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STAR TREK

"Encounter at Farpoint"

Written by

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TEASER:

The U.S.S. Enterprise approaches Farpoint Station, a new staging station at the far edge of explored space. CAPTAIN JULIEN PICARD instructs the ship's computer to alert Farpoint to their imminent arrival. Picard is transferring passengers and personnel to another ship at Farpoint before setting out on an extensive long range voyage and he wants them ready to move. We get an impression of Picard as a brisk, firm man, comfortably in command of his ship.

At Farpoint Station, we see the station administrator, ELZEVER, in close-up as he is informed by intercom that the Enterprise is on her approach. Elzever is pleased, flips off the speaker device and addresses someone in the room. "The starship is the biggest and most important vessel to visit here. I want her personnel, especially the Captain, to be treated handsomely. I want them to be impressed. You've done very well so far. It will continue." As he speaks, the camera has pulled back to reveal a beautifully appointed office -- and no one else in the room. Is Elzever mad -- or is there someone/thing else there that we cannot perceive -- something mysterious and possibly dangerous...?

ACT ONE:

At Farpoint Station, the announcement of the Enterprise's arrival in orbit starts a flurry of preparation among the personnel in transit who have been waiting for her. We see, without knowing yet who they are:

Start w/ Riker.

DR. BEVERLY CRUSHER and her fifteen-year-old daughter, LESLIE, gathering together their carry-on baggage. Leslie is excited at the prospect of being aboard the newest and best starship in the Fleet. Dad would've been so proud! She'd love a chance to visit the bridge. Beverly could talk to the Captain and ask, couldn't she? Beverly is somewhere in her mid- to late-thirties, intelligent, as beautiful as her daughter will become, and a fine doctor. She seems to tense up as Leslie mentions the Captain and finds a way to change the subject;

COMMANDER WILLIAM RYKER, an attractive thirty-year-old, smartly turned out in correct uniform, already moving quickly toward the station's transporter area. En route, he encounters;

ENSIGN GEORDI LaFORGE and ENSIGN MIKHAIL N'KAI GREEN. At first, we see only Geordi's back and may routinely register the fact he is black. Both young men are hauling the equivalent of sea bags; but Green's is far heavier and bulkier than Geordi's, and Green is struggling with it. Geordi turns to help Green with the bag, good naturedly complaining about all the junk Green put in it -- and reveals the strange, flat device he wears in place of eyes. Geordi is birth-defect blind but able to see in "different" ways via the visual prosthetic.

Green is talkative, chattering about the Enterprise and speculating as to what Picard will be like. He's heard a lot about the old man....

Ryker, who's come along behind them, firmly advises the two ensigns to get a move on. He's heard Captain Picard is a stickler for the proprieties and regulations of Star Fleet -- and new ensigns aren't late, or they get to be very old ensigns.

In his Enterprise cabin, Picard has changed from his "shirt sleeve" duty outfit to the same sort of more formal uniform we saw on Ryker. There is a soft musical tone from the door, and Picard calls for the visitor to enter. It is his First Officer, COMMANDER KYLE SUMMERS,

Too FAST.
Let's have TIME
for Rumors,
discussions

later

soon to be Captain Summers and in command of his own exploration and survey vessel. The two men are obviously friends, having served together for a number of years. Picard hates to lose Summers, but he is happy for his promotion. *Although Picard has service records in Summers is well Acq with him -- describes Ryker.* Summers, will work out well. The man has a fine service record, appears to be an efficient young officer who has advanced early to his current rank and to the Enterprise First Officer assignment on merit and brilliance. Picard is reserving judgment until he can observe the man and not just his service record.

*Options
Summers
will have
covered
All that.*

Picard conducts a short welcoming ceremony for the new personnel and their families. (There are a number of them in addition to Beverly, Leslie, Green, Geordi, and Ryker.) During this, we will notice Beverly watching Picard intently and seeming somewhat uneasy when the Captain glances casually in her direction during his brief remarks. Summers formally hands over to Ryker as the new First Officer. *No.* As his final duty, Summers will see to it that all new personnel are escorted to their quarters and introduced to their duty stations. Non-crew personnel will be met by "coordinators" who will show them around and explain ship's procedures and regulations to them. Picard excuses himself and leaves Summers and Ryker in charge of the details.

*Picard - 1.5 hr of meet with
Ryker separately.*

Ryker wants to meet his away mission second-in-command and his security officer. On the Enterprise, the Security Chief and away mission security officer are the same. In the gym, Summers introduces Ryker to LT. COMMANDER MACHA HERNANDEZ, who has been running one of her security teams through a tough physical workout. Macha is a handsome woman, trim figured, with enough muscle to make her formidable and yet strikingly attractive at the same time. Macha is instantly

on parade discipline, and so is her team. To Ryker she appears sharp, efficient, direct and correct in her responses -- a good officer. *surprises E. officers with FACT he has studied their service records.* Ryker is impressed by the physical drill and fitness of the security team. Macha promptly invites him to come down and join them any time. Ryker isn't sure whether that's a challenge or a very personal invitation. (For Macha, it is neither. Ryker will come to learn she means exactly what she says, no more and no less.)

Beverly Crusher has reported in to the medical section where the departing Chief Medical Officer, DR. ASENZI, shows her the sick bay, the equipment, introduces her to staff, etc. He tactfully leaves when Picard comes in to personally welcome the new ship's physician aboard.

Alone, the two are hesitant and unsure of what to say to each other -- both talking around "a situation." Then it comes out -- Beverly admits she doesn't know exactly how to react to the man who twelve years ago brought her husband's body back to her from the ill-fated Stargazer mission that killed him. *And also sent him on the mission that killed him.* Picard, who had no control over her assignment to the Enterprise, feels she would have every right to request transfer if she is uncomfortable aboard -- if she feels she can't serve with an officer who would remind her of that great personal tragedy in her life. Beverly is quick to decline. This assignment means a great deal to her and to her daughter. Beverly has worked for years toward a starship billet and Leslie has grown up on smaller ships. They want to stay aboard the Enterprise. Picard is taken back when she mentions Leslie. He'd almost forgotten about the child. Hard to believe Beverly is the mother of a teenager....

The teenager is out exploring the ship and having a great time. She meets a couple of other kids about her age and discovers some of

the unique, new features of the Enterprise that earlier ships of the name didn't have. Leslie, most of all, wants to see the bridge -- but one of her new friends tells her that is absolutely off limits to non-crew personnel. In fact, ninety percent of the actual crew never get onto the bridge -- their duties don't take them there. *Explain it is simply bec. would become crowded + inefficient.*

On the bridge, Ryker is impatient to meet Lt. Commander Data, who will be his away mission second-in-command and Ryker's alternate at the conn when Picard is not on the bridge. Summers explains that Data is on a special assignment just now, the sheparding of a certain Admiral onto the waiting U.S.S. Belvidere for transport back toward Earth. Why should this admiral get such special treatment on a routine transfer? Well...he's a rather remarkable man....

At first, we hear the mellow tones of LT. COMMANDER DATA's voice as he gently and respectfully urges an elderly Star Fleet Admiral along an Enterprise corridor, promising that the transporter room is not too far away now.... As Data and the Admiral appear, the Admiral stops short, draws himself up as straight as he can, and we hear a familiar voice, crotchety and perhaps even more "Southern" with age than we remember it. "Hold it right there, boy. I'm goin' across on a shuttle, or I'm not goin'!" ADMIRAL LEONARD MCCOY, Star Fleet Medical Services (Retired), is bent, wrinkled and white haired, but he is as stubborn and crusty as ever. "Never did hold with flashin' my atoms across space and gluin' 'em back together on the other end. Machines can make mistakes." Data is a trifle embarrassed correcting an admiral, but: "Sir, a machine may malfunction, but it cannot make a mistake unless its programming or its operator are at fault. And that would not be the machine's mistake." McCoy peers at him closely,

What is he doing here?

scowling. "I don't see any points on your ears, boy, but you sound like a Vulcan." "No, sir. I am an android." McCoy snorts. "Musta been built by Vulcans then." Data is at a loss with the old man, but determined to remain respectful. "No, sir, but if I had been, I'm sure my programming would have been of equally superior quality. I have been assured Vulcans are a brilliant and most honorable race." McCoy stares at him a moment, his severe blue eyes gentling and his feisty scowl fading. He pats Data's sleeve and nods a little. "They are, boy. They are." Then the impatient frown snaps back. "Well, let's get on with it. The shuttle bay now -- not that damned transporter. You got that?" Data sighs. "Yes, sir." And they move off in a different direction.

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Ryker is looking for Data when he runs into the ship's psychologist, an encounter that shakes him considerably as he fumbles for a greeting to LT. DEANNA TROI. The lieutenant is one-eighth alien (Betazed), which shows in her interesting beauty and primarily in her empathic mental ability. It is clear she "feels" Ryker's surprise and confused emotional state at this face-to-face confrontation with her -- it is also clear there was some strong relationship between them in the past. Troi, on the other hand, is serene, pleasantly and warmly welcoming. She implies their former relationship has no bad memories for her. He is still her imzadi. Ryker doesn't know what that Betazed word means. To Ryker's consternation, Troi smiles sweetly and offers to show him what it means -- the next time they're alone.

Ensigns Green and Geordi LaForge have been shown around by other, more experienced, ensigns and are now on their own for a while. As recent graduates of the Academy on their first official tour of duty, they will have no regular duty status but will be on a rotation system,

serving in different areas of the ship as medical interns do. Geordi's special visual abilities already have Green calling him ^{the Human} "Tricorder." The two ensigns are speculating on Ryker and Picard. The Number One always delegates final duty assignments for ensigns after their initial tour. But, Geordi reminds Green, the Captain approves them. And Picard is supposed to be real hard nosed old bastard. Suppose he decides a "human tricorder" has no use aboard when they have perfectly good mechanical ones? Picard's voice interrupts drily that even a

hard nosed old...Captain...would find it difficult to turn down so intriguing a talent as a human tricorder. The ensigns are mortally embarrassed and extricate themselves from the encounter apologetically and nervously. Picard remains stern as they scurry out of sight and then chuckles to himself, "Hard nosed...maybe. But old?" ^{containing not} "you puppies!"

Picard meets with Troi in the Ready Room to brief her on their inspection visit to Farpoint. The planet is a forbidding place, except for the inhabited city, of which Farpoint Station is a part. The natives call themselves the Annae, and they appeared to be a bustling young race, ^{ALL AN ANCIENT} anxious to work with the Federation and grow to importance within it. When first contacted a year ago, the city was the only evidence of civilization the Annae had. However, they pleaded for a chance to build the Federation a Star Fleet station here so their world could become a staging planet for ships stepping off into further exploration and survey missions in this sector of the galaxy. Permission given, the Annae constructed the entire complex station in an amazingly short period of time, an unbelievably short period of time, a situation Star Fleet is now eying warily. How did they do that? Picard, therefore, has orders to survey the station and, in the guise of a routine inspection, find out if there is anything potentially dangerous about this unusual station and the people who built it. Picard doesn't like being

Should have been in before Pentas briefing #1.

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a snoop. To him, it's not what being a starship captain is all about -- but an order is an order. Troi is accompanying him as her empathic perceptions will be invaluable to the investigation.

When they beam down to Farpoint, Picard and Troi are met by Elzever and his assistant, DANELI. The Annae are gracious and hospitable, but not above bragging as they show off the beauties of their wonderful station. And it is wonderful. Aside from the efficient cargo-handling areas and multi-environments to support many different species passengers*, Picard and Troi are shown lovely quarters with luxurious amenities for in-transit passengers. They are shown parks and recreation areas among stunning buildings, all of which are domed to protect against the planet's harsh surface conditions. Picard notices the buildings are very like some of old Earth's architecture of the 20th Century...such architecture being one of his interests. Elzever smoothly shrugs it aside by saying they have made a study of the Federation planets -- and Earth is one of the prime ones. Therefore, they elected to honor the planet with these designs. Isn't Picard pleased? Perhaps he prefers something even more familiar in his surroundings? Elzever directs their attention to a painting which the audience has seen a moment earlier but which Picard and Troi did not particularly notice. It was of a distinctly alien landscape -- it is now a Monet. Picard is admiring, but Troi stares at it, frowning slightly. Noting her look, Elzever and Daneli glibly move them along to another area, talking, talking, explaining everything very convincingly.

Picard and Troi return to the Enterprise. Picard wants to know what Troi was able to pick up. He doesn't trust all those smooth

*(For production purposes, those areas will be implied more than seen.)

explanations, none of which fully answered any of Picard's questions. Troi cannot explain what she felt, since all the Annae they saw seemed cheerful and friendly; but she felt a lonely despair. She felt someone weeping....

ACT TWO:

Picard calls a meeting in the bridge briefing area which includes Ryker, Troi, Data and Macha. He realizes Ryker has not had time to really settle in yet, but Picard feels the situation calls for a full scale investigation -- but not an obvious one. Picard asks Data for a complete workup of all information on the Annae and Farpoint, which Data promptly delivers.

The Annae are a comparatively young race -- clever and ambitious. However, their population is small, concentrated in the one city which now includes Farpoint Station which they singlehandedly built. The original survey and contact teams did a preliminary scan of the planet and found the harsh, forbidding environment had been conquered only in the city area. There were remains of other cities and settlements, but these had been abandoned, apparently in the face of the unremitting difficulties of the planetary conditions. The Annae had smoothly explained these as experiments of their forebears which had been deserted once the "new city" was established -- the one that worked.

Picard picks apart this information. The Annae appear to be a young but failed civilization -- one doomed until the "new city" was established. Why -- and how -- does it work? In all the areas he and Troi saw, there was no evidence of machinery or any technology except their prime energy source in the center of the city and it, in fact, is a fairly mundane solar energy source reinforced by nuclear energy when needed. Where do they get their food, their clothing, their trade goods? There are no farms -- there does not seem to be any industry

"buys"
the explanation.

Nu

or manufacturing. The Annae they met had what amounted to desk jobs -- keeping the "tourists" happy. So how do they do it? Data recalls Arthur C. Clarke's comment that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. This is not good enough for Picard. Before he reports to Star Fleet that their vessels are safe reporting to this station, he wants to know exactly what makes it run...and why the Annae are so close-mouthed about it.

Ryker, during this, has been somewhat surprised to find Data is an android, that his rank is not honorary but earned, that Data is a graduate of the Academy like himself -- and that despite Ryker believing himself to be an enlightened man about all life forms, he doesn't accept that an android can act, respond, or be like a true human/humanoid. Picard quickly shuts off any further remarks to that effect, and it is clear Picard places a great deal of trust in Data. Macha and Troi remain silent on the matter, but their loyalties are to their own -- and Ryker isn't one of them yet. Ryker is the one who will have to prove himself, not Data. (Data, of course, is completely unoffended and candidly open on the subject.)

Picard decides there will be shore leave on Farpoint Station for the crew -- under cover of which Macha, Troi, Ryker and Data will try to find out what the Annae are hiding about the city and the station. The U.S.S. Belvidere has already left orbit, heading back toward Earth, so her crew cannot help with the subterfuge; but there are enough Enterprise crew and family personnel to make the station a busy place and keep the Annae occupied seeing to their needs and wants. Picard has specific orders on how he wants his people to team up on Farpoint -- Macha and Troi, Ryker and Data. And he will suffer no arguments on those assignments. He also wants to see that new ensign -- what's his name? -- LaForge.

In sickbay, Leslie is pestering her mother about getting a look at the bridge. Beverly says it's impossible. Unless there is a medical emergency of some sort on the bridge, even she has no business there unless the Captain requests her presence. That is just Leslie's point. Beverly knows Captain Picard, doesn't she? Leslie pleads for just a look...a little peek...it isn't too much to ask...is it? Beverly finds it hard to refuse her only child and finally promises she'll try.

Would be in his 20s file.

Picard sees a very nervous Ensign LaForge in the ready room. The Captain brusquely asks exactly what Geordi does to have been dubbed a "living tricorder." Geordi explains he was born blind, but sympathetic doctors provided him with the visual prosthetic he wears. He can "see," but not in the same way ordinary humans do. He believes his eyes are actually better. He can see warmth or aura of a human form; he can see energy waves or ultra-violet that living creatures (flora, fauna or higher life forms) give off. Depending on how much energy a being is radiating, he can often "see" their mood. For instance, though he cannot say what Picard exactly looks like, he can say that Picard is currently projecting a calm, benign presence. Picard snaps that that can change -- but in the meantime, Geordi has a special assignment.

Macha, Troi, Ryker, Data and Geordi beam down with other crew personnel to start their R & R. Beverly approaches Picard with her request to let Leslie on the bridge for just a brief look around. Picard politely refuses. The bridge of a starship is no place for a child. Beverly points out this is Jack Crusher's child. She rates just a little more from Julien Picard. Besides, Leslie is special.

A short time later: the bridge is quiet. Set in geosynchronous orbit, the Enterprise needs no duty officers on the bridge as the computers smoothly serve her needs. The lift doors open; and Picard, Beverly, and Leslie step out onto the bridge. Leslie is in awe... to her, it is the equivalent of a devout Catholic stepping into the nave of St. Peter's Basilica. Picard and Beverly are somewhat amused by the girl's enthusiasm and desire to know what the instruments are. Picard shows her the command station and how the ship (computer) responds to requests for information, etc. A communications signal for Picard goes off on the board, and Leslie instantly and instinctively reaches out and keys exactly the right touch point to cut the signal in to audio/visual for the Captain. She instantly apologizes, embarrassed at her own action. ^{having grabbed the phaser} Picard accepts the apology, studying Leslie with some interest and ignoring the incoming message for a moment. Beverly tries to excuse them both so Picard can take the message in privacy, but Picard asks Beverly to stay behind while Leslie leaves.

The message is from Geordi LaForge. INTERCUT Geordi at Farpoint Station and Picard on the bridge. We see Geordi in an unobtrusive vantage point carefully studying the Annae, and we see them from Geordi's unique point of view as he interprets the "readings" he's getting. The Annae he has inspected so far appear as originally reported -- humanoid, with certain anatomical anomalies, but nothing mysterious or even terribly odd. Picard asks if Geordi's readings can be thwarted or distorted in any way? The young ensign is positive what he's seeing is what is there; his reading of energy auras ^{no} has never been faulted. Picard orders him to carry on, coordinate with the others, and stay in touch.

Quote
Geordi's
comments on
Geordi.

Beverly, standing by, is amazed to find Picard wants to know when Leslie had been on a starship bridge before. The answer is: never. She's been on a number of smaller vessels, of course; and she's always been interested in how they work. But the Enterprise is state of the art technology, and Picard had merely indicated the communications board; yet Leslie knew instantly what to do and did it when Geordi's call came in. Well, Beverly did tell him Leslie was special, and the girl does have an eidetic memory and a genuine feel for machines. Picard nods thoughtfully, filing away that information.

On Farpoint, Ryker and Data are an odd couple, each trying to communicate with the other. Ryker finds himself starting to talk to Data as he would to any other man and then being checked by the realization Data is a machine. Ryker has always used machines, not interacted with them. Data, on the other hand, regards himself as a sentient life form regardless of the composition of the container, a container which is startlingly human. (If you cut him, does he not bleed?) Data and Ryker are discovering by careful, close inspection that every apparently working piece of equipment on Farpoint Station is just that -- apparently working. It shouldn't be because there are only rudimentary mechanics inside most of the equipment, enough to flash the lights and ring the bells, but not enough to run these extremely sophisticated machines. Yet they function.

Macha and Troi have requested a room to relax in and been shown a luxurious suite. The Annae woman who has conducted them in hovers, anxious that they like it. There is a bowl of Earth-type fruit on a table, and Troi offhandedly remarks to Macha she wishes she could have some Betazed glow fruit. The Annae woman bows herself out; and

as Troi and Macha turn away from a view of a lovely garden outside, they are startled to find the bowl is now filled with vibrantly and exotically colored fruit. Troi cautiously reaches out and takes one of the fruits. It's solid and real. She bites into it -- delicious -- quite possibly the best Betazed glow fruit she's ever had.

Geordi finds Data and Ryker examining the station's transporter.

This, at least, seems to have all the correct inner works. Why is this different? Data recalls that the information on the initial contact included a ship's visit for Elzever with an in-depth tour that included cargo and passenger transporter rooms. An enthusiastic transporter chief had embarrassed the Captain by holding forth too long on the special wonders of how and why a transporter works. Did the Annae build theirs from Elzever's memory? Geordi turns his special vision in reader mode on the transporter console, gasps, and then turns it on other pieces of equipment. They'd better get in touch with Captain Picard right away. He has to see this.

Picard is contacted in the ready room, and Geordi shows the Captain what it is he is reading. Every inanimate object at Farpoint Station is organic, not metal or alloy as they appear to be. And once Geordi set his reader mode for the objects, they are also revealed as insubstantial -- transparent. It looks like all of Farpoint Station may be an illusion.

Picard immediately orders all personnel back to the Enterprise and tells Elzever he's beaming down to see him. Now. The transfer of personnel back to the ship, supervised by Macha and her security teams, is steady but slow. Most of the people were actually under the impression this was a real shore leave and have been enjoying themselves

accordingly. The situation presents Macha with some difficult and amusing moments to deal with as Picard beams down to confront Elzever.

In Elzever's office, Picard demands answers. Star Fleet is not about to send ships to this station, no matter how appealing it is, if there are misrepresentations and possible danger. Picard wants the truth -- and he is well aware that much of this station is an illusion. Elzever is defiant. Is it an illusion? Elzever and the other Annae can create realities. He will show Picard the realities. What does Picard want? What would he like to see? All he has to do is think of something. Unbidden, Picard has thought of a specific item (perhaps something personal from his quarters). Elzever makes a vague gesture, says "Create," and the item appears before Picard, recreated down to the last detail. Elzever is contemptuous of the Captain. Would he like this thing changed -- a different color perhaps? Larger? Simple. A wave of his hand and the command "Create," and it is done. Anything anyone wants may be enjoyed here. That isn't wrong or dangerous to anyone. It is only different. The Annae can provide anything and everything any ship or visitor wants or needs. If it is an illusion, it is a lasting, material illusion. Where is the harm in that? The Annae are merely providing a service. Before Picard can respond, the station alarms go off and Daneli is reporting that an unidentified vessel has appeared on approach to the planet. It is unannounced; and, when challenged, it refuses to respond. Who are these guys?

ACT THREE:

Picard immediately beams back aboard the Enterprise to take charge. Macha is still trying to get all the personnel rounded up. Some of them are having such a good time, they resist her -- to their regret.

Nb
?
Picard, Riker, etc. are with Elzever when the strange vessel arrives. See some panic in Elzever.

Elzever in his office and Picard on the Enterprise both try to hale the mysterious and menacing vessel. No response as it moves into orbit, holding station directly over Farpoint. The intruder is dull gray against the black of space, almost more of a presence than a ship.

? It's the ANNAE planet, rather, Picard would attempt to communicate re space vessel to ANNAE.

Picard orders an electronic probe of the mystery vessel. Data is getting readings that indicate the ship and its weaponry are far more powerful than the Enterprise. The probe is abruptly cut off, and Picard demands to know what happened. Data informs him that the other ship has somehow terminated or blocked the probe.

Picard will turn to Troi for telepathy info.

Ryker has been monitoring the crew status, especially those still on the station. Macha has the last few crew/civilian members rounded up and is ready to beam up. A strong probe from the mystery vessel appears, physically manifested by a blindingly bright beam of light; and the building rocks with what feels like a seismic drop kick. As the ceiling starts to fall (or a crack rips the floor), Macha shouts for the beam up that takes her and her people out of there.

No, The vessel will be impure. It's Fellow creature.

Simultaneously, Troi is hit with a wave of empathic rage and hate that literally knocks her flat. It is so intense, it almost submerges her own personality, causing her to savagely fight Beverly's efforts to help her. In desperation, Beverly gives her a shot that forces her into unconsciousness.

Instead, the ANNAE are being killed.

Picard has kept a steady communications signal going to the other vessel demanding identification and its reason for being here. Finally, there is a response. Picard sees an image of a (humanoid) grizzled veteran CAPTAIN with a stern visage. The Captain is abrupt, curt, ignores Picard's questions. He tells Picard not to interfere.

His ship's business is with the city-station down below. Abruptly, the screen goes dark as the Captain cuts off the communications link.

On the planet, the mystery ship's probe is causing more structural damage to the station. Machinery that was functioning perfectly is going haywire or failing abruptly. Elzever frantically signals the Enterprise, begging for help. The communication line is jammed, and the frightened Elzever is left pleading into a silent transceiver.

Picard puts out a call for Ensign LaForge to report to the bridge. Green is jealous. All he's had a chance to do was unpack his bag and be shown around the ship a little. Geordi's had an assignment from the Captain already, and now they want him on the bridge again. Geordi doesn't have time to stop and explain; the order was for him to report to the bridge on the double. Green is left feeling a little useless, a little forlorn -- and a lot lonely at the apparent loss of his close friend.

When Geordi gets to the bridge, he finds the Enterprise's electronic eyes and ears are blind and deaf when turned on the mystery vessel. But Geordi can see through the observation port, and Picard wants a report from the living tricorder. Geordi ^{doesn't do this} tries, but the ^{kind of thing. Use Troi} impressions he sees are confused and jumbled. There are life forms aboard, but there is also a larger mass that seems to emanate a living force, too. The impression shifts and changes so much, it's almost dizzying for him to look at it. He has to confess he cannot get a definitive reading on the vessel. Data offers the opinion that Geordi's visual prosthetic might have been blocked, too.

Troi is having a difficult time in the sickbay. The sedation Beverly administered is starting to wear off, and Troi is showing signs of intense agitation again. Beverly would be inclined to let

Necessary?
We need to AS TO ADD TO THE MYSTERY.

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her regain consciousness, but Troi seems to be feeling pain now, as well as anger and hatred. She is crying uncontrollably. Beverly is afraid the waves of empathy battering Troi could harm her psychologically if Beverly doesn't keep her under. But Picard needs to know where all that feeling is coming from. Is it only the mystery vessel -- or is there more? Reluctantly, Beverly helps Troi begin to regain consciousness.

At Farpoint, the relentless probe is shutting down power in sector after sector. The station is in chaos, as the power loss creeps systematically closer to the city. Elzever is in his office, pleading with someone/thing we still cannot see. He is begging for protection. "We fed, sheltered, cared for you. Now you must protect us! And yourself. If the power source dies, you'll die too!"

Data and Geordi both report readings from Farpoint suddenly changed. There seems to be a surge of power coming back. For a moment, we see machines staggering back on line, running erratically, but functioning. And then the power blacks out again, and the systematic loss of power creeps toward the city.

Picard calls a council of war on the bridge. He feels a responsibility toward the Annae and their city-station. Even if they were dealing in material illusions, he has no reason to believe they deserve destruction. If the power-blanking probe hits the city's main energy source, it could kick the supplementary nuclear reactor into a devastating explosion that would level the area and annihilate the Annae. Beverly brings a weak Troi to the bridge just as Data points out the creeping probe is working around the station in an almost surgical manner. Troi says she thinks this is deliberate. She has a feeling of a cruel satisfaction, a feeling that this probing

and slow death of the city/station is a kind of torture being practiced by whoever is on the mystery vessel.

Picard believes the key player, the puzzle solver is Elzever. He is called the station administrator, but records all show Elzever as the person who headed up all meetings between the Annae and the first contact teams, proposed and followed through on the Federation approval of a Star Fleet staging station on Farpoint, and then presented the rapidly completed station ready to do business. Picard details Ryker and Macha to go down to the station and bring Elzever back to the Enterprise.

They locate Elzever at the heart of the almost powerless station. Even the walls are vanishing now as the material illusions fail. There are no more luxurious amenities in sight as Elzever stands there, piteously begging someone/thing for help. Ryker and Macha are under the impression he is appealing to some kind of god.

Ryker and Macha unceremoniously grab Elzever and request beam up. As they appear in the transporter room, another (very different) transporter effect interferes, travels over them, picks out Elzever, centers on him -- and he is pulled away screaming to somewhere else.

ACT FOUR:

The only place Elzever could be is aboard the mystery vessel. Macha and Ryker explain how they found Elzever appealing for help from some seemingly mystic source. But what if the source is real -- and in or part of the station? Is that what the mystery vessel wants? If so, Elzever may be a hostage for it.

The damaging probe is now into the city. Geordi is again getting confused readings -- but there seems to be a larger life form mass near the power center, a life form mass that is almost totally surrounded

*They'll have
the "energy"
ship is down this.*

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by Annae life forms as the city-station inhabitants retreat in fear from the probe.

Picard orders the Enterprise into position between the station and the mystery vessel, hoping to deflect the probe. Picard is banking on that grizzled old veteran to not fire on another spaceship when his quarrel is with the Annae. Puzzled looks from some of the others who saw that captain on the view screen. Grizzled old veteran? Data saw him as an Oriental gentleman. Macha saw her as a distinguished woman. Ryker saw him as a man in his thirties. Each one had a different perception of the person who appeared on the view screen, a perception that coincided with each one's notion of what the captain should look like.

At that moment, the mystery ship fires on the intervening Enterprise. The powerful weaponry of the other ship rips through the Enterprise's shields like tissue, and phaser blasts tear the power nacelles. Other phaser blasts swiftly follow, lancing strikes all over the ship. The Enterprise bridge power falters, then comes on again on emergency backup systems. The weaponry bank is still operative, but Picard urgently orders no retaliation.

Uproar on the bridge as Ryker, Macha, LaForge and Beverly argue in outrage, and Picard silences them. Data and Troi quietly agree with the Captain. Data points out the ship seemed to fire on them with phasers -- Star Fleet weaponry, but this is not a Star Fleet vessel. Listen to the damage reports. They sound authentic as they come in, but people calling them in do not have familiar voices. To each one on the bridge, the ship appears damaged in a different way, just as the captain they saw appeared different to each of them. Then is the damage real -- or is this, as Picard now believes, just one more illusion?

Troi is still getting the feelings of anger and hatred, but under it, the sadness and pain she felt is alleviated. She says she feels something else now...hope.

Picard sends Macha and her security teams down to the city's core, where all the Annae are gathered in fear near their power source and that other life form. He wants all transporter rooms standing by for a massive beam up of all the Annae.

INTERCUT with Macha and her people organizing the beam ups, soothing the frightened Annae, getting it going. We see Picard start sending a communications signal to the mystery vessel, even though the frequencies still seem jammed. Picard broadcasts one simple message. Whoever is listening is assured that the Annae -- only them but all of them -- are being removed from the city-station to the Enterprise. "They will make no trouble for you. There will be no interference with you -- not from us or from them. No one will harm you." But Picard also demands the return of Elzever to the Enterprise, as a sign of good faith. A long moment -- and then Elzever is transported by the strange beam to the bridge of the Enterprise.

Now Picard wants answers -- not illusions -- and Elzever had better come up with them. The prime questions are: what is the creature or life form the Annae have held captive on the planet, and is it the creature which creates the illusions? Elzever admits it is. The Annae were a dying race some twenty years ago -- unable to live or build successfully on the planet and without the ability for the technology that would save them. They were clinging to the last remnants of what civilization they had in the city when the

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creature drifted down to land near the city. It was starving and weak, and it had been damaged by some natural enemy from which it had fled. It was young then, but it had the power of telepathy and could read their minds and communicate with them. It needed the one thing they could provide for it, solar energy for food and rehabilitation. They were not a heartless people, and they gladly helped the creature. In thanks, it paid them back with material illusions -- anything they could think of was created for them. So they housed it while it recuperated from its starvation and wounds. They enclosed it completely, and they "gentled it." Pressed for an explanation of that, Elzever uncomfortably says they rationed its food if it started to become intractable. But they always made sure it was comfortable and reasonably fed and kept healthy -- as long as the illusions kept coming.

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It's not hard to figure out that when the contact team found them, Elzever used the creature's abilities to impress them and to build and maintain the subsequent station. Until the other showed up. The mystery vessel is no vessel -- it is an elaborate illusion plucked from someone's mind to create a threat. The confused readings, the illusion of weapons, life forms inside the life form, all point to the "vessel" being a stronger, larger, and far more powerful creature -- one filled with rage and hate at what it found was being done to its mate/lover/child/companion.

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All the Enterprise's sensors and equipment have come to life again; and as we watch with the crew and Elzever, Farpoint Station disappears. The probe stabs down from the mystery vessel/creature and cracks a section of the city like an eggshell.

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Something stirs inside and begins to emerge. It is not a bulky, awesome thing, but rather a creature of gossamer, feathery lightness -- beautiful in its grace as it rises away from its long captivity. The mystery vessel changes into a creature of the same light beauty and grace. The two meet and touch -- a dance of delicate tendrils twining -- and then they leave. *the station is gone.*

Picard turns to Elzever, who is not watching the creatures. He is staring down at the damaged city and at the space where Farpoint Station used to be -- in illusion, of course. Picard tells him the Annae will have to get along on realities now, just like most people do. But Picard thinks the Federation can offer some help, if the Annae are willing to work for it. Farpoint, after all, is a viable location for a staging station. With Federation help and Annae work, it can be built. The Annae will be facing a future, not a death.

Troi is still watching the disappearing creatures on another view screen. She turns to Picard, smiling. She is receiving feelings of freedom and great joy -- and deep thanks. The Enterprise will not be forgotten as a friend.

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THE END