

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"Piece of Mind"

1/17/90

TEASER:

Picard, Riker, Data and Troi are at one end of a conference table in a small, elegantly furnished room. They show signs of fatigue that tell us they have been here for awhile, and that whatever they are engaged in has not been easy. There is a well-dressed, dignified man seated at the center of the table who is the picture of calm. He is Reittan Grax, the Betazoid who has been overseeing this treaty negotiation on his home planet, Betazed. This important Federation planet, like the old Earth meeting grounds of Geneva and Reykjavik is often host to these Starfleet treaty negotiations. At the opposite end of the table are three aliens we have never seen before, the Dhasgai. They talk excitedly amongst themselves.

Just as Picard says something to Riker about these negotiations dragging on into eternity, the chief Dhasgai speaks up. He concedes on three different paragraphs of the treaty, and grants Federation access to the dilithium mines on the seventh moon of Dhasgai. Picard is stunned -- with these concessions, they now have a treaty, and negotiations have suddenly and unexpectedly ended.

Reittan Grax produces the equivalent of a 24th century leather-bound book and has both sides sign the treaty. The doors to the conference room open and Grax invites the Dhasgai and our Away Team to a wing-ding Betazed celebratory reception, already in progress. Picard wants to know how Grax had this in place. The Betazoid explains that while it was not ethical to use his telepathy to aid either side during negotiations, he did know the Dhasgai were about to concede on all key points. He telepathically summoned a few Betazoids and Federation officials to this reception.

They are now in a much larger room, which prominently features a view of the Betazed capital city of Ollander. The sky is bright red, and multi-colored flashes of electrical energy (an aurora borealis-like form of Betazed lightning) discharge frequently. The room is filled with people, yet there is a hushed tone to it -- many people stroll and nod understandingly to each other. Others may make gestures with their hands, or point and nod, but there is very little vocalization. The Betazoids are engaged in animated telepathic conversation!

Inside, as Betazed refreshments are passed around, Data and the rest of our crew socialize with the Dhasgai for the first time.

Riker, who once lived on Betazed, recognizes some old acquaintances. Troi has many friends here, and Picard is in polite conversation with Grax when he is interrupted by a familiar voice: Lwaxana Troi. She congratulates Picard on signing a treaty with the Dhasgai and makes small talk in her inimitable fashion.

Troi sees Picard and her mother together, and comes to the Captain's aid. As Mrs. Troi greets her daughter, she lets slip a comment about the Ferengi, and how much she enjoyed meeting them very recently.

This is news to Picard. Grax explains it was a minor incident, hardly worth mentioning. A Ferengi vessel paid a visit to Betazed recently, inquiring about trade agreements. The Betazeds were not interested and the Ferengi left -- but not before Lwaxana had the opportunity to meet them and boast of her heritage as the Daughter of the Fifth House.

As Lwaxana tells Picard that she thought the Ferengi were kind of amusing although somewhat bizarre, Grax demurs. It would be quite easy to take them for comical little creatures. But the Betazeds could not read the mind of any Ferengi, which he found most disturbing. In his opinion, the Ferengi need to be watched more closely -- they are much more dangerous than they appear. Picard nods in strong agreement.

ACT ONE:

Picard is in his ready room, observing an unusual stellar phenomena on his viewscreen. Riker enters. Picard presents his dilemma: everyone had expected the Dhasgai negotiations to drag on for weeks. The USS Bradbury is to rendezvous with the Enterprise at Betazed in ten days. They could stay in orbit and wait for the Bradbury -- or, the Enterprise could begin its next assignment ahead of schedule -- to map and calculate the extent of the proto-stars in the stellar nursery in sector G7. Riker suggests proceeding with the mapping project, a rather routine assignment at best which they could easily complete before the rendezvous with the Bradbury. Picard points out that they really don't need a full ship's complement to do that, suggesting that some of the crew may want to have shore leave on Betazed. Riker is about to carry out the order, when Picard says that a certain ship's officer who once lived on Betazed might want to take advantage of that shore leave, as would a certain ship's counselor who grew up on Betazed. Riker finally gets it: Picard is giving him and Troi a ten-day holiday. Riker accepts and reminds Picard that they had better be back on time to meet the Bradbury: it's the training ship that will be taking Wesley Crusher to his final exams for entrance into Starfleet Academy.

Ten-Forward. Wesley is having his dinner, but he is spending more time staring out at the planet Betazed than eating his food. He hardly notices his mother's voice when Beverly asks if she can join him for dinner -- and of course, she wants to know what's wrong. Wesley has realized that the investigation of the proto-stars will be his last mission aboard the Enterprise. When they return to Betazed in ten days, he'll board the Bradbury and head off for his final Starfleet Academy exams. If he passes, he'll be enrolled immediately and will be at the Academy for at least two years. And then Starfleet will randomly assign him to some other ship. Beverly understands his mixed emotions, but points out that it's what he's been wanting for some time now, and that it's his own dream coming true. Wesley realizes this, but it doesn't take away the pain of leaving old friends and comfortable surroundings.

Riker and Troi, now in civilian clothing appropriate for wear on Betazed, are in the transporter room. Riker asks O'Brien if he's set the exact coordinates requested. Of course he has, says O'Brien -- and have a pleasant shore leave. Riker and Troi dematerialize and appear --

On Betazed, in a lush, green clearing that is away from the city. The spires and lights of Ollander can be seen in the distance. It is dusk, and the sky is a dark crimson. The multi-colored hues of electricity still light up the sky at random intervals. A dirt pathway leads out of the clearing into what must be some kind of forest. Deanna is delighted -- she instantly recognizes this place. It's the Betazed version of Mulholland Drive, and she and Riker had some romantic times here. As memories flood back, Riker shows her a Muktok plant -- a long-lived, turquoise-colored growth with eight silver-colored flowers. Riker used to call it the "do-re-mi" plant, because each flower plays a different musical note. Sure enough, as Riker and Troi come closer to the Muktok, the silver flowers react by emitting different tones. It's a haunting melody, one that Deanna knows by heart. It's the song they first heard when they fell in love. The Muktok plant, a species capable of recognition, senses the presence of this once familiar couple, and plays the song back for them.

On board the Enterprise, Picard orders Wesley and Data to take the ship out of orbit. They head off for the nebula which is nursery to the evolving proto-stars. Data is ordered to Engineering to assist Geordi with preparation of their instruments, measuring devices, etc. for the upcoming mission.

Back on Betazed, Riker and Troi are recalling the time they spent together here. Even though their relationship has changed over the years, being back in this setting is stirring old feelings, and there is a moment when Riker

impulsively leans over and gives Deanna a kiss. She is enjoying it, but the moment is interrupted by a loud voice: "You never could keep your hands off of her, could you?" It's Lwaxana Troi, trudging up the trail that leads from the forest. Her remarks are meant as a light-hearted commentary on Riker's advances, but Deanna is annoyed at her mother's interruption here in the middle of nowhere. Lwaxana parries by accusing her of arriving back on Betazed without telling her. Lwaxana insists that Riker and Troi spend their ten days at her house as her guests. But right now, Mr. Homn has prepared an evening banquet for them. He spreads it out, picnic-style, in the clearing. Lwaxana sits down and starts chomping on some purple Betazed food.

Mr. Homn has also brought some potent Betazed liquor, and is the first to imbibe. But soon, all of them are feeling its effects. It's growing cold, so Lwaxana telepathically summons a Grograzal (a friendly Betazed beast who generates heat -- much better than a campfire). The Grograzal, about the size of small black bear, curls itself into a ball near them and begins to glow softly, giving off a much-appreciated warmth. Lwaxana also desires something sweet for dessert, so she asks Mr. Homn to go pick some uttaberries, which she saw growing along the path to the clearing. Homn dutifully goes off with a basket to pick uttaberries.

Lwaxana tells Riker and Troi about her adventures with the Ferengi. They were nice enough, she explains, but those teeth! Don't they ever go to a dentist? And those ears -- did you ever see anything so ugly in your life! The Betazed spirits have affected Riker, and he laughs even though he doesn't mean to. Soon, they're all having a very good time, and Lwaxana says something else nasty about the Ferengi appearance, like, "And the shape of their head! So unattractive -- just like that little guy over there." That snaps Riker and Troi out of their laughter, and they turn to see a Ferengi standing in the clearing, observing them. Riker wants to know what he's doing there, and the Ferengi says, "You'll know soon enough." And he dematerializes, along with Lwaxana, Troi and Riker in an effect that signifies a Ferengi transporter. And then the clearing is empty, with nothing left but the glowing Grograzal and the Muktok plant, singing a strange, distressed song. Just then, Mr. Homn reappears with a basket full of uttaberries, his mouth stained a dark green from having eaten a few himself. He looks around at the empty clearing, trying to figure out where everyone else has gone. Seeing no one there, he pops another berry into his mouth.

ACT TWO:

The Enterprise is on course for the stellar nursery. Geordi and Data are calibrating their instruments when they are interrupted by Wesley, who is still feeling a bit low.

Geordi tries to cheer him up with a story of his own entrance into Starfleet Academy. Data would like to assist in making Wesley feel better, but his Academy experiences were unusual, since his own course of study there was so accelerated. His misfired attempts at consoling Wesley work and do serve to make Wesley laugh -- a little bit.

On board the Ferengi vessel: we are in a darkened room. The only light source is a rainbow-colored force field, which swirls tightly around three unconscious figures in the center of the room. From a POV inside the force field, we see the three figures are Riker, Deanna and Lwaxana. Riker is the first to come to, followed by Deanna and Lwaxana. They are not sure how long they've been lying on the floor. They're not even sure where they are -- but then Riker notices a very distinctive odor. Lwaxana notes that she's not reading anyone's thoughts, hitting the same blank wall as when she met the Ferengi. They deduce they are on board a Ferengi vessel. (N.B. No human has ever seen the inside of a Ferengi vessel before.) They examine the forcefield, but it's quite secure and resists all attempts to break through. From what they can tell, this room has no exits.

Riker asks Lwaxana for a complete explanation of her contact with the Ferengis. She was quite hospitable to them, and they seemed very interested in her -- especially the fact that she is the Daughter of the Fifth House and keeper of the Holy Rings and the Sacred Chalice of Rixx. Could that be what they are after? Deanna dismisses this -- the rings have no significant value, and the chalice is some old clay pot with mold growing on it. Then what do the Ferengi want? The answer comes soon enough when the two women disappear in a transporter effect. Oddly, their clothing remains behind!

The Ferengi science lab. Deanna and Lwaxana materialize here. They are unclothed. Deanna feels humiliated, but Lwaxana communicates telepathically with Deanna and tells her not to worry -- she's determined to get them out of this.

Dr. Xyloc, the ship's CMO, enters. The women demand their clothing back, but the doctor explains that it is Ferengi custom for women to go unclad; the very thought of clothed females is abhorrent to them. Deanna tells them it's too cold and requests that they be allowed to cover themselves. The doctor agrees to allow them to cover themselves until the environment can be properly corrected to a temperature that suits them.

Lwaxana, who cannot read the Ferengi minds, demands to know what they want. The Holy Rings of Betazed? The Sacred Chalice of Rixx? No, replies Dr. Xyloc. The Ferengi desire the Betazed power of telepathy to enhance their

commerce, their wheeling and dealing. Lwaxana laughs: Telepathy is something she was born with, not something she

can give away. That's too bad, says the Doctor. Because if you won't give it to us, we'll have to take it anyway.

ACT THREE:

The Enterprise arrives in the vicinity of the stellar nursery. This is an incredibly beautiful sector of space, like no other we have ever seen. It is the birthplace of stars, much like the already familiar Orion nebula or the nursery in Eta Carina (N. B.: these are actual stellar nurseries near the Earth's own galactic arm), but with much more vast amounts of energy being converted into stellar matter. There is extreme magnetic interference from the stellar nursery, which interferes with communications. Under Geordi and Data's supervision, the crew begins star charting.

Aboard the Ferengi ship, Riker is still alone in the holding tank. He demands to talk to someone, but the only response is on a screen: the ship's Daimon tells him they have discovered he is the "hoo-man" Riker that they met at the Last Outpost of the Tkon Empire. He got the better of them in that confrontation, now they will even the score.

Dr. Xyloc's lab. It bears no resemblance to the sanitary sick bay of Dr. Crusher. Various compounds have spilled and crusted; there is an array of alien-looking tools and sophisticated machinery. The various electronic sounds we hear in this lab are disturbing. Lwaxana and Deanna are held in stasis on biobeds. Dr. Xyloc, an eminent Ferengi neuroscientist, begins his probe of the Trois. As he traces his instruments across Lwaxana's skull, a computer screen displays graphic readouts.

But his equipment is calibrated for Ferengi, not Betazoids, and the probing proves painful to Lwaxana. Deanna's naturally empathic link with her mother forces her to endure the pain as well. As Reittan Grax warned, there is nothing comical about the Ferengi at all, and they are proving to be quite dangerous. When the painful probe provides no answers to Xyloc, he announces he will have no choice but to dissect Lwaxana's brain -- a sample of brain tissue may yield the answers he seeks.

In the holding tank, Riker finds a way to break out. He attacks a Ferengi guard, almost overpowers him, but is jumped by another Ferengi. He is beaten up and recaptured. Riker is returned to the holding tank, where Lwaxana and Troi are now waiting for him. Deanna explains what's happened so far, and that the next step is apparently dissection. Riker is still in pain, and Deanna offers comfort and support to ease his suffering.

Back in the stellar nursery, the Enterprise concludes its mission, with spectacular results. Setting course for

Betazed, the ship regains its communications and Picard signals Riker on Betazed that they are on the way back -- hope he's been having fun on his holiday. The reply comes not from Riker but from Reittan Grax: he has been trying to reach the Enterprise, with no luck. He tells them of the apparent abduction of Riker, Deanna and Lwaxana by Ferengi. There have been no other ships in the area capable of giving chase. The Enterprise changes course and sets off in search of the Ferengi -- unfortunately, this means missing the rendezvous with the Bradbury. Wes will not be able to take his exams, and will miss the last opportunity to enter the Academy for at least another year.

ACT FOUR:

The Enterprise has set course for the Ferengi Alliance.

Aboard the Ferengi vessel, Riker, Deanna and Lwaxana are still in the holding tank. A Ferengi guard delivers nourishing bowls of Ferengi gruel, a last meal for the Trois before "surgery." Lwaxana finds the gruel disgusting -- she thinks: I'd rather eat a live yylot. Suddenly, the Ferengi guard recoils. For an instant, the gruel appears to be transformed into a jagged-toothed eel-like creature that is trying to eat his hand. An yylot! Then the image is replaced by the gruel. Lwaxana realizes that her thoughts have somehow been planted in the Ferengi's mind. Deanna suggests that she concentrate her thoughts and make the image last longer. She'll assist her. Together, their thoughts recreate the yylot image, and the guard flees in terror. Riker realizes they now have a very potent weapon at their disposal.

On board the Enterprise, Picard is directing the search for Riker and Deanna. This is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The sector of space that the Enterprise normally travels in adjoins the Ferengi Alliance -- but that covers a lot of territory, and a methodical search could take a very long time.

In sickbay, Wesley is crushed. He and Beverly discuss the young Crusher's misery over missing the rendezvous with the Bradbury. By not being there for the Starfleet Academy entrance exams, Wes has missed his last chance to enter the Academy for at least another year. This chance incident has ruined all of his plans, and possibly the rest of his life.

On board the Ferengi vessel, the guard has returned with what he thinks is more gruel. But Lwaxana has tricked him -- he actually is returning their clothing, which he had earlier removed. Once they are dressed, Lwaxana and Deanna "parade" before him -- and he "sees" them in the nude, although they are fully dressed. Lwaxana employs another

trick -- she makes the guard think Riker is one of the Ferengi officers. Riker overpowers the little guy, and the three make their escape, heading for the Ferengi bridge.

On the bridge, Riker takes "his" position; the other Ferengi now see him as the ship's second officer. On the viewscreen, we see a Ferengi planet. The Ferengi will arrive at their home planet before the Enterprise can affect a rescue.

ACT FIVE:

Captain's log: we continue to look for a needle in a haystack. But we'll comb every haystack until we find Riker and the Trois.

On the Ferengi ship, on course for their home planet, Riker remains on the bridge. The Ferengi see him as one of their own (although from our POV, he is still Riker). As second officer, he is in charge of security and communications. He's ordered to hail the planet, still several hours away, and he sends a signal.

On the Enterprise bridge, Worf picks up a strange signal. Decoding it, there seems to be a hidden message. Could it be Riker signalling the Enterprise somehow? Picard changes course to home in on the signal.

On the Ferengi ship, Riker and the Trois, (now on the bridge) pull off another deception. Riker affects a course change -- right toward the Enterprise.

The Enterprise scans pick up the Ferengi vessel and Picard sets a course for intercept. The Enterprise sights the Ferengi ship, goes to red alert and raises its shields. The Ferengi vessel does likewise when it suddenly sees the Enterprise.

Picard hails the Ferengi ship. On screen, we see the Ferengi Daimon respond; then he turns to his "second officer," ordering him to arm all weapons banks. Worf informs Picard that the Ferengi shields have just been lowered. The Daimon, still believing that the shields are up, orders Riker to fire at the Enterprise. Worf tells Picard he's receiving coordinates to beam three people over. Picard says "Make it so." On the viewscreen, we see Riker, Troi and Lwaxana beaming off the Ferengi ship. O'Brien notifies the bridge that he's got them.

Before the Ferengi can figure out what's happened, Picard gives the order to go to warp speed. And they're out of there!

Picard sets course for Betazed. He signals ahead to see if the Bradbury is still in orbit -- but it's too late. The Academy ship has left and set course for Starfleet Academy, without Wesley Crusher on board.

In Deanna's quarters, Lwaxana and Deanna have a mother-daughter talk.

Picard summons Wesley to his ready room. The Captain says he has something important to discuss with him. We hear the beginning of their discussion about Wesley not going to Starfleet Academy.

DISSOLVE TO:

Enterprise Bridge. All our main cast are present, plus Lwaxana Troi. She's been allowed here to express her gratitude and say her goodbyes before returning home. Picard makes an announcement: Wesley Crusher will not be going to Starfleet Academy. Picard has received a message from Starfleet: Wesley's previous high scores and his three years of experience on the Enterprise as an acting ensign have qualified him for status as a full ensign. The turbolift doors open, revealing Ensign Wesley Crusher, entering the bridge in his new burgundy-colored Starfleet uniform. As Wesley takes his seat, Picard asks Wesley to set course for Betazed and the young ensign complies.

