the short scene between Anij and Picard where she tells him, “You must spend your life asking questions.” Another erosion of my clutter arc, but I agreed the picture played better without it.

So did the second test audience. The picture still had the old ending but with almost seven minutes taken out, it was clearly a better movie. The test scores went up. Once we added a better ending, we were sure we’d get an even better response from audiences.

I finished my first draft of the new action finale and sent it to Rick. After spending a day polishing it, we distributed it to the studio:

*[Note: existing footage is normal type, new scenes are **bold**]*

INT. SON’A BRIDGE - (OPTICAL)

Where Picard, Worf and Gallatin are firmly in command... see the real countdown display has been frozen at 00:06.

WORF

All injector sub-systems on the collector are confirmed off-line. Cryogenic reactors are stable.

PICARD

Decloak the holo-ship and engage a tractor beam, Mister Worf.

As Worf presses panels and the holo-ship DECLOAKS on the viewscreen...

MEDIUM ANGLE - GALLATIN

watches from a console... behind him the Son’a bridge is deserted... as several small lights appear on a console, he crosses and presses a few panels to shut them off...

GALLATIN

The crew knows something’s happened. I’ve secured the bridge.

EXT. SPACE - THE HOLOSHIP

held in the tractor beam...

INT. HOLO-SHIP COCKPIT - (OPTICAL)

Ru’afo is frustrated...

RU’AFO

This ship is equipped with fourteen long range transporters... are they all useless...?

TARLAC OFFICER #1

(working the console)

They must have been locked and secured after we were beamed here.



RU'AFO
Isolate one and re-route its command sequence through the auxiliary processor...

SON'A OFFICER #1
Sir, there's nothing we can do... they already have control of our ship.

RU'AFO
I don't plan on going back to our ship.

INT. SON'A BRIDGE - (OPTICAL)
The collector filling the viewscreen. Picard moves into frame, considers the majestic but deadly piece of space hardware.

PICARD
Mr. Worf...
(beat)
Destroy that thing.

WORF
Aye, sir.

Worf moves to a console, presses some panels, reacts, presses them again... off Picard's look --

WORF
Weapons systems have been taken off-line.

And now Gallatin moves to another console and checks readings...

GALLATIN
The crew is rerouting bridge controls...

WORF
Captain, there's a problem aboard the collector. The launch sequence has resumed.

He motions to the digital display... the countdown has started over, counting backwards at 02:55 now... Picard reacts... Gallatin works the controls...

GALLATIN
The collector's shields have been raised. Someone's on board.
(checking)
It's Ru'afo.

PICARD
Can you override the launch sequence from here?

GALLATIN
Not without his access codes...
With much urgency, his mind working --

PICARD
Is there a self-destruct?

GALLATIN
(reacts, surprised)
Yes, but without the codes it would have to be activated at the upper control matrix on the collector...

PICARD
(overlapping)
...Worf, find a way to beam through those shields...

Worf goes to work... Gallatin shakes his head...

GALLATIN
...you'd have to detonate it manually -- there'd only be a two second delay...

The bridge lights go out... hammering can be heard outside the bridge doors... they react...

WORF
(checking panels)
We may be able to transport between shield generators if we're within one hundred meters...

PICARD
(to Gallatin)
Take us into position and prepare a site to site transport.

The countdown has reached 02:31... Picard moves to Worf, takes the rifle out of the startled Klingon's hands... he intended to follow his Captain into battle...

WORF
(reacts)
Sir...

PICARD
Remain at your post, Commander. I need you to stand by to beam me back.

GALLATIN
We're approaching the collector.
(Picard stands by for transport)
One minute before separation you'll see the cryogenic tanks venting... weapons fire could ignite the exhaust.

EXT. SPACE - THE COLLECTOR - (OPTICAL)
as the Son'a ship approaches...

INT. COLLECTOR (OPTICAL)
The weird cavernous room is left with a skeleton of structural elements now that all the sails are fully unfurled... it almost reminds of the support for an old-time roller coaster -- a cobweb of crisscrossing pipes, and conduits and planks...

SON'A COMPUTER VOICE
Separation in two minutes.

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)
in a control area safely removed from the injector, working controls... the digital display moving back from 01:57... he doesn't immediately see --

ANGLE - PICARD - (OPTICAL)
MATERIALIZING... maybe two hundred meters away from the injector. This is not an area built for manned operation... so Picard has to make do with the structural elements... he's been beamed to a platform near the base of the sail substructure... his phaser rifle is strapped to his chest, commando style... he begins to climb toward the injector...

WITH RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)
an intruder alarm has sounded on his console ... he reacts... looks up at -

P.O.V. - PICARD - (OPTICAL)
climbing across the crisscrossing structure toward the injector...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

fires a hand weapon toward Picard but it ricochets off the structural elements harmlessly...

PICARD - (OPTICAL)

looks down, making eye contact with Ru'afo, presses on...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

abandons the control area, begins to climb after him... the countdown has reached 01:42. {existing footage ends at shot of Ru'afo, marked 280 1301+05...⁶¹ runs about :45...}

INT. SON'A BRIDGE

Worf and Gallatin turn as the doors burst open and Tarlac and Elloran soldiers pour in... Gallatin doesn't resist but Worf knocks one crewmen to the right, one to the left and throws one over his shoulder with strong Klingon martial arts moves... he moves quickly to a console and hits a companel...

WORF

Captain...!

Before he can finish, he is overwhelmed and pinned to the floor by five men.

INT. COLLECTOR - CLOSE ON PICARD

as he reacts to the cut-off in Worf's message...

PICARD

Worf?

No response. He continues to pull himself higher...

WIDE

Picard and Ru'afo look like spiders crawling across a web... and the trick for Ru'afo is to angle himself so he can get a clear shot at Picard...

WIDE - THE SPIDER WEB SHOT - (OPTICAL)

as Picard scrambles the last few yards toward the

injector assembly... {This section currently runs :10 and ends at 280 7222+10.}

EXT. SPACE - BRIAR PATCH - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

on its way back...

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

Riker at Command, Supernumerary at Conn, Perim at Ops, Daniels at Tactical. Basic repairs have been done, but the bridge still shows signs of the battle.

DANIELS

Commander, I'm picking up Captain Picard's bio-signature on board the Collector...

Off Riker's reaction...

INT. COLLECTOR - CLOSE ON PICARD (OPTICAL)

still climbing.

RIKER'S COM VOICE

Enterprise to Picard...

PICARD

(reacts)

Number One.

RIKER'S COM VOICE

We're approaching your position.
Do you need assistance...

A phaser shot just misses Picard. He ducks behind a pillar.

PICARD

I might be needing a lift in a minute or so. Wait for my signal.

As Picard exits frame left to right...

RIKER'S COM VOICE

We're on our way.

INT. COLLECTOR

Picard runs across the catwalk... Ru'afo gets him in his sights again and is ready to pull the trigger when suddenly the cryogenic tanks vent nitrogen gas...

SON'A COMPUTER
Ignition in one minute.

Ru'afo pulls back the weapon, knowing he can't fire without igniting the fumes now... he climbs in a hurry, tired and out of breath...

ANGLE IN THE COMPUTER ASSEMBLY (OPTICAL)

where another digital display shows the countdown at 00:55... Picard, breathing hard, moves to a wall of circuits where he finds the control matrix... {existing footage ends at 280 3474-15 runs about :20...}

INSERT LOWER PANEL

As Picard opens it... presses a few buttons, stands and opens the upper panel...

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

is rocked by an explosion.

RIKER

Report!

DANIELS

It's Ru'afo's ship.

RIKER

On screen.

INCLUDE THE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

to see Ru'afo's ship firing weapons as it approaches... the ringed planet seen far in the distance...

PERIM

Sensors are reading over a hundred Ba'ku on board... and one Klingon.

Riker frowns, there's no time for this... he needs a daring plan and fast...

RIKER

Target their ventral engines and life support. Set a collision course.

INT. COLLECTOR

{Existing footage from Scene 280Q with new inserts}
Picard is at work on the computer controls, aligning a sequence of circuits, when Ru'afo appears behind him...

RU'AFO

Stop.

Picard turns to see Ru'afo on the support structure, climbing up toward him, his gun trained on Picard... Picard glances again at the countdown which has reached 00:42... both men are exhausted, sweaty and out of breath... fumes billow between them...

PICARD

We're getting too old for this,
Ru'afo.

RU'AFO

After today, that won't be a
problem. For either of us.

SON'A COMPUTER VOICE

Ignition in thirty seconds.

PICARD

Are you really going to risk
igniting the exhaust?

Their eyes are locked. Picard smiles.

PICARD

No? All right. Then I will.

Ru'afo reacts as Picard grabs his rifle and fires a single shot at the fumes as he dives for cover behind a standing console...

RU'AFO

No!

There's a tremendous flash and smoke... Ru'afo is knocked back by the impact, his hood thrown off, revealing the stretched skin stapled to his head... {existing footage ends at 280 5233+10, runs about :38}

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

As Ru'afo's ship looms ever larger on the viewscreen, still blasting away... the bridge rocking as the shields absorb the blows...

PERIM

Shields at sixty percent.

RIKER

Hold your course.

INT. SON'A BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise about to collide on the viewscreen... The Son'a officer turns to Worf who is under guard, observing...

SON'A OFFICER

He wouldn't.

WORF

(smiles)

Yes. He would.

The Son'a officer finally hits a control and ship veers sharply away...

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE - RIKER CLOSE UP

RIKER

Now!

EXT. SPACE - BRIAR PATCH - THE ENTERPRISE AND THE SON'A SHIP - (OPTICAL)

veer off from one another like two DC10s trying to avoid a mid-air collision... their undersides almost scraping... as they do... the Enterprise fires phasers...

THE SON'A SHIP'S BELLY (OPTICAL)

is hit in specific areas... we see small explosions occurring...

INT. COLLECTOR - RU'AFO'S HAND

comes into frame and he pulls himself back up to the platform...

PICARD

still connecting circuits... The countdown is at 0:00:09...

RIKER'S COM VOICE

Stand by, Captain. We're right
around the corner.

Picard grins, well, too bad but it's been a great ride...

PICARD

(to himself)

Sorry. Time's up.

And... he connects the final circuit in the sequence... As he does, we hear a distant boom and...



EXT. SPACE - THE COLLECTOR (OPTICAL)

We see a second explosion at the far end...

INT. COLLECTOR - (OPTICAL)

Ru'afo climbs to his feet, looks down...

RU'AFO'S POV - THE APPROACHING FIREBALL

RU'AFO

reacts to his impending death...

EXT. SPACE - BRIAR PATCH - THE ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

in an extraordinary shot, flies right along the collector, literally racing the cascading explosions toward Picard's position...

INT. COLLECTOR - (OPTICAL)

Picard and Ru'afo watch the approaching fireball... and just as the explosions sweep through... Picard DISAPPEARS in a transporter effect...

RU'AFO - (OPTICAL)

isn't so lucky... as a fraction of a second later, the fireball obliterates him and...

EXT. SPACE - THE COLLECTOR (OPTICAL)

blows apart in a cataclysmic explosion...



INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

As Picard enters...

PICARD
What kept you, Number One...?

RIKER
(smiles)
The Federation Council asked me to inform you that the Ba'ku relocation will be halted while they conduct a top level review.

Picard squeezes his First Officer's shoulder, delighted by the news.

DANIELS
Sir, Ru'afo's ship is hailing us.

PICARD & RIKER
(in unison)
On screen.

They glance at each other.

INT. SON'A BRIDGE (TO APPEAR ON VIEWSCREEN)

Worf is surrounded by his very nervous captors...

WORF
Captain, the Son'a crew would like to negotiate a cease fire. It may have something to do with the fact that we have three minutes of air left.



PICARD
(grins)

We have plenty over here. Prepare to beam aboard.

As Worf acknowledges... {Cut to Tag⁶²}

The note came back from the studio -- we like it but can't we make the space battle bigger? Only if you move the release date, said Rick. For a major studio to move the release date of their Christmas movie was simply not an option. The scene was shot as written, the picture was locked and sent to the lab. This time, my work really was finished.



THE CURSE

The first screening of the finished film was on the Paramount lot about ten days before the premiere. It was another one of those anomalous audiences. Patrick and his agent were there. So were Rick and Jonathan and LeVar and Donna Murphy. Several journalists attended. A lot of industry people. Very few fans.

I was sitting behind a noted critic who has a reputation for not always paying attention to a screening when he's bored. It made me recall the words of Harry Cohn, the legendary head of Columbia Pictures a half-century ago, who announced that his ass always tells him how good a picture is. If it's moving around a lot in the seat, he said, it's a bad picture. So, as I watched the film, I also watched the critic's rear end out of the corner of my eye. I caught a squirm during the main titles but then it settled down. Other asses seemed firmly entrenched as well. I was hopeful.

But then, as the end credits began to roll, whoever was sitting behind me sighed to his companion: "Well, it's an odd number."

The curse.

See, in *Star Trek* mythology, there's a curse on odd numbered films in the series. The even ones are good. The odd ones are bad.

So, there in the darkness of the Paramount studio theater, two years of my life had been defined simply as "an odd number."

My wife and I left quickly. I didn't want to stand around and hear the congratulations that would be said with Hollywood sincerity. And besides, I wasn't sure anyone had told Patrick that his kisses with Donna Murphy had been cut out of the film. (In fact, Jonathan Frakes had told him in advance and Patrick reportedly thought it a wise decision.)

I had just turned in a new television pilot script to the WB network and so I really had nothing to do the week before the premiere except wait. Where I had ignored Buzz during the writing process, now it became my lifeline. I surfed the net two or three times daily, waiting for people who had seen advanced screenings around the country (most of them for exhibitors and critics) to write in.

The first posting was from a writer on a genre website and it was mixed and sarcastic about my "over-ambitious" script filled with "new-age" philosophy. But the writer found it too cheerful a film to genuinely hate. And then to my amazement, almost every other reaction posted, maybe twenty of them, were positive.

Most of these were from fans who'd been guests at these screenings and might not be indicative of critics or the public at large but they were *fans* and they were saying they "appreciated the change of pace," "the crew finally gets to have a little fun," "it's what *Star Trek* is all about." Many of them noted that they'd gone in expecting not to like it because of what they'd heard but were delightfully surprised.

Journalists who'd interviewed me started to call to tell me about enthusiastic screenings they'd attended. "The consensus is the curse has finally been broken," one told me. There was an odd quality about their praise -- almost as though they were apologizing for liking it so much. It wasn't what they expected -- nobody saved the universe here, there were no space monsters.

But they loved the humor and they loved the ensemble work of the characters, they loved Brent's performance and they thought Patrick was as attractive in this film as they'd ever seen him. It reminded them of why they fell in love with *Star Trek* in the first place. One journalist's comment summed it up for many of the people's reactions: "As I came out of the theater, I said to myself, 'This is my Next Generation.'"

But this was still before the picture premiered. And I was resting on laurels from maybe twenty-five people on the Internet and positive reports that the studio had received from screenings around the country.

My agent called and counseled me about a rewrite of a feature I'd been approached to write. "I want you to take a meeting even if you're only halfway interested," he said. "It would be good to have something else in the bank just in case your picture doesn't open well."

And with that chilling thought in mind, I packed my bags and went off to the premiere in Las Vegas.





THE OPENING

Maybe you can tell by now but I'm not a Vegas kind of guy and I wasn't thrilled that I had to go there for the premiere which was launching the first CineVegas Film Festival. But I was determined to turn it into a family event and managed to secure tickets for our three kids, my wife and her mother to join us. Although reluctant at first, even my mother decided to bundle herself up and join us from New York. "This trip will kill me, I want you to know that," she said.

The studio borrowed the L.A. Lakers' charter plane with seats that had the most amazing leg room you'll ever see. Patrick, Jonathan and Rick were on board. Gates McFadden brought her nephew. Garrett Wang from *Star Trek: Voyager* chatted up Nicole DeBoer, the cute actress who had joined the cast of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* replacing Worf's dead wife. Don Granger gave me what-he-called his standard speech about reviews. "You'll get hundreds of then," he said. "Some will be great. Some will be awful. Just remember that's true of every movie that comes out." I'd brought along the first newspaper review that I'd read from Mike Antonucci at the San Jose Mercury News. It was very positive. Spirits were high.

We were met at a private runway in Las Vegas by a caravan of twenty-five double stretch limos. It was the kind of scene you try to snap-shot in your mind, knowing it may never come again.

Twenty minutes later, my wife and I were deposited on the red carpet outside Bally's Hotel lined with photographers and reporters and fans, none of whom had the first interest in me. "Hello, whoever you are," said one fan. In a strange twist, I ran into one of the sponsors of the festival, a writer I know named Michael Berk. Michael co-created *Baywatch* and when they were looking for someone to run the writing staff they interviewed me for the job. I didn't get it. If they had hired me, I wouldn't have been available for another job that became available a month later at *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. "We're responsible for your success," Michael said with a laugh.

We didn't linger on the carpet. My family had flown in on a commercial plane and I wanted to make sure they'd arrived okay. An usher took us to our seats in the Jubilee Theater, converted for the night into a state-of-the-art movie house.

I found my family safe and sound, escorted by Eric my assistant. I was wearing glasses (which I find I have to do more and more these days) and my mother had to look twice before she recognized me. I kissed her hello, noted thankfully that she was still alive, and escorted them all to our seats.

Rick pulled me aside. "New York Times," he said. And then he held a thumbs up. The New York Times -- damn, they hadn't always been kind to *Star Trek* movies -- but they liked this one.

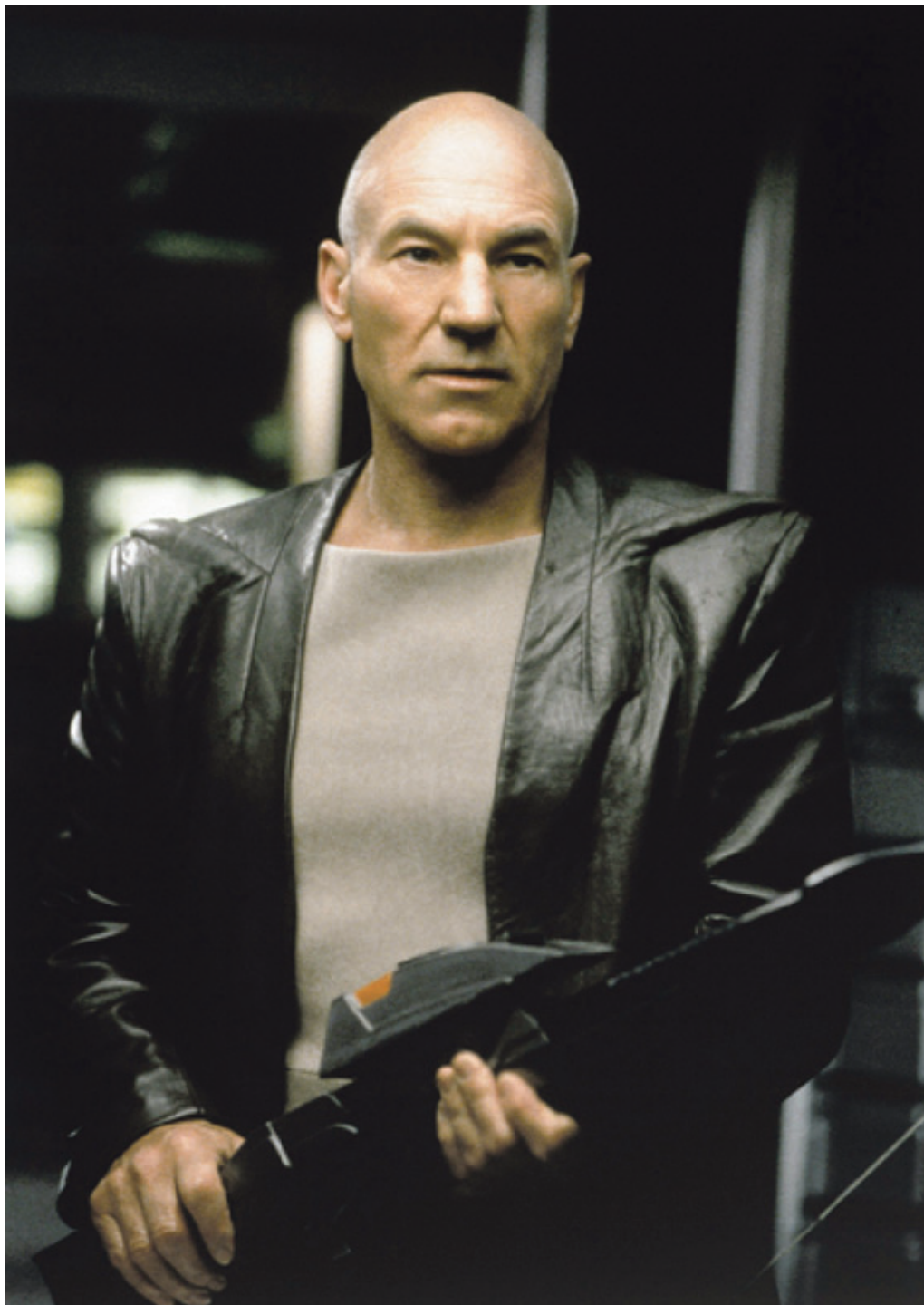
Wrapped in the warmth of the Times' review, I settled in for the movie to start. Sherry Lansing introduced the cast and Rick and Jonathan and



me. She mispronounced my name for which I immediately forgave her. I have an introduction phobia myself.

As the movie started and the first laughter began, I relaxed and recalled the Joel McCrea character in *Sullivan's Travels*, a favorite movie of mine, written and directed by Preston Sturges, one of the Paramount ghosts who greeted me at the studio every dawn. McCrea plays a Hollywood director who wants to make a dark film to reflect the troubled times of the '30s Depression. He goes on a personal odyssey to find a serious topic

for the film, travelling across country incognito, until he gets himself into real trouble and winds up in prison. Feeling true misery for the first time, he shuffles with the other prisoners into a bleak room where a projector and a screen have been set up for the evening's recreation -- a long way from his private screening room in Beverly Hills. As a Mickey Mouse cartoon begins, the convicts explode into laughter at the dumbest little jokes... embracing every opportunity to escape the hard reality of their lives. Only then, does Joel MacCrea awaken to the desperate need for laughter in dark and cynical times.



THE MORNING AFTER

This is the part of the book where I tell you I don't pay any attention to reviews.

"I'll know about the thumbs by six tonight," Rick had told me the day before the premiere. The studio apparently had a spy watching Siskel and Ebert tape their show.

I'd known Gene Siskel twenty-five years ago in Chicago when I was producing the five o'clock news and we needed a film critic. He got the job -- his first job in television. He had a bushy moustache in those days and one day he said he was thinking about cutting it off. "It adds character," I told him. "If you want a television career, you ought to keep it." So much for the wisdom of my advice. Over the years, we'd fallen out of touch. I knew Gene wouldn't show any favoritism - in fact I was worried he'd bend over backwards not to show any. I remembered that time in touch football when I humiliated him by catching pass after pass as he tried to cover me. He wouldn't hold that against me, would he?

But when six o'clock came, my problems were with Ebert not Siskel. Gene gave it thumbs up. Roger, thumbs down. There were no details.

The next night, after the premiere party, I went up to my room at the Hilton, turned on my laptop and surfed the web for the next several hours, visiting every major city in the country, poking my nose into the major newspapers' morning editions.

There were a lot of bad reviews.
There were also a lot of good reviews.

In addition to the Times, strong notices came from the *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Detroit News*, *Boston Globe*, *Cincinnati Post*, *Charlotte Observer*...

Pans from *The Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Newsday*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Reuters*...

Dozens more pro and con and in between. I had hoped for a strong positive consensus. It wasn't there.

Here are a few excerpts from the negative reviews. I've asked Eric to pull out some of the very worst. You've walked in my shoes for almost two years now. Imagine how it must have felt to read these --

James Verniere, *Boston Herald*: "Fans will have themselves to blame if they don't reject *Star Trek: Insurrection*... and send a message to Paramount. Supposedly a lighter entry in the series after the horror film like *Star Trek: First Contact*, *Insurrection* is cheesy-looking and badly written."

Michael Wilmington, *Chicago Tribune*: "If you wanted to dream up a movie parodying many of the excesses of *Star Trek* from 1966 to today -- you couldn't have done any better (or worse) -- than this."

Mr. Showbiz: "Most of *Insurrection's* failures can be laid at the feet of its lame and unimaginative script, which hangs by the thinnest of logical threads and has been cobbled together from pieces of too many original and *Next Generation* TV episodes..."

Daniel Neman, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*: "First-time feature-film writer Michael Piller caps the experience with that special *Star Trek* dialogue that could always stand a good rewrite: 'The android! He's out of control! He's heading toward the village!' is Piller's idea of action exposition, while noble determination is handled with, 'If a court martial is the only way to tell the people of the Federation what is happening here, I welcome it.' ... The people making *Star Trek* films should just give up and make only even-numbered movies..."

Bruce Westbrook, *Houston Chronicle*: If we applied old-style movie hype to *Star Trek: Insurrection* -- with a touch of irony -- it easily could sound like this:

"See! Cadaverous, cranky bad guys obsessed with face lifts!

"Hear! Dialogue such as 'Reroute its command sequence through the auxiliary processor!'

"Thrill! As good guys fight to preserve the status quo of a small commune of boring, pacifist vegetarians!

"The problems stem from the screenplay by Michael Piller... he's a first-time film screenwriter -- and it shows."

I won't lie. These hurt. For reasons I can't explain, bad reviews linger in the memory longer than the good ones. I had my own criticisms of the work (which I'll share in the final chapter), but I never expected the hostility that some critics expressed. I'd done pretty well with critics in television over the years. I guess, even with Don Granger's warnings, I wasn't quite prepared for this. Even though I eventually received hundreds of reviews from the studio publicity department, I stopped reading them after the first day.



Still, there were many, many positive reviews, some from very influential sources. In the name of equal time, as well as propping up my fragile ego, here are my favorite excerpts. I've made them longer than the negative ones because it's self-serving.

George Powell, *San Francisco Examiner*: "The ability to tell an old story freshly and with fervor has never been more evident than in *Star Trek: Insurrection*... Little did any critic or science-fiction fan realize in 1966, as the TV show made its debut, that 32 years later the same hopeful values and vision espoused by creator Gene Roddenberry would be the subject of such a rousing and satisfying film... a polished film that shines like a crown jewel in the *Star Trek* firmament."

Rita Kempley, *Washington Post*: "Insurrection [is] the funniest, most character-driven of the *Next Generation's* three big-screen treks... As with most *Trek* sagas, this movie reunites us with characters who are old friends and gives us an imaginative -- if campy -- story in which all possibilities are invariably realized. And as you walk from the theater to your car, you find yourself thinking, if only for a few seconds, that if Klingons can tolerate Cardasians and Ferengies, perhaps there's hope for Serbs and Croats."

Stephen Holden, *New York Times*: "Some good things really do last, if not forever, then longer than anyone might reasonably have expected. Take *Star Trek*. If *Star Trek: Insurrection*, the latest installment, is little more than a glorified television episode, it still has all the ingredients that have made it a perennial, with a few extras, including improved special effects... *Insurrection* is breezily paced, and Michael Piller's screenplay has enough good-natured humor to keep things from bogging down into sentimental pomposity... With its vision of a peaceable kingdom of eternal youth in an agrarian arts-and-crafts paradise in a California environment, *Insurrection* is an appealing millennial throwback to the hippie dream that is part and parcel of *Star Trek's* utopian ethos."

Mark Altman has no influence with the general public, but as a noted science fiction critic, he's been writing in genre magazines about *Star Trek* well before I ever knew what a turbolift was. Everybody at *Star*

Trek considers Altman the Anti-Christ. He's ripped us apart in print over and over again, without a doubt the toughest critic of this franchise. The last time Mark Altman wrote anything about me it was to say what a lousy job I had done during the second season of *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Here's some of what he wrote about the movie:

"Star Trek: Insurrection, the latest in what has become a seemingly cookie cutter franchise, beats the odds (and the odd; more accurately, the odd numbered curse, that is) by being one of the best films in the Trek motion picture series.

"...What it lacks in physical scope, it makes up for through its cerebral storyline and moral quandary marking it as one of the more thought provoking and compelling entries in the motion picture series twenty year history.

"...What Insurrection does to inject new life into the timeworn franchise is go back to the very roots of the Star Trek series foundation. Piller does this not only by using an ethical and moral dilemma as the underpinnings of the story but by also relying on wit and sensuality to color his characters... all the characters are rich and interesting.

"...The actors have never been so loose and fun to watch as they are here. While writer Piller may find it anathema, I believe that the film is the first time that the Next Generation characters have captured the charm, wit and idealism of the original series."

So, is it as good as Mark Altman says it is? Or as bad as those other guys said? How do you explain why two newspaper critics in San Francisco adored it while two newspaper critics in Dallas-Ft. Worth hated it? I wish I knew.

I finally found Roger Ebert's published review on the internet during the early morning after the premiere:

"...Our own civilization routinely kills legions of people in wars large and small for reasons of ideology, territory, religion, or geography. Would we contemplate removing 600 people from their native environment in order to grant immortality to everyone alive? In a flash. It would be difficult, indeed, to fashion a philosophical objection to such a move, which would

result in the greatest good for the greatest number of people..."

Memo to Roger Ebert: the point of the movie was exactly that. If we found the fountain of youth today, I have no doubt that we'd steal it from whomever it rightfully belonged and very likely destroy them if they fought back. But it might be nice to consider the moral implications of our actions.

As for Gene Siskel, well, I didn't see his review but I started getting calls about it after he appeared on the CBS Morning News on Friday:

"Let me be honest, I don't know much about the whole world of Star Trek. I wouldn't know a Klingon if one came up and bit me. In fact, I don't even know if Klingons have teeth, but I do know a good movie when I see one and Star Trek: Insurrection is one.

"Star Trek: Insurrection is one of the best in the series, with a good story, exciting conflict and, at times, some cutting-edge effects that truly entertain.

"...A Star Trek tradition is a story with some kind of moral lesson, and 'Insurrection' is no exception. Here is Captain Picard's sermon on the mount -- Mt. Ba'ku. (Clip: Captain Picard confronts Admiral Dougherty...)

PICARD

We are betraying the principles upon which the Federation was founded... this is an attack on its very soul.

(beat)

And it will destroy the Ba'ku. Just as cultures have been destroyed in every other forced relocation throughout history.

DOUGHERTY

Jean-Luc, we are only moving six hundred people.



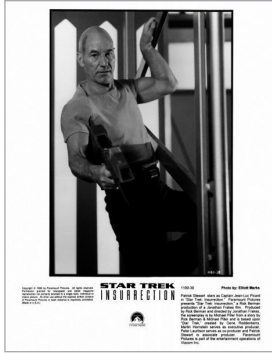
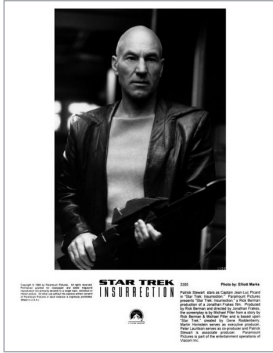
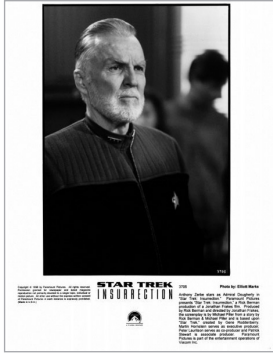
PICARD

(beat)

How many people does it take... before it becomes wrong? A thousand? Fifty thousand? A million? How many will it take, Admiral?

"That's good writing. It sounds better than anything Yoda ever said. But I looked up who did the writing on this picture and I found out it was someone that I actually knew and worked with about twenty-five years ago at this very station, WBBM-TV, CBS-2 Chicago, and his name is Michael Piller, and he has written a really good script. Keep it up, Mike. Congratulations. This is a good film to see, even if you don't follow the whole Star Trek series, as I don't follow it."

Thanks, Gene.



THE MONEY

Reviews are quickly forgotten in this town. Money is remembered. In the age-old Hollywood tradition, the quality of my work would be measured in dollars. First, in how much we grossed the first weekend -- the daily trades would trumpet the film's success or failure on Monday morning -- and eventually on the total domestic and foreign grosses earned.

I understood the facts of life about my career after this picture. If the movie opened well, I'd be hot. If it didn't, not.

Then we'd have to wait to see if the movie had "legs" or staying power. *Star Trek* movies usually fall off quickly after a strong opening. The average domestic gross of the eight previous movies was about \$80 million. *Star Trek: First Contact* had grossed \$92 million; *Star Trek Generations* \$75.7 million. If *Star Trek: Insurrection* broke the 100-million-dollar mark, the screenplay would be credited for being entertaining, fun and uplifting, perfect relief to depressing current events. If the numbers came in the eighties or nineties, the screenplay would be another solid entry that didn't disappoint the legions of Trek fans. Seventies or worse -- the screenplay would be criticized for being soft and chick-friendly when everyone knows the guys who see these kinds of movies want bigger and better thrills in their action films.

I'd been curious about how the studio decided to market the film. Most of trailers I'd seen emphasized the action. Since this was a film that was notably lighter and more romantic, why wouldn't the studio want to get the word out? After all, we'd already seen how women and non-Trek audiences responded positively during our tests.

But it was explained to me that *Star Trek: Insurrection* was being positioned as the only action alternative in a crowded holiday line-up. Emphasizing the "date movie" qualities of the film would not work, the studio believed, because of the competition from *You've Got Mail* and *Stepmom*.

I tracked the box office over the weekend from reports published on the web. The Friday box office came in at nine-million. Frankly, I didn't know if that was bad or good. All I knew was that the studio was hoping for a number in the twenties for the first weekend. Nine was almost half way there. But then I went to the 4:30pm, Saturday showing of the movie at Mann's Chinese (I wanted to see it with a real audience), and the theater was half-empty. That scared me to death.

Friends had warned to expect a dip on Saturday because the hard-core Trekkers always come out on Friday. But how much of a dip would it be? Finally, the report came in... only about a 17% drop-off. Seven and a half mil on day two and the studio was estimating \$22.4 million for the weekend.⁶³

Variety's Monday headline: "WARP SPEED B.O. LEAD"

Hollywood Reporter's Monday Headline: "'TREK' UPRISING SEIZES NO. 1"

A producer I was working with on another script called. "The numbers are wonderful for our project," she said. "You've established yourself!"

That night, Don Granger called me to say the studio was delighted with the opening. Yes, it was lower than the last film but that one had opened at Thanksgiving before anyone started their Christmas shopping. This was the fourth highest December opening in motion picture history. Even more important, said Don, "The exit polls were terrific. They love it. You did your job."

On Tuesday morning, the Hollywood Reporter reported: "The ninth installment in the series sported a solid demographic profile and positive reaction, which should enable it to hold up relatively well through the important post-Christmas moviegoing period.

"Males led females by a 3-2 margin in surveys conducted Friday night by CinemaScore, a ratio in line with the previous *Star Trek* movies. The age profile skewed older but not by such a share as to suggest that the frequent-filmgoing younger set is staying way.

"The overall 92% favorable grade suggests that audiences were quite satisfied with this latest telling of the exploits of the Starship Enterprise. Of course, Trekkies are not the most objective of observers, but even less-fanatical customers will likely find something to like in the film given such a high initial score."

The optimism didn't last long. The following weekend, the week before Christmas, the gross fell over sixty percent and never recovered. The final domestic box office was tabbed at xxx-million, what Paramount would probably describe as a modest success because the movie will earn a profit for the studio. But because *Insurrection's* domestic grosses were significantly less than the last movie, there will be much research and analysis to try to figure out why. Many issues will be discussed including marketing strategies, release date, nature of the competition, weather, demographic appeal of the franchise, the possibility of over-saturation of *Star Trek* in various media... and most certainly a great deal of the discussion will center on the creative and conceptual decisions that we made. To listen in on what they'll saying, please turn back to the first page of this chapter, paragraph three, last line.

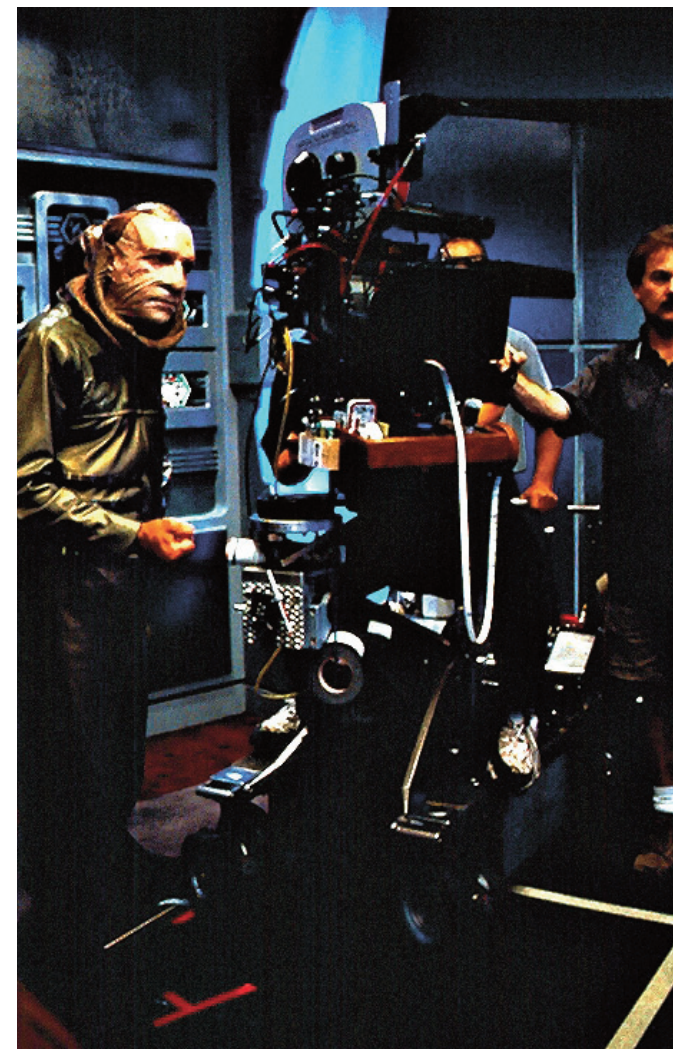
The studio's final judgements will be applied to the successful launch of *Star Trek X* and it *will* be a successful launch because as any psychic can tell you, ten is an even number.

Is there a lesson for the writer in these box office numbers? After all, here is the cold, hard audience response to my work in dollars and cents. Shouldn't a writer listen to what the gross receipts are telling him change his approach next time?

Let me give you the same answer I would have given if the picture had earned a hundred million (although I would have been more cheerful as I said it): No.

Sure, they call it "The Picture Business". And yes, the pictures are supposed to make money. But that isn't our job. It's the studio's. There has always been a tension between the creative interests and the business interests in film-making and *that tension must be preserved at all costs*.

The moment we cross the line and start writing with an eye toward higher grosses (or TV ratings), to borrow a line from the script, we lose everything we are.





GOOD AND WELFARE

Would I change anything now that it's over? Sure. Here are a couple of second guesses.

I started out with a vision of man standing alone on a mountainside holding a phaser rifle, defending a weak and helpless people against two of the most powerful forces in galaxy. A true mythic hero against impossible odds.

That's not quite how it turned out.

I'm not satisfied that, when all was said and done, we adequately established the odds against Picard. Yes, maybe one less cut in the ground action might have helped -- the attack comes from only three Son'a shuttlecraft and the drones -- but that's not really at the heart of the issue as I look back at it now. The true villain in the picture is the Federation leadership, but as written, their crimes are mostly philosophical. That leaves the Son'a, whom I described in dialogue as "petty thugs", to provide the entire threat. I think the film might have had more scope if I'd pitted Starfleet forces as well as Son'a against Picard and crew.

The second second-guess: when much of the "clutter arc" wound up on the editing room floor, we lost most of Picard's personal journey. I wish I had started with a more substantial arc for Picard -- one that could have withstood the loss of a scene or two. The clutter arc as written was just too subtle to survive. I have to reiterate that, based on the assembled film, I fully endorsed the cuts that Jonathan, Rick and the studio decided to make. But a trip to the fountain of youth deserves a profound re-birth of some kind for the hero and we didn't quite get there.

That's a missed opportunity, one that bothers me a lot. I keep thinking back to how the script might have changed if we had faded in to find Picard weary from two years of war, first with the Borg and now with the Dominion, having lost many crew members fighting to protect the ideals of the Federation. Now, he discovers his own command is about to sacrifice those very ideals to steal the Ba'ku planet. In that scenario, the peaceful world would have provided an immediate contrast to Picard's dark days of war.

My colleague, Alan Spencer, tells the story of the artist who is caught trying to steal his own work from the Louvre. "I just want to finish a few things in my painting that aren't quite right yet," he says. "It's not yours anymore," says the Louvre guard as they take him away. "It's ours now."

As I consider the work that will forever be 'unfinished' in my mind, there is still much that I find pleasing in *Star Trek: Insurrection*. I wanted to write a film that was uplifting and optimistic in the Roddenberry tradition. I wanted to explore the intellectual, moral leadership that I felt set Picard apart from other heroes. I wanted to show how this crew is a family that love and support one another. And I wanted to get the Enterprise back to exploring strange new worlds. *Star Trek: Insurrection* achieves those goals.

Is it a good movie? That's up to you.

Whether your thumb is up or down, I know I brought every skill I have to this screenplay. A writer can't ask any more of himself.

When you start a screenplay, you never know where it's going to take you. Or what you'll have when it's done. I tell young writers what I always try to remember myself: enjoy the journey. It's the best advice I have to offer. And the journey is enjoyable for me when, and only when, I'm writing about something meaningful to me. That's when I can bring a passion to my work.

In a recent interview, Lawrence Kasdan, speaking about *The Big Chill*, said, "...if you're passionate about your work, you can get almost anything made."⁶⁴ I wish I could agree. I think if you're Lawrence Kasdan, you can get anything made. The Catch-22 for the rest of us is -- if we ever want to *be* Lawrence Kasdan -- we have to write with passion or we'll never get there.

It's a tough choice sometimes, especially when there are bills to pay. A choice between writing material you don't really care about for money or writing something that matters to you, often without compensation. I won't minimize the wrenching pain that comes when something you've written and deeply care about stirs no one else's interest. But I'm haunted by my conscience -- I still hear the words "Shame on you" when I consider doing it for the dough. After all, that's *my name* on the script.

I know it's easy for me to say -- I get checks every week from *Star Trek* whether I sell anything new or not. But I wouldn't have been in a position to take advantage of the *Star Trek* opportunities if I'd written without passion throughout my career.

By now, you know pretty well what gets me passionate about a project. I want it to make me feel something. I want it to engage my heart and my mind. If that's where I'm coming from as I write, then it's possible -- if I do my job well -- to make the audience feel something too.

There's a new kind of action writing in Hollywood that I simply don't know how to do. It begins -- even before a word is put down on paper -- with identifying "set pieces", big self-contained action moments that are thrilling and memorable, and then finding some way to string all your set pieces into a coherent narrative. The theory is that audiences are really coming for the "eye candy" -- to see how we've filled the screen with awesome visuals and special effects. Set pieces sound great in pitches and make for good coming attractions but in my opinion, this approach almost never results in a good movie because it abandons the fundamental demands of story-telling.

Of course, I want top-notch visuals and effects, but I don't go to the movies to see them. I go to see stories about interesting characters. It's hard for me to feel anything about hardware. The best evidence in recent years to support my argument: *Titanic*, certainly the greatest

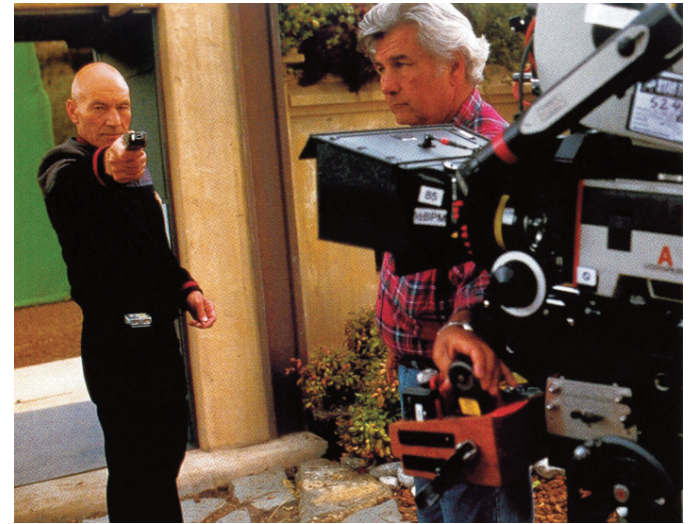
hardware movie ever made. But that movie worked because and only because writer-director James Cameron took the time to make us care about Jack and Rose. Believe me, my little girl didn't go see the movie six times because the ship sank -- she went back to see if Leo might just make it this time.

In sixth grade, Artie Paulson and I always stayed up late on Friday nights to watch *The Twilight Zone*. Never missed it. I started writing *Twilight Zone* short stories. I just wanted to make other people feel the way Rod Serling made me feel. I still do. They were low budget shows, filmed in black and white and had minimal special effects but it remains a benchmark of good writing for me because every show told us a little bit about who we are and who we might be. I've tried to do that with each *Star Trek* script I've worked on and I think that's what Gene Roddenberry was asking me to do. I tried to do it with *Star Trek: Insurrection*.

One of the first reactions to this film was from an anonymous fan who wrote a long and thoughtful letter to a website that included many pros and cons before concluding with the line: "...this movie left me with a nice warm feeling inside."

I wonder if she realizes how much that matters to the guy sitting in my chair. A comment like that... well, that's what makes all the sleepless nights worthwhile. That's why I became a writer.







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