"Force of Nature"

FIRST DRAFT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1993
FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

at impulse.

2 INT. GEORDI'S QUARTERS

An ANTIQUE, HAND-CARVED CHESS SET sits in the middle of Geordi's table. GEORDI is at the table along with his sister, ARIANA. She's several years younger than Geordi and has a gentle, easy manner. She's an artist and she dresses to reflect her attitude -- she's warm, casual, loose.

Ariana watches expectantly as Geordi studies the chess set.

ARIANA
Do you remember this?

GEORDI
(smiling)
I do...

Geordi bends down to give the board a closer examination.

GEORDI
(continuing)
That's right... the board is only two-dimensional...

He picks up one of the pieces, turns it upside-down, and examines the underside.

GEORDI
(continuing, delighted)
And the pieces don't even have voice actuators...

Touching the chess pieces brings back other memories, and it makes him a little sad.

ARIANA
The set was in Mom's family for generations.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARIANA
(continuing, gently)
I think she would've wanted you to
have it.

GEORDI
Thanks, Ariana. A lot.

He gives her a warm hug.

GEORDI
(continuing)
It's good to have you on board.

ARIANA
Good to see you too.

After a moment, they break. Ariana begins to move
about, casually studying the room.

ARIANA
(continuing)
So this is where they keep you...
How long have you been in these
quarters?

GEORDI
About four years... no five, I
think.

ARIANA
Ever think about putting in a few
plants?

Ariana pauses in front of Geordi's space painting.

ARIANA
(continuing)
And what's this?

Geordi reacts -- this isn't the first disagreement
they've had about art.

GEORDI
Come on, Ari. I like that
painting...

ARIANA
You know, Geordi, if you want to
see space, you can just look out
a window.

He's about to respond when the COM interrupts.

(CONTINUED)
RIKER'S COM VOICE
Senior staff please report to the conference room. Mission briefing in ten minutes.

GEORDI
(taps combadge)
On my way, sir.

Geordi grabs a nearby PADD.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Sorry, I've got to go.

ARIANA
Great... you wouldn't mind if I made a few changes to the room while you're gone, would you?

GEORDI
(kidding)
How long did you say you were going to be here?

ARIANA
Long enough to make this room liveable, I hope.

He grins; the DOORS OPEN and he EXITS.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
FADE IN:

(Note: Episode credits fall over opening scenes.)

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

at impulse.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's Log, Stardate 47310.2. We are investigating the disappearance of the Federation Medical Transport Theresa. Our search is complicated by the unique properties of this particular region of space.

INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

PICARD, RIKER, DATA, TROI, BEVERLY, WORF, and Geordi are seated at the conference table. The mood is upbeat – even though the mission is serious, it's still fairly routine.

RIKER

The Theresa's last contact with Starfleet was four days ago. They reported that there was nothing out of the ordinary when they entered the Herakas Corridor...

Riker nods to Data who rises and moves to the large monitor. Data presses the controls and the monitor displays an OKUDAGRAM of a subspace map of this particular region of space. The graphic indicates a long, path-like trail threading its way through several star systems.

DATA

The unusually intense subspace tetrayon fields in this sector pose a severe navigational hazard to warp-driven vessels...

Data indicates the path-like structure on the graphic.

(continued)
DATA  
(continuing)
The Hekaras Corridor is the only continuous route in the area which is free of tetryon fields. Ships travelling at warp must use the Corridor to ensure safe passage through the region.

Picard nods and Data takes his seat.

PICARD  
(to Geordi)  
How long will it take to complete a level-one search of the area?

Geordi consults a PADD in front of him.

GEORDI  
At least two days, sir. The Corridor is over twelve light-years long, and the surrounding tetryon interference is going to limit our sensor range.

WORF  
Could we send out reconnaissance probes to supplement the sensors?

DATA  
The tetryon interference will make it difficult to maintain contact with the probes; they will not be effective.

Troi, meanwhile, has been studying the graphic.

TROI  
The planet at the opposite end of the Corridor -- Hekaras Two... it's inhabited, isn't it? Maybe they've had contact with the Theresa.

Riker shakes his head.

RIKER  
They haven't. I've already spoken with the Hekaran government. According to them, only one ship has passed through the area in the last week... and that was a Ferengi trader which entered the Corridor at their end.

(CONTINUED)
Beverly reacts.

BEVERLY
The Theresa was carrying a supply of bio-mimetic gel... it's rare and potentially quite valuable. Do you think it's possible the Ferengi could have hijacked it?

RIKER
(considers)
I wouldn't put it past them.
(beat; to Picard)
We should at least be prepared for that contingency.

PICARD
Agreed.

Picard makes his decisions.

PICARD
(continuing)
All right then. Mister Worf, initiate a standard search pattern. Let's head in.

The meeting breaks up.

INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi is at his office, handing a PADD to an N.D. when Ariana ENTERS in the b.g. Data is working at a nearby console.

GEORDI
Take these figures to Ensign Tyler. We may need to buffer the port lateral sensor array...

The N.D. takes the PADD and moves away as Ariana approaches Geordi.

ARIANA
Hi, am I early?
(off Geordi's blank look)
You promised to give me a tour.

(CONTINUED)
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5 CONTINUED:

GEORDI
Oh, Ari... I'm sorry, I forgot. I've still got to run a diagnostic on the EPS relays. It's going to take a while.

ARIANA
(disappointed)
That's okay... we can do it later.

Data has heard their exchange and moves over to them.

DATA
Geordi, I have completed my sensor diagnostic ahead of schedule. If you wish, I will show your sister our facility.

Before Geordi can reply, Ariana breaks in.

ARIANA
That would be great. You're Data, aren't you?

DATA
Yes.

Ariana smiles.

ARIANA
I'm Ariana. Geordi's told me a lot about you.

DATA
He has not told me much about you.

ARIANA
(amused)
Oh? Any reason in particular?

GEORDI
It's just you don't come up in conversation that often...

Ariana watches as Geordi struggles, trying to come up with a reasonable excuse.

GEORDI
(continuing, gives up)
I better get to that diagnostic. Thanks, Data.

Ariana watches as Geordi moves away.

(CONTINUED)
ARIANA
He's always so busy.

DATA
Geordi is a dedicated officer.
Shall we begin?

Ariana nods and Data leads her to the pool table.

DATA
(continuing)
This is the Master Systems Display
which is used to monitor a wide
variety of ship functions...

He points out the Jefferies Tube.

DATA
And this is the main Jefferies
tube. From here we can directly
access most of the ship's systems
including the central ODN junction
and the nacelle reconfiguration
loop...

As Data talks, Ariana steps into the tube and looks
around curiously.

ARIANA
I think there was one of these on
the transport I took from Starbase
eighty-seven.

DATA
(puzzled)
There is one of these on every
ship.

ARIANA
Oh.

She steps out of the Jefferies Tube and back into Main
Engineering. Data leads her around to the warp core.

DATA
And this is the ship's warp core.
It houses the matter/anti-matter
reaction chamber which powers our
engines.

Ariana stares at the warp core for a quiet beat.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
(continuing)
Do you have any questions regarding the function of this system?

ARIANA
No... I was just noticing that it's really quite beautiful.

DATA
I agree. I find it beautiful as well.

(beat)
It is not an opinion shared by most people.

ARIANA
Why do you say that?

DATA
The physical properties of this unit are quite formidable, and its designers were more concerned with function than form. I believe it is regarded by most as purely utilitarian.

Ariana reacts -- it's an interesting aesthetic observation. She looks up into the core, studying it carefully.

ARIANA
Maybe if the catwalks were widened it would soften the scale... make it seem a little less -- intimidating.

Data follows her look.

DATA
That is an intriguing suggestion. It would be interesting to sketch possible variations of the core design and study their effect on perspective.

ARIANA
Do you draw?

DATA
A little. I prefer to paint.
ARIANA
(delighted)
Data, that's fascinating. I'm a museum curator. I'd love to see some of your work. We have several examples of computer generated art, but I don't think I've ever even heard of a painting by a synthetic life form.

(beat)
Who knows... I might even be able to put one your paintings on display.

Data kind of likes the idea.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Riker to Data.

DATA
(taps combadge)
Data here.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
We're picking up some kind of ship ahead on long range sensors. If Geordi can spare you, we'd like to have you at Ops.

DATA
Acknowledged, sir.
(to Ariana)
You must excuse me. My presence is required on the Bridge.

(beat)
If you will come to my quarters later, I will show you my paintings.

ARIANA
(smiles)
I'd love to.

Data EXITS. Off Ariana's expression.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Picard and Riker are at their command stations; Worf is working his console at Tactical; Geordi is at Aft Science; various N.D.s are at the other stations.

(CONTINUED)
WORF
We are now within visual range, sir.

PICARD
On screen.

Worf works his console and...

THE MAIN VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)
activates, showing a Ferengi ship drifting in space. While some lights can be seen on the body of the ship, there is no visible glow from its warp engines.

RESUME SCENE
Data ENTERS from the aft Turbolift and moves to Ops, relieving the N.D. as Riker examines the readout of his chair console.

RIKER
(to Picard)
This is the same Ferengi ship that entered the Corridor a week ago, sir... It matches the configuration the Hekarans gave us.

PICARD
Mister Worf, open a hailing frequency.

A beat as Worf works his console.

WORF
No response on any channel, sir.

PICARD
Mister Data, scan for life signs.

DATA
(off console)
There are approximately eight-hundred fifty Ferengi on board. That is a standard complement for a vessel of this class.

A puzzling beat. Geordi studies the Viewscreen closely.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
Captain, look at their engines...
I can't see any emissions from the
plasma vents. Their warp drive
must be completely inactive.

DATA
(off console)
That is correct, sir. They are on
impulse power only.

Geordi is working the Aft Science console.

GEORDI
I'm getting some very strange
readings... It looks like all of
their subspace field coils have
been overloaded somehow.

RIKER
That explains why they didn't
respond to our hails...

DATA
It may also explain the failure of
their warp drive as well.

A beat.

GEORDI
Sir, I have an idea... I could
modify our com systems and set up
an old-style radio-frequency link
to contact the Ferengi ship. It
wouldn't depend on any subspace
systems, so they should be able to
receive it without any problem.

PICARD
Make it so.

Geordi moves away to a console and begins working.

RIKER
(to Picard)
In the meantime we could beam over
a repair crew... see if there's
anything we can do to help...

PICARD
As well as find out whether
they've had any contact with the
Theresa.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
PICARD (Cont'd)

(beat)

Helm, bring us within Transporter range...

The HUM of the engines comes up as the Enterprise begins to move...

WORF

(urgently, off console)

Captain, they are locking disruptors!

PICARD

(quickly)

Raise shields --

Picard barely gets the words out as the SHIP SHADES from the blast. The RED ALERT lights flash and the KLAXONS sound.

OFF reactions.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

9 INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The SHIP SHAKES again as another blast from the Ferengi vessel connects. Picard and Riker quickly bark out their orders.

RIKER
Ready phasers. Prepare to return fire.

PICARD
Target their disruptor array only.

WORF
Phasers locked.

PICARD
Fire.

10 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
fires its phasers, hitting the Ferengi ship.

11 INT. BRIDGE

DATA
Direct hit. (beat)
Their weapon systems are down.

PICARD
(to Worf)
Damage report.

WORF
(off console)
Minimal damage on decks five and seven, sir. Without warp power, their disruptors were not effective.

PICARD
(to Riker)
They must've known they couldn't hurt us significantly. Why attack and risk their ship?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RIKER
Somehow I don't think they're going to let us beam over and ask them...

Picard turns to Geordi who's still working at Aft Science.

PICARD
Mister La Forge, how are you coming with that com link?

GEORDI
Almost ready, sir...

Geordi tinkers with the console for a quick beat and then steps back.

GEORDI
(continuing)
We can give it a try.

PICARD
Open a channel.

Geordi works his console.

THE MAIN VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)
comes on. The image is unrecognizable, almost completely obscured by "snow".

as he works his panel, attempting to clear the image.

INClude THE MAIN VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)
as it gradually clears to show the grainy, static image of the Ferengi commander, DAIMON PRAK (NOTE: the visual should be clearly inferior to our normal Viewscreen image). He doesn't look happy.

PICARD
This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Federation Starship Enterprise. Please explain your attack on my ship.

(CONTINUED)
PRAK
(outraged)
Our attack? We were defending ourselves. Do you deny that you are responsible for disabling my vessel?

Picard exchanges a glance with Riker -- what is this guy talking about?

PICARD
Your ship was adrift and your communications inoperative. We were attempting to help you.

PRAK
Do not toy with me, Picard... we are obviously at your mercy. But know that when the Ferengi Council learns of your actions, they will be considered an act of war.

PICARD
Daimon, there has clearly been a misunderstanding here. I believe it would be in the best interests of our respective governments if you came aboard and discussed the situation.

Prak eyes Picard suspiciously. He's not sure what to do.

PRAK
First you attack... then you offer to help us...

PICARD
Our instruments indicate that your warp systems are completely inoperative. We may be able to assist you.

PRAK
I see no reason to trust you, hewman. We do not require your assistance.

Picard wants to get to the bottom of this -- but he's going to have to force the Ferengi to accept his help.

(Continued)
PICARD
Then I suppose we'll be on our way.

(beat)
I'll make certain to relay your position to the nearest Starbase... in the event you remain stranded here.

Prak reacts -- he really isn't ready to take that chance. He quickly makes his decision.

PRAK
Perhaps it would be better if we did discuss the situation... in the best interests of our respective governments, of course.

Off Picard's reaction.

CUT TO:

15
EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
and the Ferengi ship.

16
INT. READY ROOM
Picard, Riker, and Prak.

PRAK
We detected what appeared to be a Federation signal buoy. When we approached it, it emitted a massive (TECH) surge... our warp drive, our sensors, our communications systems were all rendered inoperative.

(beat)
We assumed we were the victims of a new Federation weapon.

PICARD
Daimon Prak. The Federation established this Corridor to ensure a free and safe trade route through the sector. We have nothing to gain from mining it.

(CONTINUED)
RIKER
Whatever happened to your ship may not be an isolated incident. A Federation Medical transport was recently lost in the Corridor as well.

PRAK
We passed a Federation ship several days ago. It did not appear to be in any distress.

Picard and Riker react.

RIKER
Can you give us an idea of their position? If we knew their course or heading it would help our search.

Prak smiles -- finally, he's got something to bargain with.

PRAK
It's possible that information was recorded in our navigational logs, Commander.
(beat)
Unfortunately, my entire crew is occupied with effecting our repairs. I don't know if there will be time to search our records.

It's obvious what Prak is getting at.

PICARD
Perhaps if we assigned you an engineering team to assist with your repair efforts... would that give you time to retrieve your logs?

Prak seems quite satisfied with the arrangement.

PRAK
I believe it would, Captain.

INT. DATA'S QUARTERS

Data is leading Ariana through a gallery-like display of his PAINTINGS (including several of the works seen in "Birthright, Part 1").

(CONTINUED)
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17 CONTINUED:

TWO PAINTINGS mounted on EASELS are in the center of his room; a few CANVASES DRAPED WITH SHEETS are on the floor in a corner.

DATA
Over the past years, I have created two-hundred seventeen paintings in various media, including oils, acrylics, and sustained plasma arcs...

Without warning, Data's cat, SPOT, runs at Data's feet, meowing loudly, trying to get his attention. Data gently picks him up and moves him aside.

Data indicates the two framed paintings.

DATA
(continuing)
I feel these represent my best efforts to date...

18 PAINTING NUMBER ONE

It looks as if someone cut a hole in the middle of a canvas, stuck a tricorder into it, and framed it.

19 RESUME SCENE

DATA
This is a Hyper-realist rendition of a standard science instrument. Note my use of transparent polymers to provide depth.

ARIANA
It looks extremely... accurate.

DATA
Thank you.

They move to the next painting. Spot is on a nearby table.

20 PAINTING NUMBER TWO

is a strange, kaleidoscopic work, a miasma of colors and shapes.
RESUME SCENE

ARIANA
This is interesting...

DATA
It is the warp core as seen through Geordi's VISOR.
(beat)
Based on Geordi's descriptions of his vision, I attempted to render impressionistically what Geordi sees naturally.

A beat as Ariana nods, appreciating the work.

ARIANA
I guess you know him pretty well.
(beat)
Do you spend a lot of time together?

DATA
Yes, our shipboard duties frequently coincide. We work together often.

ARIANA
What about outside of work?

DATA
We are also currently pursuing a project to enhance plasma conduit throughput.

That's not what she wanted to hear.

ARIANA
Does Geordi do anything not related to his job?

DATA
(considers)
Geordi and I used to program Sherlock Holmes mysteries on the Holodeck. However, we have not done so in the past several months.

ARIANA
Ever since Mom died...

An element of concern comes into her voice as she continues.

(CONTINUED)
ARIANA
(continuing)
You know, Data, whenever I try to
talk to Geordi these days --
especially anything about Mom --
he always seems to go out of his
way to make himself busy.

DATA
(offers)
For humans, focusing intensely on
work can often be a therapeutic
experience.

ARIANA
It's not just that. Geordi
doesn't like change. He hates it
when events are out of his
control...

(beat)
He knows that Mom's gone... but he
doesn't want to admit that things
are different.

DATA
I believe your assessment of
Geordi's personality is largely
correct. However, I would add
that the same tendencies you find
somewhat excessive in him are also
a source of great strength.

(beat)
I have observed Geordi in many
situations, facing many obstacles.
In each case, he has always
managed to persevere.

Data's words have managed to cheer her up.

ARIANA
I'm glad he has a friend like you,
Data.

DATA
Thank you.

They hold the moment for a beat, and then Data looks
around the room.

DATA
(continuing)
Do you feel that any of my work
would be suitable for display in
your museum?

(CONTINUED)
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CONTINUED: (2)

Before she can answer, she's interrupted by a MEOW and a loud CLATTER. Data and Ariana turn to see that the canvases standing in the corner have been knocked to the ground.

Data apprehends Spot as he tries to scamper away from the scene of the crime.

DATA
(continuing)
Spot, you have been a bad cat...

As Data gently scolds Spot, a SMALL, UNFRAMED CANVAS on the floor catches Ariana's eye. She picks it up.

ON THE CANVAS
is a picture of Spot sleeping peacefully.

RESUME SCENE
Ariana turns to Data, who's holding his cat.

ARIANA
I think I'll take this one, Data. It's perfect.

Off Data's reaction.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (STOCK OPTICAL)
at impulse as it approaches a DEBRIS FIELD (as seen in "Face of the Enemy").

PICARD (V.O.)
Captain's Log, Stardate, 47311.4. Based on the Ferengi navigational logs, we have traced the most likely course of the Theresa through the Corridor. Unfortunately, that course may have led to an unhappy conclusion.

INT. BRIDGE - AFT SCIENCE

Picard and Data are studying an OKUDAGRAM on the monitor which shows a line indicating the course of the Theresa through the Corridor; the line passes through a debris field.

(CONTINUED)
PICARD
Is there any indication of what might have caused this debris field?

DATA
No, sir. It does not appear on any Federation charts of the Corridor.

PICARD
Could it be what's left of the Theresa?

Data works the console.

DATA
It is a possibility. There is sufficient mass to account for a vessel of the Theresa's size.

A grim beat. Picard moves back to his command position and joins Riker; Data returns to Ops; Worf is at Tactical.

PICARD
Helm, plot a course through the debris field. Ahead slow.

(beat)
Mister Data, begin scanning the debris. Let's see if we can find anything that'll give us a positive identification.

DATA
Aye, sir.

Data works his console as the Enterprise begins slowly moving into the debris field.

DATA
(continuing)
The debris consists primarily of metallic fragments, possibly manufactured... ranging in size from zero-point-three to one-point-five meters in diameter...

A warning light FLASHERS and BEEPS on Data's console.

DATA
Captain, I am picking up some unusual readings... there is a (TECH) field forming alongside --

(CONTINUED)
Continued: (2)

Picard and Riker react.

PICARD

Full reverse, now!

But the realization comes too late. Suddenly, an INTENSE WHITE LIGHT fills the Bridge for several seconds, accompanied by a HIGH-PITCHED SOUND (note: there is no ship shake).

When the effect subsides, the Bridge lights are dimmed and many of the consoles are dark.

PICARD

(continuing, to Worf)

Damage report.

WORF

Warp engines are off-line... shields are down... all subspace systems are inoperative...

RIKER

Just like the Ferengi.

DATA

Captain, there is an unidentified ship coming into visual range... it is on an intercept course.

Reactions.

EXT. SPACE – A SMALL ALIEN SHIP (OPTICAL)

approaches the Enterprise and slows to a halt.

INT. BRIDGE

DATA

(off console)

They are initiating their Transporter systems...

PICARD

(to Worf)

Can you get any power to the shields?

Worf works his console in frustration.

WORF

No sir.

(continued)
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CONTINUED:

RIKER
(to com)
All decks... security alert!
The ship goes to RED ALERT.

DATA
Their Transporter beam has been
activated... they are going to
board...

A tense beat... where are they going to materialize?

GEORDI'S COM VOICE
La Forge to Bridge... we've got
intruders in Main Engineering...

INT. ENGINEERING - ON GEORDI

Geordi is in his office, staring through the glass at
the now-inactive warp core.

GEORDI
(continuing, to com)
We need a security team down
here...

WORF'S COM VOICE
Right away...

As Geordi moves out of his office...

TWENTY TO INCLUDE THE WARP CORE

TWO HUMANOID ALIENS, a male, RABAL, and a female,
SEROW, are standing in front of the darkened core.

GEORDI
What are you doing here?

RABAL
We had to make you listen...
(beat)
Your warp drive is killing us.

Off Geordi's stunned reaction.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

30 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Picard, Riker, Data, and Geordi are at the table with Rabal and Serova.

Rabal is a mature, reasonable man but he's extremely passionate and determined.

RABAL

Captain, according to our research, warp fields cause a dangerous (TECH) reaction in this particular region of space. (beat) If warp travel through the Corridor continues, it will create massive subspace instabilities.

Serova is younger than Rabal, and she seems more determined and less inclined to listen to reason.

SEROVA

Our own planet is already being affected. We have measured gravitational shifts in the Hekaran orbit and anomalous tetryon fluxes throughout our system.

RABAL

If these effects are allowed to progress, our planet will become uninhabitable.

There's a beat as Picard considers the implications of what they're saying. If they are right, then the situation demands study. Geordi, however, is openly skeptical of their claims.

GEORDI

Captain, I've heard this theory before. Their research was evaluated by the Federation Science Council about two years ago. Their claims just didn't hold up.

Serova bristles.

(CONTINUED)
30 CONTINUED:

SEROVA
That research was only
preliminary. Our original
analysis was incomplete...
(reluctantly)
Our theories were somewhat flawed.

DATA
Do you now believe that you have
overcome your theoretical
deficiencies?

RABAL
(confidently)
Yes. That's why we want Starfleet
to review our work.

Picard understands their position, but he doesn't care
for their methods.

PICARD
Doctor Rabal. If you wanted us to
review your research, you could
have placed a request through the
Federation Science Council.

RABAL
We asked the Council to study the
Corridor, but they put us off. In
their opinion, our work had been
proven wrong once... so we were
put at the end of the line.

SEROVA
We can't afford to wait until the
Science Council gets around to us --
we need someone to observe the
effects here, now.
(beat)
This was the only way we could get
Starfleet in a position where we
could present our case... and be
certain we'd be heard.

GEORDI
That's how you rationalize
attacking starships?

SEROVA
You suffered no casualties,
Commander, and the actual damage
to your vessel was negligible.

RABAL
We dispersed our (TECH) probes in
the Corridor merely to disable
warp-driven ships... nothing more.

(CONTINUED)
PICARD
You can call it whatever you like. The fact remains that your probes are almost certainly responsible for "disabling" a medical transport.

There's an uncomfortable silence. Both Rabal and Serova realize they've taken some pretty extreme measures, but they're not going to apologize for it.

A beat as Picard considers his options.

PICARD
Mister La Forge, how long do you estimate it will take to restore the engines?

GEORDI
Their (TECH) pulse overloaded our field coils. It'll take at least thirty-six hours to restore systems and get underway.

PICARD
All right, begin --

SEROVA
(interrupts)
I can have this ship operational in ten hours.

Picard and Geordi react.

SEROVA
(continuing)
I will tell you precisely how to accelerate the repairs to your systems...
(beat)
If you agree to review our research.

Picardfixes Serova with a hard stare; he is not going to be forced into this.

PICARD
We have one priority here, Doctor, and that is the recovery of the Theresa. If you can assist us in that mission, I expect you to do so.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
PICARD (Cont'd)

(beat)
Therefore, you will help us
restore our systems, and you will
deactivate all of your remaining
probes in the Corridor...

(beat)
If you do not, I will put you both
in the brig and take you to the
nearest Starbase where you'll face
charges for reckless interference
with free space travel.

Serova is unrepentant and she's not backing down;
Rabal, however, is willing to compromise.

RABAL
Forgive us, Captain. We have no
wish to impede your rescue efforts --

SEROVA
Rabal, don't. The probes are the
only leverage we have. If we --

RABAL
(silences her)
Serova.
(to Picard)
I will deactivate our probes,
Captain, but I ask you, please...
re-examine our data.

PICARD
We will, Doctor. That is part of
our mission as well.

(beat)
Mister La Forge, take them to
Engineering and get the core back
on-line.

Geordi isn't happy at the prospect of working with
these people, but there isn't much of a choice.

GEORDI
Yes, sir.

PICARD
Mister Data, begin a review of
their research. I'd like your
report as soon as possible.

Data nods, then Data, Geordi, Rabal, and Serova EXIT.
Off Riker and Picard's expressions.

CUT TO:
INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi, Rabal, and Serova are working in and around the area of the warp core. All three have PADDs. The warp core is still dark.

RABAL
The (TECH) pulse from our probes was designed to hyper-saturate subspace field coils... that's why it can disable practically any subspace-dependent system.

Geordi nods, understanding.

GEORDI
And the only way to get the coil active again is to discharge it and wait for the (TECH) saturation to dissipate.

SEROVA
Unless you know the precise phase distribution of the (TECH) pulse...

Serova works a console and the warp core begins to GLOW SLIGHTLY. She checks a panel.

SEROVA
(continuing)
You'll be able to re-engage your engines in... eight hours and twenty-six minutes.

Geordi checks the panel himself.

GEORDI
(irritated)
You know, even after we get the engines on-line, it's going to take a week to recalibrate them properly... the flow parameters have been completely scrambled.

SEROVA
(dismissive)
Don't you understand? Our concerns are more important than the state of your engines.

Geordi reacts. They move to another area and begin working some consoles.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
(to Serova)
Just because you believe you have
a problem, you don't have the
right to drag other people into
it.

(beat)
What if the Theresa had been
transporting perishable
supplies... or was on a emergency
mission? Your attempt to get
attention might have cost a lot of
lives.

SEROVA
But that didn't happen. And we're
trying to save lives.

GEORDI
You have an interesting way of
going about it.

The tension between the two of them is escalating, and
Rabal tries to calm things down a notch.

RABAL
Commander, we have measured
disturbing effects in our system --
no one disputes that. The
question is the cause. Why are
you so unwilling to believe that
warp fields could be responsible?

GEORDI
Warp drive has been around for two
centuries. It's safe, proven
technology. And there are other
explanations for the effects
you've observed...

SEROVA
How much evidence do you have to
see before you believe us?

GEORDI
A lot more than you've shown me so
far.

(CONTINUED)
SEROVA
Perhaps you'd feel differently if it were your home planet in danger.

(beat)
Somehow, I think you'd go to any lengths to save what you cared about.

Serova moves away, leaving Geordi alone with Rabal.
But her words have struck a chord.

GEORDI
I lost my mother recently, Doctor. For a while, it was really hard for me to accept the fact that she was gone. Believe me, I know what it's like to lose objectivity.

(beat)
Maybe that's what's happened to both of you. You can't rationally solve a problem that way.

RABAL
It's the only way we have left. And once we convince Starfleet to stop warp travel through the Corridor, our job will be to convince our own people to give up warp drive completely.

Geordi's shocked -- it's a radical notion.

GEORDI
Hekaras Two is the only inhabited world in this region. Without warp drive, you'd be completely isolated from the rest of the Federation. Are you really willing to give that up?

RABAL
Yes. And if you were in my position, I hope you'd be willing to do the same.

Rabal EXITS. Off Geordi's expression.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
at impulse.
33 INT. STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY LAB

Data is giving his report to Picard as Rabal and Serova listen anxiously.

DATA
While many aspects of their theory appear to be sound, it does not conclusively prove a causal connection between the use of warp drive and the effects they have observed.

PICARD
I see.

Rabal is clearly disappointed; Serova's expression is for the moment unreadable.

RABAL
But what about the orbital shifts we've seen... the tetryon fluctuations...?

DATA
All of those effects can be accounted for by known variations of nearby stellar formations (TECH).

SEROVA
(not surprised)
So you believe we're wrong.

DATA
Not entirely. Your research does raise several important questions. (to Picard)

Captain, on the basis of this review, I believe a detailed study of this region would be in order.

That's not enough to satisfy Serova.

SEROVA
That's your response? More study? I suppose I shouldn't have expected anything different.

Before he can respond, Picard is interrupted by the COM.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Bridge to Captain Picard.

(CONTINUED)
33 CONTINUED:

PICARD
(taps combadge)
Go ahead.

INTERCUT:

34 INT. BRIDGE

RIKER
Sir, we've located the Theresa on extreme long-range sensors, approximately two-point-eight light years away.

PICARD
What's its condition?

RIKER
It looks like all of their subspace systems are out. They're drifting, but the vessel appears to be intact.

PICARD
Excellent. We'll get underway as soon as the engines are back on-line.

RIKER
Aye, sir.

END INTERCUT.

Picard returns his attention to Data, Rabal, and Serova.

PICARD
I'd like you to put together a research proposal for the Federation Science Council. I'll send it along with my recommendation for a full scientific investigation.

DATA
Yes, sir.

Unlike Serova, Rabal is trying to stay upbeat and hopeful.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RABAL
Captain, I appreciate the opportunity you're giving us. It's a beginning that we --

SEROVA
Not "we". You can do whatever you want, Rabal. I want no part of it. It's just another delay. (beat) There's no point trying to convince people who have already refused to believe. We don't have enough time to be wasting it.

Serova abruptly EXITS. Reactions.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE
Picard and Riker at command; Worf at Tactical; Data at Ops; Geordi is at Aft Science; Rabal is working at another station.

GEORDI
Engines are now on-line, sir. All systems are ready.

PICARD
Good. (to conn) Lay in a course for the Theresa --

WORF
(interrupts, off console) Captain, the Hekaran ship is powering up...

EXT. SPACE - THE ALIEN SHIP (OPTICAL)
powers up and heads away from the Enterprise.

INT. BRIDGE (OPTICAL)
Puzzled reactions. Picard turns to Rabal.

PICARD
What's going on, Doctor?

(CONTINUED)
Rabal is honestly baffled.

RABAL
I don't know...
(beat)
May I speak with her, Captain?

PICARD
(nods)
Mister Worf, open a channel. On-screen.

Worf works his console and the IMAGE OF SEROVA APPEARS on the Viewscreen.

RABAL
Serrova, what are you doing?

Serrova's expression is grim.

SEROVA
They wanted proof.
(beat)
I'm going to give it to them.

Serrova terminates communications and the Viewscreen returns to starfield. Rabal is still puzzled.

DATA
(off console)
Captain, Doctor Serova is overloading her ship's engines... energy output is passing safe levels.
(beat)
I believe she is attempting to force a warp core breach...

Shocked reactions. Suddenly, Rabal understands what's Serova's trying to do.

RABAL
(quietly)
No...

EXT. SPACE - THE ALIEN SHIP (OPTICAL)

flashes across the frame at warp, rapidly disappearing to a point deep into space. A moment later, we see the FLASH from an EXPLOSION. A SHOCK WAVE radiates outward from the flashpoint, leaving a STRANGE GLOW in its wake...
INT. BRIDGE

The SHIP SHAKES, buffeted by the shock wave. RED ALERT lights are flashing...

RIKER
Shields at maximum... Full reverse...

A few dicey moments later the SHAKING SUBSIDES.

PICARD
Report!

DATA
(off console)
We have cleared the shock wave, sir... but tetryon flux in the area is increasing rapidly... I believe there is some type of subspace instability forming...

PICARD
Put it on-screen.

Data works his console...

THE MAIN VIEWSCREEN

displays a GLOWING RIFT IN SPACE -- it's like a ragged tear in a black curtain with a bright light shining through it. It's enormous... terrifying...

RESUME SCENE

Off the crew's shocked reactions.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

INT. BRIDGE - ANGLE ON VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Continuous action. The image of the rift fills the screen.

DATA
(off console)
The effect extends approximately three-point-seven light years in diameter. It is highly unstable... precise readings are difficult to establish.

RIKER
What is it?

Rabal moves forward.

RABAL
A subspace (TECH) rift. It's what I've been trying to tell you about since I came here.

PICARD
This is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, Doctor. As far as I can see, your colleague created it.

RABAL
No, she merely accelerated its growth.

(beat)
When she detonated her ship's core, she exposed the surrounding space to warp field energy millions of times greater than normal. She knew this would be the result.

(beat, sadly)
I think she felt it was the only way left to make you believe us.

A beat.

PICARD
Mister Data, can you get a fix on the Theresa? Is it still in one piece?

(CONTINUED)
DATA
(works console)
The Theresa is near its previous coordinates, sir... it is fully surrounded by the rift... however, it appears to be intact.

Picard and Riker exchange a relieved glance. Suddenly, the SHIP SHAKES strongly and then stops.

PICARD
(concerned)
Analysis.

Geordi is studying the console at Aft Science.

GEORDI
It was some kind of subspace distortion wave, sir.

RABAL
That's correct. They're generated inside the rift.

RIKER
What's the danger to the ship?

DATA
(off console)
At the level of intensity we just experienced, the distortion waves do not pose a threat. As long as we remain outside the rift, our shields should give us sufficient protection.

But the implication is clear.

PICARD
How long can the Theresa survive?

DATA
The intensity of the distortion waves increases within the rift. It is unlikely the Theresa will survive more than twenty-two hours.

RIKER
Could we risk just sweeping in and getting them out as quickly as possible?

(CONTINUED)
RABAL
That would not be wise, Commander. The rift is highly sensitive to warp field energy. If we enter it at warp, we would make it far worse.

PICARD
Then I want some better options.

(beat)
Mister La Forge, Mister Data, Doctor Rabal... start analyzing the rift. We need a rescue plan quickly.

Data moves to join Geordi and Rabal. Geordi is confident and determined.

GEORDI
Captain, I suggest we start by launching a class-two probe at full impulse. Some firsthand information inside that rift might show us a way to reduce it... or maybe even seal it up.

The SHIP SHAKES again from another distortion wave, this time slightly stronger than before.

PICARD
Make it so.

Geordi, Data, and Rabal EXIT into the aft Turbolift. Off Picard's grim expression as he stares at the viewscreen and into the rift.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
at impulse outside the rift.

44 INT. STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY LAB
Data, Geordi, and Rabal are gathered around a console. They've all been working for a while and Geordi and Rabal are a little on edge.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
According to the information from our probe, there is no longer any doubt: the exposure of the Corridor to warp field energy is directly responsible for the formation of this rift.

It's a sobering moment.

RABAL
It didn't have to go this far. If people had been more willing to listen, Serova wouldn't have done what she did.

GEORDI
We were prepared to study the situation further.

RABAL
You can't prepare forever, Commander. Serova felt that it was time to act. I don't excuse what she did, but at least now you believe our problem exists.

GEORDI
Maybe if she'd waited until the Theresa was clear, I'd be more inclined to forgive her.

The SHIP SHAKES from the impact of another distortion wave. Data checks a console.

DATA
The intensity of the distortion waves is increasing. At this rate, the Theresa will only be able to withstand the stress for approximately twelve hours.

Geordi and Rabal exchange a look; there's no time for arguing here.

GEORDI
All right... let's take another look at this...

Geordi works the console.
THE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

displays a map which clearly indicates the boundaries of the Corridor; the rift is highlighted near the center.

RESUME SCENE

Geordi, Data, and Rabal study the display; something's bothering Geordi.

GEORDI

Something just doesn't make sense...
(to Rabal)

If your theories are right, the rift should be one-fifth the size it is now. It's just too big.

DATA
(to Rabal)

It is puzzling. In all other respects, your predictions of the rift's properties have been quite accurate.

RABAL
(considers)

The size of the rift depends on the (TECH)-sources in the Corridor. Maybe there are additional (TECH)-sources I haven't accounted for.

GEORDI

Let's see if we can find any more of them...
(to computer)

Computer, enhance the epsilon-band spectrum in the scan area. Indicate all (TECH)-sources in the region of the Corridor.

THE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

display changes, indicating a few areas near the rift. One area outside the Corridor is highlighted as well.

RESUME SCENE

Data works a panel.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
There are still insufficient (TECH)-sources to account fully for the size of the rift.

Geordi is still studying the monitor; something has attracted his attention.

GEORDI
Doctor, these (TECH)-sources occur when warp field energy interacts with the unique subspace structure of the Corridor, right?

RABAL
That's correct.

GEORDI
Then why is there a (TECH)-source outside the Corridor?

Rabal studies the monitor, puzzled.

RABAL
I don't know.

Geordi has a hunch...

GEORDI
Computer, increase scan region... Display any (TECH)-sources in this sector...

THE MONITOR (OPTICAL)
display changes again, widening to reveal the entire sector. There are (TECH)-sources highlighted in several places throughout the region.

RESUME SCENE

GEORDI
(astonished)
They're all over the sector...

DATA
It appears that the formation of (TECH)-sources is not limited to the Corridor alone. The effect occurs in normal space as well.
CONTINUED:

RABAL
But the only way to create a (TECH)-source is with a warp field...

The conclusion is inescapable.

GEORDI
Then -- the problem is warp drive itself.

There's a moment of shocked silence -- the revelation is stunning.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Warp drive is creating these (TECH)-sources. That means a rift could form practically anywhere in space if it's exposed to enough warp field energy.

(beat)
Computer. Project probable rift formation over the next forty years based on current warp drive usage in this sector...

THE MONITOR (OPTICAL)
displays the (TECH)-sources in the sector.

COMPUTER VOICE
Ten years...

As the computer voice counts out increments, the various regions begin to grow...

COMPUTER VOICE
(continuing)
Twenty years...

Several of the regions begin to form into rifts...

COMPUTER VOICE
(continuing)
Thirty years... Forty years.

When the computer voice stops, the rifts cover vast areas of the sector. It's a stunning and terrifying image.
RESUME SCENE

The three men study the display in silence. Geordi and Rabal are too shocked to speak. Data rises.

DATA
I will inform the Captain.

Data exits. Off Geordi's expression.

CUT TO:

INT. TEN FORWARD (OPTICAL)

Geordi is near the windows, staring at the rift, depressed and lost in thought.

ARIANA (O.S.)
Finally decided to take a break?

Geordi turns to her.

GEORDI
(absently)
Yeah.

Ariana can tell that something's wrong.

ARIANA
What's going on, Geordi? Do you want to talk about it?

GEORDI
Why not? That's about the only thing I can do.

There's a bitter edge in his voice. He indicates the rift outside.

GEORDI
(continuing)
We're responsible for that, Ari. Our warp drive is damaging space... and I don't know what to do about it.

She's surprised by the news, but she sees Geordi is taking this as a personal failure. She tries to be supportive.

ARIANA
You'll come up with something. You always do.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
Don't you understand? This could mean the end of interstellar travel. For centuries we've been warping across the galaxy... exploring it, colonizing it... and all the while tearing it to pieces.

She's a bit taken aback by the force of his response.

ARIONA
Geordi, I understand the problem... but I've never seen you like this.

GEORDI
Well, I don't think I've ever felt like this.

(beat)
You know, when Mom died the only thing I had left was my job. I started pulling double shifts, spending all my time in Engineering...

ARIONA
That's part of the reason I came to visit. I didn't think it was healthy for you to be doing that.

GEORDI
It was the right thing for me... because it was the one place where I always knew what to do.... where I felt I had some control.

ARIONA
And now you've lost control again.

GEORDI
Yes.

ARIONA
Control isn't something you're given... it's something you create. It's what you've done every time you've brought this ship out of danger.

(beat)
You've lost a lot lately, Geordi -- we both have.

(MORE)
ARIANA (Cont'd)
But you've still got a lot left.
Mom is gone, but you still have a family. And even if warp drive is
damaging space... you're still the best person there is to fix it.

GEORDI
What if it can't be fixed?

ARIANA
Then we'll adapt and move on.
Because that's the only thing we can do.

Off Geordi's expression.

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM
Picard, Riker, and Data.

PICARD
Have you found any way to operate
our warp engines safely within the rift?

DATA
No, sir. Our analysis indicates
that any use of warp fields inside
the rift could significantly
worsen the effect.

RIKER
Well, we can't rescue the Theresa
using impulse engines alone --
it'd take weeks even to reach them.

DATA
That is correct. However, there is an alternative: the rift will
not be significantly affected if we use our engines outside the
unstable region.

(beat)
We can initiate a brief, high-intensity warp pulse before
entering the rift.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
DATA (Cont'd)
This will give us sufficient velocity to rescue the Theresa and exit without activating our engines inside the rift.

RIKER
(understanding)
So we just coast in and grab them.

DATA
Yes.

PICARD
What's our margin of error?

DATA
It is difficult to estimate. We can partially compensate for the subspace distortions we will encounter; however, the rift is highly unstable and the maneuver will be dangerous.

Picard still isn't happy -- he doesn't like this.

PICARD
(to Riker)
Has there been any progress raising the Theresa?

RIKER
(shakes his head)
The subspace interference in the rift is too high. All we know for certain is that they're still out there.

DATA
And the distortion waves are continuing to increase in strength. The transport will not survive much longer.

Picard makes his decision.

PICARD
Mister Data, begin your calculations. We'll go in when you're ready.

DATA
Aye, sir.
CONTINUED: (2)

Data exits. Off Picard and Riker's troubled expressions.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Picard, Riker, Data, and Worf are at their stations.

DATA

(works console)
Captain, warp pulse calculations are complete. We will be firing the engines at maximum intensity for six-point-three seconds before disengaging.

RIKER
Our course to the Theresa is plotted and laid in. Standing by.

Picard acknowledges.

PICARD
(to com)
Mister La Forge... whenever you're ready...

INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi is near the warp core.

GEORDI
Aye-aye, sir.
(works panel)
Initiating warp pulse... now.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship's engines flare to life and the ship blasts into warp, heading into the rift.

INT. BRIDGE

We hear the SOUND of the warp engines building in intensity... The acceleration is enormous... Suddenly, the engine SOUND STOPS completely...

(CONTINUED)
DATA
Engines disengaged...
(beat)
We are entering the rift...

Immediately, the ship SHAKEYS SLIGHTLY... it's an anxious moment...

DATA
(continuing)
The rift appears to be unaffected by our entry.

A moment of relief.

PICARD
How long until we reach the Theresa?

WORF
(off console)
One minute, twenty-two seconds...

PICARD
Good.
(to Riker)
Have tractor beams standing by... lock on to the Theresa once we're within range.

Riker acknowledges confidently -- everything seems to be working...

RIKER
Aye, sir.

WORF
(concerned, off console)
Captain, I am picking up power emanations from the Theresa... they may be attempting to initiate their warp drive.

A shocked beat as they realize the danger.

RIKER
They must have been able to repair their engines... they're probably trying to close distance with us...

(continued)
DATA
Captain, if the Theresa's crew is unaware of the nature of this rift and they activate their engines--

PICARD
I know, Data. (to Worf)
Can we raise them?

WORF
No, sir... subspace interference is too high...

PICARD
How long until we reach transporter range?

WORF
Twenty-two seconds...

PICARD (to com)
All transporters, stand by. Prepare for emergency evacuation procedures--

WORF
Sir, they are activating their warp drive...

A HUGE BLAST rocks the ship...

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
Engulfed by the rift.

INT. BRIDGE
as the LIGHTS DIM and ALARMS SOUND...

PICARD
Report!

WORF
Damage on decks six and fourteen... structural integrity field is holding.

RIKER
What about the Theresa?

(CONTINUED)
DATA
(off console)
It is undamaged, sir...
(beat)
However, the rift has expanded by fifty-two percent...
(beat)
We no longer have sufficient momentum to escape.

Off reactions.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR
FADE IN:

61 INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The SHIP is ROCKED by another distortion wave.

DATA
Captain, the distortion wave intensity has increased by a factor of ten. Hull stress is rising...

PICARD
(to Worf)
Is the Theresa within transporter range?

WORF
(beat; off console)
Yes, sir. We are commencing evacuation procedures now.

The SHIP SHAKES again.

DATA
Hull stress approaching maximum safe levels...

Picard and Riker react.

RIKER
We've got to get out of here.

PICARD
If we engage the warp drive, the rift will expand even further.

GEORDI'S COM VOICE
Captain...

INTERCUT:

62 INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi has been monitoring the Bridge and he works quickly as he talks.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I've got an idea. We might be able to get out of here without using the warp engines.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The SHIP SHAKES again.

DATA
Hull pressure is now critical...

PICARD
(to Geordi)
How do we do it?

GEORDI
We can use the distortion waves, sir... they radiate out from the center of the rift. If I can match our deflector shield (TECH) to the (TECH) phase of the distortion wave, when the next one hits, we'll be pulled along with it and thrown clear.

RIKER
Assuming we survive the ride.

Picard considers this risky plan.

PICARD
(to Worf)
Is everyone off the Theresa?

WORF
The last of the crew has been beamed aboard, sir.

PICARD
All right, Mister La Forge. Get us out of here.

Geordi works frantically.

GEORDI
Yes, sir... I'm calibrating the shield (TECH) now...

DATA
The next distortion wave will impact in fourteen seconds...

GEORDI
Matching (TECH) phases...
(beat)
Prepare to engage shield (TECH) on my mark...

DATA
Ten seconds...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

GEORDI
We're ready...

PICARD
(to Data)
Engage shield (TECH)... full power...

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
A DISTORTION WAVE comes rippling through the rift, catching the Enterprise and pulling it along...

INT. BRIDGE
The ship LURCHES forward.

DATA
Inertial dampers failing... hull stress one-hundred-twenty percent above tolerance...

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
With a final blast, the ship is thrown clear of the rift.

INT. BRIDGE
DATA
We have cleared the rift.

Reactions of relief from the crew.

PICARD
Secure from red alert.
(to com)
Good work, Mister La Forge, as usual.

INT. ENGINEERING
Geordi is in front of the warp core.

GEORDI
Thank you, sir.

Off Geordi's expression.
EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
at impulse outside the rift.

PICARD (V.O.)
Captain's Log, Stardate 47312.5.
We have reported our findings
about the subspace rift to the
Federation Council and are
awaiting their response. I feel
certain that what we have seen
here will have repercussions for
many years to come.

INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Picard, Riker, Data, Troi, Beverly, Geordi, and Worf.
The mood is somber as Picard reads from a PADD.

PICARD
Areas of space that are
particularly susceptible to warp
fields will be restricted to
essential travel only...

(beat)
And effective immediately, all
Federation ships will be limited
to a maximum speed of warp eight,
except in cases of extreme
emergency.

RIKER
Warp eight... that's going to make
the galaxy a much bigger place.

PICARD
Until we can find a way to
counteract the warp field effect,
this is the best way to slow the
damage.

WORF
The Klingons may observe these
restrictions, but the Romulans
will never do so.

TROI
And what about the Ferengi... and
the Cardassians for that matter?

PICARD
The Federation is sharing our data
with all the warp-capable species
in the quadrant.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
PICARD (Cont'd)
All we can hope is that they
realize it's in their best
interests to take similar action.

TROI
And what are we going to do about
this rift?

GEORDI
Starfleet has already dispatched
a science ship to perform a long-
term study, but right now, there
doesn't appear to be any way to
close it... and it's still
growing.

DATA
At its current rate of expansion,
the rift will fill the entire
Hekaras Corridor in less than
forty years.

BEVERLY
(shocked)
There are six-hundred million
people on Hekaras Two... what's
going to happen to them?

PICARD
They will be evacuated.

WORF
Even with every available ship in
Starfleet, that would take years.

DATA
A conservative estimate would be
approximately eleven-point-six
years.
The scale of the effort is so huge, it takes a moment
to really sink in.

PICARD
The formation of this rift is
clearly a tragedy... but perhaps
it will also serve as a reminder --
of what could happen again if we
don't take measures to prevent it.

A long quiet beat.

(CONTINUED)
PICARD
(continuing)
Dismissed.

The group EXITS, leaving Riker and Picard alone in the room.

RIKER
Sir, we're ready to leave the area... we're due to rendezvous with the Havana in twenty-four hours.

PICARD
Very well. Lay in a course... (beat) Warp eight.

Both men realize that things are not the same -- their world has changed in a fundamental way. Riker nods and EXITS, leaving Picard alone in the room. Off his expression.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORDI'S QUARTERS

Geordi's space painting has been taken down and is standing on the floor, face to the wall. Ariana is sitting at the table with the chess set in front of her, the pieces in disarray on the board. She looks expectantly at the KNIGHT.

ARIANA
Knight to king's bishop three.

Nothing happens.

Disappointed, she picks up a small (TECH) TOOL on the floor nearby. She turns over the knight which now has a SMALL (TECH) DISC affixed to its base. Ariana is using the (TECH) tool on the piece when Geordi ENTERS.

GEORDI
(surprised)
Ari! What are doing here? I thought you'd be packing.

She continues working on the piece as she talks.

(CONTINUED)
ARIANA
No, it looks like you're stuck
with me for another night.

(beat)
We're going to be late meeting the
Havana.

GEORDI
It's the new speed restrictions.
I'm sorry.

Geordi's attention is drawn to the chess set.

GEORDI
(continuing)
What are you doing?

ARIANA
I'm trying to install voice
actuators on these things. I
figured that way I might actually
get you to play a game with me.

She puts the piece back onto the board.

ARIANA
(continuing)
Knight to king's bishop three.

Again, nothing happens.

ARIANA
(continuing, frustrated)
I can't get it to work.

Geordi reaches over and moves the piece by hand.

GEORDI
We can still play.

Ariana smiles. Geordi sits down with her and the two
of them begin to set up the pieces for a game.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)
as it leaves the rift.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END