FADE IN:

1 INT. JEFFERIES TUBE

GEORDI is rushing up a ladder in the tube. The RED ALERT CLAXON is sounding around him -- this is clearly an emergency.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
(concerned)
Geordi... Are you alright?

GEORDI
I don't see it yet...

He reaches a point where tendrils of SMOKE start to appear from up ahead.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Starting to get fumes... Ammonia, fluoride, potassium cyanide...

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Keep going.

Geordi continues through the smoke -- starts COUGHING.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
What the hell...?

GEORDI
Sorry -- I couldn't help it.

He stops coughing, continues rushing ahead.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I can feel the heat from here.

Geordi enters another tube -- a FIRE blazes directly in front of him.

GEORDI
(continuing)
There it is!

RIKER'S COM VOICE
How far?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORDI
About two meters. Along the ODN line. It's hot -- over two thousand degrees.
(beat)
I'm going in.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Geordi, wait.

Incredibly, Geordi goes RIGHT INTO THE BLAZE, puts his hands into a burning junction and works with some controls. We watch for several incredible seconds as Geordi works, seemingly impervious to the violent flames...

He hits one last control -- from the walls around him, several tiny gas jets suddenly spray -- putting out the fire.

GEORDI
We're okay... I've activated the emergency control system.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

GEORDI
(continuing)
The flames are going out.
Temperature dropping.

Geordi is hooked up to a complex INTERFACE UNIT. He is standing up straight, his body leaning back into a kind of half-mold made of some alloy. On his head, covering scalp, forehead, temples, and eyes but leaving nose and mouth clear, is a two-foot diameter device -- vaguely helmet-like in appearance. It is connected by several thick cables to a complicated control and monitoring console several feet away.

DATA is monitoring the interface unit on Geordi's body; BEVERLY is studying the console; RIKER is standing by, watching Geordi.

BEVERLY
(off console)
All vital functions completely normal.

DATA
The interface unit is also operating within expected tolerance levels.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RIKER
Why did he start coughing when he went through the gasses?

BEVERLY
(shrugs)
Psychological response.

When Geordi speaks, he obviously can't see his colleagues, since his eyes are covered. So his voice has a certain removed quality, as if talking to them from a distance.

GEORDI
I feel like I'm actually here...
I mean there -- in the Jefferies tube. I saw the smoke and I couldn't help it.

RIKER
(to Geordi)
Geordi, bring the probe back down. Let's get it into the launch bay.

GEORDI
Will do...

INT. JEFFERIES TUBE - CONTINUOUS
Geordi starts back down the tube ladder, but as he does he pauses, startled at something he sees offscreen.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS
Still in the Interface Unit, Geordi has the same startled look on his face. Beverly reacts to a readout on the console.

BEVERLY
Geordi, what's wrong? Your heart rate just jumped.

Geordi smiles, relaxes.

GEORDI
Nothing...
STAR TREK: "Interface" - 07/02/93 - TEASER

INT. JEFFERIES TUBE - CONTINUOUS

Geordi is looking at "his" reflection in a glass panel -- only it's not him looking back. He sees THE PROBE.

There's still smoke in the tube, so we don't see a great deal -- just a hint of a four foot long, foot and a half diameter metallic CYLINDER. Tiny force beams -- like pencil-thin needles of light -- project constantly from its surface, sweeping over everything around it.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I just saw my reflection in the panel. I mean the probe, not me... I keep forgetting I'm really back in the lab...

He starts to continue down the tube, but stops in a stuttering fashion as if unable to complete the next step.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Data, I'm not going anywhere.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Everyone reacts to Geordi's statement.

DATA
Can you be more specific?

GEORDI
It feels like my left leg won't move.

Geordi's left thigh appears to be twitching slightly.

RIKER
(to Data)
What's wrong?

DATA
(indicating leg)
The motor nerve impulses to Geordi's left leg operate the tractor beams on the left side of the probe. That is how the probe is able to move under his control. But apparently, there is some neural leakage.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Data takes an instrument and applies it to the interface unit on Geordi's head, sweeping it down his body and along the leg in question.

DATA
(continuing)
The impulses are continuing toward the leg muscles, instead of being sent to the probe.

Data makes an adjustment with his instrument. Geordi's leg stops twitching.

GEORDI
There it goes.

INT. JEFFERIES TUBE - CONTINUOUS

Geordi continues down the tube.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm moving again.

INT. LAB

A short while later. Data and Beverly are raising the interface unit off Geordi's head. Riker hands Geordi his VISOR, and Geordi puts it back on. Everything is back to normal, but the excitement of the experience is still on Geordi's face.

GEORDI
The sensor input from the probe back to me was absolutely perfect. And the tractor beams -- they felt like my real hands. It's the best interface I've ever worked with.

DATA
(to Riker)
Geordi's VISOR inputs make him an ideal operator. The probe is able to transmit directly into his cerebral cortex and brain stem. Other users have not reported as complete a sensory experience.

GEORDI
That's their loss.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PICARD'S COM VOICE
Picard to Riker.

RIKER
(touches combadge)
Riker here, Sir.

INT. BRIDGE

PICARD, WORF, TROI, Con Officer at their posts. Picard's mood is serious.

PICARD
(to COM)
We enter the Marijne System within the hour.
(beat)
Is everything ready?

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Yes, Captain.

INTERCUT:

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

RIKER
(continuing to COM)
The test went almost perfectly.

PICARD'S COM VOICE
Almost isn't going to be good enough, Number One. You've got an hour. Picard out.

The mood in the lab is suddenly sober.

DATA
(to Riker)
Commander, perhaps we should run another diagnostic...

RIKER
Agreed.
(soberly)
Once we launch the probe, we might not get a second chance.

Geordi's exhilaration from the experience has evaporated, replaced by a deadly serious look on his face.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
(grimly)
Yeah...
OFF the mystery of the moment...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

FADE IN:

(Note: Episode credits fall over opening scenes.)

EXT. ENTERPRISE

In orbit above a huge, greenish, Neptune-like planet. The swirling, violent quality of its atmosphere can be seen even from here.

INT. BRIDGE - INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

We are in a low orbit. The planet fills the Viewscreen. Worf and the CON officer are at their posts.

The TURBOLIFT opens, Data and Geordi step out and head for the aft science station. Picard and Riker are already working there, staring at the science MONITOR.

The monitor shows a cross-section diagram of the atmospheric layers of the planet. A small graphic indicates a space ship located in one of the middle layers. Picard glances up at Geordi and Data as they arrive.

PICARD

The Mazur is currently here...
(indicates monitor)
In the planet's middle ionosphere.

GEORDI

Any life signs?

RIKER

The ship is too deep for our biosensors -- and the atmosphere is too violent. The crew might still be alive. But we'll never be able to tell from up here.

DATA

I have reviewed the vessel's mission plans. The Mazur was to descend to the lower atmosphere, eleven thousand kilometers below its current position...

Data indicates two atmospheric layers deeper.

(Continued)
DATA  
(continuing)  
The crew was to sample the  
atmosphere at that level, and then  
return to a safer orbit.  

Data indicates a position much higher than the ship's  
present location.  

GEORDI  
Something must have happened down  
there. Maybe the shields blew, or  
they had an inversion reaction in  
the nacelles.  

RIKER  
(nods)  
It wouldn't be the first time  
Starfleet lost a science vessel on  
an E class planet. And the  
subspace interference on Marijne  
Seven is higher than anything I've  
seen before.  

DATA  
(nodding)  
The mission was specifically  
designed to investigate those  
disturbances.  

Picard looks up, concerned.  

PICARD  
Will that interference be too much  
for the probe?  

GEORDI  
It shouldn't be. The probe has  
five times the shield capacity as  
the Mazur. We could send it all  
the way to the planet's surface if  
we had to.  
(doubtful)  
Well, we could try.  

13 INCLUDE WORF  
as he glances up from his console.  
(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WORF

Captain, I am receiving a transmission from Starfleet Command. Admiral Holt, on your private channel.

Picard looks up at Worf, a little surprised at the message.

PICARD

I'll take it in my Ready Room.

Picard stands, turns back to the others.

PICARD

(continuing)
The seven people on that ship are our first priority. Is the probe ready for launch?

DATA

Yes, Sir.

Picard hits a key on the console and the graphic of the planet is replaced by a schematic of the science vessel.

PICARD

(indicates graphic to Riker)
Send it directly to the aft section of the ship, through the secondary air lock. That'll put it one bulkhead away from the Bridge.

RIKER

(nodding)
And most likely, the crew.

GEORDI

I'll interface with the probe as soon as it's there and take it in the rest of the way.

PICARD

Make it so.

Riker stays at the console, Geordi and Data start for the Turbolift.
FOLLOW PICARD as he crosses the Bridge and goes into the Ready Room.

INT. READY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Picard steps around to the monitor on his desk.

PICARD

Onscreen.

ADIMIRAL HOLT appears on the small screen. Picard smiles -- they are on familiar terms.

PICARD
(continuing)
Hello, Marcus.

Jean-Luc.

The Admiral returns the smile, but it's a little forced.

PICARD
How's life on DS-Three?

ADMIRAL HOLT
We're hosting this year's palio. The Ferengi have already been accused of trying to bribe the Breen pilot into throwing the race...

Picard smiles.

PICARD
Nothing unusual about that.

ADMIRAL HOLT
(nodding)
Nothing at all...

A beat. The Admiral's face becomes serious.

ADMIRAL HOLT
(continuing)
I wish I could say I was just calling to catch up on things.

(beat)
Nine days ago, the Hera left Deep Space Three on a routine courier mission. We were in contact with the ship for five of those days. Then it disappeared without a trace.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

Picard reacts strongly.

PICARD

The Hera?

ADMIRAL HOLT
I'm afraid so.

PICARD
And everyone on board...

ADMIRAL HOLT

Missing.

(beat)
Including the Captain...

A long silent beat.

PICARD
You have no clue --

ADMIRAL HOLT

-- The Excelsior and the Noble have spent the last seventy-two hours retracing its course.
Nothing. I'm going to keep them at it for seventy-two more.

(beat)

But to be honest, I don't think another week would make any difference.

Picard nods. Another long beat.

PICARD

I'll tell Commander La Forge...

OFF Picard's grim face.

16 INT. LAB

Geordi is fiddling with the interface console as Data is applying a pen-like instrument to the interface unit, checking everything out.

GEORDI
I'm going to increase the gain on the tactile sensors.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
We have not conducted sufficient tests --

GEORDI
-- We don't have the time, Data. Once the probe is inside that ship, I'm gonna want as much control as I can possibly get. That means the remote sensors have to be sending me as much information as I can handle.

Geordi indicates the console, as the door opens and Picard ENTERS in the background.

GEORDI (continuing)
I'm just raising the tolerance levels. The cut-off will still be working -- if it gets to be too much for my neurons, I'll be automatically disconnected.

Picard steps over to where the pair are working.

PICARD
Mister Data, I need a word with Commander La Forge.

DATA
Yes, Sir. (to Geordi)
I will be on the Bridge.

Picard waits for Data to go out the door, then turns back to Geordi.

GEORDI
Captain, if you're worried about this contraption... Well, I wouldn't be. We've got safety controls on both ends --

PICARD
-- I've just spoken to Starfleet. The Hera is missing.

Geordi looks too stunned to respond.

(CONTINUED)
PICARD  
(continuing)  
It was five days out of DS-Three, heading toward sector three-four-six.  
  
(beat)  
There's no trace of the ship's personnel.  

A long beat. Geordi asks the question to which he already seems to know the answer.  

GEORDI  
And my mother...  

PICARD  
Captain La Forge has disappeared along with the rest of her crew...  

Geordi nods. OFF his grave expression.  

FADE OUT.  

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

17 INT. GEORDI'S QUARTERS

Geordi is watching a message on the monitor from CAPTAIN SILVA LA FORGE, Geordi's mother. She is dressed in her standard Starfleet uniform.

SILVA LA FORGE
-- I saw your father last week and your sister about ten days before that. So I decided I missed my favorite son...

Geordi smiles sadly at the inside joke.

GEORDI
(quietly to himself)
Your only son, Mom...

SILVA LA FORGE
(continuing)
You're going to have to see the Hera again. It's a great ship. We've got a lot of new faces on board. Including a chief engineer who juices up the nacelles every chance she gets. I think she's the best technician in the fleet.

(smiles)
Okay, second best.

GEORDI
(to himself)
Thanks...

The door suddenly CHIMES. Geordi touches a control and FREEZES the recording of his mother.

GEORDI
Come in...

The door opens and Riker steps inside the room. He pauses when he sees the still frame of Geordi's mother on the monitor.

RIKER
I didn't mean to interrupt.

GEORDI
Don't worry about it.

Geordi touches the console and the message continues.

(CONTINUED)
SILVA LA FORGE
Maybe you should meet her. I think the Enterprise is going to be close by next week. Take a shuttle over and I'll introduce you.

GEORDI
(to Riker)
Mom's always trying to find me a wife.

SILVA LA FORGE
But if you're too busy right now, I'll still be seeing you at your father's birthday party. Remember when you talk to him -- it's a surprise.

She puts her finger to her lips in the "shush" position. The message ends with the insignia of Starfleet across the screen.

GEORDI
(to Riker)
This came in about three weeks ago.

(beat)
I never got back to her...

RIKER
(gently)
Geordi, the probe has entered the planet's atmosphere. I'm ready to move it inside the ship.

(beat)
If you want to take a couple of days off, I'll run the interface.

GEORDI
Why? The interface is calibrated specifically for my VISOR inputs. We'd need at least ten hours to convert it over to you. Those crewmen down there can't wait...

RIKER
The interface doesn't have to be fully compatible. I could use it right now. I wouldn't have the control you'd have, but it would still work.

Geordi reacts a little too strongly.
CONTINUED: (2)

GEORDI

Forget it. I'm the best one for the job, and there's no reason not to go ahead as planned.

RIKER

(gently)
The Hera is reason enough.

GEORDI

The Hera is missing. That's all. Until I hear something more, my mother might just as well have taken ship and crew on an unscheduled holiday.

Geordi stands.

GEORDI

(continuing)

Let's go.

He heads for the door. OFF the concern on Riker's face as he turns to follow.

INT. BRIDGE - INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)
Picard is watching the huge planet on the screen.

PICARD
Status, Number One.

RIKER

is at the aft science station. His monitor shows the diagram seen earlier -- the schematic of the science vessel Mazur. This time, a smaller graphic representing the PROBE, is hovering outside the science ship. Riker is controlling its progress with his console.

RIKER

I'm trying the secondary airlock...

Riker hits a control -- the graphic responds accordingly -- the "airlock" FLASHES off and on.

RIKER

(continuing)
It's activated... And opening...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Riker works the console again.

RIKER
(continuing)
I'm taking the probe inside...

RESUME PICARD

PICARD
(to COM)

INTERCUT:

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Data is lowering the interface unit over Geordi's head; Beverly is at the interface monitor watching Geordi's vital signs.

DATA
(to COM)
We are preparing the interface now, Captain.

PICARD'S COM VOICE
Standby to establish connection with the probe.

DATA
Acknowledged.

Beverly is staring at several readouts on the interface monitor, adjusting some controls.

BEVERLY
Cardio-respiratory functions are on-line. Autonomic nervous system... endocrine system... completely registering.
(glances up)
Everything's okay at this end, Geordi.

Data locks the unit into place.

GEORDI
Data? How's it look?

Data makes a last adjustment.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
The interface is ready.

INT. BRIDGE - ON RIKER (OPTICAL)
Riker inputs a few final commands at the aft science station and the graphic of the probe passes through the "airlock" on the science station, entering the ship.

RIKER
We've cleared the airlock. The probe is inside.
   (glances up)
   That's all I can do from here, Captain.

INCLUDE PICARD
as he nods in acknowledgement.

PICARD
(to COM)
Picard to Data.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

PICARD'S COM VOICE
Proceed, Commander.

DATA
(to COM)
I am activating the probe's remote sensors, Captain...

Data moves to the interface command console and hits several controls.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS
Worf glances up from his console.

WORF
The probe telemetry is being received by our TECH antenna. Remote sensors are transmitting at full strength.

PICARD
(to COM)
We've got the signal, Mister Data.
INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Data glances up from the console.

DATA
Acknowledged, Captain. I am receiving it at this terminal.

He turns to Geordi.

DATA (continuing)
We can establish the interface whenever you wish.

GEORDI
Go ahead...

Data hits a few commands on the console.

DATA
I am transferring the probe signals into the interface unit...

A couple of more commands.

DATA (continuing)
You should be receiving the input... now.

Geordi's head jerks slightly, his face appears suddenly distant.

BEVERLY (off monitor)
Vital signs normal... How do you feel, Geordi?

GEORDI (distantly)
Fine...

DATA
Do you have visual contact?

CLOSE IN ON GEORDI'S FACE

Again, his voice is distant.

GEORDI
Not yet...

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. SCIENCE SHIP CORRIDOR - GEORDI'S POV

Everything is dark, murky.

GEORDI'S VOICE
Increase the strength on the visual input signal, Data. I'm not seeing anything...

A beat. Suddenly, the darkness clears -- we see the corridor, mysteriously lit and clouded with tendrils of gas. But everything is in BLACK & WHITE.

INT. LAB

Geordi's face suddenly becomes animated.

GEORDI
I can see. But no colors.

DATA
I will widen the visual input range.

Data works the controls on the console.

DATA (continuing)
Increasing the available spectrum, now...

INT. SCIENCE SHIP CORRIDOR - GEORDI'S POV

As before in Black & White. Suddenly, the scene becomes COLORED, and we can see that the smoky tendrils are green and yellowish.

ON GEORDI

standing in the corridor, looking around (the same convention we used when he was using the probe to fight the fire in the Teaser).

GEORDI
That's better.

BEVERLY'S VOICE
Your pulse has gone up...

INT. LAB

Beverly is watching the monitor.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEVERLY
(continuing)
Fifteen percent above normal.

GEORDI
I'm excited, that's all. This is
like being on a roller coaster.

INTERCUT:

INT. SCIENCE SHIP CORRIDOR

GEORDI
(continuing)
Or a first date... Everything's
okay.

BEVERLY'S VOICE
(lightly)
I'll be the judge of that, Geordi.
If your heart rate goes too high,
we'll disconnect you.

GEORDI
Understood. But don't pull the
plug just yet...

A beat as he continues to look around.

GEORDI
(continuing)
It's a mess in here. There must
be a hull breach somewhere. I'm
picking up atmospheric gasses
inside the corridor -- methane and
ammonia primarily.

Geordi starts slowly to walk up the corridor.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm heading toward the Bridge.

He continues for a few silent beats. As he goes, the
fumes increase.

GEORDI
(continuing)
It's getting worse the closer I
get. The break in the hull might
be in the Bridge itself.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He rounds a corner, sees a collapsed piece of material -- and a body beneath it.

BEVERLY'S VOICE
Geordi, your heart rate --

GEORDI
-- I found somebody!

DATA
What is your position?

Geordi hurries forward.

GEORDI
About three meters up the main corridor! A section of the bulkhead collapsed on top of him.

Geordi reaches the trapped crew member and puts both hands underneath the bulkhead material.

INCLUDE A BACKGROUND WALL PANEL

-- a finished surface that reflects mirror-like, the actual situation. We can see that Geordi's forearms and hands appear in the reflection as TRACTOR FORCE BEAMS FROM THE CYLINDRICAL PROBE.

GEORDI
I can't move it, Data -- I mean the probe can't move it. Turn up my motor nerve control. I need more power to the tractor beams.

DATA'S VOICE
I am increasing to eighty percent of tolerance.

Suddenly, Geordi's hands -- and the tractor light beams from the corresponding probe reflection -- move strongly upwards, removing the fallen material and casting it aside.

RESUME GEORDI

without the reflection. He bends down to investigate the crew member.

GEORDI
Doctor Crusher, he looks pretty bad.

(CONTINUED)
35 CONTINUED:

Geordi places his hands on both sides of the man's neck.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm putting my hands on his neck. Can you pick up anything?

36 INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Beverly looks over at Data's console and readout as Data works the controls.

BEVERLY
We're checking the sensor data right now... No. There's no pulse, no neural activity.
(beat)
He's dead.

Geordi's face reacts to the news.

INTERCUT:

37 INT. SCIENCE SHIP CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Geordi takes his hands back from the dead man's neck. He straightens up, considers the situation.

GEORDI
It looks like he was coming from over there...

Geordi goes a couple of meters up the corridor to a heavy door. He waves his hand in front of it -- it doesn't move.

GEORDI
(continuing)
It's stuck.
(beat)
Data, the door halfway down the left corridor... what's it lead to?

DATA'S VOICE
A magnetic storage bay.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORDI
(nods)
If there was a breach in the Bridge, that would be the safest place to go.

He stares at the wall next to the door.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Data, give me full infrared visual input. I want to see inside that storage bay.

Data works his console.

DATA'S VOICE
Acknowledged. I am making the adjustment...

GEORDI'S POV (OPTICAL)
The wall suddenly becomes "transparent" -- as Geordi is able to see the infrared energy from inside the storage bay. On the floor are the outlines of several human bodies...

GEORDI (O.S.)
They're inside!

RESUME (OPTICAL)
Geordi in front of the wall.

BEVERLY'S VOICE
Are they alive?

GEORDI
I don't know. They aren't moving.

Geordi holds his hands out in front of him, palms up.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Data, I need a phaser burst. Wide focus, level four intensity.

Data works his console. There is a sudden burst of phasers from Geordi's hands against the wall -- a section of it evaporates, revealing the storage bay behind it.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Geordi steps inside.

GEORDI
There are six people in here... I don't think they're alive...

Beverly checks the interface console.

BEVERLY'S VOICE
I'm not reading any vital signs.

Geordi gets closer, checks one of the bodies.

GEORDI
It looks like they've been burned. All of them...

Sudden FLAMES flash up directly in front of Geordi.

GEORDI (continuing)
There's a fire in here...

Without concern, Geordi heads directly into it --

GEORDI (continuing)
I'm gonna to put it out --

-- But as soon as his hands make contact with the flames, he cries out in pain. He whips around, surrounded by the fire, which seems to advance toward him. He swats at it with his hands, again crying out.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

And again -- Geordi cries out in pain.

BEVERLY
Data! Disconnect him!

Data quickly hits some controls on the helmet-like unit and pulls it off Geordi's head. Geordi's face loses its grimace.

BEVERLY (continuing)
What happened?

GEORDI (dazed)
I don't know... My hands...

(continuing)
CONTINUED:

Geordi slowly brings up his hands -- both of them are charred.

BEVERLY
(stunned)
They're burned...

OFF everyone's reactions.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

41 EXT. ENTERPRISE

In orbit above the huge, greenish planet.

42 INT. SICKBAY

Geordi is sitting on a diagnostic bed, and has both hands inside a high tech liquid bath. Picard, Data and Beverly are standing around him.

PICARD

How could Geordi have been burned when he wasn't even there?

BEVERLY

I have a guess.

PICARD

Let's hear it.

BEVERLY

First of all, the tolerance levels on the interface were set extremely high. That means the probe was sending a huge amount of sensory data directly into Geordi's brain. And sensory overload can cause damage.

Geordi glances toward Picard's combadge.

GEORDI

It's as simple as having the volume set too high on your combadge -- you could damage your inner ear.

Geordi pulls his hands out of the bath to check -- they are much better than when last seen. Beverly gently pushes them back into the bath.

PICARD

(to Geordi)

I can understand that you might have felt the sensation of extreme heat -- even the pain. But that was all happening inside your brain. How could your hands actually be burned?

(CONTINUED)
BEVERLY
When we were testing the probe in the Jefferies tube, Geordi started coughing when it went through the smoke.

GEORDI
(nodding)
I wasn't actually there either. But the sensory experience was so real that my body reacted as if I were.

BEVERLY
A purely psychosomatic reaction. Like when you think of a lemon and your mouth suddenly tastes sour.

PICARD
(doubtful)
A psychosomatic reaction so strong that the tissue in Geordi's hands actually burned themselves...

BEVERLY
In essence, that's correct.

Picard scowls. Beverly shrugs and pulls Geordi's hands out of the bath -- they're almost back to normal.

BEVERLY
(continuing)
I didn't say it was a great guess. But at this point, it's all we've got.

PICARD
(to Data)
Data?

DATA
The probe has never been so closely interfaced with an operator. Also, the environment on Marjine Seven is energetically unique. Highly unusual results are not unexpected.

Picard considers.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Riker to Captain Picard.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD
(touches combadge)
Go ahead, Number One.

INT. BRIDGE - AFT SCIENCE STATION

Riker is at the station, working with the graphic of the probe inside the Mazur.

RIKER
(to COM)
I'm ready to move the probe into the Mazur's engineering section.

INT. SICKBAY

As before.

PICARD
(to COM)
Standby.

Picard looks at the others.

PICARD
(continuing)
The science crew is dead. Bringing their vessel up is the next priority -- but not if it means risking Geordi's safety.

GEORDI
All we have to do is turn down the sensory input from the probe. I'll be fine.

Picard glances at Data and Beverly, who concur with nods.

PICARD
Alright.
(touches combadge)
Picard to Riker. Proceed with the probe.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Acknowledged.

Picard turns to Data.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PICARD
You'll have a few hours to adjust the interface.

Data nods and heads for the door. Beverly puts a caring hand on Geordi's shoulder.

BEVERLY
(to Geordi; re: bath)
Five more minutes.

Geordi nods and Beverly moves off to work in another part of Sickbay. Picard stays for a moment with Geordi.

PICARD
Geordi, your father called for you.

Geordi reacts -- he was trying not to think about this.

PICARD
(continuing)
Data can handle the interface adjustments for now... If you'd like to call him back...

GEORDI
(nods)
Thank you, Captain...

Picard turns to go. OFF Geordi's neutral look.

INT. GEORDI'S QUARTERS

Geordi is watching his father, DOCTOR LA FORGE, on the small monitor. Doctor La Forge is wearing the clothes of a research biologist.

GEORDI
How are you, Dad?

DOCTOR LA FORGE
As well as expected, given the circumstances. Are you okay?

GEORDI
Yeah...

His father nods. A beat.

(CONTINUED)
DOCTOR LA FORGE
I talked to your sister this morning. She said she'd get in touch with you in a few days. Right now she's pretty upset.
(beat)
The service for the Hera will probably be on Vulcan -- most of the crew was from there. But your sister and I want to have a private ceremony --

GEORDI
-- Dad. Don't you think everybody's jumping the gun here? Last I heard, two starships were still out there looking. They've found no debris, no residual warp distortion --

-- And no ship.

DOCTOR LA FORGE
GEORDI
Not yet. That doesn't mean they won't.

DOCTOR LA FORGE
Starfleet is considering the Hera lost. The search isn't much more than a formality at this point.
(beat; quietly)
Geordi, your mother's gone...

Geordi is harsh.

GEORDI
You can think that if you want. But until I see some hard evidence, I'll be damned if I'm gonna be the one who buries her.

His father starts to say something, then changes his mind.

DOCTOR LA FORGE
Call me if you need anything...

Doctor La Forge touches a control and the screen goes blank.

OFF Geordi's flat expression.
INT. DATA'S QUARTERS

Data is staring at a blank computer screen. The door CHIMES.

DATA
Come in.

The door opens and Geordi ENTERS.

GEORDI
Hey, Data. Still working?

Data continues staring at the blank screen, as if riveted.

DATA
No. I have completed the adjustments on the interface and am waiting for Commander Riker to finish moving the probe.

Geordi nods, crosses over toward Data. Data turns to his friend.

DATA (continuing)
Do you wish to be comforted?

Geordi reacts a bit negatively to Data's bluntness.

GEORDI
No... I was just passing by. Wondered what you were up to.

DATA (re: monitor)
I am using the time to catch up on my study of poetry.

Geordi steps closer, stares at the blank monitor.

GEORDI
Data, there's nothing on the screen.

DATA
That is not entirely correct. While it is true the display is currently blank, this emptiness has a poetic meaning. So it cannot be considered "nothing" as such.

GEORDI
 Says who?

(CONTINUED)
DATA
The ancient Doosodarians. Much of their poetry contained such "lacunae" or empty spaces. Often these pauses measured several days in length, during which poet and audience were encouraged to fully acknowledge the emptiness of the experience.

GEORDI
I remember some of the lectures at Starfleet academy seemed like that.

A beat as Data considers his friend again.

DATA
Are you certain you do not wish to talk about your mother?

Geordi again reacts to Data's overly direct manner.

GEORDI
Why do you say that?

DATA
You are no doubt feeling emotional distress as a result of her disappearance. Though you claimed to be "just passing by," that is most likely an excuse to start a conversation about this uncomfortable subject. Am I correct?

Geordi overreacts.

GEORDI
Well, no. Sometimes "just passing by" means "just passing by."

Data thinks about this for a moment.

DATA
Then I apologize for my premature assumption.

Data turns back to the monitor.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
(continuing)
This particular poem has a lacuna
of forty-seven minutes. You may
experience the emptiness with me
if you wish.

GEORDI
(unsure)
Thanks...

Data and Geordi watch the blank screen for several
silent seconds. Geordi glances at Data who appears
perfectly content to stare at nothing. Geordi scowls.

GEORDI
Data, you gave up too fast.

Data turns from the screen -- with some hesitation, as
though very interested in what he was watching.

DATA
I do not understand.

GEORDI
When I said "just passing by"
means "just passing by" -- I
didn't really mean it.

Data cocks his head, realizing.

DATA
My initial assumption was correct.
You do wish to speak of your
mother.

GEORDI
Am I crazy to think she's still
alive?

DATA
Your sanity is not in question.
However, your evaluation of the
available information is...
biased.

GEORDI
She's the captain of a starship!
She's gotten herself into and out
of impossible situations before.
Why should this be any different?

(CONTINUED)
DATA
Disappearances fitting the profile of the Hera have rarely ended with the safe recovery of ship and crew.

GEORDI
(annoyed)
To put it bluntly.

Data doesn't answer. Geordi feels a little guilty.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm sorry, Data. I didn't mean to snap at you.

DATA
I am not offended. You are upset and your reactions are not surprising.

Geordi quiets down.

GEORDI
I guess I am a little... on edge.

A long beat as Geordi looks away.

GEORDI
(continuing)
It's just that... If she really is dead...

(quietly)
I don't know what I'm going to do...

Geordi puts a hand on Data's shoulder for a moment in silent thanks for his support, then turns and goes out the door.

Data turns again to his blank monitor for a beat, then pauses and glances toward where Geordi disappeared, as if still thinking of his friend...

47 EXT. ENTERPRISE

In orbit above Marijne Seven.
INT. LAB

Beverly is lowering the interface unit onto Geordi's head as Data works with the console.

DATA
The input levels are currently at fifty-three percent of tolerance.

GEORDI
That's too low, Data. I won't be able to do anything over there.

BEVERLY
I want to start with as wide a margin of safety as possible. We can adjust upwards as needed.

Beverly finishes fitting the unit onto Geordi.

BEVERLY
(continuing)
Ready?

GEORDI
Go ahead.

Data works the console.

DATA
Establishing interface with the probe...

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - GEORDI'S POV

Everything is dark.

GEORDI'S VOICE
I'm gonna need a lot more visual...

DATA'S VOICE
Increasing input now...

The room begins to take form in the slowly increasing light -- a spare interior with several banks of control consoles.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Data works the controls.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORDI
That's better... A little higher
in the upper spectrum...

Data keeps going...

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

Geordi is standing in the room, staring straight ahead,
with a dumbfounded look on his face.

INCLUDE - SILVA LA FORGE

standing directly in front of Geordi, facing him.

DATA'S VOICE
Is this level sufficient?

Geordi is too stunned to answer. He continues to stare
at his mother.

DATA'S VOICE
(continuing)
Geordi?

No answer.

DATA'S VOICE
(continuing)
Geordi, can you hear me?

OFF mother and son staring at each other...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

Geordi is staring at his mother standing in front of him.

GEORDI
(barely)

Mom...

54

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Data and Beverly react to Geordi as he says the words.

GEORDI
Mom, is it you?

INTERCUT:

55

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

Silva La Forge stares at him for a moment -- there's a slightly dazed, shell-shocked look on her face.

SILVA LA FORGE
(hesitantly)

Is it you...?

A beat, Geordi seems puzzled -- then suddenly remembers.

GEORDI
I forgot! All you're seeing is a probe. Yes, it's me. I'm on the Enterprise. I'm interfaced with this probe.

BEVERLY'S VOICE

Geordi. Who are you talking to?

(beat)

What are you seeing?

Geordi ignores her, too amazed by the woman before him.

GEORDI

But is it really you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SILVA LA FORGE
(hesitant)
It's really...
(beat)
It's really... me.

GEORDI
How can it be...? How is it possible --

SILVA LA FORGE
-- We have to go down...

A beat as Geordi studies her.

GEORDI
Down where?

SILVA LA FORGE
Farther down...

She motions with her hand.

GEORDI
Toward the planet?

She nods.

SILVA LA FORGE
The planet...

BEVERLY'S VOICE

He seems to hear Beverly for the first time.

GEORDI
(to Beverly)
Hang on, Doctor...

He takes a careful step toward his mother.

GEORDI
Why? Why do we have to go down to the planet?

SILVA LA FORGE
We... are there.

Geordi is puzzled.

GEORDI
"We?" Your ship? The Hera is down there?

(CONTINUED)
BEVERLY'S VOICE
Geordi we're disconnecting you right now...

GEORDI
(to Beverly)
No. Wait...

Beverly and Data pause.

Geordi takes another step toward his mother.

SILVA LA FORGE
We need your... help. I need your help... Geordi...

Geordi reaches out with both hands, placing them on her arms -- at the contact, there is a violent SHOCKING ARC. He cries out in pain --

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Geordi still in pain -- but the lights on the interface unit are off.

DATA
(to Beverly)
The cut-off has been automatically activated.

Beverly rushes to Geordi's side.

BEVERLY
Geordi, are you alright?

GEORDI
(recovering)
I saw her...

Beverly helps Data pulls the unit off Geordi's head.

GEORDI
I saw my mother.

OFF Data's and Beverly's reactions.

INT. SICKBAY

Geordi is sitting on the big diagnostic bed, as Beverly runs various scans on him. Picard is standing by.

(CONTINUED)
BEVERLY
Neocortex, brain stem, autonomic nervous system, neural cellular functions -- all normal. Nothing to indicate a hallucination.
(beat)
At least not any kind that I'm familiar with.

Geordi looks a little impatient.

GEORDI
I told you, I wasn't hallucinating.

PICARD
How could your mother have been on that ship?

GEORDI
I don't think she was. I think her ship is stuck a lot deeper down in the atmosphere. Maybe even crashed on the planet. She kept saying we had to go down.

PICARD
Then what you saw was some kind of transmission...

GEORDI
(nodding)
She managed to contact me. How, I don't know.

The door opens and Data ENTERS. Everyone looks over toward him expectantly.

DATA
I have processed the visual input from the probe corresponding to the time of Geordi's... sighting.

Data steps over to a console, puts a tiny information card inside. The monitor displays a "video" POV of the inside of the Mazur's engineering. It's an empty room. They watch for several seconds.

GEORDI'S RECORDED VOICE
Mom... Mom, is it you?
(beat)
I forgot! All you're seeing is a probe. Yes, it's me.
(MORE)
GEORDI'S RECORDED VOICE (Cont'd)
I'm on the Enterprise. I'm
interfaced with this probe.

BEVERLY'S RECORDED VOICE
Geordi. Who are you talking to?
(beat)
What are you seeing?

GEORDI'S RECORDED VOICE
But is it really you?

The monitor continues to display an empty room.

BEVERLY
(re: monitor)
There's nothing there...

Data touches the console -- the monitor now displays
the room where Geordi found the bodies earlier. We see
the bodies, but nothing else.

DATA
This is the visual input from the
previous incident in the storage
bay.

GEORDI'S RECORDED VOICE
It looks like they've been burned --
all of them...
(beat)
There's a fire in here...

The room remains as before -- bodies and nothing else.

BEVERLY
(amazed)
No fire...

DATA
Exactly.

GEORDI'S RECORDED VOICE
I'm gonna put it out --

Geordi's recorded voice suddenly cries out in pain.

GEORDI
(sharply)
Turn it off, Data.

Data does so, the monitor goes blank.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
(to all; re: monitor)
This doesn't mean anything. The probe sends about ten thousand times more information than visual back to my brain. I could have been perceiving my mother and those flames along some other kind of sensory parameters. Maybe even telepathic.

PICARD
Doctor?

BEVERLY
It's possible. Psychologically, Geordi's brain could have interpreted the raw input visually. He might have experienced things that were actually on that ship, but in some form we can't see.

GEORDI
I wasn't hallucinating.

BEVERLY
I didn't say that. I'm saying it's conceivable you weren't. But given the circumstances... I think you were.

Geordi flashes with anger.

GEORDI
I was burned by that fire. And when I touched my mother it overloaded the interface. Pretty strong hallucinations, Doctor.

BEVERLY
Those effects most likely have another explanation.

GEORDI
Such as?

Beverly is firm.

BEVERLY
Such as the probe is dangerous. It's altering your perceptions and your mind and your body.

(Continued)
GEORDI
I'll take that risk.

PICARD
I won't.

Picard turns to Data.

PICARD
Mister Data, find another way to save the Mazur. I want to hear an alternate plan in two hours.

DATA
Yes, Captain.

Data heads for the door. Picard turns to Geordi.

PICARD
(gently)
In the meantime, I'd like you to talk with Counsellor Troi. She's expecting you.

Geordi seems about to object -- then he catches himself.

GEORDI
Aye, Sir...

OFF Geordi's frustrated look.

INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is seated in a chair, watching as Geordi paces slowly in front of her. He's impatient -- he doesn't want to be here.

TROI
What's your mother like, Geordi?

GEORDI
Counsellor, if you think I'm going to start talking about my childhood, you're way off.

TROI
That's not what I asked.

Geordi stops pacing.

(continues)
GEORDI

No, I guess not.

(beat)

She was --

(catching himself)

She is... brilliant, funny...

really perceptive. She knows people. Knows what they're all about even before they open their mouths. She's always been like that. A good judge of character.

TROI

When did you see her last?

GEORDI

Seven months ago, when she first got her command of the Hera. I went to a party she had for her crew...

TROI

The Enterprise and the Hera were in the same sector three weeks ago.

Geordi reacts -- as if Troi has struck a sensitive note.

GEORDI

I know. She wanted to see me. We were pretty busy though...

(quietly)

Well, I guess I could have made the time. But I didn't think... I mean I just didn't think...

His voice trails off.

TROI

(gently)

You didn't think it would be your last chance to see her...

Geordi is angered.

GEORDI

You can't know that! None of us can!

A long silent beat.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:  (2)

TROI
I'm going to run something by you. Call it a theory. Alright?

GEORDI
(calms down)
Alright...

Troi stands.

TROI
You are deeply disturbed by the disappearance of your mother. Compounded with the guilt you feel over not seeing her when you had the chance. So you're unwilling to even consider that your mother may be dead. This repression has taken physical form -- as the image of your mother.

GEORDI
But she told me she's trapped on the planet! She's in danger! If this was some kind of wish fulfillment, don't you think I'd fantasize her being safe and sound?

TROI
No. Because that would end the fantasy -- you'd know it wasn't true. The more involved and complicated and unending your story is, the longer you can believe your mother is alive somewhere at the end of it.

Geordi stops pacing. He thinks for a moment, then looks at her.

GEORDI
That's your theory, Counsellor.

Geordi turns and goes out the door. OFF the concern on Troi's face.

INT. OBS LOUNGE

Picard, Riker, Worf, Troi, Beverly, Geordi. Data is presenting his report; Geordi looks impatient.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
The Mazur is not out of range of our tractor beam. However, the planet's atmosphere is too energetic -- it attenuates the beam's ability to lock on.

RIKER
If we could set up some sort of relay system...

DATA
That is exactly my conclusion, Commander. Two shuttle crafts, staggered between the Enterprise and the Mazur, their shields adjusted to refocus the tractor beam.

PICARD
Can we get those shuttles close enough without putting them in danger?

(to Geordi)  
Mister La Forge.

GEORDI
(shrugs)
I suppose so.

(beat)
Yes. As long as you keep them above the troposphere, they'll be alright.

Picard nods, turns to Data.

PICARD
In that case --

GEORDI
(interrupting)
-- But we just can't do that.

Everyone turns to him.

PICARD
Why not?

GEORDI
Because we'll be leaving my mother and her crew stranded on the planet. We have to save them.

(Continued)
CONTINUED: (2)

Picard reacts, displeased but also concerned with Geordi's insistence...

PICARD
Commander --

GEORDI
(interrupting)
-- I've been thinking about this...

Geordi stands.

GEORDI
(continuing)
In the last message I got from my mother, she said she had a new chief engineer who was always experimenting with the warp drive. Well, I've seen the Hera -- it uses Mark Three type initiators in the warp coil. The Mark Threes have a history of strange side effects -- especially if you start playing around with them.

Picard glances at Data for confirmation.

DATA
There have been reports of warp bubbles and other subspace deformations.

GEORDI
(nodding)
So what if that's what happened? Not a warp bubble, but some kind of subspace funnel. The Hera was passing by this sector only ten days ago. Marijne is the most massive star in the area, and Marijne Seven the planet with the strongest gravitation field. The ship could have been pulled into a subspace funnel that emptied out right here, on Marijne Seven.

RIKER
(disbelieving)
And the Hera is still in one piece, down on that planet?

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
Maybe surrounded by some kind of subspace field that's keeping it together. But who knows for how long?

Geordi looks absolutely convinced.

GEORDI (continuing)
I have to take the Mazur closer to the planet. That's just what my mother asked me to do. Because it's the only way to rescue them.

Picard reacts.

PICARD
This... hypothesis... Could it be true?

Picard turns to Data, who considers the fantastic story for a couple of beats.

Yes.

DATA

Geordi smiles.

GEORDI
There.

Data seems conscious of not wanting to offend his friend, but he still has to do his job.

DATA
However, I believe the probability of occurrence is... (hesitates)
small.

PICARD
How small?

DATA
Vanishingly so, Sir.

Picard nods, considers for a moment.

PICARD
Proceed with the shuttle plan.

GEORDI
Captain --

(Continued)
CONTINUED: (4)

PICARD
-- Mister La Forge. Stay here for a moment.

Picard nods to the rest of the staff in dismissal. Everyone heads out the door, as Geordi sits back down. When the door closes behind the last one --

PICARD (continuing)
Geordi, I'm not unsympathetic about what you're going through. But I want you to consider my position as well.

A beat. Geordi reluctantly decides to listen.

GEORDI
Yes, Sir.

Picard looks at him for a moment.

PICARD
Your mother's disappearance... It's... a tragic thing...
(beat)
But I can't risk your safety on a... hypothesis.

A beat.

GEORDI
If there's even one chance in a million she's alive and I can save her...

Picard reacts -- this is a no-win situation for him.

PICARD
I'm sorry, Geordi. I've made my decision.

A beat. Geordi appears to have given up.

GEORDI
I understand, Sir.

Picard heads for the door to the Bridge. Geordi stays for a beat. Then with resolve, heads for the opposite exit...
As all its readouts and monitors light up.

Geordi makes some final adjustments, then steps into the interface itself. He removes his VISOR, starts to bring the unit over his head...

The DOOR OPENS. Geordi freezes at the sound -- without his VISOR he can see nothing. Data ENTERS.

DATA
I could not find you in Engineering or your quarters.

Geordi knows the voice.

GEORDI
(relaxing)

Data.

Geordi reaches down for his VISOR, puts it back into place to see his friend as Data eyes the interface console.

DATA
You have activated the interface.
(beat)
I suspected you would do so.

GEORDI
(surprised)
You did?

DATA
I am familiar enough with your behavior patterns to predict certain... decisions.

GEORDI
You know me pretty well...

DATA
Yes.

GEORDI
Then you know I can't just sit back and do nothing when my mother might be down on that planet.

(CONTINUED)
DATA
You are disobeying the Captain. And you are possibly endangering your life.

GEORDI
She's my mother. Can you understand what that means?

DATA
No.

A beat. Data thinks for a moment.

DATA (continuing)
But I am your friend. And I do not wish our friendship to end. Perhaps your relationship with your mother has a similar dimension.

GEORDI
Yeah.

Data takes up position next to the console.

DATA
I will monitor the interface and attempt to keep you safe.

Geordi is touched.

GEORDI
Thanks, Data.

He reaches up to remove the VISOR --

DATA
However, I have a request.

GEORDI
(surprised)
What's that?

DATA
I would ask you to consider the possibility that what you see is not real.

Geordi pauses for a moment -- Data has gotten through to him.

(continued)
GEORDI
(nods)
I'll be careful...

Geordi removes the VISOR and pulls the interface unit over his head. Data works the console.

DATA
I am establishing the interface...

OFF Geordi's face and the tension of the moment as the interface comes alive around him...

END OF ACT FOUR

FADE OUT.
FADE IN:

62 EXT. ENTERPRISE

The ship in orbit above Marijne Seven.

63 INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING

Geordi as probe is standing inside Engineering. He glances around the room -- he is alone.

GEORDI

Mom...?

SILVA LA FORGE (O.S.)

Hello, Geordi...

Geordi whips around at the voice.

INCLUDE SILVA LA FORGE

standing nearby, where Geordi was looking only a moment before.

GEORDI

How did you get there?

A moment as Silva stares at him.

SILVA LA FORGE

I'm not sure. A kind of projection...

(beat)

It might be telepathic. Because of the warp funnel...

GEORDI

That's just what I thought! Your engineer was messing with the drive. The Hera went into a funnel and came out on the planet.

SILVA LA FORGE

Yes...

DATA'S VOICE

Geordi, I believe you are now seeing the image of your mother...?
STAR TREK: "Interface" - 07/02/93 - ACT FIVE

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Data is carefully watching Geordi's reactions.

GEORDI
That's right, Data. She just confirmed my theory about how her ship got here. Her being able to contact me is part of the same phenomenon.

DATA
(doubtful)
I see.

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING (OPTICAL)

Geordi steps over to the console as his mother watches.

GEORDI
I can take the Mazur as far down as the lower mesosphere. From there, I -- I mean the probe can reach your ship.

Geordi thinks for a moment.

GEORDI
(to Data)
Data, I think I can use the probe to start an inverse warp cascade on the Hera's nacelles.

DATA'S VOICE
Theoretically, it is possible.

GEORDI
(to Silva)
That would reverse the warp funnel and put your ship back into normal space -- right where you started from.

SILVA LA FORGE
(nodding)
We must go down...

GEORDI
(quickly working)
I'm doing that right now... Shields back on line... starting our descent...

Geordi works the console... He glances at his mother as she watches over his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
(continuing; quietly)
Thank god.

SILVA LA FORGE
Thank god...

GEORDI
You're alive. That I was right about all this.

(beat)
I can't wait to call Dad. He and Ariana had given up...

The ship suddenly shudders, then smooths out.

SILVA LA FORGE
We're going down...

GEORDI
That's right.

SILVA LA FORGE
Home.

Geordi reacts -- puzzled at her use of the word. But he brushes it off.

GEORDI
Eventually, yeah.

His mother smiles. Suddenly, Geordi seems to phase -- his image dissolves back and forth with that of the probe.

GEORDI
Data -- everything's fading in and out.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm losing the interface.

Data studies the console.

DATA
The probe is descending out of range.

GEORDI
Then turn up the input gain.

(continued)
DATA
(hesitates)
We have not experimented beyond this setting.

GEORDI
I can take it, Data. Increase the input!

Data pauses, then works the console.

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING (OPTICAL)

Geordi continues to phase in and out with the image of the probe.

DATA'S VOICE
I am increasing to sixty-five percent of tolerance.

Geordi's image becomes completely solid again.

GEORDI
It's working.
(beat)
Data, keep increasing the input, five percent for every hundred kilometers we go down. That should maintain the connection between me and the probe.

DATA'S VOICE
Geordi, at such high levels, we will not be able to disconnect the interface without harming --

GEORDI
-- Do it!

Data complies.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard, Riker, Worf, the CON officer. Worf reacts to his console.

WORF
(off console)
Captain, the Mazur is descending toward the planet.

Everyone reacts, surprised.
CONTINUED:

PICARD
Why should the orbit have decayed so quickly?

WORF
It is a controlled descent, Sir.

PICARD
How...?

Picard and Riker exchange a look.

RIKER
Geordi...

INT. SCIENCE STATION ENGINEERING

Geordi continues to work the Mazur's console, as his mother looks on.

GEORDI
I'm sorry I didn't get over to see you a few weeks ago.

SILVA LA FORGE
You were... too busy with work.

GEORDI
I could've made the time. But believe me, it won't happen again.

PICARD'S VOICE
La Forge.

Picard's voice is distant, much less audible than Data's was before. Geordi reacts to hearing it.

GEORDI
Yes, Captain?

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Picard and Riker and Beverly are now with Data. Picard is facing Geordi.

PICARD
I gave you an order.

A beat. Geordi's face takes a second to react.

GEORDI
Captain, I can barely hear you...

(CONTINUED)
Picard turns to Data.

DATA
The sensory input from the probe is now high enough to suppress Geordi's normal perceptions. He is becoming unable to process the sensory impressions in this room -- including your voice, Captain.

PICARD
Then disconnect him.

DATA
I would advise against that, Sir.

Beverly is studying the interface monitor.

BEVERLY
(nodding)
At these levels, his nervous system is too closely identified with the probe. If we try to break the connection, his heart might stop, his neural functions could completely fail.

PICARD
But if something should happen to the probe down there...

BEVERLY
The same result. Sudden disconnection, sudden death.

Riker reacts.

RIKER
Start reducing the input gradually.

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS
Riker's voice is even more distant than Picard's.

RIKER'S VOICE
(continuing)
Bring the levels back to where we can disconnect...

(CONTINUED)
GEORDI
It's no use, Commander. If I have
to, I'll take this ship down even
faster. You won't have enough
time.

RIKER'S VOICE
Damn it, Geordi! You're going to
kill yourself!

GEORDI
And if I come back now, my mother
and her entire crew will die.
(reads monitor; to
Silva)
We're getting close.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

GEORDI
Nine hundred kilometers to go...

Data suddenly reacts to Geordi's statement -- he's
thought of something.

DATA
Geordi, at your present position,
the Mazur's sensors can detect all
subspace distortions near the
planet.

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING

Data's voice is barely audible.

DATA'S VOICE
(continuing)
If indeed, your mother's ship is
caught in a warp funnel, it will
now register...

Silva La Forge reacts with concern. Geordi looks at
her -- a little puzzled by her response.

GEORDI
I believe you. But I promised
Data I'd make sure...

He turns to the console. Though he can't see it, Silva
now has a look of intense fear on her face.
GEORDI

works the commands.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Data, I'm using the forward sensors now... Checking subspace parameters...
(puzzled)
I'm not finding anything... The warp funnel... The ship... There's nothing there.

A SUDDEN SHOCK. Geordi cries out in pain.

INCLUDE SILVA LA FORGE

her hands holding the sides of Geordi's head, her eyes crazed with fury and terror. His head is shocked with wave after wave of pain as she holds him.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

Geordi's face is contorting with pain. An energy pulse is arcing violently between the interface and his head.

BEVERLY
(off monitor)
The neural synapses are overloading.
(to Picard)
He can't survive this...

RIKER
Geordi! What's happening to you?

INTERCUT:

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

Silva La Forge continues to hold the sides of Geordi's head -- his agony appears to increase.

RIKER'S VOICE
Geordi! Say something!

GEORDI
(barely)
Data! Reverse the fore tractors on the probe! Reverse the fore tractors on the probe!

(CONTINUED)
Data quickly works the console.

**DATA'S VOICE**
Reversing tractor beams...

Suddenly, Silva La Forge's hands spring away from Geordi's head and she goes flying backwards -- as if flung back by an unseen force.

Geordi recovers, no longer in immediate pain. He stares toward Silva as she too recovers from the surprise.

**GEORDI**
Who are you?

She cries out and springs toward him.

**GEORDI**
(continuing)
Data! Maintain the beams!

Silva seems to hit an invisible wall a foot in front of Geordi -- and is again thrown back. This time as she recovers, a half-dozen, two-foot high fires appear at her sides. They are the same flames that seemed to attack Geordi previously when he found the dead crew in the storage bay. The flames spread out and surround him...

**GEORDI**
(continuing)
Maximum power, Data! Maximum power!

**DATA'S VOICE**
Acknowledged...

Silva rushes him again -- and so do the flames. This time, her hands get to within inches of his head -- the flames within inches of his body. But no further. Geordi is wide-eyed...

**GEORDI**
(concerned)
Data... Keep it up...

**DATA'S VOICE**
Maintaining maximum levels...

Geordi and Silva stare at each other, faces only inches apart, Silva crazed, Geordi trying to control his fear...

(continued)
Suddenly, Silva and flames simultaneously back off, as if understanding they can't harm him. Silva seems a bit dazed. She recovers... seems to lose the fury.

SILVA LA FORGE
We... are sorry... We do not...
wish to harm you... But we are in... agony...

Geordi reacts with surprise to the statement. He studies her for a moment -- she seems spent.

GEORDI
(to Data)
Data, back off the reverse tractors for now... But standby...

DATA'S VOICE
Acknowledged.

Geordi continues to look at the woman before him.

GEORDI
Who are you? And what do you want?

INT. BRIDGE
Worf reacts to his console.

WORF
(to COM)
Worf to Captain Picard. The Mazur has increased its descent velocity.

INT. LAB
Picard, Riker, Data, and Beverly are still monitoring Geordi.

WORF'S COM VOICE
It has entered the lower mesosphere.

DATA
The ship will be beyond sensor range within minutes.

RIKER
Geordi... Report.

(CONTINUED)
A long beat. Everyone exchanges looks.

BEVERLY
  (off monitor)
  His vital signs are stable...
  (beat)
  He's just not responding.

A beat -- Beverly gets a sudden idea.

BEVERLY
  (working console)
  I'm going to try something...

PICARD
  La Forge. Can you hear us?

Another beat. Then --

GEORDI
  Captain. I'm taking the ship into the lower atmosphere...

INTERCUT:

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

Geordi is working the console. Silva is standing in the background, as if waiting. The flames are gone. Picard's voice is barely audible.

PICARD'S VOICE
  Explain, La Forge.

GEORDI
  When the crew took the Mazur in close to the planet, they accidentally picked up some lifeforms that live there. Plasma beings of some kind -- intelligent. When the Mazur went back into a higher orbit, the beings were trapped here.

RIKER'S VOICE
  They killed the crew...

GEORDI
  Not on purpose. They were trying to make them understand. But they ended up killing everyone they touched.

(MORE)
81 CONTINUED:

GEORDI (Cont'd)
Then the probe got here -- they
read my memory through the
probe...

PICARD'S VOICE
And became your mother.

GEORDI
Yes. To talk me into taking the
ship down.

82 INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS
Everyone reacts to Geordi's report.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Captain. Starfleet is responsible
for this. I have to help them.
I have to take them back --
they'll die up here.

83 INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'll turn the ship right around
and come home as soon as we're --

AN EXPLOSION OFFSCREEN. Geordi tumbles backwards from
the console as the ship rocks. Silva La Forge is still
standing -- she looks at Geordi with concern. Again,
Riker's voice is barely audible.

RIKER'S VOICE
La Forge! What happened?

Geordi recovers and gets back to the console.

GEORDI
We hit some kind of energy
disturbance. A storm or
something...

The ship rocks again. Geordi again is flung back...

84 INT. BRIDGE
Worf checks his instruments.

(CONTINUED)
84 CONTINUED:

WORF
(to COM)
Captain, the Mazur is out of sensor range.

85 INT. LAB

Picard, Riker, Data, and Beverly react to Worf's message. Beverly continues to work feverishly at the interface console.

RIMER
(to Geordi)
Geordi, our sensors can't read you anymore.

GEORDI
That's okay, Commander.

86 INT. SCIENCE SHIP - CONTINUOUS

Geordi is back at the console, working like crazy. Small explosions can be heard offscreen - the ship is coming apart.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I'm at five percent shield strength. In about a minute there won't be anything left to read...

SILVA LA FORGE

Geordi...

Geordi turns to her.

SILVA LA FORGE
(continuing)
Thank you...

Geordi stares at her -- it's a strange moment, she is and is not his mother. Before Geordi can say anything -- she becomes a flame. And quickly moves straight through the bulkhead, disappearing completely.

Geordi turns back to the console.

GEORDI
I'm reversing direction --

A HUGE EXPLOSION OFFSCREEN. This time, Geordi is flung forward -- where he clutches the console for support.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORDI
This is it, Enterprise...

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Beverly continues to work as fast as she can.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Twenty-nine seconds to shield failure.

RIKER
He'll be disconnected. He'll die.

Beverly looks up from the console.

BEVERLY
I think I can compensate. I'll feed the recorded inputs back into Geordi's nervous system -- maintain the levels of intensity until I can bring them back to normal.

RIKER
Like a decompression tank...

BEVERLY
(nods)
The same idea.

GEORDI
Seven seconds...

INT. SCIENCE SHIP ENGINEERING - CONTINUOUS

Geordi at the controls.

GEORDI
(continuing)
Four... three... two... one...

The ship suddenly IMPLODES in a violent smash -- Geordi cries out in pain.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

As Geordi continues the same cry, Beverly hits a control on the interface console.

(CONTINUED)
BEVERLY
I'm switching inputs!

Geordi's face suddenly seems to freeze in its expression. Everyone watches for several tense beats.

RIKER
Is it working?

Beverly checks the monitor.

BEVERLY
I don't know... His vital signs...

Geordi's face suddenly relaxes. Beverly responds to what she sees on the monitor, smiling.

BEVERLY
(continuing)
Are stable...

Everyone reacts with relief.

EXT. ENTERPRISE
The ship is at impulse across a field of stars.

INT. READY ROOM
Picard is behind his desk, Geordi standing somewhat formally in front of him -- he's been called on the carpet.

PICARD
You disobeyed my direct order, and you put yourself in grave danger. (beat) I'm not happy.

GEORDI
Yes, Sir.

A beat. Picard's tone softens.

PICARD
That being said, I would have done the same, had it been me.

Geordi reacts.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PICARD
(continuing)
I'm sorry you didn't find your mother.

A moment between them.

PICARD
(continuing)
I want you to take the next few days off. And if you need anything... You know where I am.

GEORDI
(nods)
Thank you, Captain.

Geordi turns and goes out the door. Picard watches him go, eyes thoughtful...

INT. GEORDI'S QUARTERS

The lights are dim -- as though the hour is late. Geordi is sitting alone at his desk, his mood quiet.

He touches a control.

GEORDI
Chief Engineer's log, Stardate XXXXX.X...

A long, silent moment.

GEORDI
(continuing)
I guess she's really gone...

OFF the sadness on Geordi's face.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END