



STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"The Best of Both Worlds"
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THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Commander William Riker rolls away from the attractive blonde woman in his bed...they snuggle, warm and comfortable with each other. She asks him about his life, his choices...why he's content to be second officer on the Enterprise rather than go off and explore his own command potential. Riker explains it, but wonders, under the circumstances, what generated the question. Just curious, she says.

In his ready room, an admiral is discussing the very same subject with Picard. Riker has turned down more than one offer for command. Ten years ago, he was the hottest prospect in the grapefruit league just out of the academy. He was on a fast track to Captain. Now suddenly, he's content to stand in Picard's shadow. Picard frowns...that isn't the way it is, Admiral. But the Admiral tells Picard the boys at headquarters say he's lost the fire...and there are a lot new, younger hot prospects on their way up. One of them is the young officer that is due to arrive on the Aries when they rendezvous, a Lieutenant Commander Shelby...someone who would make one hell of a first officer on the Enterprise, says the admiral. He concludes by emphasizing that no matter how much Picard likes him, Riker is hurting his career by staying put. Picard is forced to realize it's very likely true.

The discomfoting conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Riker and the blonde, who is, in clothes, revealed to be a lieutenant and the Admiral's aide de camp. The Aries arrives and the Admiral and his aide depart...and Lt. Commander Shelby arrives...a drop dead beautiful woman in her late twenties. She's an aggressive, confident woman who leads with her libido, her sexuality a constant subtext. A woman who takes charge in a crisis and in a bed. Indeed, she's cut from the same cloth as Mr. Riker.

She has been assigned to the Enterprise for a short term job of some sort, but she tells Riker as he escorts her to her quarters, she hopes the posting will become permanent. In fact, she makes it clear she's hoping to replace him when he leaves...and Riker reacts, realizing he's a little behind the play...and it may be her faux pax or perhaps she's throwing down the gauntlet, but either way, the stage is set and on Riker's reaction, the main titles begin.

The Captain's log tells us of a garbled distress call from the federation colony of New Providence on Dela Tau Three at the rim of the galaxy as the Enterprise warps off. Picard talks to Riker...it is a tough meeting between the two of them. Picard says Riker really ought to think about pursuing other opportunities, explains why. Riker feels like he's being pressured. Picard says it's for his own good. Riker says he's capable of making his own decisions about his future. The conflict is quite father-son-like and the scene ends with it unresolved.

The garbled distress signal ends suddenly...there is no further contact. The long range sensors pick up strange readings.

In the meantime, Commander Shelby is impressing the hell out of everyone with whom she comes into contact. Riker discusses his anger with Troi, doesn't know what to do yet. Are they right? Must I be overtly ambitious to be successful? He defines the rewards he gets out of being on the Enterprise. But he must also admit they've got him talking to himself...maybe it's time to leave, why hasn't he been more ambitious? (And maybe there's a statement ultimately to be made about the theme of ambition in this episode.)

They reach the planet and there is no communication from the colony...no lifeform readings on the sensors. Riker leads an away team...that includes Shelby, her specialty applies somehow, and they beam to a matte shot that reveals that where the colony once was, there is nothing...it has been literally scooped off the face of the planet.

In act two, the crew recalls the other incidents that have been reported like this...all unsolved mysteries. Riker expects to be in charge of the investigation but Shelby jumps to the fore, volunteers and makes a strong case why she's particularly suited to the job. Picard gives her the assignment. He wants to see her in action.

Riker complains privately to Picard...in a scene in

which he tries to bridge their growing gap, seek an understanding, but only exacerbates their breach. Picard wants Riker to monitor Shelby's work and give Picard his impressions of her capabilities. You mean help choose my own replacement, says Riker. Picard acknowledges, yes, in a matter of speaking. In a rare moment, Riker loses his temper with his captain. Picard thinks Riker has lost perspective...perhaps a leave of absence is warranted to think things over. Riker says he isn't going anywhere and leaving the hungry Lt. Shelby unchecked.

As the early stages of the investigation unfold, Riker wants very much to dislike Shelby. He finds it difficult. She's extraordinarily forceful, but adept at sidestepping any adversarial moments. In fact, even Riker has to admit he's impressed with her. And more than a bit unnerved by her. And it's depressing. In a strange turn of events, she aggressively seduces and beds him. And in her hands, sex is a weapon.

The next day Riker puts in for a transfer. On the same day, the Enterprise makes first contact with the Borg.

They have followed us as we feared they might at the end of "Q Who?" The future has arrived too early and we are not ready. (We can assume that from our experience that Starfleet has tried to develop new weapons for the day when we re-encountered the Borg, but most of them are in the theoretical stage.) Act Three is essentially an action sequence where the battle begins and all of our new ideas fail...Wesley, Data, Geordi form the research team to try and come up with

a way to defeat the Borg.

The Borg who showed no interest in the human beings the last time we saw them...have changed their priorities a bit. They know they are entering a new galaxy where humanoids rule, have verbal speech and so forth...they need to find a way to communicate...a new prototype must be developed that can be a spokesman for the inter-connected community of Borg. That's one of the reasons they scooped up New Providence and it's the reason at the end of Act three...they snatch the leader and spokesman of the Enterprise -- Captain Picard.

In Act Four, Picard is aboard the Borg ship...sees the horrible medical experiments the Borg are conducting on the former, dead residents of New Providence...tries to communicate, tries to escape. He fails at every turn.

On board the Enterprise, Riker and Shelby have a major disagreement over the way to proceed (maybe she wants to play it by the book and he throws the book away and runs on instinct - a little old hat but it usually works). Riker overrules her...prepares to lead an away party aboard the Borg ship. Meanwhile, the research guys with a little support from Guinan come up with a potential vulnerability in the Borg -- they're essentially consumers...they consume raw material to improve themselves, a continuing hunger is their motivation. If we can design a weapon that feeds that hunger, your basic roach motel, the more you ingest the more you need until you overload and self-destruct...the opposite of a computer virus. Our ship and our Captain is in

continuing jeopardy. There isn't much time. Geordi and Wesley go to work on the weapon as Riker and Data leads an away team to rescue their captain. Shelby has the bridge. Battles aboard the Borg ship...sensors lead them to the communicator...and the Captain's uniform which has been stripped off...further exploration uncovers the shocking discovery of a half-Borg-half-Picard. The Captain has been Borgified.

As Act five begins, the away team is forced to withdraw without Picard. Shelby is brilliantly holding off the Borg attack on the bridge...but they're at the end of their defenses. As Riker and Data report back to the bridge, Wesley and Geordi report the anti-Borg weapon prototype is ready...Worf announces the Borgs are hailing them. On screen: the Picard-Borg appears...attempts to communicate...indecipheral noises come out of his mouth. He is a beast. A monster.

Riker orders the weapon prepared to fire with a volley of photon torpedoes...the Picard monster makes more noises... Riker gives the command to Worf...fire...we freeze. To be continued.