



STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"THE DEFECTOR"

by

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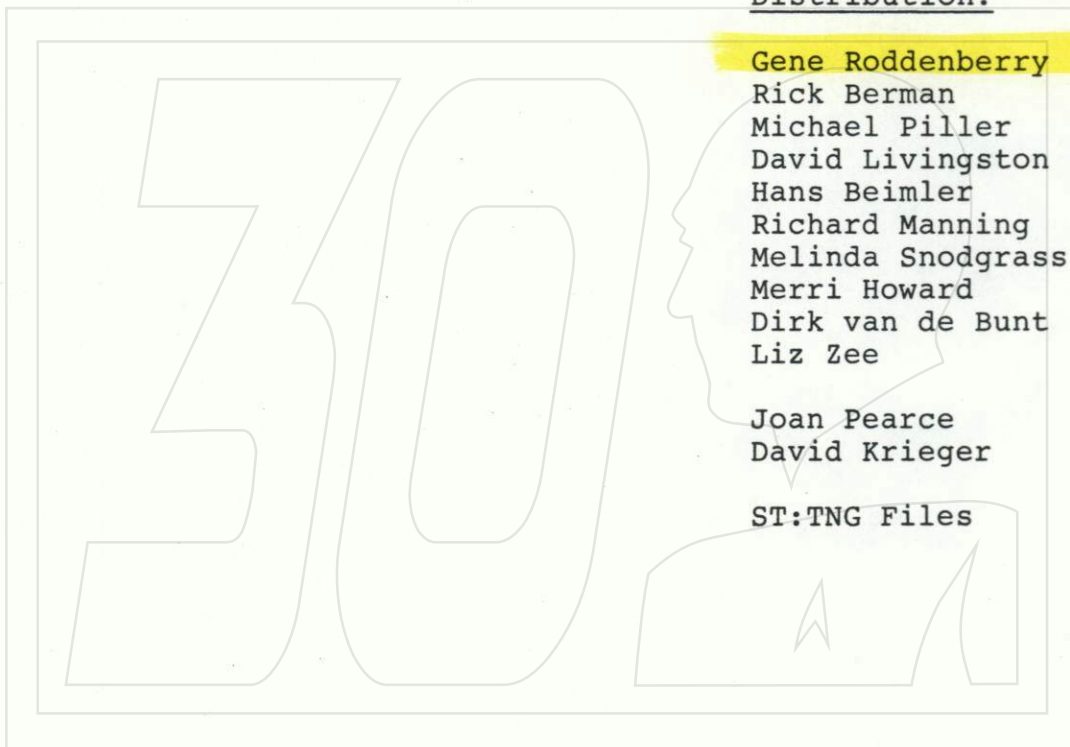
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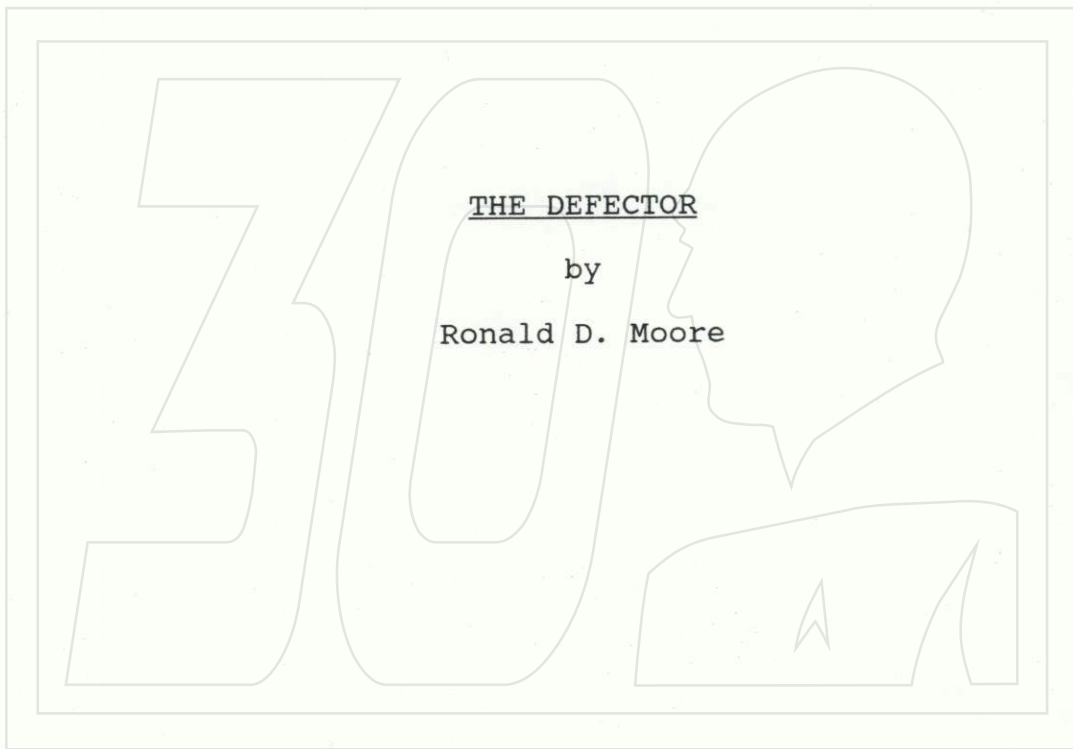
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## THE DEFECTOR

### TEASER

The Enterprise is making a routine patrol near the Neutral Zone, when a Romulan vessel crosses into the Zone and heads for Federation territory. The Enterprise races to get to the intruder before it can reach an outpost and attack it. As the starship nears, the Romulan vessel can be clearly seen, in direct contrast to standard Romulan tactics of running cloaked and then attacking. The Romulan ship is attacked by a pursuing Romulan battlecruiser which has also crossed into the zone. The first Romulan ship sends a signal requesting help.

### ACT I

The Enterprise will not violate the Zone and waits to see what will happen. The first Romulan vessel takes several direct hits from the battlecruiser, but manages to make it across the Zone into Federation territory. Now the Enterprise interposes itself between the first Romulan ship and the second, clearly blocking its path. Picard warns the ship not to enter Federation territory and declares the first vessel to be under his jurisdiction. The Romulans are furious, but are not ready to fire the first shot while clearly in the wrong. The battlecruiser retreats back across the zone and then engages its cloaking device.

The Romulan ship is badly damaged and its transmissions have ceased. Picard orders the ship taken in tow and its occupant beamed aboard. The sole occupant is a Romulan male about 38 human years of age named Setal and has been injured in the battle. Once he is beamed aboard, he requests asylum in the Federation and then collapses in the transporter room.

### ACT II

The man is taken to Sickbay and the Enterprise proceeds to the Command Outpost in the sector where a representative of Starfleet Intelligence will take charge of the defection.

Dr. Crusher is amazed by the recuperative powers of her patient. Setal begins to recover quickly from injuries that would have kept even Vulcans off their feet for several days. Setal is impressed by her medical knowledge and abilities, and they develop a grudging respect for each other. Dr. Crusher keeps Setal isolated in Sickbay for the time being.

When Picard reports what has happened to Starfleet Command, he learns that they have been expecting trouble along the Neutral Zone. Several starships are within a day's travel time and have been put on stand-by alert. Intelligence has been picking up bits of information that point toward a major strategic move on the part of the Romulans for several weeks now, but they have yet to establish any solid motives or objectives. Starfleet Command wants the defector debriefed as quickly as possible, but they caution that the timing of the defection may be too convenient to be real.

Just as the Enterprise arrives at the Command Outpost, Setal tells Crusher that he has very important information to tell the Captain. Crusher relays this to Picard and he has a very unpleasant conversation with the Intelligence Officer that has just beamed aboard, Captain Shankar. Shankar is very clear about his authority in this matter and does not want Picard or anyone else to attend the debriefing. Shankar is hampered, however, by the fact that Setal refuses to be interviewed by an Intelligence officer alone and wants Crusher and a line officer to attend. Shankar reluctantly agrees.

The debriefing takes place in Sickbay and Shankar's attitude is very smooth, very professional. He appears to sympathize with Setal and generally is displaying a much more open and caring face to the Romulan than he earlier showed to Picard. Setal seems to know that this is all part of the game and he insists on addressing most of his answers and statements to Picard and Crusher.

Setal claims to be a lieutenant posted to the Romulan High Command. He says that his defection was motivated by a desire for freedom and a disillusionment with Romulan life. He says that he was no longer proud to be a Romulan and wanted a new life in the Federation. The Romulan Praetor is turning Romulan society into a shallow mockery of what it once was.

What was a noble culture built on the codes of centuries of warriors is turning into a corrupt, greedy dictatorship that sees conquest as a way of solving its ills at home. The Romulan empire is dangerous now as it has not been for centuries. The Praetor hungers for war in order to draw his people's attention away from mounting problems at home. Setal's decision to cross the Neutral Zone now was triggered by knowledge of a new Romulan plan to gain the strategic upper hand over the Federation and it is this information that he has risked his life to bring to them.

The Romulans are secretly establishing a large base on Nelvana IV, a small planet in the Neutral Zone. They intend to present the Federation with a fait accompli, and once the base is in place, Starfleet will be forced to either attack the base (thus touching off a war) or accept the new Romulan claim and the effective nullification of the Neutral Zone itself. Time is short: once the Romulan garrison is in place and the base's defenses are activated, only a full-scale attack will be able to dislodge the new occupants, and the garrison is about to leave for Nelvana IV.

### ACT III

Picard, Riker, Crusher, Data, Worf, Troi, and Shankar meet to discuss this new threat. Shankar objects to the spread of the information to the new people, but Picard overrules him.

Shankar, Riker, and Worf flat-out do not trust Setal and believe that he's lying. Shankar points out that defectors almost never become defectors for idealistic reasons. They go across the line for love, for personal gain, or because of some deep need for revenge, but they never just wake up one day and decide that they are going to betray everything they've been taught to believe in on a whim. Worf has conducted several long-range scans and can detect no sign of any installation on, or activity around Nelvana IV. He also reminds them of Romulan treachery and cunning and believes that Setal has been sent to purposely send them into the Zone to be trapped. Riker is not willing to risk the ship on the word of a man who has just committed an act of treason against his own people.

Troi is unable to fully "read" Setal because of his Romulan mental shields, but she does detect a certain deception about his manner of speech and actions. Dr. Crusher points out that his injuries were quite real and that he could have easily died from the battle with the larger Romulan ship. She believes that Setal is telling the truth. Data has analyzed the skirmish between the two ships and has determined that it was probably a real fight rather than a practiced routine for their benefit, but he cannot prove this for certain.

Picard reserves judgement on Setal's trustworthiness. He will be treated like any other guest aboard ship for now, but will not be allowed access to the bridge or other control areas.

Setal can sense the turmoil in Beverly when she returns to Sickbay. Without divulging any secret information, she tells him that his story basically rings false to Intelligence. Setal admits that idealism alone did not drive him to defect. His wife and family were killed on the direct orders of the Romulan Praetor when Setal's loyalty was called into question by another member of the High Command. He was later vindicated and his accuser put to death, but the wound never healed. The dishonor of having no family, no heir, is still almost too much for him to bear and so he did not tell the others of the real reason for his defection. Beverly is genuinely touched by his story and it prompts her to tell Setal of the death of Jack Crusher. They find that they both went through the same periods of anger, grief, loneliness, and ultimately painful acceptance. The common touchstone of loss builds a small bridge between them and they start to talk about other things.

Wesley enters Sickbay a short time later and finds them both deep into conversation and on very familiar terms with each other. He is very uncomfortable and abruptly leaves after Beverly introduces him to Setal.

Shankar, Riker, and Data begin to sift through the intelligence information that has been accumulated over the past year regarding Romulan movements. The picture they begin to put together points to a build-up of ships and forces along the Neutral Zone. Several transmissions have been

decoded and mixed in among one of them is a reference to a Captain Setal commanding one of the outpost stations on their side of the Neutral Zone.

Beverly returns to her quarters to find Wesley waiting for her. He confronts his mother about her growing affection for Setal. They argue heatedly about who is blinded by personal feelings or forgetting their loyalties. Beverly is surprised by the depth of Wesley's feelings in this matter and he is equally surprised to learn just how deeply Setal has touched her. They are unable to settle their differences and Wesley leaves. After a few minutes, Setal comes to Beverly's quarters. Beverly's emotions are running high and Setal responds to her. They embrace.

#### ACT IV

The time is approaching for when Setal claims Romulans will occupy the base on Nelvana IV. Starfleet Command is deeply divided over the issue. No outpost along the Neutral Zone has found any corroborating evidence to back up Setal's story, and now they have discovered that he was lying about his true rank and position. Other starships are being moved into position in case of a confrontation along the border.

Shankar now comes to Picard and Riker and informs them of Crusher's growing relationship with Setal. Picard is concerned for the Doctor, but Shankar wants to use this as a way of getting more information out of him. He is able to order Picard not to interfere in the situation.

Riker points out that they are almost out of time if Setal is telling the truth, but Shankar believes that Setal is trying to set them up. If the Enterprise violates the Zone, it could be jumped on by Romulan battlecruisers and captured or destroyed. Intelligence has shown there to be a steady build-up of Romulan strength along the border and a violation of the Zone by the Enterprise now could trigger a full-scale confrontation. As they are arguing, Worf breaks in over the com and alerts the Captain that Setal has been apprehended while in a restricted area near main engineering. Picard orders Setal held in the brig.

Picard meets with Setal alone and tries to get to the bottom of his defection.

He confronts him with the fact that he lied about both his position in the Empire and his reasons for defecting. They have no reason to believe that he's telling the truth about Nelvana IV. Picard demands the truth and wants Setal to lower his mental shields and allow Troi to pick up his real emotions.

Setal reluctantly agrees and he tells them that he was actually delegated to be in charge of the new base on Nelvana IV when the outpost he commanded was struck by a plague brought in on a supply ship. Half the station was lost to the deadly disease. The Praetor allowed him to live, but then murdered his entire family as punishment. It was the act of a coward. It was Setal's right and privilege to die for his failure, and to allow him to live while his entire family died traitors' deaths was too much for him. The Praetor had dishonored the throne upon which he sat and Setal's family had to be avenged. Setal's defection would embarrass and humiliate the Praetor, and would prevent the base on Nelvana IV from being established. He was near Main Engineering because he was looking for Dr. Crusher and the computer had told him she was on that deck.

Troi verifies that Setal is at last telling the truth and Picard is convinced. They have only a few hours until the Romulan garrison is due to arrive at Nelvana IV and Picard must hurry if he is to get there first. Picard makes the decision and orders Worf to prepare a plan to neutralize the base without provoking a full-scale battle. Shankar countermands the order and instructs Riker to relieve Picard of duty and take command of the Enterprise.

#### ACT V

Riker refuses to take command of the ship and the command crew backs him up. Setal works with the ship's crew and the ship prepares for the plunge into the Zone. Shankar remains on board in order to watch Setal and also to gather any further intelligence that they may discover.

The Enterprise blazes into the Neutral Zone and immediately encounters a Romulan battlecruiser which had been sitting quietly behind its cloaking device and waiting. The Romulan fires on the Enterprise but Picard is able to out-manuever the battlecruiser and damage its engines enough to slow it down. The Enterprise arrives at Nelvana IV and finds . . . nothing. There is

no sign of a base or anything else that is remotely threatening. Even Setal seems stunned. Shankar tells Picard that he is a fool for listening to Setal.

The Romulan battlecruiser is closing and other ships are fast approaching. The situation is looking grim when Picard suddenly whirls on Setal and asks him if the entire installation could be cloaked. Setal says it is possible, but he had not been aware of any such plans. Data quickly runs a specialized scan and detects the faint ripple of a cloaking device engaged on the planet surface. Picard orders a phaser strike at the source of the cloaking device, which then collapses and reveals the entire installation. The Romulan ships close in, but do not fire.

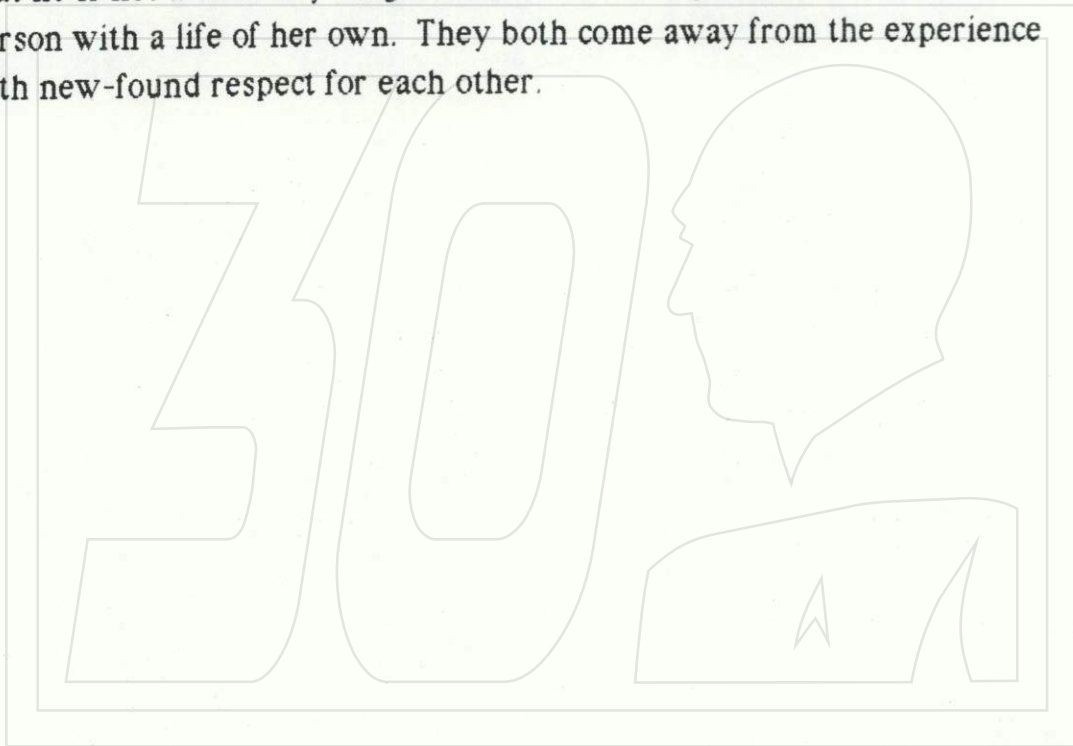
Setal explains that the Romulans will not attack now that the plan has been exposed. If they had been successful, they would have trumpeted their cunning and superiority, but now they have simply been caught trying to cheat on a treaty that their ancestors pledged to uphold. They would have to fire first in this situation. There is no honor in openly breaking such a pledge, and without honor, the Romulans are nothing.

The Romulan ships hold their fire and there is an uneasy stand-off between them and the Enterprise. They demand that Picard leave the Zone and he agrees to only if it is a mutual withdrawal. On the Federation side of the Zone, other starships are beginning to arrive, and the Romulans agree to a mutual withdrawal.

Crusher and Setal have a last meeting before he leaves with Shankar for the Command Outpost. Picard has told Crusher of Setal's actual position and reason for defection. She tells Setal that the hate he carries with him is not something that she can live with. She also points out that Setal was perfectly willingly to obey the Praetor, even if it meant war with the Federation, until the Praetor hurt him personally. Setal is driven by vengeance, not conviction. They both need someone to fill the voids in their lives, but their values are too far apart and the gulf cannot be bridged so easily. They part with regret.

Shankar promises Picard an inquiry into his actions will be made by Intelligence, but also promises to give him his full support. Shankar was convinced by what he saw. The whole matter will remain secret and Picard must caution those aboard not to speak of the matter again. Picard responds that what sets them apart from the Romulans is trust. Shankar will have to trust Picard and his crew.

Wesley and his mother have a rapprochement. She is beginning to realize that he is not a child any longer, and he is starting to view his mother as a person with a life of her own. They both come away from the experience with new-found respect for each other.



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