

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"The *Dradnucarni*"

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STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"The *Dradnucarni*"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. TEN FORWARD

TROI is adamantly attacking a huge gooey fudge sundae.

BEVERLY (OC)

Uh-oh, not another "Fallout Fudge" sundae. Isn't that your second one this month?

BEVERLY is standing back, unsure whether it's safe to approach.

TROI

This one is called "Mother" and who is counting?

BEVERLY tentatively takes a seat.

BEVERLY

I am if those are real calories. Wasn't the last one "Mother"?

TROI

No, that one was "Professor Albert" for not accepting, "The Danger of the Holodeck as Substitute Therapy". My research was valid.

BEVERLY

I see...

TROI

Beverly, you're a mother, explain this to me: will you just die of horror and shame if you don't have any grandchildren?

BEVERLY

I haven't even thought of that. Wes is still in the Academy- he's got his whole life ahead of him.

TROI

Exactly!

BEVERLY

Well, Deanna, he's a bit younger than you.

TROI

Are you saying I don't have my whole life ahead of me?

BEVERLY

Ahh, this is going to be one of those no-win conversations where no matter what I say-

WORF enters and sees them.

TROI

No, really, I have my career, I feel fulfilled, I'm happy- why doesn't she see that? No matter what I tell her, she still-

WORF

Excuse me, Counselor, I have-
(sees sundae, steps back)
Oh, I see you have been in contact with your mother, perhaps another time.

TROI

Now is fine, Worf, what is it?

WORF

It is nothing urgent, it can wait.

TROI

If you have a problem, just tell me- it's my job.

WORF

If it is not an inconvenience.

BEVERLY eases out of her chair.

BEVERLY

Here, Worf, take my chair.

WORF

Please remain seated, Doctor, I-

Suddenly, the Yellow Alert alarms go off.

DATA(OC)

Senior officers report to the Bridge.

WORF is the first one out the door looking extremely relieved. TROI glances back at her sundae.

TROI

Hold that thought- I'll be back.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD and RIKER are standing by Ops where DATA is seated. All eyes are glued to the screen.

LA FORGE enters from the turbolift and goes to his Engineering station.

WORF and TROI enter from the other turbolift; WORF assumes his post as TROI joins the others staring in shock.

TROI

What could have caused such destruction?

On the main screen are several different destroyed and disabled starships.

DATA

...There are no signs of life registering from any of the vessels.

RIKER

Data, what is that off the starboard bow?

DATA

Magnifying.

A large familiar Cube resolves on the screen.

RIKER

Shields up! Go to the Red Alert! Ready phasers for-

DATA

Sir, there are no signs of life or any power generating from within it. All systems are inoperative.

RIKER

What are you saying? There's no threat?

DATA

That is correct, sir. Whatever destroyed those other vessels destroyed the Borg ship as well.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Everyone reacts to the screen in disbelief. TROI goes to her seat and studies her computer terminal.

RIKER

That's not possible, is it?

LA FORGE

Believe it. I'm picking up definite structural failure throughout the entire vessel. We just can't see it from this angle.

RIKER

Helm, bring us in an orbital path around the Borg ship. Maintain weapons and shields.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE

as it circles around the Borg ship to reveal the huge hole that blasted a good third of the Cube away.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD

My God, it's completely destroyed. Cancel red alert. Data, any idea what happened?

DATA

Scanners indicate the damage is a result of sustained phaser attack.

RIKER

But we weren't even able to put a dent in it.

DATA

That is incorrect, sir. We succeeded in destroying 20% of their ship with our phasers.

LA FORGE comes up besides WORF.

LA FORGE

Yeah, but not without almost depleting our power in the process. There was barely enough to maintain the shields.

RIKER

And yet this thing was destroyed by phasers-

PICARD

Data, what would have happened if the *Enterprise* had continued firing on the Borg ship?

DATA

We would have completely destroyed it in a matter of 5.3 minutes.

RIKER and PICARD exchange glances as they realize the significance.

RIKER

Then that would mean-

WORF

-There is an enemy out there with twice our phaser power.

LA FORGE

Twice all our power, not just phasers. Some sort of shielding would have to be maintained to deflect return fire, maintain life support, maneuverability... not to mention keeping all systems on line. That would have to be one hell of a power source.

WORF

Such an enemy could be a major threat. We must find the source of such destruction.

PICARD

I agree, Mr Worf.

DATA

Caution is advisable. Sensors indicate these vessels were destroyed as they entered this sector. The Borg ship is the most recent casualty.

RIKER

Can you plot a probable course based on the line of destruction?

DATA

Analyzing... probable course completed. Sir, if this course is maintained, it will intersect the Cafen Asteroid Field along the Neutral Zone.

PICARD

The Neutral Zone... could this be the result of a Romulan experiment with phaser power?

DATA

Inconclusive at this time. Long range scanners do not register any Romulan presence in this sector.

RIKER

We won't know until we find it. Helm, bring us on course.

PICARD

Engage. Maintain shields and...
(turns to WORF)
...proceed with caution.

He takes his seat in Command. RIKER follows.

PICARD (CONT'D)

It seems we have a monster out there-

TROI smiles at the reference.

TROI

A monster, sir?

RIKER

But it's not your mother.

TROI's smile turns to a glare.

PICARD

I meant this is something big and menacing- completely unknown.

RIKER

And scary. Your mother is just- well...

TROI

Speaking of Mother, she was just saying she hadn't seen me for so long, maybe I should invite her on board.

PICARD

I don't remember seeing any missions coming up that would require her.. presence. Do you, Number One?

RIKER

As a matter of fact, I believe we'll be on the opposite side of the galaxy, too far to-

WORF

Sir, long range sensors are picking up massive explosions within the Cafen Asteroid Field.

DATA

Confirmed, Captain. I am detecting extensive phaser energy corresponding to standard Federation wave-lengths. However, analysis indicates the power has been enhanced 5 times greater than our own phasers at maximum output.

RIKER

That must be it. Helm, bring us within range of the field.

PICARD

Is the source of power under attack?

LA FORGE

Whatever it is, it doesn't stand a chance.

WORF

There are no other vessels in the area.

DATA

It appears to be destroying the asteroids in its trajectory.

RIKER

Blasting its way through? Why doesn't it just navigate around?

LA FORGE

Unless it's testing its power out on the asteroids?

WORF

Captain, we are within range of the "monster".

PICARD

On screen.

The asteroid belt appears on the main viewer. A nice clean path has been cut right through the center by a small freighter ship.

WORF

The configuration is that of a civilian starship, merchant class with a crew of 12... it is the *Dradnucarni 4* of Dradnucarni Shipping.

RIKER

Slow to impulse, maintain shields.

PICARD

Hail them, Mr Worf.

WORF works on all frequencies.

TROI

The Dradnucarni are a very affluent family in the Federation.

PICARD

You know them, Counselor?

TROI

Not personally, sir. Let's just say their wealth almost made them worthy of the Daughter of the 5th House of Betazed...

RIKER

There it is again, the long arm of Lwaxana...

WORF

There is no reply, sir, but they are receiving my hails.

RIKER

So either they don't want to respond or there's no one there to respond.

TROI

Or they are not able.

PICARD

Mr. Worf try to make contact with the
Dradnucarni family, see if they know anything
about the current disposition of their ship.

DATA

Captain, I do not register any signs of life.

TROI

Data, are you sure? I sense something. It's very
weak, but there is something there.

DATA

Most of the ship's power appears to be shut down
except for life support.

WORF

That is incorrect, my instruments just measured
an energy pulse inside the vessel... it's going
off the scale.

LA FORGE comes up beside WORF and studies the readings.

LA FORGE

Whoa, that can't be right.

RIKER

Explain, Geordi.

LA FORGE

That kind of reading would have meant it just
exploded- and should have taken us with it.

Every one looks at the screen where the *Dradnucarni 4* is just
sitting there.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE

Trailing the *DRADNUCARNI 4* blasting through the asteroid belt.

PICARD (VO)

Captain's log, stardate 47111.5. We have traced the source of destruction to the Cafen Asteroid Field along the Neutral Zone. It appears to be a civilian freighter with an unknown source of immense power.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Everyone is waiting for an explosion.

PICARD

Geordi, there is no explosion. What do you mean?

LA FORGE

Well, sir, a ship of that class has a maximum power of say, 10 to the 8th gigawatts. What just happened was higher than we could generate safely in the terrawatt range. The only way that much power could be generated was if the matter/antimatter containment collapsed.

PICARD

Could it then be a result of a decaying containment field neutralized by an auxiliary field?

WORF

The power surge is gone. Readings have dropped back to minimal output. It has come to a full stop.

DATA

I have detected no signs of a containment breach. The ship is within the normal parameters of operations.

PICARD

Any conclusions?

PICARD looks around at all the puzzled faces.

WORF

An experiment in warfare.

PICARD

But whose? The *Dradnucarni*? Or the Romulan's?

RIKER

They wouldn't keep it here, they'd take it back to Romulan space.

PICARD

Have you reached the *Dradnucarni*'s yet?

WORF

No sir. Starfleet will contact us when they've been located.

LA FORGE

Until we get a closer look, all we know is that a huge amount of energy is being generated and consumed inside that ship.

RIKER stands up and looks up at WORF questioningly.

WORF

The bridge seems to be secure, there are no signs of life.

TROI

I don't understand why there are no signs of life when I feel something is there. I could be wrong, the feeling is weak, but...

PICARD

Let's hope it is the crew, and no one else.

RIKER

Geordi, Data- let's go.

PICARD

And if that ship gets any where near the Neutral Zone, you will be evacuated immediately.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* BRIDGE

RIKER, LA FORGE and DATA materialize into the semi-darkness. Dark black cubes are attached to vital stations.

LA FORGE

Now, that's something I've never seen before.

LA FORGE studies the cube on Ops while DATA scans the area with his tricorder.

RIKER

Any sign of the crew?

DATA

No sir, however I am registering a weak form of life within this vessel.

RIKER

Humanoid? Romulan? Where?

DATA

The reading is too weak to determine an exact location or the nature of the being.

LA FORGE

The computer should be able to locate them.
Computer, what is the location of the crew?

Silence.

RIKER

Computer, engage.

DATA

I will try to engage it manually.

DATA reaches out to touch the console and gets zapped.

LA FORGE

Are you all right?

DATA

Yes, Geordi, I am unharmed. However, I would
advise against any further contact with the
stations.

DATA scans the cube again and then touches it without a jolt.

DATA (CONT'D)

The original circuitry has been shielded and
rendered inoperative by this cube. I believe
these cubes are what is running the ship.

RIKER

Can you get into it?

DATA runs his fingers over all the sides. Nothing happens.

LA FORGE

Apparently not.

DATA

There is no record of this kind of technology
known to the Federation.

LA FORGE

I can't believe the computer has been totally
bypassed.

RIKER

Maybe it can accessed from ours. (keys combadge)
Riker to *Enterprise*.

PICARD(OC)

What have you found, Number One?

RIKER

There's no sign of crew, but the ship has been
tampered with...

INTERCUT:

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD notices TROI is still puzzled.

PICARD

How so?

LA FORGE(OC)

Captain, every station has been shut down in a protective shield and bypassed with... a cube.

PICARD

Did you say a cube? A Borg cube?

DATA(OC)

No sir, this is an unknown technology.

PICARD

Can you disengage it?

DATA(OC)

Not at this time, sir. It will require further analysis.

RIKER(OC)

And Captain, there is a faint reading of life somewhere on the ship, apparently it could only be detected at close range. We'd like to try and access the computer from there.

TROI perks up.

PICARD

Understood. Mr. Worf?

WORF

Still no word on the family. I will contact Star Fleet for civilian override codes.

PICARD

Do what you can and keep me informed of your progress.

RIKER(OC)

Yes, sir, away team out.

PICARD

Well Counselor, it seems your sense was correct.

TROI

Yes, but why does it feel like they're barely alive?

PICARD doesn't like that implications.

INT. DRADNUCARNI BRIDGE

RIKER and LA FORGE are looking things over while DATA analyzes the cubes.

RIKER

Geordi, over here.

RIKER is pointing his flashlight at an empty bulkhead.

RIKER (CONT'D)

Am I mistaken, or doesn't a food replicator normally belong here?

LA FORGE

That's strange. Why would they remove it?

RIKER

Under the assumption the crew wouldn't need it? I don't like it. I'm going to look for the crew.

LA FORGE

And I definitely want to see what they've done to Engineering.

RIKER

Data, see if you can figure out how to disengage those things.

DATA

Yes, sir.

LA FORGE is the first one to the turbolift- it doesn't respond.

LA FORGE

The turbolifts are off line, I guess we're walking.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* CORRIDOR/CREW QUARTERS

RIKER comes out of the ladder access. He scans the hall with his flashlight and then goes to the first door which opens into darkness.

RIKER

What the hell??

DATA(OC)

Commander, do you require assistance?

RIKER's flashlight reflects a room filled with shield generators.

RIKER

No, Data, but this is unbelievable. The quarters are jammed with shield generators and the retaining bulkheads have been removed to accommodate them.

DATA(OC)

Sir, that would explain the vessel's unlimited capability to withstand any attack.

RIKER

The energy consumption-

LA FORGE(OC)

-Is unbelievable! Commander, you've got to see this.

RIKER

On my way.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* BRIDGE

DATA is still analyzing the cubes.

WORF(OC)

Commander Data, we have accessed the *Dradnucarni*'s computer.

DATA

Computer, locate Cmdr. Riker.

Silence. DATA tries to engage it through the alien controls.

DATA(CONT'D)

I am still unable to engage it.

WORF(OC)

Then I will download a link to your tricorder.

DATA

Computer link established. Computer, locate Cmdr. Riker.

The tricorder beeps.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* ENGINEERING

Most of the retaining bulkheads and stations have been removed to make room for 20 main power generators. Several glowing cubes of different sizes are attached to all the stations.

RIKER walks in completely thunderstruck at the sight.

LA FORGE is shining his flashlight on a schematics layout on the main console containing a large glowing hexagon.

LA FORGE

If I hadn't seen it for myself...

RIKER

I'm seeing it and I don't believe it. How...?

LA FORGE

I'm not sure yet, but here is the computer's interpretation of the modifications. Here are your shield generators. And- if I'm looking at this right- these are multiple weapons array jammed into the forward cargo bay.

RIKER

What's this?

LA FORGE

That's what's really weird- it looks like some sort of matrix in the aft cargo bay that's tied to the cargo transporter. I-

DATA(OC)

Commander, computer access has been established. There is still no sign of the *Dradnucarni* crew.

RIKER

That can't be- they've got to be around here some where.

INTERCUT:

INT. DRADNUCARNI BRIDGE

DATA is walking around trying to get a fix on the readings.

DATA

There are insufficient vital signs to indicate location.

RIKER(OC)

You mean they're dying?

DATA

There are insufficient vital signs to-

RIKER(OC)

Alright, Data, let's try going from general to particular. Identify the life signs on board this vessel.

DATA

There are 3 members of the *Enterprise* and 12 members of the *Dradnucarni* on board.

RIKER(OC)

Location?

DATA

One member of the *Enterprise* is on the bridge, two members are in Engineering. The members of the *Dradnucarni 4* are indeterminate.

LA FORGE(OC)

The shield generators could be hiding their location.

DATA

That is a plausible conclusion.

RIKER(OC)

Then we'll have to search this place meter by meter. Data, you start from there and I'll start from here.

DATA

Yes, sir. Commander Data out.

DATA scans the bridge one more time before leaving.

INT. DRADNUCARNI CORRIDOR

DATA is half way down the corridor when the red alert siren lights up the darkness. He keys his combadge.

DATA

Cmdr. Riker, I am registering-

LA FORGE(OC)

Commander! Everything's powering up. The output is enormous.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

WORF is at his station, PICARD and TROI are seated in command.

WORF

Sir! The *Dradnucarni* has gone to red alert, all systems are off the scale.

PICARD jumps up.

PICARD

PICARD to Away Team. Away Team answer. Riker, Data report!

(to WORF)

Get them out of there now.

WORF

The *Dradnucarni*'s shields are up, we can not transport.

PICARD

Red alert, raise our shields.

WORF sounds the red alert.

WORF

It's going into warp drive.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE

The warp drive forms around the *Dradnucarni 4* as it speeds out of the asteroid field.

BACK TO SCENE

WORF

It is heading straight for the Neutral Zone.

PICARD

And taking our people with it.

STAR TREK:"The *Dradnucarni*", King - ACT TWO 17.

PICARD and TROI watch in horror as the *Dradnucarni* disappears from the screen.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* BRIDGE

RIKER stares helplessly at the blank screen as DATA reads off the information from his tricorder. LA FORGE is trying desperately to open the glowing cubes.

DATA

We have entered Romulan Space. We are closing in on the Romulan warbird, N'wap.

RIKER

We've got to stop this thing before it starts a war!

LA FORGE

Damn! I don't even know if the cube actually controls the helm its attached to.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD, WOLF and TROI watch as the *Dradnucarni* bears down on the warbird on the screen.

WOLF

The warbird's shields are up.

PICARD

Bring us within range, but keep us inside the Neutral Zone.

The warbird disappears under cloak.

WOLF

Full weapons array has been deployed.

The *Dradnucarni* fires a concentrated blast. There's an explosion as the damaged warbird limps out of cloak.

WOLF (CONT'D)

Heavy casualties on the warbird. Hull integrity has been breached.

PICARD

Transporter, can you get a fix on the Romulan survivors?

TRANSPORTER COM VOICE

Yes, sir, they are in one location.

WOLF

The *Dradnucarni* is powering the weapons array again.

PICARD

Beam them out now!

The *Dradnucarni* fires again and the warbird is pulverized.

WORF

Transporter room reports 9 survivors with injuries.

PICARD

Dr. Crusher, report to the transporter room with an ER team.

BEVERLY(OC)

We are already here, Captain.

PICARD heads for the turbolift as he gives WORF orders.

PICARD

Let me know if that thing does anything else, and try to get the Away Team back.

WORF

Yes, sir.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

BEVERLY is doing quick triage and directing the ER TEAM with the ROMULAN SURVIVORS as PICARD enters.

BEVERLY

Give him something for the pain, we'll set the broken bones in sickbay.

PICARD identifies the highest ranking officer, NERAK, who is actually the Romulan version of an ensign. He is weakened but standing on his own.

PICARD

I am Captain Jean Luc Picard of the *Enterprise*, we will do anything we can-

NERAK

This is still war. An unprovoked attack in Romulan space is a direct act of war. The Empire will not negotiate for hostages.

PICARD

Believe me, this was not an act of war and you are not hostages. That ship is a civilian freighter acting on its own.

BEVERLY

These burns need to be treated immediately.

NERAK lamely shrugs her off.

NERAK

Do you expect me to believe that much power came from a "freighter"? Nonsense, it is a warship to-

WORF(OC)

Sir, the *Dradnucarni* has shut down and dropped its shields. We have locked on to the Away Team.

PICARD nods to the TRANSPORTER CHIEF and RIKER, DATA and LA FORGE materialize on the platform.

RIKER

Captain, there was no way to stop it.

PICARD

I understand, Number One. Mr. Worf, is the *Dradnucarni* still in Romulan space?

WORF(OC)

Yes, sir.

PICARD

Send out a warning beacon not to approach this area on all frequencies and all languages. Alert Starfleet of the situation.

(to LA FORGE)

Is there anyway to get that thing out of Romulan space while its shut down?

LA FORGE

The tractor beam should bring it in.

PICARD

Make it so. And we...

NERAK

Nerak, engineering division. We were in our quarters when you attacked. Engineering, weapons, the bridge crew were obliterated instantly, including our commander.

PICARD

We will contact the Romulan Empire directly and explain. You can't be anxious for war any more then we are.

NERAK isn't sure what to think and tries to keep his guard up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

A patched-up and somewhat restored NERAK is seated with two other ROMULANS at table with all the senior officers.

A schematics of the *Dradnucarni* is on the screen. LA FORGE is explaining what they found.

LA FORGE

...Everything was bypassed. Basically, they created an automatic offensive-measure program. And what made it all possible was this replicator-transporter matrix, here.

DATA

That made it possible to replicate large objects, such as a generator, and transporting it to any part of the ship once the damaged part was transported out.

WORF

Are you saying this "offensive-measure" program was started and now it can not be disengaged?

LA FORGE

That's the gist of it- whoever took over the *Dradnucarni* and set all this up is no longer around to abort it. And these cubes are, well.. unbreakable. And I don't know how to remove it from the console.

PICARD

Do we know who initiated the program?

DATA

Aliens appear in the ship's logs, however, I am unable to identify them.

DATA gets up and goes to the screen. He keys in a command and a fuzzy picture of the *Dradnucarni* bridge resolves into focus.

DATA (CONT'D)

This is the last record.

FOUR ALIEN BEINGS never seen before are running around studying the bridge while the bewildered *DRADNUCARNI* CREW watch.

LEAD ALIEN is frantically trying to be understood by a young man who is the CAPTAIN.

TROI

I've never seen them before.

DATA

There is no record of any known species in the galaxy matching their description.

NERAK is dumfounded.

PICARD

Nerak?

NERAK

I have no idea. I've never seen them before.

WORF

How did they get on board the *Dradnucarni*?

DATA

That is unknown since the log was only recorded from the bridge. There is no record of sensors detecting the approach of an alien vessel or of an intruder alert.

LEAD ALIEN'S efforts become more frantic as they keep looking at the *Dradnucarni*'s viewscreen. The CAPTAIN is trying to calm them down and trying to understand.

TROI

They appear to be in a crisis situation and are expecting something terrible to happen.

Suddenly, the LEAD ALIEN confers quickly with ALIEN #1. They then turn around and stun the *DRADNUCARNI* CREW to unconsciousness.

BEVERLY

So they did do something to the crew.

LEAD ALIEN directs ALIENS #2 and #3 to remove the CREW. Immediately they begin picking up the CREW and carrying them to the TURBOLIFT.

ALIEN #4 appears with a large cube and starts breaking it down into smaller cubes.

They appear calm now that they are in control, but LEAD ALIEN still glances at the view screen anxiously.

DATA presses a key and the image fast-forwards through the placement of the cubes on the bridge.

He plays the log again when the LEAD ALIEN gives an alarm. The other ALIENS take different stations as the *Dradnucarni*'s bridge dims to semi-darkness.

WORF

They are dimming the lights to maintain security.

RIKER

Can you tell what they are doing? It looks like their hands are in the cubes.

A battle rocks the *Dradnucarni*'s bridge. Electrical static dances over the ancillary stations with no cubes on them. Suddenly, a bright electrical haze oozes into the bridge and they are vaporized.

RIKER (CONT'D)

After all that, they still didn't survive.

WORF

Which means their opponent was greater than their modifications- modifications that destroyed a Borg ship...

The thought hangs in the air as DATA restores the *Dradnucarni* schematics to the screen and returns to his seat.

BEVERLY

Could the crew have survived that?

TROI

Yes, they did. I'm sure of it.

DATA

The computer indicates that the life signs present are that of the *Dradnucarni* Crew, but it is too indistinct to locate it.

BEVERLY

Which means they could be in stasis or somehow held in-phase.

TROI ponders that statement.

PICARD

You found no trace of these aliens or what attacked them?

LA FORGE

Not a clue. No electrical residue or apparent damage. Systems not controlled by a cube were in stand-by mode.

NERAK is properly mollified. He confers with the other ROMULANS and comes to a conclusion.

NERAK

Captain Picard, we can see the Federation is not responsible for this unusual invention and I will make a full report to the Empire. We are grateful for our lives and if we can be of any assistance...?

PICARD

Thank you, Nerak, we appreciate any opinion that will shed any light on this new technology.

(to LA FORGE and DATA)

How long do you estimate for this offensive program to run its course?

LA FORGE

That's just it- it's not a finite program. It will continue to seek out and destroy perceived threats and if you try to shut down the power source it will simply replicate a new one.

Determined, TROI suddenly sits up.

TROI

Captain, I would like to go over to the *Dradnucarni*. I believe if I could get closer I could find the crew.

PICARD

Absolutely not, Counselor.

RIKER

That thing could take off again any second and take you to who know's where.

TROI

But you were safe.

LA FORGE

Actually, I wouldn't mind another chance to take a look at the alien modifications.

PICARD
(to WORF)

Can you contain the ship within the tractor beam?

WORF

If it does not power up, yes. Otherwise, it can generate sufficient power to break away.

DATA

The ship will not power up if it does not detect a threat within its range.

WORF

Why aren't we a threat?

LA FORGE

Their modifications interfaced with the *Dradnucarni*'s computer to control ship-wide systems. This gave the alien system knowledge of Starfleet and recognized the *Enterprise* as being part of its own.

PICARD

Very well, we can quarantine the area-

NERAK

You will have the cooperation of the Romulan Empire.

PICARD stands up for final orders.

PICARD

Good. Geordi, assemble your team- a small one- to study the alien modifications. And you, Counselor, let's hope you find them quickly.

The rest of them get up. NERAK approaches LA FORGE.

NERAK

I would like to assist you, if I may.

LA FORGE smiles and gestures for him to proceed.

LA FORGE

Maybe you will have better luck figuring it out...

INT. DRADNUCARNI CORRIDOR

DATA is holding the flashlight for them while BEVERLY scans the area with her medical tricorder.

TROI trails behind them, concentrating hard.

BEVERLY

Damn, it's still weak and indistinct all over the ship. You would think the readings would increase if we got close to their location.

DATA

Perhaps they are not all in the same place. If they have been dispersed through out the ship, then-

TROI

Here! They are close by.

BEVERLY and DATA turn around. She watches her tricorder as she walks back to where TROI is standing.

BEVERLY

Nothing. Are you sure?

TROI

Yes, they're right here.

BEVERLY shakes her head at the tricorder.

TROI (CONT'D)

It's as though their minds have been shut down or shielded. They're functioning- all of them, right here- but there is no emotion of any kind.

DATA shines the flashlight back and forth across the width of the corridor.

BEVERLY

Data, have you found something?

DATA

The width of corridor appears to be 1 meter smaller then the schematics indicated.

BEVERLY

Geordi said that retaining bulkheads had been restructured to-

DATA goes up to the bulkhead and stares at the circle of the flashlight. Puzzled, he walks right through the bulkhead.

TROI

Data!

DATA (OC)

(through the bulkhead)

I have found the Crew of the *Dradnucarni* 4.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* CORRIDOR

TROI and BEVERLY exchange glances and then go right through the bulkhead.

Within the 1 meter space, 12 stasis-like containers with the *Dradnucarni* Crew are lined up against the real bulkhead. Each one has a dark cube in front of it.

BEVERLY

Clever, very clever.

BEVERLY runs her medical scanner over each container.

DATA

This is a shielding mirage which would escape visual and sensory detection. One would have to know they were there to find them.

TROI

How did you know?

DATA

With knowledge of the ship's schematics and I observed the light did not reflect off the bulkhead. It was absorbed.

BEVERLY

They are in some sort of coma- I'm not getting any brain activity, but that could be due to the protective shielding they're under.

TROI

Can you revive them?

BEVERLY frowns at the dark cubes.

BEVERLY

That's the bad news- I don't see how those cubes work anymore then you do. I've never seen anything like this.

(keys combadge)

Crusher to Picard.

PICARD(OC)

Go ahead, Doctor. What have you found?

BEVERLY

Yes... has the family been located yet?

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Where PICARD is seated in Command.

PICARD

Starfleet has located the family. They have sent a cruiser out to bring them here. Are they alright?

BEVERLY(OC)

I think you need to see this.

PICARD

I'm on my way, Picard out.

WORF

Sir, a hail just came in from two Romulan warbirds, the Latigid and the O'div. They are standing down out of range within the Neutral Zone and ready to assist.

PICARD

Thank them for their assistance and tell them we'll keep them informed as you keep me informed.

WORF

Yes, sir.

INT. DRADNUCARNI ENGINEERING

RIKER and NERAK are gathered around LA FORGE at a large hexagon. Several ENGINEERS and ROMULAN #1 are setting up extra lighting and working at other stations.

LA FORGE

...This is their main computer. It's running everything from this auxiliary control.

NERAK

What you are saying is the modifications interfaced with the Federation computer only as a means to access the rest of the ship, but bypassed all other systems?

LA FORGE

Right! And each function has been put in some sort inoperative shielding-

NERAK

A "cocoon" of sorts.

RIKER

Which we can't penetrate.

LA FORGE

And some where in this thing is the "off" button for the offensive program.

NERAK

I would like to consult with some other engineers- Romulan engineers-and see-

BEVERLY(OC)

Crusher to LaForge.

LA FORGE

I'm right here, Doctor, what is it?

RIKER

Did you find the crew?

BEVERLY(OC)

Yes and I need Geordi to take a look at this thing.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* CORRIDOR

LA FORGE, RIKER and NERAK enter the empty corridor, shining their flashlights all around.

LA FORGE

I thought they were here.

BEVERLY (OC)

(through the bulkhead)

We are.

RIKER

Where?

PICARD sticks his head out of the bulkhead mirage.

PICARD

Through here, Number One. This is a mirage.

LA FORGE

Amazing! It looks solid to me.

They walk through the mirage to join PICARD and the others.

LA FORGE (CONT'D)

So this is why their location couldn't be determined.

RIKER

And they're alive?

BEVERLY

All that's registering are basic life signs- there's no brain activity.

(to LA FORGE)

Can you figure out how to open these?

LA FORGE

Figures, more cubes. Let's see... I don't see any seals to break open.

BEVERLY

No, we can't break them open! No, they have to be revived within their chambers.

NERAK

They would die instantly without proper decompression.

RIKER

What about surrounding the chamber with a stasis field? That would contain the chamber environment when it's opened.

BEVERLY

True... but I don't know if it's a matter of just the chamber environment alone or if their life functions are directly linked-

TROI

-where the chamber is functioning for them, like a life support machine.

BEVERLY

Right. I don't know... I just don't know.

DATA

Geordi, I have also made another important discovery.

LA FORGE

What's that, Data?

DATA shines his flashlight straight into the cube on a container.

DATA

Do you see it?

LA FORGE shakes his head.

DATA (CONT'D)

You can not see it from an angle. You must look directly into the spotlight.

LA FORGE

Whoa, now I see it.

RIKER steps up behind LA FORGE and looks over his shoulder.

A small panel of alien controls are visible under the spotlight.

RIKER

So they're not just ambiguous cubes. It's camouflage.

DATA

I discovered the nature of the mirage bulkhead when I shined my flashlight directly on to it, and it did not reflect the light. I had a "hunch" the same technique was applied to the cubes.

RIKER

That's a very good "hunch".

NERAK takes a look and then raps his knuckles on the cube.

NERAK

However, this mirage has a substance we can not penetrate.

LA FORGE

Then we're right back to square-one. In trying to break the cube open we could destroy the mechanism- and I don't know what that could do to the ship.

BEVERLY

Or them.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Everyone except BEVERLY and TROI are present.

RIKER

...and we can't just restrict the area because it will take off on its own.

WORF

If we are not perceived as at threat, can we destroy it?

LA FORGE

All of our concentrated fire power wouldn't put a dent in it. Besides, there's no guarantee it wouldn't return fire if we try to hit it.

PICARD

It could consider us a threat, then, at-

The door opens and they all stand.

TROI enters escorting NOTSNIW and ETTENNA DRADNUCARNI followed by DATA.

TROI

Captain, may I present Notsniw *Dradnucarni* and his wife, Etenna.

PICARD

You have our deepest sympathy regarding the state of your crew. We are doing everything-

ETTENNA

I know, I know, Captain. I'm grateful that you even found our son and that they-

Notsniw sees NERAK.

NOTSNIW

A Romulan! Was this some sort of Romulan take over?!

PICARD

On the contrary, they are one of many casualties from your ship. Fortunately, we were able to rescue them and they have been gracious enough to assist us.

NOTSNIW

I see... well, yes, the loss is enormous.

PICARD

Please, sit down and we can discuss this.

RIKER

Did you say your son?

ETTENNA

Yes, the youngest. He was- I mean is-

TROI

The captain of the *Dradnucarni* 4.

NOTSNIW

(proudly)

Each son got a ship and our only daughter manages the fleet.

ETTENNA

Is there no hope for them?

PICARD looks at TROI, not sure what to say.

TROI

As I explained, they are alive.

PICARD

Our Chief Medical Officer and a team of scientist are working around the clock and will do everything they can to bring your son back. In the meantime, your ship has been turned into a dreadnought and we've got to stop it before more lives are lost.

ETTENNA

Then it must be destroyed, it's as simple as that. But you've got to promise me you will save my son- the crew.

PICARD

We will do our best.

RIKER

Then we're back to how. We can't contain it, we can't fire on it...

LA FORGE gets up and goes to the *Dradnucarni* schematics on the screen.

LA FORGE

I'd hate to destroy it... I could devote the rest of my life studying that technology.

Notsniw comes up beside him.

NOTSNIW

This is what's been done to it?

LA FORGE

It is ingenious and the key to it is right here with this matrix...

RIKER

If we could ram it into something-

DATA

It would have to contain enough mass that the shields would not maintain it under impact.

PICARD

You mean like a star.

DATA

A class C planet, a moon or any asteroid with a mass 3 times greater than the *Dradnucarni*'s would suffice. The problem is to get the ship to impact with a massive body since we can not program it to do so.

LA FORGE is thinking and listening to the discussion.

RIKER

What we need then is the proverbial carrot.

NERAK

I don't understand. How is a Terran vegetable involved?

DATA

The carrot is a metaphor. In this instance, it refers to the practice of waving a carrot in front of an animal, which would then follow you because it wants the carrot. There are similar metaphors through out the galaxy. For example, the-

DATA catches PICARD's sigh of annoyance.

DATA (CONT'D)

However, I can give you examples another time at your convenience.

LA FORGE whips around.

LA FORGE

That's it! It has to go on its own and what makes it go are threats- so we have to make a big enough carrot to threaten it! Come on, Data, I need your help. And yours too, Nerak.

LA FORGE dashes for the door as DATA gets up to follow.

PICARD

Geordi!

LA FORGE

Captain, if those aliens were able to create a replicator-transporter matrix we might be able to do the same thing with the holodeck. I need to check this out first.

LA FORGE dashes out without waiting for a reply.

PICARD

(as a postscript)

Then you are dismissed...

ETTENNA

What about my son? Are they going to be destroyed along with it?

TROI

We have to try and save them.

PICARD

Believe me, Counselor, I want to. I do not want anymore loss of life. But the question is can we eliminate the threat without eliminating them?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - THE *DRADNUCARNI*

Still in the tractor beam and being towed back to the Cafen Asteroid Field.

BEVERLY (VO)

Medical log, supplemental. I have determined the *Dradnucarni* crew can survive indefinitely. But I am still at a loss on how to revive them while everyone else is at a loss on how to deal with the ship they're on.

INT. *DRADNUCARNI* CORRIDOR

Lights have been setup making the mirage bulkhead almost invisible. SCIENTISTS are at work while BEVERLY paces and punches info into her tricorder.

TROI and Etenna materialize nearby.

TROI

Have you made any progress?

BEVERLY

It's so frustrating- here they are within reach and I can't get to them.

TROI

This is Etenna *Dradnucarni*. This is Dr. Crusher, Chief Medical Officer.

ETTENNA

Oh, my son!

ETTENNA rushes up to the young CAPTAIN. She tentatively reaches out and lays a hand over his heart.

ETTENNA (CONT'D)

Oh dear God, my baby.

BEVERLY stares at Etenna's hand then raps another chamber.

BEVERLY

Deanna, didn't Geordi say they couldn't touch the stations because they were under some sort of protective shield?

TROI

I believe so.

BEVERLY

But these aren't!

(elated, keys combadge)

Crusher to LaForge.

LA FORGE(OC)

La Forge here. Is it urgent Doctor? I'm right in the middle of something...

INT. HOLODECK

LA FORGE, DATA and NERAK are at the computer on the holodeck grid bulkhead.

BEVERLY(OC)

Just don't do anything to the *Dradnucarni* until you've seen me.

LA FORGE

I'll contact you as soon as we're through. La Forge out. Now, Nerak, I want you to create a Romulan warbird. Say 1 meter in length.

NERAK

I can not reveal the secrets of our technology.

LA FORGE

You won't be, I swear on my honor as a Federation officer we will not be present when you create it and no one will enter while the program is running. And then afterwards you can completely erase your program.

NERAK studies him a moment.

NERAK

The specifications will be exact to scale. However, if you try to analyze it in anyway, it will be programed to destruct.

LA FORGE

Fine. Let me know when you're all ready.

NERAK watches LA FORGE and DATA leave before getting to work.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

LA FORGE and DATA are finishing linking a portable replicator to the transporter.

LA FORGE

Okay, Data, lock on to my combadge and energize on my signal. I'll need you to react quickly if anything goes wrong.

RIKER enters.

RIKER

What could go wrong, is there a problem?

DATA

This kind of experiment has never been conducted before, but that has never stopped Geordi.

LA FORGE

Why thank you, Data... I think that was a compliment?

DATA

It was an observation of your character that makes you a unique human being. Your initiative is admirable as well as your-

LA FORGE

Well, anyway, if there is even the slightest destabilization from Nerak's design- beam it right into space.

NERAK(OC)

The simulation you requested is complete.

LA FORGE

Great! Meet us in Engineering.

RIKER

Do you mind explaining this to me?

LA FORGE gestures for RIKER to proceed him into the corridor.

LA FORGE

It's very simple really...

INT. CORRIDOR

LA FORGE explains his plan to RIKER while they walk.

LA FORGE

...basically, we're going to transport a holodeck simulation off Holodeck 3.

RIKER

You can't- we just ended up creating a ship within a ship.

LA FORGE

Right, but after seeing how the replicator-transporter matrix was created on the *Dradnucarni*...

They pause in front of Engineering.

LA FORGE (CONT'D)

I realized that putting the replicator's matter synthesizer on line with the holodeck and the transporter would give it the necessary trace pattern to materialize the simulation out of the holodeck.

RIKER

Since we have no trace pattern of a Romulan warbird on file. Data was right...

(gestures for LA FORGE to proceed)

...your initiative is always admirable.

LA FORGE pauses and smiles back at RIKER.

INT. ENGINEERING

NERAK is waiting for them. LA FORGE takes off his combadge as goes to the center of the open area.

LA FORGE

Now for step two. Computer, reduce gravity by 98% within a spherical area- 1.2 meters in diameter, and located 1 meter above my combadge.

COMPUTER VOICE

Anti-gravity sphere complete.

LA FORGE

LaForge to Data- energize.

A miniature warbird appears floating in the air and everyone's impressed.

DATA(OC)

Transportation complete. There is no sign of destabilization.

PICARD enters.

PICARD

Well, Geordi... I wasn't aware that any warbirds had crossed the Neutral Zone.

RIKER

Geordi, how is that going to lure the *Dradnucarni* to its doom without blasting a hole in your holo.

LA FORGE

Oh, that won't happen as long as we keep ahead of it.

PICARD

Are you saying we can out run it?

LA FORGE

See, Captain, just because its capable of producing more power, its still the same merchant class *Dradnucarni* 4.

DATA

What Geordi means is that warp speed would still be limited by the original design specifications.

PICARD

Good work, Geordi, let's get started.

LA FORGE

Captain, there's just one other detail to arrange. We need two ships with cloaking capabilities to assist us. One to hide the Enterprise while we project the holo, and one to hide the asteroid so it won't veer off from the collision.

All eyes fall on NERAK and he nods.

PICARD

Mr. Worf, are those two Romulan warbirds standing by to assist?

WORF(OC)

Yes, sir. They are holding their position.

PICARD

What about the *Dradnucarni* crew?

LA FORGE

Oh, that's right, Dr. Crusher hailed me earlier.

PICARD

Number One, see what you can do about that crew. Geordi, get your warbird while Nerak and I will enlist the aid of the other warbirds.

LA FORGE, RIKER and DATA head for the transporter.

LA FORGE

LaForge to Dr. Crusher, I haven't forgotten about you...

INT. READY ROOM

PICARD is standing by while NERAK is relaying the plan to ROMULAN #4 on screen.

NERAK

...approach the *Enterprise* under cloak and you will not be detected.

WORF(OC)

Captain, long range sensors have detected a vessel entering the quarantine.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

WORF is in control at his station as PICARD and NERAK enter.

PICARD

Report.

WORF

It is a Ferengi maurader.

PICARD

And the status of the *Dradnucarni*?

WORF

The medical Away Team is still on board, but there is no activity.

PICARD

Hail them, Mr. Worf. Transporter room, prepare to evacuate the Away Team.

WORF

I have Damon Noj.

PICARD

On screen.

DAMON NOJ appears on the main viewer.

PICARD (CONT'D)

I am Capt. Jean-Luc Picard. The quarantine was put there for reason- you must leave immediately.

DAMON NOJ

Federation quarantines mean nothing to us. I think you have discovered something valuable and want to keep the profits to yourself.

PICARD

Listen to me, you are in grave danger if you come within range of us. There's no time to explain.

DAMON

Ahhh, then it is profitable. Those that don't have explanations are hiding something big- Rule of Acquisition #114.

PICARD

This is no time to discuss-

NOJ

This is open space, you can't deny us opportunity. Perhaps we can strike a deal- 50/50? 60/40?

WORF

Captain, the *Dradnucarni* is powering up.

PICARD gestures to cut communications.

PICARD

Evacuate the Away Team. Mr. La Forge are-

LA FORGE (OC)

Captain, we're not quite ready yet.

PICARD

Then get ready- we have no choice.

INT. DRADNUCARNI CORRIDOR

NOTSNIW and ETTENA watch anxiously with BEVERLY and TROI as RIKER and DATA inspect the containers.

BEVERLY

Well?

DATA

(reading tricorder)

There is no evidence indicating the mechanism is linked to the alien computer controlling- sir, there has been a massive power surge. The *Dradnucarni* is powering-

PICARD(OC)

Bridge to Away Team, we have to evacuate you now.

BEVERLY

And the containers! Beam us directly to sickbay.

The containers and the AWAY TEAM dematerialize.

INT. MAIN BRIDGE

LA FORGE enters and goes right to the Engineering Station.

PICARD

Geordi, we need your warbird now.

RIKER enters from the TURBOLIFT and goes up to PICARD and NERAK by Ops.

WORF

We are under the cloaking field.

PICARD

Stay within range.

EXT. SPACE - THE DRADNUCARNI

The Enterprise shimmers and disappears. A Romulan warbird image appears in its place and now the *Dradnucarni* is hanging between it and the Ferengi.

BACK TO SCENE

LA FORGE

Come on, look this way. We're bigger and closer.

WORF

The *Dradnucarni* is turning towards us and powering the weapons array.

RIKER

Helm- full ahead, warp factor 3. Keep us in tandem with the *O'ediv*.

The warbird image snaps into warp speed before the *Dradnucarni* can fire on it. The *Dradnucarni* warps into pursuit.

WORF

The *Dradnucarni* has reached maximum speed- warp factor 2.

LA FORGE

Come on, that's it, just keep on us.

EXT. SPACE - THE *DRADNUCARNI*

The warbird image heads right for an empty space in the asteroid field. Abruptly the warbird image disappears and a huge asteroid shimmers into place before the *Dradnucarni* can veer off.

The impact destroys the asteroid and the *Dradnucarni*. The *Latigid* warbird warps out of the debris.

BACK TO SCENE

WORF

The *O'Ediv* is standing by to receive Nerak and his crew.

PICARD stands with NERAK.

PICARD

We are grateful for the cooperation of the Romulan Empire and deeply regret of the lives lost on the *N'wap*.

NERAK

Thank you, Captain. I will include your condolences in my debriefing.

NERAK goes up the ramp and LA FORGE stops him before he enters the TURBOLIFT.

LA FORGE

Nerak, wait. I have this program from Holodeck 3 that needs erasing and it's got a voice print ID.

NERAK had forgotten. He is impressed that LA FORGE kept his word.

INT. TROI'S OFFICE

BEVERLY and TROI are hashing out options.

BEVERLY

...So which is more cruel- to let them go on like this, trapped in a container where their lives mean nothing more than the machine that breaths for them?

PICARD enters.

TROI

You don't know that. In a few years we could make progress in that technology. Or maybe we will make contact with that alien race.

BEVERLY

Or maybe I should just break them open now so their family can put them to rest in peace.

TROI

It's not your decision to make.

PICARD

She's right, you know.

BEVERLY

But am I up holding the sanctity of life? I can't help feeling there's more I could do.

PICARD

Have you explored every possibility with every resource you have?

It's hard for BEVERLY to admit, but she relents under the discerning gazes of TROI's and PICARD's.

BEVERLY

Alright, yes.

PICARD

Then you have done your job and now I will do mine and inform the family of their options.

BEVERLY

Jean Luc...

PICARD turns back to her.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

PICARD returns the smile before leaving. TROI takes BEVERLY's arm.

TROI

Have you ever had a "Fallout Fudge" sundae? Believe me, it is good for whatever ails you...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END