



STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"EVOLUTION"

FIRST DRAFT OUTLINE

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ST:TNG FILE

Star Trek: The Next Generation

"Evolution"

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TEASER - BRIDGE

The Enterprise flies cautiously into an unusual stellar system for reasons of exploration. The system is composed of one brilliant white star surrounded by thousands of orbiting comets (no planets). The beauty of it is dazzling. The system is apparently uninhabited.

Suddenly the Enterprise veers to one side, out of control, into the path of a comet. Efforts to regain control are in vain. Disaster is averted only when Picard shuts down the powerplant and gently bumps the comet aside with a deflector shield. The power is started up again. A quick check of the systems show they're all functioning perfectly. What the hell happened?

ACT ONE

1. BRIDGE - The incident is still strong in Picard's mind as the ship resumes its mission of exploration and takes up a trajectory alongside three billowing giant comets. The scientific studying and sightseeing begin in earnest.

2. SICKBAY - Something strange is happening in sickbay. The Doctor notices that her refreshment dispenser is serving continuous cups of coffee for no one. The Central Computer informs her there is nothing wrong with the dispenser.

3. BRIDGE - The joy of exploration is cut short when alarms ring; Worf reports the sensors show a squadron of Romulan battle cruisers moving in for an attack -- but nothing shows up on the main viewer. The detection is quickly identified as false, a glitch of some sort.

Suddenly the ship goes into another uncontrollable turn. At the same moment the turbolift doors start opening and closing repeatedly and we hear the voice of the Central Computer lecturing mindlessly on some meaningless subject. Again Picard is forced to cut off all power to the systems;

the ship goes dark. Picard slowly brings the ship back to life...and finds that all systems are once again performing perfectly...

4. CONFERENCE ROOM - Picard, Riker, Troi, Worf, Data and the Doctor discuss the incidents. The cause or causes are still completely unidentified. (Rigorous diagnostic tests are being run as we speak, but their results won't be known for several hours.) The fear is the ship will have to discontinue its exploration and head home for repairs -- if it can make it home.

Worf has an interesting theory: maybe it isn't the ship's fault, maybe they've been attacked from the outside by some as yet unseen entity in this star system, one that the Enterprise's visit has disturbed. The idea seems unlikely to Picard; for one thing the sensors and Counselor Troi are picking up nothing at all. Just then the bridge calls in with another emergency -- the phantom squadron of Romulans is back and the Enterprise has just been stripped of all control of its weapons!

ACT TWO

5. BRIDGE - Picard discovers this emergency is as shortlived and as bogus as the last -- with the important exception that the Enterprise seems to have permanently lost control of its weapon systems and shields. The "outside attack" theory of Worf's is brought up again; it does seem as if something were trying to render the ship helpless. Maybe the Enterprise is trespassing in this star system; maybe it has angered the local intelligence. The only thing they can do at this stage is conduct a passive search for this lifeform and hope nothing else goes wrong.

6. CREWMEMBER'S CABIN - At that moment, an off duty crewmember receives a deadly shock while operating a computer keyboard in his cabin. First blood has been drawn.

7. ENTERPRISE AND COMETS - Suddenly the three comets begin drifting in closer toward the Enterprise. They move very slowly, like gigantic jellyfish. Are they under intelligent control? Are they living entities themselves? Picard has Troi try her damnest to find out -- but she feels Nothing. Data reports that the comets are now drifting away...maybe their approach was just a strange gravitational harmonic between the four bodies.

A call comes to the bridge concerning the electrocuted crewmember; Picard is deeply concerned. The only thing to do now is play it safe and leave the stellar system on the off chance the ship is being attacked. But before the course can be set John Phillip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes

Forever" comes blasting over the bridge sound system. Picard orders the Central Computer to shut it off. The Computer doesn't respond. Picard is forced to shut off the power to the bridge for quiet. Total frustration...and fear.

8. UTILITY CORRIDOR - Data, on a damage inspection, finds Wes up to something in the bowels of the ship. Wes shyly explains that he's "setting traps." He'd heard about an alien spaceship that had experienced something similar to the Enterprise's problems. It turned out to be a worm-like creature that had slipped aboard and was eating the insulation in the electrical systems. Maybe a creature similar to the worm has gotten aboard the Enterprise. Wes was worried people would think the trap idea was stupid, so he was doing it on his own.

Data confesses that he too was going to try something: he put together an alphabet for easy communication and was going to broadcast it into space in hopes whatever entity was attacking the ship would pick it up, learn it and then establish peaceful contact. But he dropped the idea when he realized it was in violation of the Prime Directive.

9. COMPUTER ROOM - Riker has been summoned; one of the diagnostic tests has turned up the computer equivalent of a lesion in the Central Computer's core memory. It explains everything, including why it took so damned long to find the problem. Big sigh of relief. Then the engineers tell Riker that they aren't sure how to stop the degeneration because they have no idea what's causing it. One of them comes up with the funny notion that it looks as if someone were skillfully trying to cut out a section of the memory and cart it away. But who? And how?

ACT THREE

10. BRIDGE - Everyone is on their toes, waiting for the next computer grand mall seizure. The comets continue to be dazzling. Then there's a funny little incident: Worf thinks he hears something...he says it sounds like the Klingon equivalent of a gnat. But nobody else hears it. Then Geordi thinks he sees it, but at a very hot spectrum level - way too hot for an insect. Then they lose it. Suddenly Troi is crying out and grabbing at her cheek; it looks as if something bit her.

11. SICKBAY LAB - Wes is inspecting his traps. He's been through a dozen and they've all been empty. Now he's on his last. It seems empty too; then the sensors pick up on something microscopic. Wes isolates it and can't believe what he sees: a tiny flying vehicle accompanied by its hideously ugly and very dead microscopic pilot.

12. COMPUTER ROOM - LATER - Picard is there with Riker and Data as the lesion in the core memory is inspected at microscopic level...and found to be infested with scores of the hideous little aliens and their flying machines. Riker asks Picard if "extermination" is warranted. Picard is reluctant -- there should be a way of containing them. An engineer interrupts...it's too late. The little beggars were burned up by the ultraviolet lamps used in the first inspection. Picard sucks in a breath. "Let's study them...find out everything we can...and hope we haven't committed an incident of our own." In the meantime the lesion will be repaired.

13. SICKBAY LAB - LATER - Wes and the Doctor are working side by side. He is doing a major study on the tiny vehicle. She is doing an autopsy on the tiny pilot. Both procedures involve very delicate tools manipulated by computers. Wes flies the little ship around the room remotely, watching it on a terminal; he's impressed. Picard, Riker and Data enter for a briefing from the Doctor. She tells them something astonishing: the creature is no alien invader; in fact it is nothing more than a common dust mite, something which thrives in the rugs, beds and sofas of everyone on the planet earth. It and other earthly organisms were purposely put aboard the Enterprise as part of the ship's natural biosphere. Astonishingly, this species seems to have acquired intelligence (with a single holographic neuron) and then gone on to develop a technology. The Enterprise is being assailed by home-grown vermin. Everyone is amazed. And concerned. Wes says the little vehicle seems to have all the characteristics of a warship. The mites were obviously attacking the core memory to disable, perhaps destroy, the Enterprise. The crew had every right to defend themselves.

And then suddenly the power to the room fails...

14. CORRIDOR - Picard tries to get to the bridge as machinery failures and power outages plague the entire ship. The crew is on the verge of panic. Picard thinks he knows what has happened: the mite population has attacked the entire ship this time -- not just the computer. And it's in retaliation for the deaths of their comrades. It's all out war.

ACT FOUR

15. BRIDGE - The Enterprise's systems continue to malfunction dangerously. And then the attack stops as suddenly as it began. A sigh of relief...then Picard is immediately put under pressure by his bridge staff to exterminate the mites before they attack again. The entire

ship is at risk. But Picard (backed up by Data) hesitates. He's been thinking. The mites are obviously intelligent...but are they truly hostile? Has everything been done to understand the situation before drastic measures are taken? He thinks not. More study is necessary...even if there is some risk.

16. CORRIDOR - Troi witnesses panic among the crew. She sees men and women frightened of an invisible enemy that is everywhere. A family torches its own cabin out of fear it is "contaminated." And the panic is spreading.

17. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - Data approaches Picard about the alphabet he's constructed. He thinks it can work now because the Prime Directive is concerned only with "foreign" entities. The alphabet can be miniaturized and placed at several locales. The mites will be sure to find it. Picard likes the idea and adds: And if we're sending them messages, maybe we should be looking for messages from them.

18. SICKBAY LAB - And at that moment that's exactly what is happening in the laboratory with Wes and the Doctor. The lab has been invaded by mites, but on a friendly mission. In a swarm, they circle a countertop, then dissipate. Wes checks the counter and finds what looks like a miniature tablet with words on it.

19. SICKBAY LAB - LATER - Data is pouring over the tablet with Picard and others. He says it's easy, off and on, yes and no, zero and one -- binary. The translation raises Data's eyebrows. It is essentially the same message the crew of the Enterprise has sent the mites: Ceasefire!

ACT FIVE

20. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - Troi describes to Picard the precarious mental health of some of the crew. Hunting down and killing dust mites is a growing sport. It is certain that many mites are in fact being killed. How is this going to affect the ceasefire? Badly, it seems, because just then isolated mite-attacks begin again at various parts of the ship.

21. BRIDGE - As Picard assumes the bridge, Data tells him he thinks he knows of a way to communicate directly with the mites from the bridge. He tries but is unsuccessful...

22. SICKBAY LAB - Wes hasn't slept sleep for some time, but he's doggedly reexamining the data on the mite vehicle, trying to live up to the Captain's open-mindedness. And then he makes an observation that disturbs him -- the vehicle has receptors for "tasting" its environment. "Why would a mite warship want a sense of taste?" he asks the

Doctor. The Doctor answers with a wise, "Maybe it isn't a warship, maybe it's an exploratory vessel with weapons -- a miniature Enterprise." Wes is astonished -- "We're attacking our own kind!"

23. BRIDGE - Data succeeds in establishing "live" contact with the mites. He translates as Picard converses with them. They describe their situation as desperate. The pressure to kill all the "overbig ones" is intense. Why did the "overbig ones" attack them to begin with? They were only exploring.

Picard explains they were endangering the Enterprise, that they in fact killed a crewmember. This comes as a terrible shock to the mites. They meant no harm. The core memory fascinated them and they only wanted to study it. Picard explains that his vehicle is also an exploratory vehicle and means no harm to any lifeform. At last they understand each other. But the madness from individuals continues. The situation for the Enterprise is getting very dangerous. Something needs to be done now! Picard makes a reluctant decision: he orders high-intensity ultraviolet sterilization of the entire ship. The mites protest! All they ever wanted was the right of all intelligent beings...the right to explore their own universe. They plead...

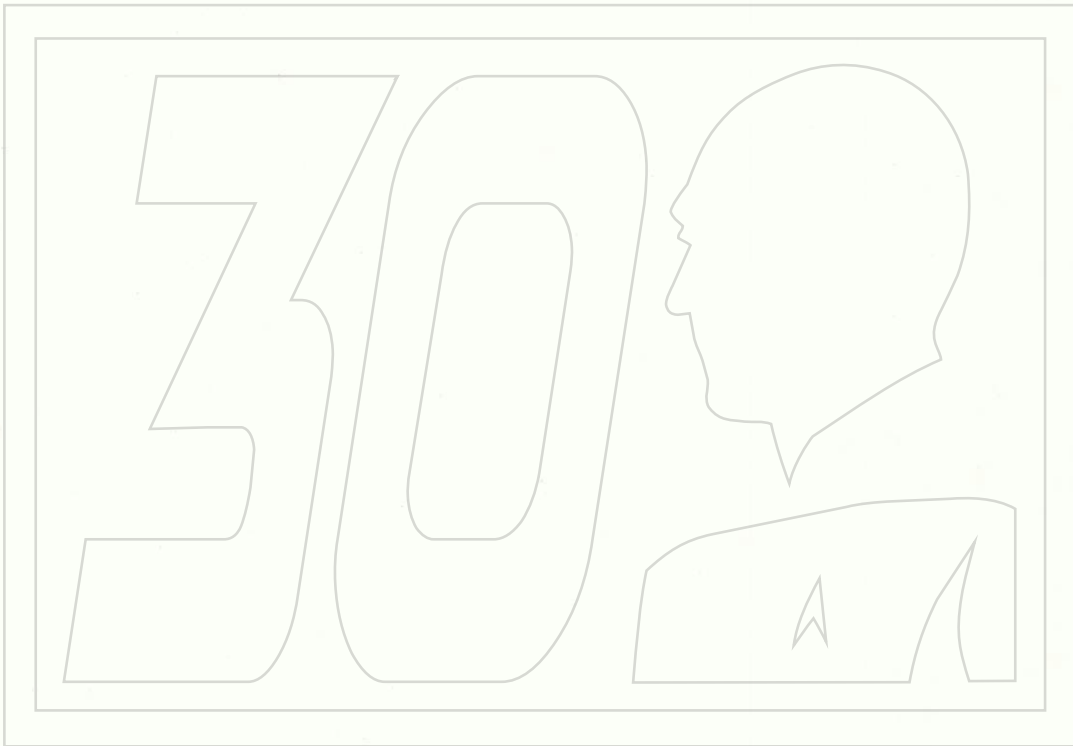
But the Enterprise's defense mechanisms are so potent that Picard's sterilization is over with in a matter of seconds. The attacks stop...the mites are dead...the crew relaxes...the panic is over. Picard is stoic, hiding his emotions. Many of those around him are sad that the mites had to be killed. Picard leaves the bridge for his cabin.

24. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - Picard enters and sits, lost in thought. Suddenly the mobile sculpture on his desk goes wacko. It's the mites again -- they've survived the fumigation! But instead of showing concern, Picard smiles brightly. This is just what he wanted. He says cryptically to the mites who can't possibly hear him, "You understood what I was doing."

TAG - BRIDGE - LATER - Business as usual. Picard assumes the bridge and asks to address the entire crew. With all hands listening, he admits that he lied to them. There was no sterilization. Just before the crisis he had secretly ordered the computer to disobey his command to fumigate the ship and instead administer a placebo effect. It was an attempt to get the crew stabilized, not to destroy the mites. It seems to have worked. The attacks have stopped and the panic is over. Everyone has had a chance to see that the mites represent no threat.

He ends the address and takes his captain's chair. He begins a star date: later he will establish a firm communication with the mites and draw up a treaty specifying those parts of the ship the mites must never mess with and vice versa. Whatever the case, humans and dust mites must both be allowed to boldly go...

END



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