

# STAR TREK

*THE NEXT GENERATION*®

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING







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## THE NEXT GENERATION®

### INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

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DIGITAL

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**SPACE... THE FINAL FRONTIER.**

**THESE ARE THE VOYAGES OF THE *STARSHIP ENTERPRISE*.**

**ITS CONTINUING MISSION: TO EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS,  
TO SEEK OUT NEW LIFE AND NEW CIVILIZATIONS,  
TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE.**









PROGRAM SAVED.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DATA.



SIR? MAY I ASK A QUESTION?

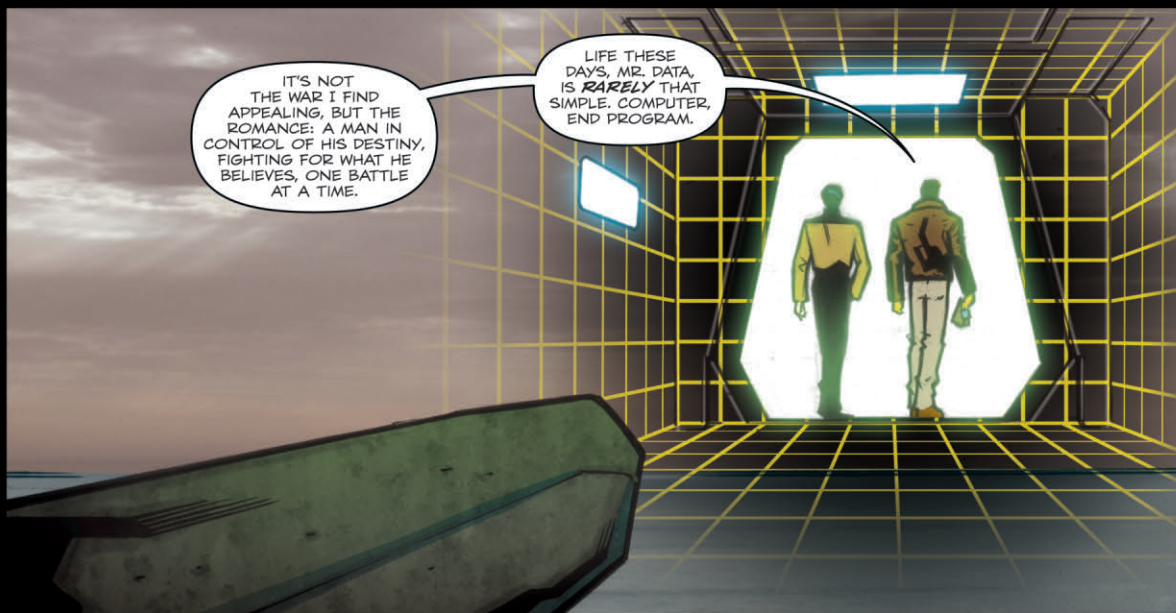
I WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED IF YOU DIDN'T.

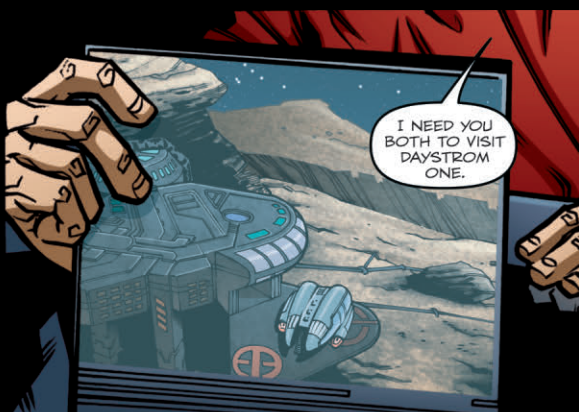
IS IT NOT INCONGRUOUS TO FIND RELAXATION IN A SIMULATION OF WAR?



IT'S NOT THE WAR I FIND APPEALING, BUT THE ROMANCE: A MAN IN CONTROL OF HIS DESTINY, FIGHTING FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES, ONE BATTLE AT A TIME.

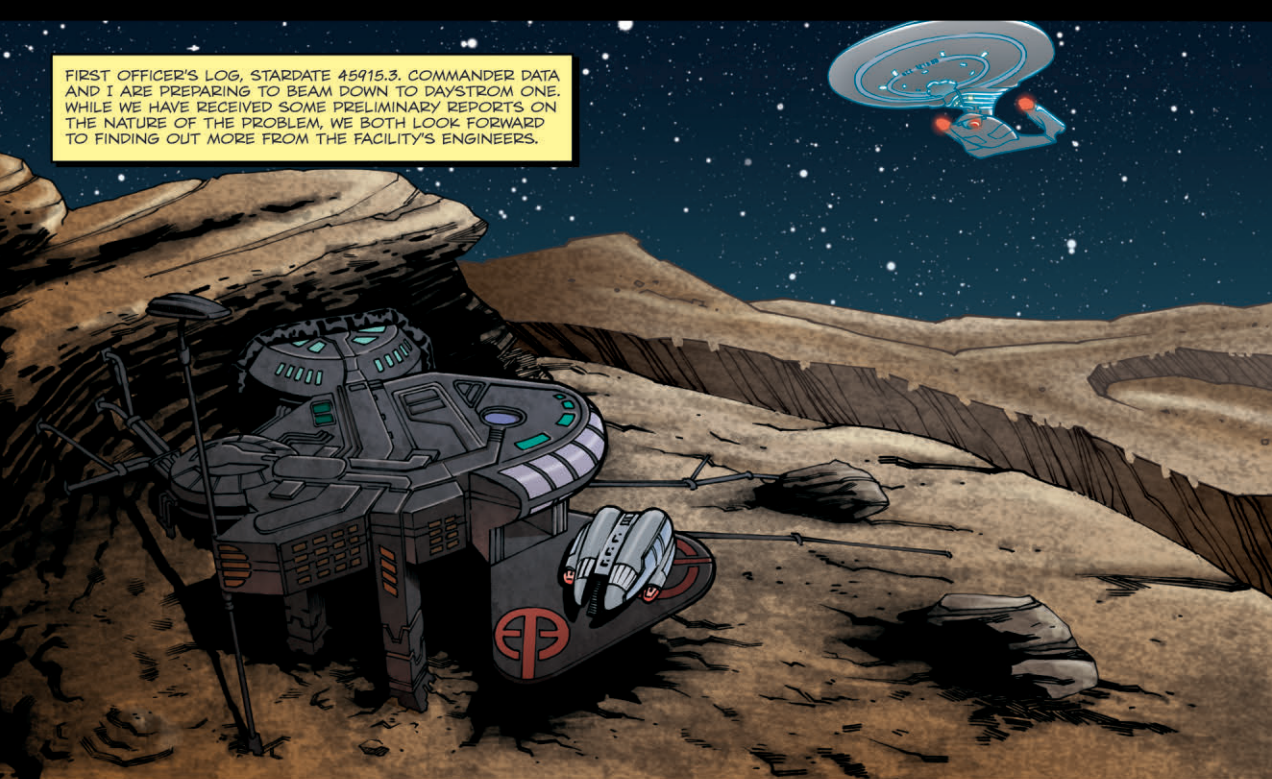
LIFE THESE DAYS, MR. DATA, IS *RARELY* THAT SIMPLE. COMPUTER, END PROGRAM.







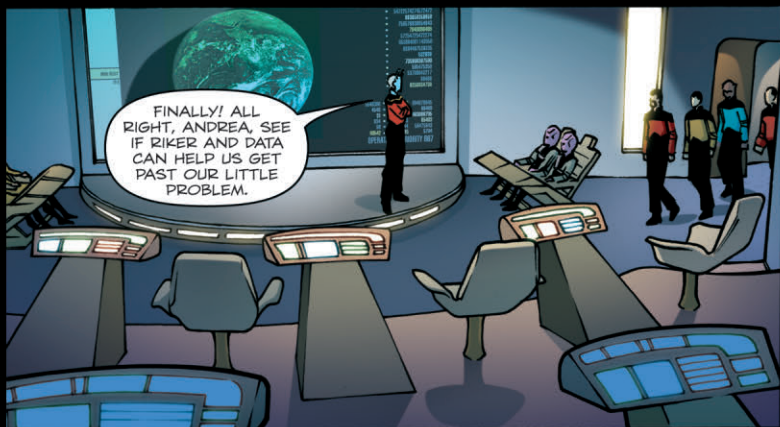
FIRST OFFICER'S LOG, STARDATE 45915.3. COMMANDER DATA AND I ARE PREPARING TO BEAM DOWN TO DAYSTROM ONE. WHILE WE HAVE RECEIVED SOME PRELIMINARY REPORTS ON THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM, WE BOTH LOOK FORWARD TO FINDING OUT MORE FROM THE FACILITY'S ENGINEERS.



COMMANDER RIKER! COMMANDER DATA! WE'RE VERY GLAD TO SEE YOU! WELCOME TO DAYSTROM ONE.



IF YOU PLEASE, WE'LL TAKE YOU TO ADMIRAL KEBAL.



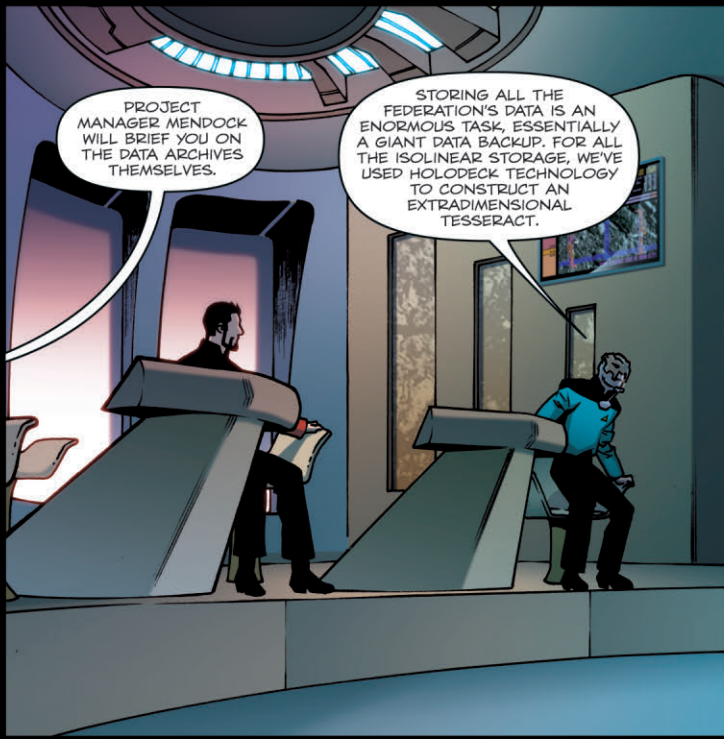
FINALLY! ALL RIGHT, ANDREA, SEE IF RIKER AND DATA CAN HELP US GET PAST OUR LITTLE PROBLEM.



THE DAYSTROM PROJECT WILL CREATE A SECURE ARCHIVE OF THE ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE OF THE FEDERATION. DAYSTROM ONE REPRESENTS THE PROTOTYPE FOR A SERIES OF SUCH FACILITIES.

WE ARE NOW IN THE SERVICE FACILITY. THE ARCHIVE IS IN A CHAMBER BELOW.





PROJECT MANAGER MENDOCK WILL BRIEF YOU ON THE DATA ARCHIVES THEMSELVES.

STORING ALL THE FEDERATION'S DATA IS AN ENORMOUS TASK, ESSENTIALLY A GIANT DATA BACKUP. FOR ALL THE ISOLINEAR STORAGE, WE'VE USED HOLODECK TECHNOLOGY TO CONSTRUCT AN EXTRADIMENSIONAL TESSERACT.



THE TESSERACT-A FOUR-DIMENSIONAL CUBE-ALLOWS US TO EXPONENTIALLY INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE ARCHIVE. WITHIN THE TESSERACT, THE DATA FOR EACH HOMEWORLD IS STORED IN INDIVIDUAL NODES.



MANAGING SUCH A LARGE ARCHIVE IS A HIGHLY COMPLICATED PROJECT. WE'VE CONSTRUCTED AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, BASED UPON DR. NOONIAN SOONG'S POSITRONIC BRAIN TECHNOLOGY, TO SERVE AS THE HUB FOR DAYSTROM ONE.

YES, MY UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THE A.I. WAS WORKING SATISFACTORILY UNTIL RECENTLY?



CORRECT. TWO WEEKS AGO, THE A.I. STARTED TO PERFORM ERRATICALLY, BECOMING SLOW TO RESPOND TO COMMANDS. THIS WEEK, IT STOPPED RESPONDING ENTIRELY. WE'RE CONCERNED THAT THE A.I. MAY HAVE ACHIEVED SENTIENCE AND HAS CHOSEN NOT TO COOPERATE ANY FURTHER.

MR. DATA, WE NEED YOUR EXPERTISE TO HELP US REGAIN CONTROL OF THE ARCHIVE. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED AND ORDERED TO SHUT DOWN THE A.I. HUB IF THAT BECOMES NECESSARY TO REGAIN CONTROL.



IF THE A.I. HAS INDEED ACHIEVED SENTIENCE, I AM UNSURE THAT I WOULD BE WILLING TO SIMPLY "TURN IT OFF."

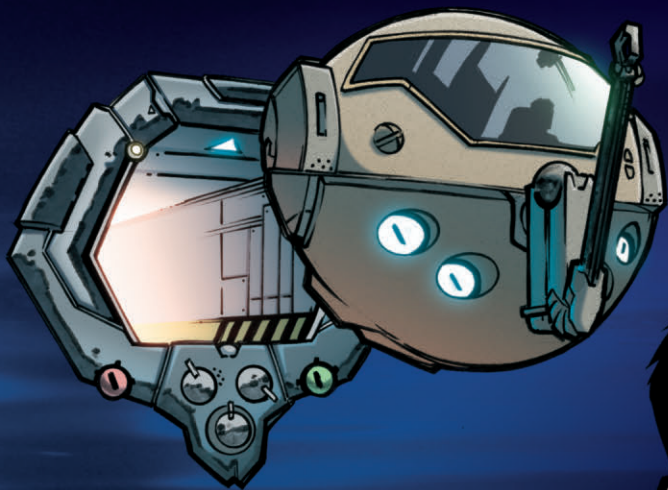
YES, I ANTICIPATED YOUR OBJECTION. THAT'S WHY COMMANDER RIKER WILL BE ACCOMPANYING YOU. THIS PROJECT IS TOP PRIORITY! THE FEDERATION'S NEED FOR SECURE, RELIABLE DATA BACKUP IS CRITICAL. THIS WAYWARD A.I. MUST BE EITHER REPAIRED OR DESTROYED SO WE CAN START FROM SCRATCH.



MR. DATA, WE THINK YOU HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF SALVAGING OUR WORK AND KEEPING US FROM STARTING ALL OVER. THAT'S WHY WE'VE ASKED FOR YOUR HELP.

IF YOU TWO WILL FOLLOW ME, WE'LL TAKE YOU TO THE TESSERACT GATEWAY AND DIRECTLY INTO THE ARCHIVE, OR, AS OUR FRIENDS THE BYNARS CALL IT, THE "DATA LANDSCAPE." FROM THERE, YOU CAN USE A MAINTENANCE POD TO TRAVEL AMONG THE INDIVIDUAL DATA NODES AND FIND YOUR WAY TO THE CENTRAL A.I. HUB.



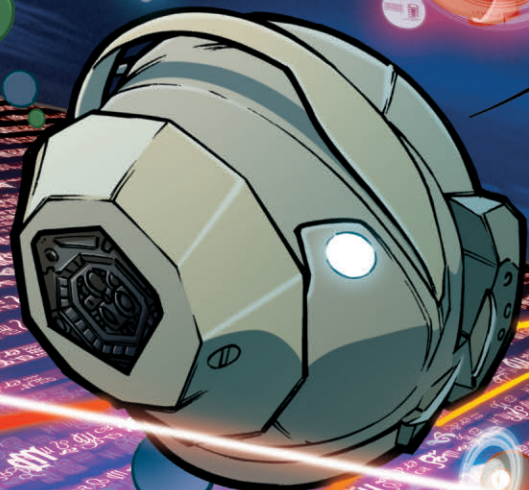


AMAZING...

THE POSITRONIC  
BRAIN EXTRAPOLATED  
TO THE ULTIMATE DEGREE,  
COMMANDER. EACH OF THE DATA  
NODES YOU SEE BEFORE YOU  
CONTAIN THE ACCUMULATED  
KNOWLEDGE AND DATA OF  
AN ENTIRE PLANET  
OR RACE.

NOT ONLY WHAT  
THE FEDERATION ITSELF  
HAS ACCUMULATED, BUT ALSO  
THAT OF THOUSANDS OF MEMBER  
WORLDS AND FRIENDLY SOCIETIES,  
WHO HAVE ELECTED TO STORE  
BACKUP COPIES OF THEIR ARCHIVES  
HERE FOR SAFEKEEPING. THE  
GLOWING STRANDS BETWEEN THE  
NODES REPRESENT THE  
CROSS-REFERENCING OF  
INFORMATION.

AND WE  
JUST FOLLOW THE  
ACCESS CORRIDOR  
TO THE CENTRAL A.I.  
UNIT, CORRECT?







PRECISELY. AT OUR PRESENT COURSE, WE SHOULD REACH THE UNIT IN APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AND THIRTY-SEVEN MINUTES.

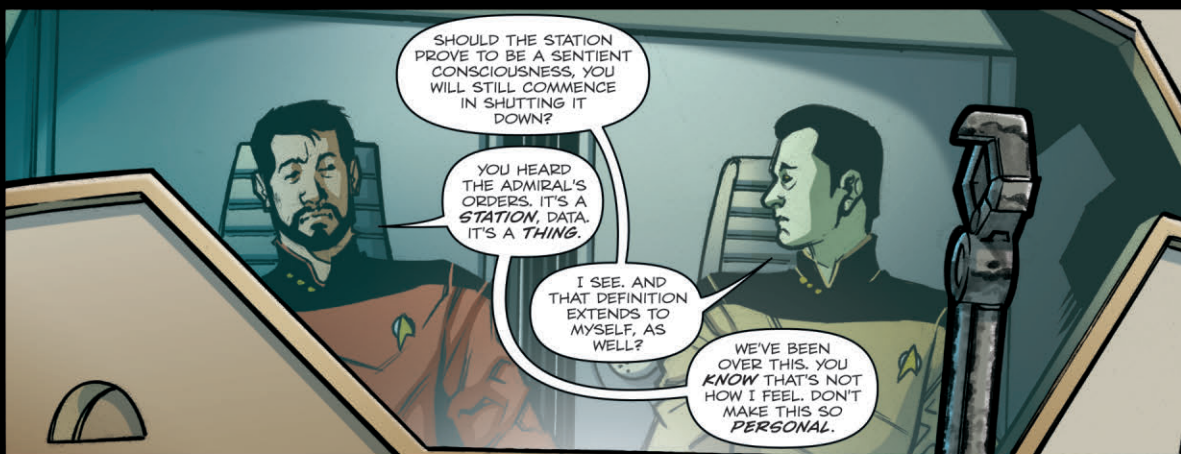


COMMANDER, I WAS CONSIDERING THE ADMIRAL'S REMARK, ABOUT "ANTICIPATING MY OBJECTION."

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DATA. AND YOU HAVE MADE YOUR OBJECTIONS CLEAR IN THE PAST.

GRANTED, I WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION. IF I DO BELIEVE THE STATION TO BE SENTIENT, WHAT THEN?

LET'S CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN WE COME TO IT, SHALL WE, DATA?



SHOULD THE STATION PROVE TO BE A SENTIENT CONSCIOUSNESS, YOU WILL STILL COMMENCE IN SHUTTING IT DOWN?

YOU HEARD THE ADMIRAL'S ORDERS. IT'S A STATION, DATA. IT'S A *THING*.

I SEE, AND THAT DEFINITION EXTENDS TO MYSELF, AS WELL?

WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS. YOU *KNOW* THAT'S NOT HOW I FEEL. DON'T MAKE THIS SO *PERSONAL*.



AS I AM NOT TECHNICALLY A PERSON, I SHALL TRY NOT TO, SIR.

DATA—

—WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT'S THAT?

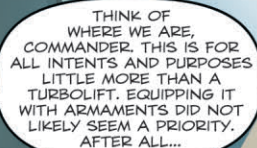
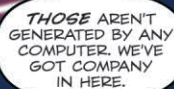
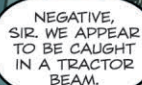


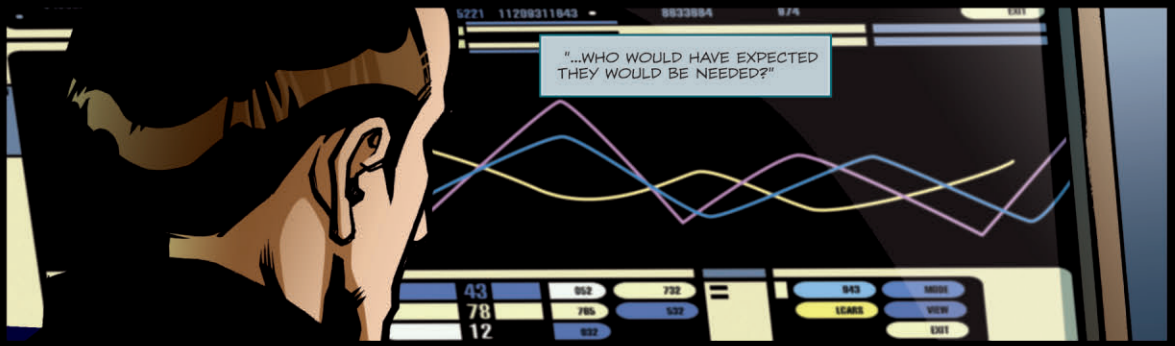






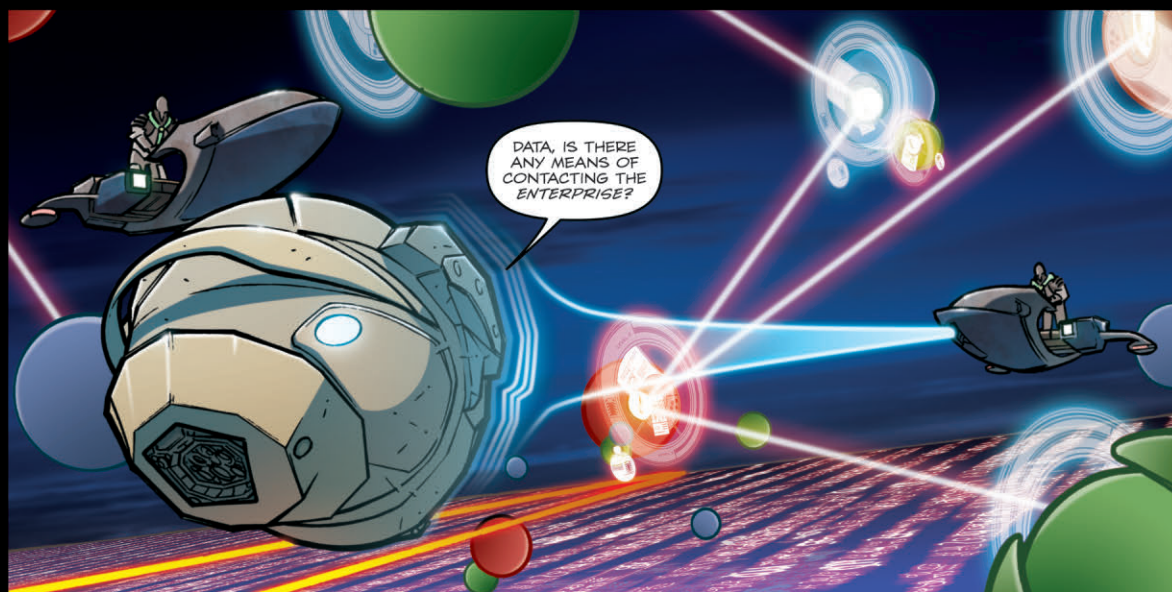










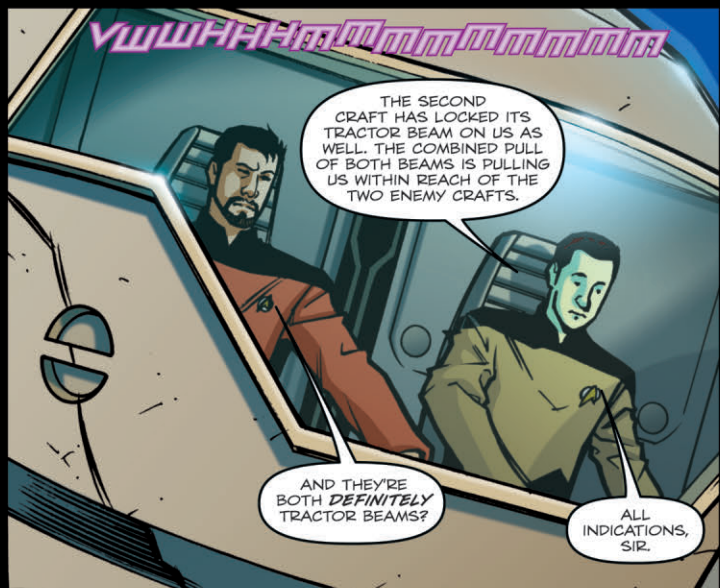


DATA, IS THERE ANY MEANS OF CONTACTING THE ENTERPRISE?



NEGATIVE, COMMANDER. THE INTERDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF THE TESSERACT CUTS OFF ALL CONVENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS.

OF COURSE IT DOES. NO POINT IN SETTING THE PERFECT MOUSETRAP IF THE MICE CAN JUST CALL FOR HELP.



THE SECOND CRAFT HAS LOCKED ITS TRACTOR BEAM ON US AS WELL. THE COMBINED PULL OF BOTH BEAMS IS PULLING US WITHIN REACH OF THE TWO ENEMY CRAFTS.

AND THEY'RE BOTH **DEFINITELY** TRACTOR BEAMS?

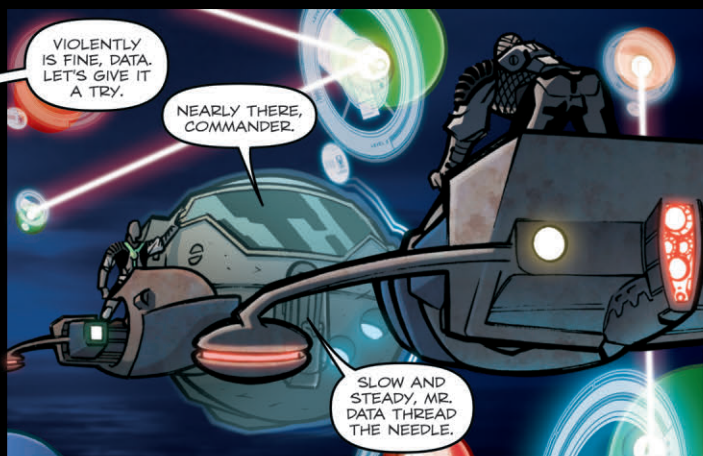
ALL INDICATIONS, SIR.



ALL RIGHT, THEN. IF THEY'RE NOT TRYING TO KILL US, THEN WE HAVE THE EDGE.

MR. DATA, IT'S TIME WE TOOK SOME RISKS.





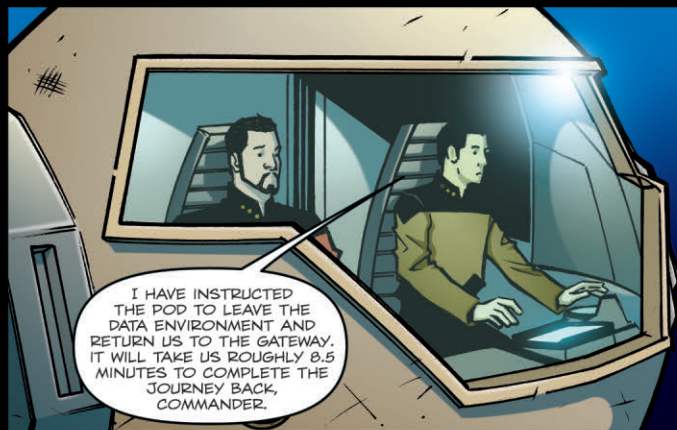












I HAVE INSTRUCTED THE POD TO LEAVE THE DATA ENVIRONMENT AND RETURN US TO THE GATEWAY. IT WILL TAKE US ROUGHLY 8.5 MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE JOURNEY BACK, COMMANDER.



WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?



WE ARE BEING FIRED UPON, SIR. SHORT-RANGE DISRUPTOR PISTOL FIRE, JUDGING BY THE SOUND. THE INTENT SEEMS NOT TO DESTROY OUR POD, MERELY TO STOP ITS PROGRESS.



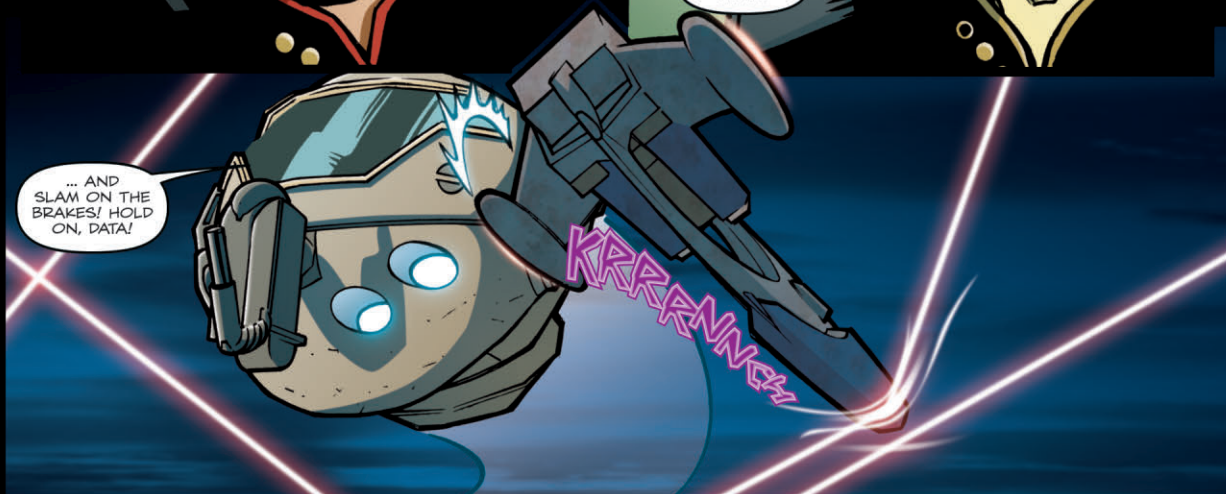
THIS IS RIDICULOUS. HOW CAN WE BE UNDER ATTACK INSIDE A SECURE FEDERATION FACILITY?

UNKNOWN. I AM, HOWEVER...

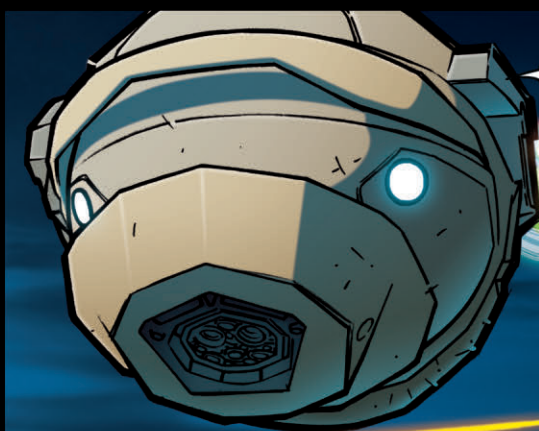


...ATTEMPTING TO EXTRICATE US FROM THIS SITUATION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.







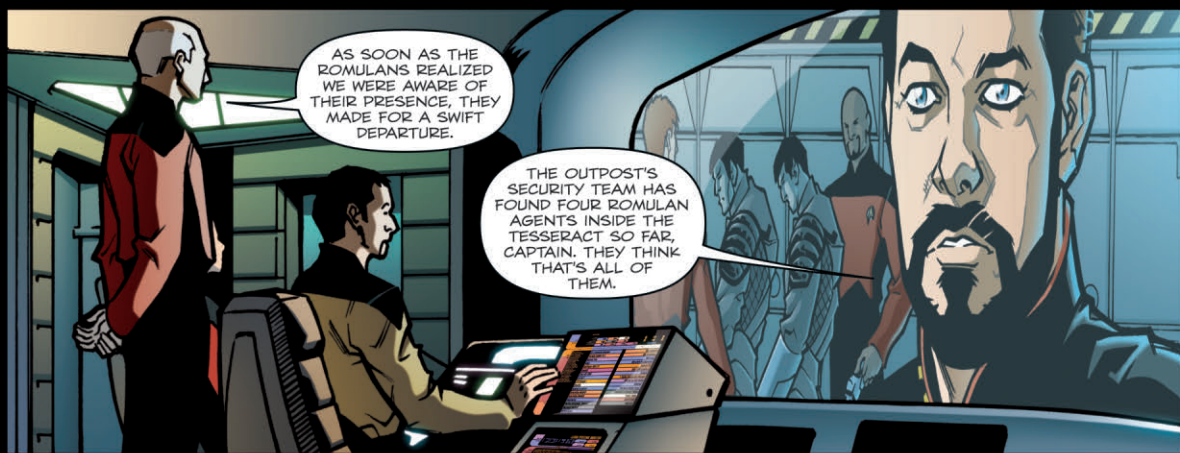


EXCELLENT. LET'S  
HEAD BACK TO THE  
GATEWAY AND COME  
BACK WITH PROPER  
REINFORCEMENTS.

IF THERE'S  
ANYBODY ELSE  
IN HERE AFTER US,  
I'D LIKE TO BE  
ARMED WITH MORE  
THAN A HAND  
PHASER...







AS SOON AS THE ROMULANS REALIZED WE WERE AWARE OF THEIR PRESENCE, THEY MADE FOR A SWIFT DEPARTURE.

THE OUTPOST'S SECURITY TEAM HAS FOUND FOUR ROMULAN AGENTS INSIDE THE TESSERACT SO FAR, CAPTAIN. THEY THINK THAT'S ALL OF THEM.



WE STILL HAVE NO IDEA HOW THE ROMULANS ACCESSED THE TESSERACT TO BEGIN WITH, BUT IT'S CLEAR NOW THEY WERE CREATING THE ANOMALIES THAT CAUSED THE STAFF TO THINK THE STATION HAD GAINED SENTIENCE. ALL TO LURE US HERE.



SO IT WOULD SEEM, NUMBER ONE.

INCOMING TRANSMISSION FROM THE FLEEING ROMULAN SHIP, CAPTAIN. WE'RE BEING HAILED.

ON SCREEN, ENSIGN.

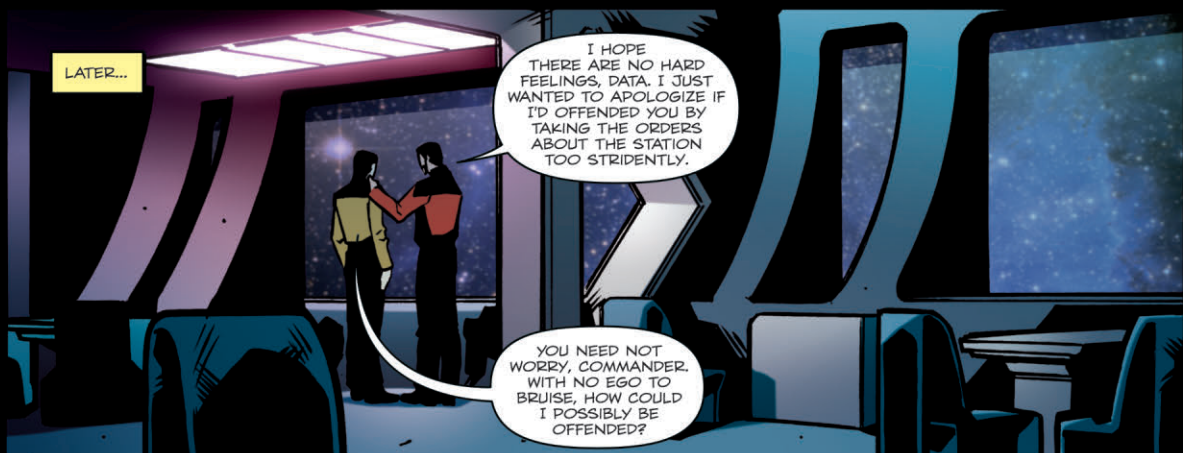


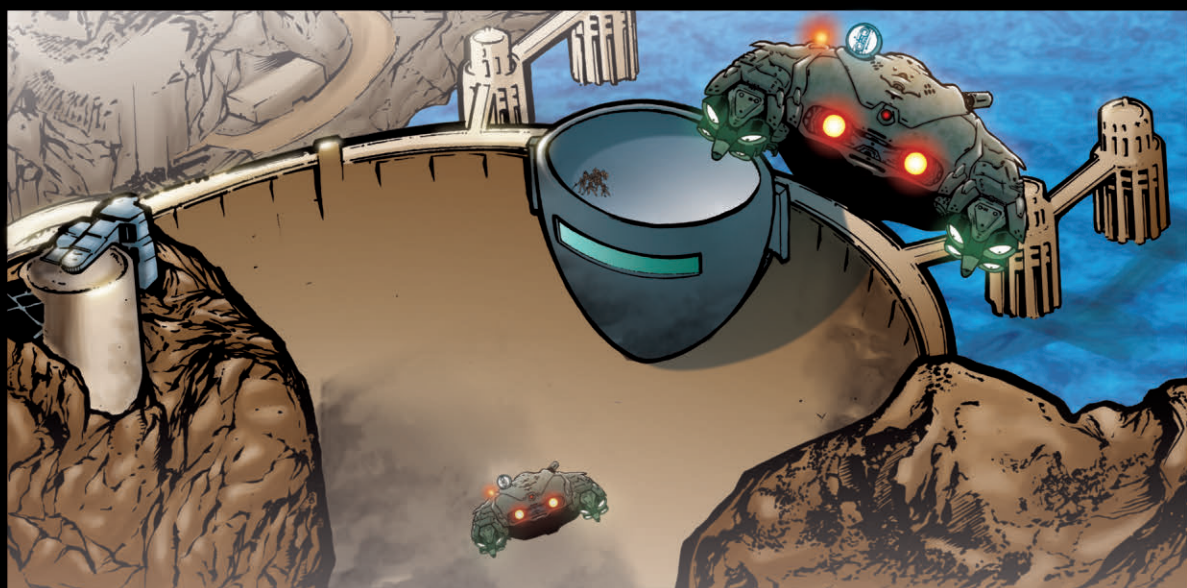
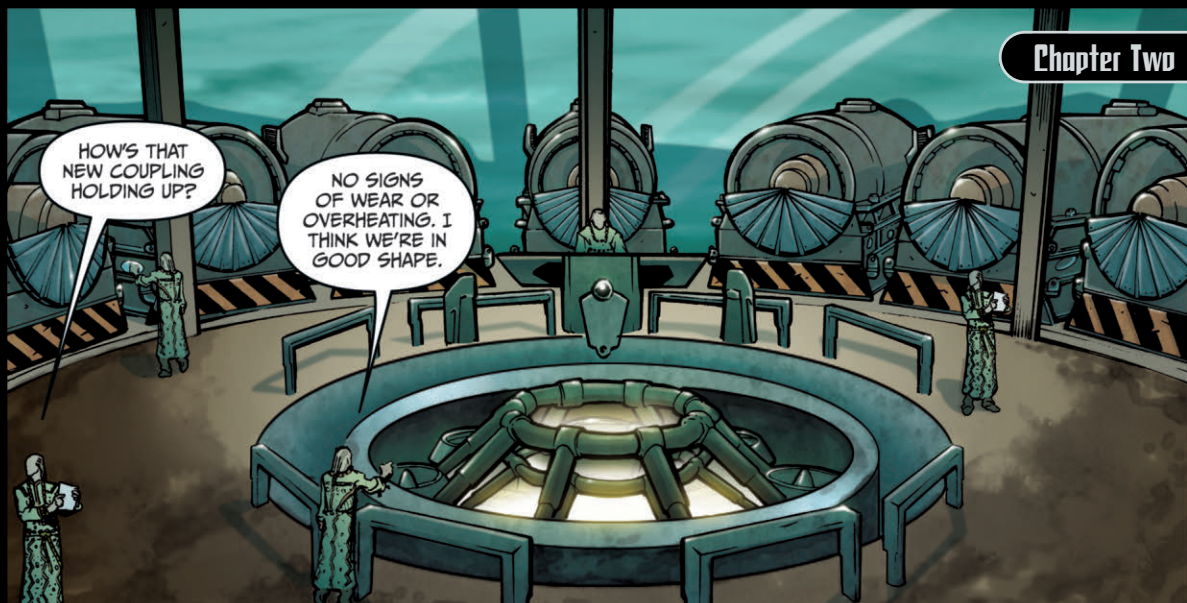
TOMALAK!

CAPTAIN PICARD. A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU, THOUGH NOT ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED.

















PAMPERED BUREAUCRATS. ATON, ARE YOU READY?

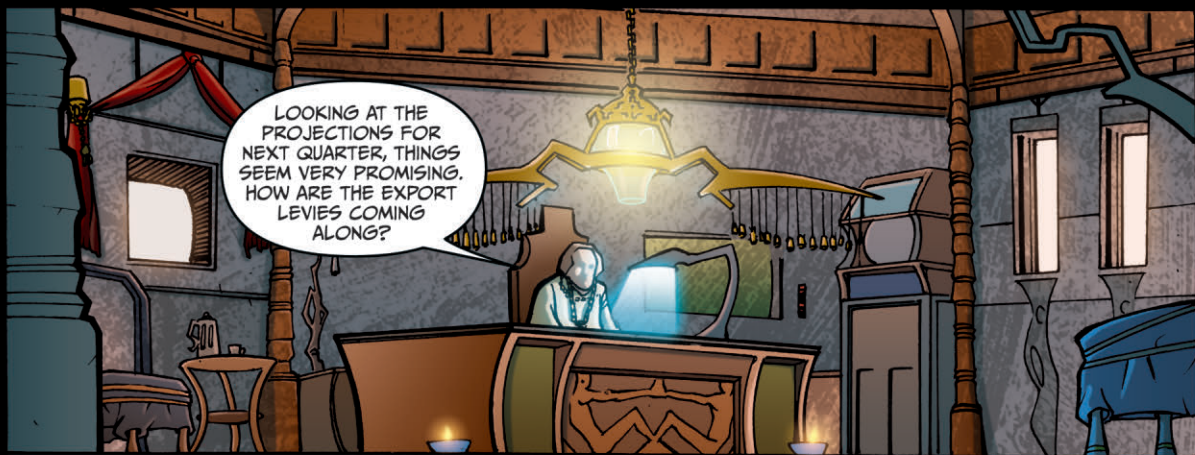


EVERYTHING IS IN PLACE, AREEN.



DO IT!

DONE!



LOOKING AT THE PROJECTIONS FOR NEXT QUARTER, THINGS SEEM VERY PROMISING. HOW ARE THE EXPORT LEVIES COMING ALONG?



WHAA-?





CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 45934.7.

HAVING COMPLETED OUR MISSION TO THE DAYSTROM ONE FACILITY, WE'RE NOW HEADING TO THE VOTAR VII COLONY TO HELP RESOLVE A FACTIONAL DISPUTE AMONG SOME RIGELIAN COLONISTS.

DATA, WOULD YOU PLEASE BRIEF EVERYONE ON THE VOTAR COLONY AND THE DISPUTE AT HAND?



CERTAINLY, SIR. VOTAR VII IS A FEDERATION COLONY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AS A COOPERATIVE VENTURE OF TWO GROUPS FROM THE RIGEL SYSTEM: THE RIGELIANS AND THE KAYLAR.



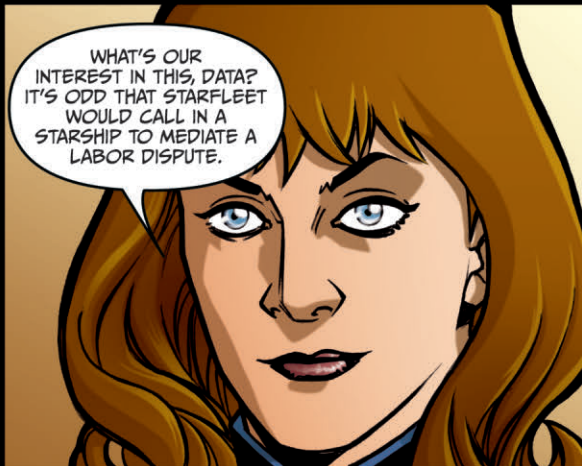




THE RIGELIANS ARE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND INDUSTRIOUS. THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING LUXURIOUSLY ON THE PROFITS MADE FROM THEIR ECONOMIC VENTURES.

0594730303

THE KAYLAR ARE LARGE AND PHYSICALLY POWERFUL, KNOWN FOR THEIR ABILITIES IN CONSTRUCTION AS WELL AS FOR THEIR AGGRESSIVE NATURE.



WHAT'S OUR INTEREST IN THIS, DATA? IT'S ODD THAT STARFLEET WOULD CALL IN A STARSHIP TO MEDIATE A LABOR DISPUTE.



A STRATEGIC LOCATION, DOCTOR. IF THE RIGELIANS FAIL TO COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION ON VOTAR VII, THE CARDASSIANS WILL STEP IN.

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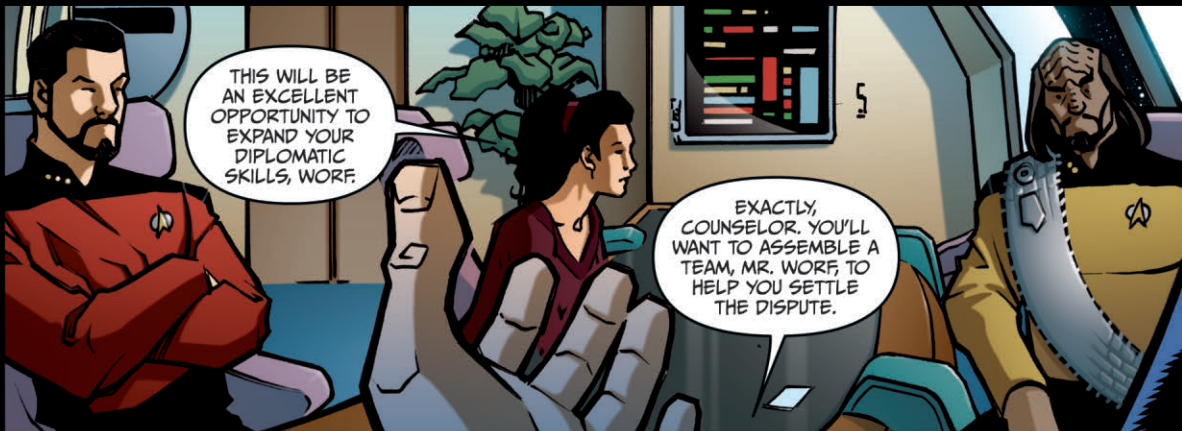


THE KAYLAR HAVE STAGED AN UPRISING AGAINST THE RIGELIANS. STARFLEET WANTS THE DISPUTE RESOLVED QUICKLY TO AVOID CARDASSIAN INTERVENTION.

CAPTAIN, WE CANNOT ALLOW THE CARDASSIANS TO GAIN A FOOTHOLD. THIS COLONY MUST NOT FAIL!



ACTUALLY, MR. WORF, I WAS THINKING OF PUTTING YOU IN CHARGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.



THIS WILL BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND YOUR DIPLOMATIC SKILLS, WORF.

EXACTLY, COUNSELOR. YOU'LL WANT TO ASSEMBLE A TEAM, MR. WORF, TO HELP YOU SETTLE THE DISPUTE.





DON'T WORRY, MR. WORF—I THINK YOU'LL MAKE AN EXCELLENT DIPLOMAT!



ENSIGN, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO JOIN MY AWAY TEAM TO SETTLE THE VOTAR DISPUTE. YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH INSURRECTIONS WILL BE A VALUABLE ASSET.

I DON'T KNOW, COMMANDER. I'M FAMILIAR WITH BEING PART OF A RESISTANCE, NOT HOW TO CRUSH THEM.

I THINK THIS TASK WILL PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR BOTH OF US. I WOULD VALUE ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE WITH A STRATEGIC EYE.

VERY WELL, COMMANDER. I ACCEPT.



I'LL BE BEAMING YOU TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE RIGELIAN FACTION. THEY ARE EXPECTING YOU. ARE YOU READY?

AFFIRMATIVE, CHIEF. ENERGIZE.





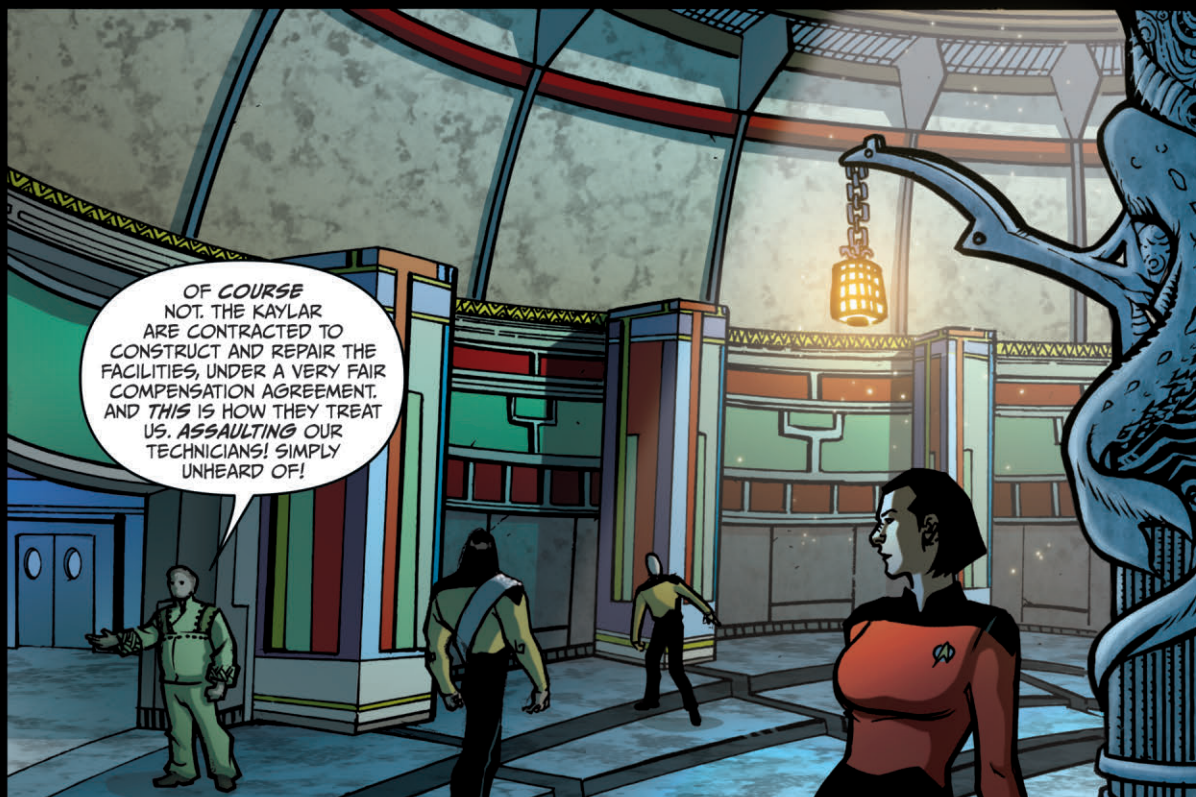
CAN YOU SEE?  
CAN YOU SEE WHAT  
THEY'VE DRIVEN US  
TO? SAVAGES!

WHAT *PRECISELY*  
DO THE KAYLAR HOPE  
TO GAIN BY CAPTURING  
THE POWER PLANT,  
ADMINISTRATOR?

WHAT DO YOU *THINK*  
THEY WANT, COMMANDER?  
THEY WANT TO CONTROL THE  
OUTPOST FOR THEMSELVES!  
JUST BECAUSE THEY BUILT THE  
PLACE, THEY SEEM TO  
THINK THEY OWN IT.



AND THAT'S  
NOT THE  
CASE?



OF COURSE  
NOT. THE KAYLAR  
ARE CONTRACTED TO  
CONSTRUCT AND REPAIR THE  
FACILITIES, UNDER A VERY FAIR  
COMPENSATION AGREEMENT.  
AND *THIS* IS HOW THEY TREAT  
US. ASSAULTING OUR  
TECHNICIANS! SIMPLY  
UNHEARD OF!





AND IF WE DON'T ACCEDE TO THEIR DEMANDS, THOSE BARBARIANS SAY THEY'LL BLOW UP THE DAM! COLONISTS ARE ALREADY STARTING TO FLEE THE PLANET!

HM. THAT WOULD MAKE A FRONTAL ASSAULT RISKY. EITHER TAKING THE FACILITY BY FORCE OR BEAMING IN DIRECTLY WOULD STILL ALLOW THEM TO DESTROY THE DAM.



WE DO HAVE A WAY IN. THIS SERIES OF WASTE DUCTS WAS INSTALLED BEFORE THE KAYLAR BEGAN CONSTRUCTION ON THE DAM. THEY MAY KNOW ABOUT IT, BUT THEY MAY NOT.

THE ACCESS PANELS OPEN UP ONLY FOOTSTEPS AWAY FROM THE DAM'S PRIMARY TURBOLIFT. YOU CAN GET ANYWHERE IN THE POWER PLANT FROM THERE.

DO WE KNOW HOW MANY OF THE KAYLAR PRESENTLY HOLD THE PLANT?

OUR PEOPLE REPORTED AT LEAST TEN. BY NOW, WHO KNOWS? THERE ARE OVER 200 KAYLAR LABORERS ON VOTAR VII.



THIS SEEMS LIKE A DECENT ENOUGH PLAN, SIR.




I SUPPOSE...



...LET US HOPE IT DOES NOT BECOME NECESSARY.






WE ARE AT AN IMPASSE, AND I SEE NO SOLUTION THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE DIRECT INTERVENTION.

WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING. I ATTEMPTED TO MEET WITH THE KAYLAR AND THEY REFUSED TO EVEN SEE US.




THIS IS BETWEEN THE RIGELIANS AND US.

FEDERATION INTERFERENCE WILL **NOT** BE TOLERATED.




THE LACK OF POWER IS BECOMING MORE OF A CONCERN FOR THE RIGELIANS. WE CAN SUPPLY GENERATORS, BUT THAT'S NOT A SOLUTION.

AND THE RIGELIANS ARE CONVINCED THE KAYLAR INTEND TO DESTROY THE DAM.



THE PROJECT IS ON THE VERGE OF FAILURE. SOME OF THE RIGELIANS ARE PREPARING TO ABANDON THE COLONY. I THINK WE NEED TO ACT.



IF YOU'RE **CONVINCED** THAT YOU'VE EXHAUSTED ALL POSSIBILITIES, I'LL AUTHORIZE A **NON-LETHAL** EFFORT TO TAKE THE DAM BY FORCE.



I SEE **NO OTHER** OPTIONS, SIR.

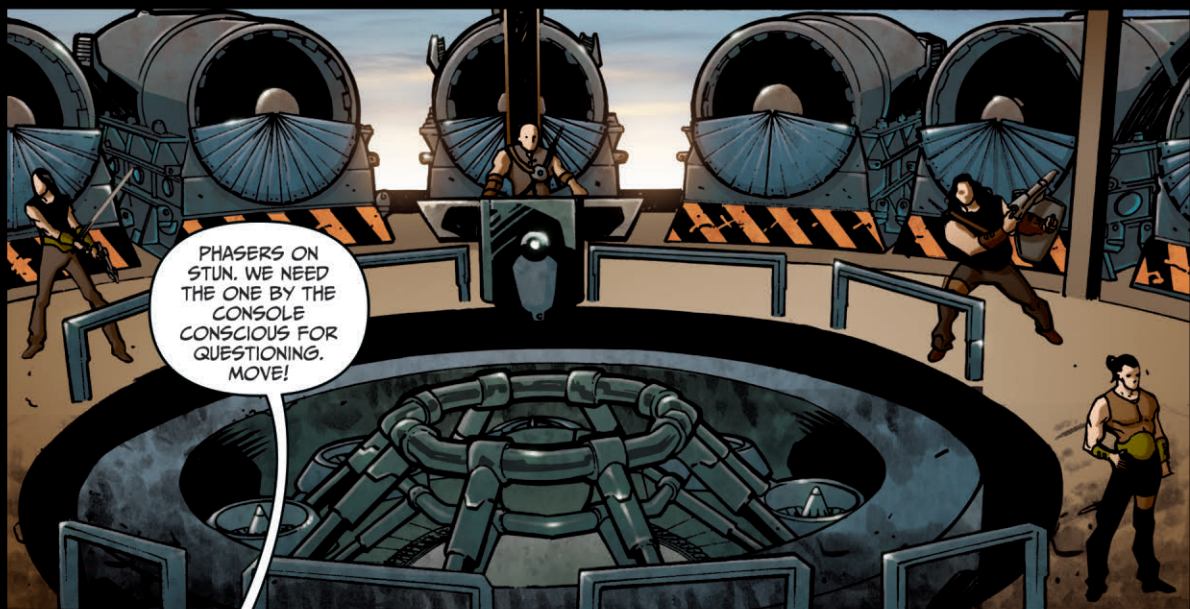
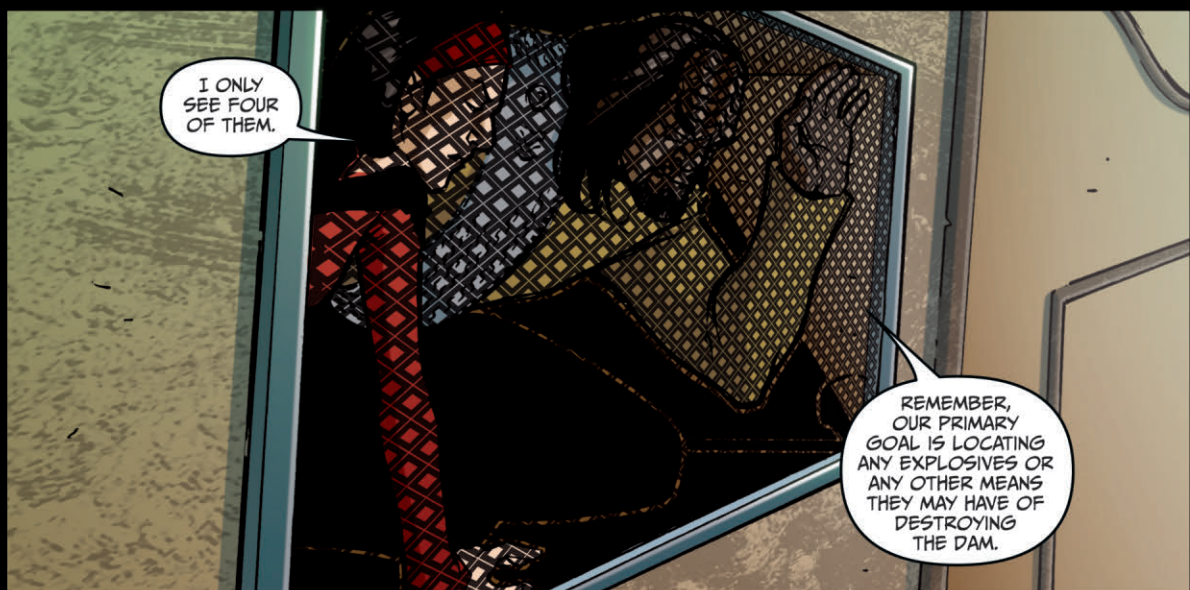


VERY WELL. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.





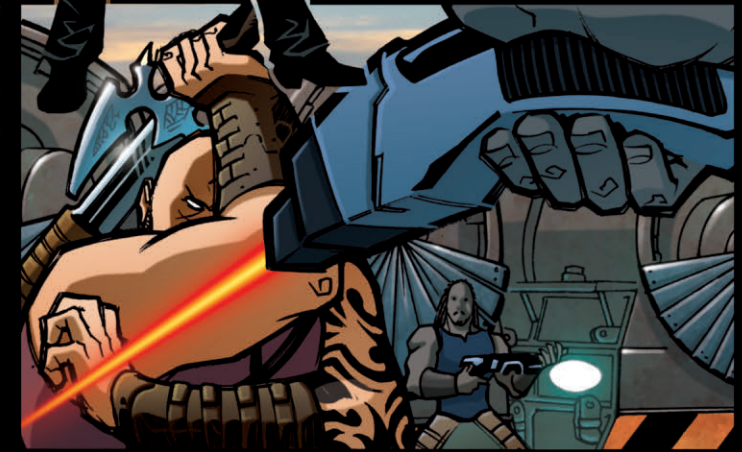
























DOCTOR CRUSHER REPORTS THAT SINGH WILL RECOVER. BUT HOW CAN I SUCCEED WHEN ONE SIDE LIES TO ME, AND THE OTHER SIDE *REFUSES* TO NEGOTIATE!

THE KAYLAR LEADER TOLD ME JUST BEFORE WE BEAMED OUT THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF DAMAGING THE DAM. I'M NO LONGER SURE WHO OR WHAT TO BELIEVE!



I DON'T LIKE FEELING...  
HELPLESS.



HM.



WOOF, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE FRENCH DIPLOMAT TALLEYRAND?

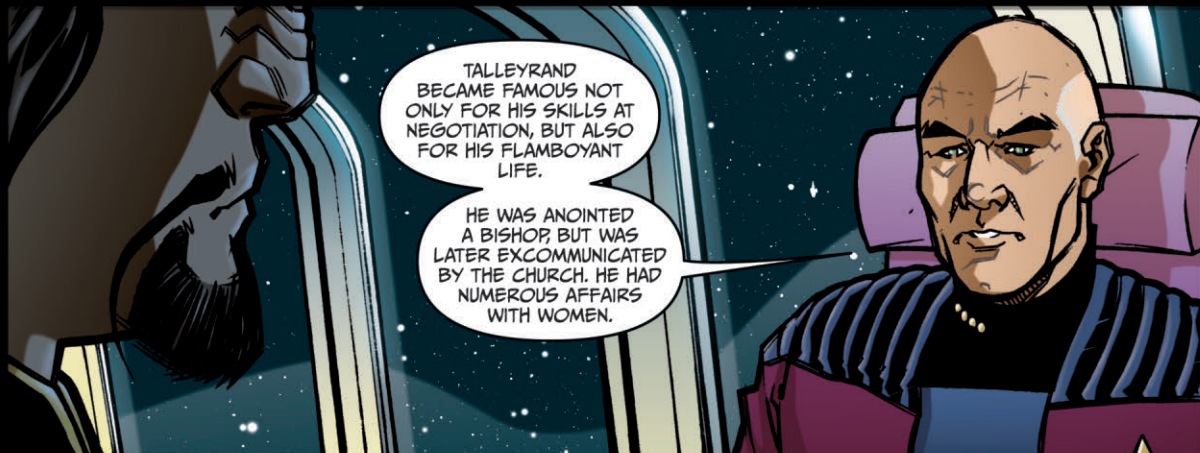


TALLEYRAND WAS A MASTER NEGOTIATOR UNDER THE OLD REGIME, DURING THE REVOLUTION, UNDER NAPOLEON, AND EVEN AFTER NAPOLEON.



HE MANAGED TO NAVIGATE HIS WAY THROUGH THAT TURBULENT PERIOD OF FRENCH HISTORY, ALL WHILE KEEPING HIS HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS—NO SMALL TASK DURING THE TIME OF THE GUILLOTINE.





TALLEYRAND  
BECAME FAMOUS NOT  
ONLY FOR HIS SKILLS AT  
NEGOTIATION, BUT ALSO  
FOR HIS FLAMBOYANT  
LIFE.

HE WAS ANOINTED  
A BISHOP, BUT WAS  
LATER EXCOMMUNICATED  
BY THE CHURCH. HE HAD  
NUMEROUS AFFAIRS  
WITH WOMEN.



HE WAS  
EVEN KNOWN  
FOR ACCEPTING  
BRIBES!

HE WAS A MAN OF  
OBVIOUS CONTRADICTIONS,  
BUT BECAUSE HE MADE THE  
ART OF DIPLOMACY HIS OWN,  
HE EXCELLED AT IT IN A WAY  
ALMOST NO ONE ELSE HAS. HIS  
SOLUTIONS WERE TYPICALLY  
UNIQUE AND SUITED TO HIS  
CHARACTER.



I WONDER, MR.  
WOLF, IF THERE MIGHT  
BE A RESOLUTION HERE  
BEST ACHIEVED IF YOU  
WERE TO FOLLOW YOUR  
OWN SENSIBILITIES.



I SEE.  
THANK YOU,  
CAPTAIN.





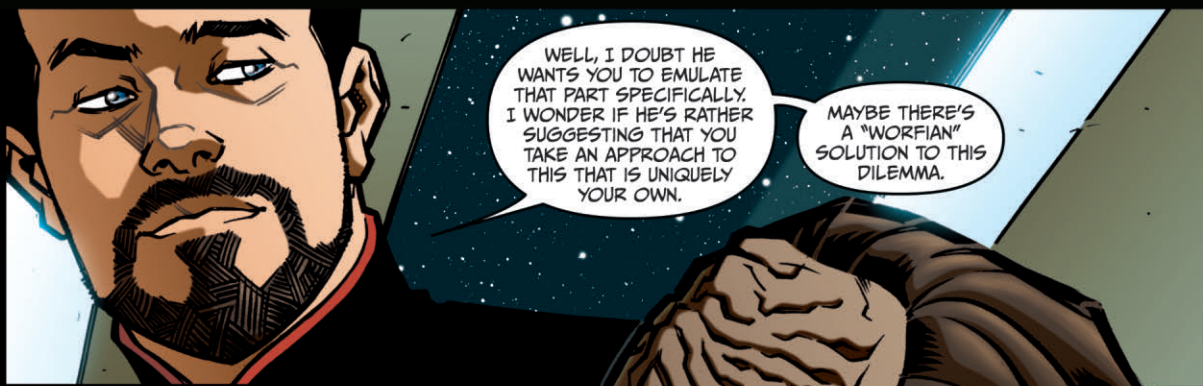
I DO  
NOT SEE  
AT ALL!



SO THE  
MEETING WITH  
CAPTAIN PICARD  
WAS LESS THAN  
PRODUCTIVE?



YES. HE  
RECOMMENDED I  
CONSIDER THE EXAMPLE  
OF THE FRENCH  
DIPLOMAT TALLEYRAND, A  
RENOWNED SCOUNDREL  
AND WOMANIZER.



WELL, I DOUBT HE  
WANTS YOU TO EMULATE  
THAT PART SPECIFICALLY.  
I WONDER IF HE'S RATHER  
SUGGESTING THAT YOU  
TAKE AN APPROACH TO  
THIS THAT IS UNIQUELY  
YOUR OWN.

MAYBE THERE'S  
A "WORFIAN"  
SOLUTION TO THIS  
DILEMMA.



PERHAPS  
THERE IS.





ADMINISTRATOR  
PAHTEL! LET US  
CONFER.



I'VE JUST  
COME FROM A MOST  
ENLIGHTENING MEETING  
WITH THE KAYLAR, AT  
WHICH ONE OF MY MEN  
WAS VERY NEARLY  
KILLED.



THEY CLAIM  
THEY'D NEVER  
DREAM OF BLOWING  
UP THE DAM. A MOST  
DIFFERENT STORY THAN  
WHAT WE'VE BEEN  
TOLD.



I'M WONDERING  
WHOM I SHOULD  
BELIEVE...



WELL... PERHAPS  
THE THREAT WAS  
MERELY IMPLIED. AN  
INFERENCE ON  
OUR PART?





PERHAPS.  
AND WHY WERE THE  
KAYLAR SO AGAINST  
OUR INVOLVEMENT IN  
NEGOTIATIONS?



THE KAYLAR MAY  
HAVE... SOMEHOW  
GOTTEN THE  
IMPRESSION THAT THE  
FEDERATION WOULD BE  
CALLED IN TO FORCIBLY  
REMOVE THEM FROM  
THE FACILITY.



I SEE.  
SOMEHOW.

THE FEDERATION  
DISLIKES BEING MISLED,  
ADMINISTRATOR, AS DO I.  
WE'LL BE LEAVING NOW, AND  
WE'LL BE CERTAIN TO  
RECOMMEND THAT ANY FUTURE  
CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS  
GO ELSEWHERE.

GOOD LUCK  
WITH YOUR  
DISPUTE.



WAIT! SURELY  
AN ACCORD CAN  
BE REACHED!



SURELY.  
SHALL WE GO MEET  
WITH THE KAYLAR,  
ADMINISTRATOR?











CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 45937.2.  
THE ENTERPRISE IS ON SCHEDULE  
FOR A VISIT TO STARBASE 215,  
FOR SOME MINOR REPAIRS AND  
EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT.

## Chapter Three

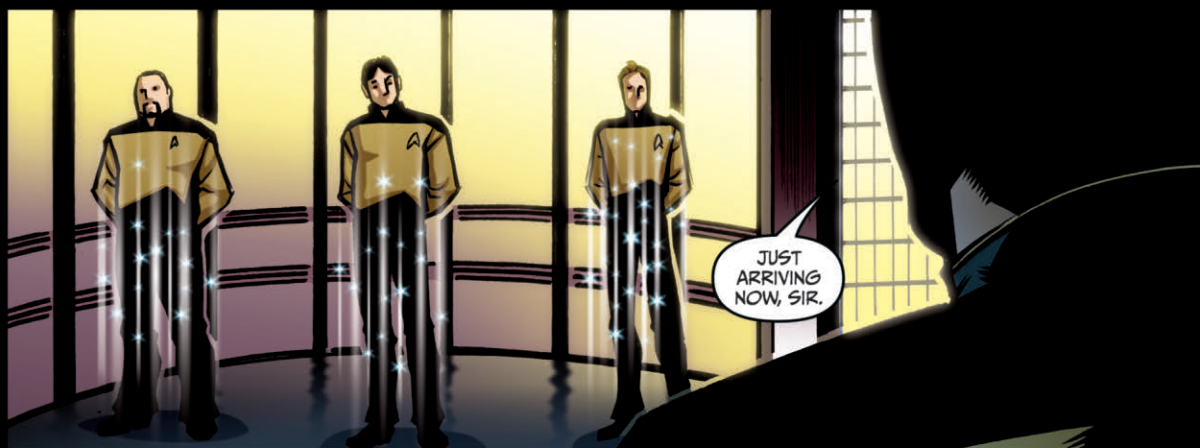
WHILE HERE, WE'LL ALSO BE DROPPING  
OFF THE ROMULAN SPIES FROM THE  
AFFAIR AT DAYSTROM ONE, FOR THEIR  
EVENTUAL RETURN TO ROMULUS THROUGH  
THE PROPER DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

THE ROMULANS HAVE GIVEN NO INDICATION  
AS TO PRECISELY HOW THEY MANAGED TO  
INFILTRATE THE FACILITY, UNFORTUNATELY  
LEAVING THIS A MYSTERY TO BE SOLVED  
ELSEWHERE...

STARBASE  
SECURITY HAS  
INDICATED THEY'RE  
READY TO RECEIVE  
OUR GUESTS,  
COMMANDER.

VERY GOOD. MY  
MEN WILL ACCOMPANY  
THE PRISONERS TO THE  
STARBASE HOLDING  
CELLS.









HOW DO YOU  
KEEP YOUR SANITY,  
COOPED UP IN HERE  
WITH THE TRANSPORTERS  
ALL DAY? DON'T YOU  
EVER WANT A LITTLE  
VARIETY?

VARIETY,  
SIR?



SOMETHING  
DIFFERENT, THAT'S  
ALL—A CHANGE OF  
SCENERY, A DIFFERENT  
ASSIGNMENT. SOMETHING  
BESIDES THIS CONSOLE  
AND THAT CHAMBER.



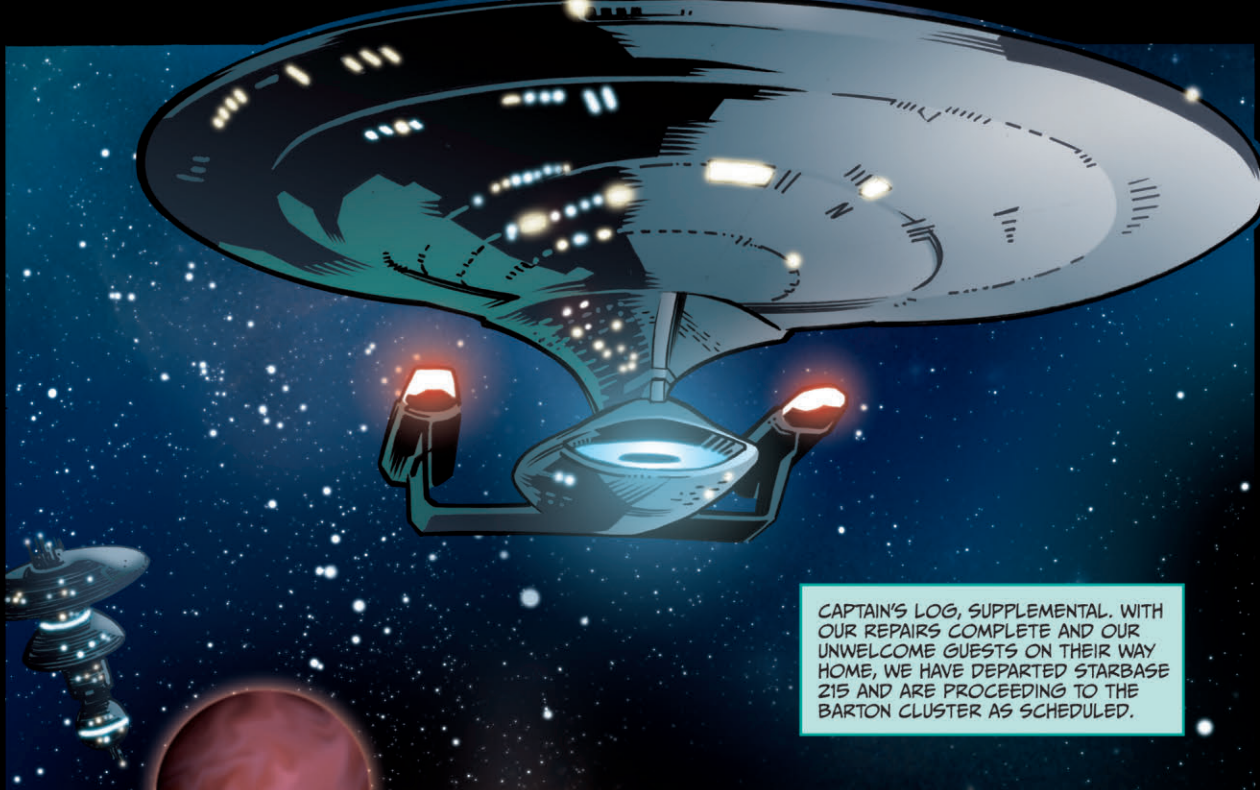
GUESS I  
NEVER MUCH  
THOUGHT ABOUT IT.  
IT SEEMS TO SUIT  
ME FINE.



YOU'VE *GOT*  
TO LET ME GET  
YOU OUT OF HERE  
ONCE IN A WHILE,  
CHIEF

WE'LL  
SEE...





CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. WITH OUR REPAIRS COMPLETE AND OUR UNWELCOME GUESTS ON THEIR WAY HOME, WE HAVE DEPARTED STARBASE 215 AND ARE PROCEEDING TO THE BARTON CLUSTER AS SCHEDULED.



CAPTAIN! WE ARE RECEIVING A PRIORITY-1 DISTRESS CALL FROM THE USS JACKSON.

SPECIFY, MR. DATA?

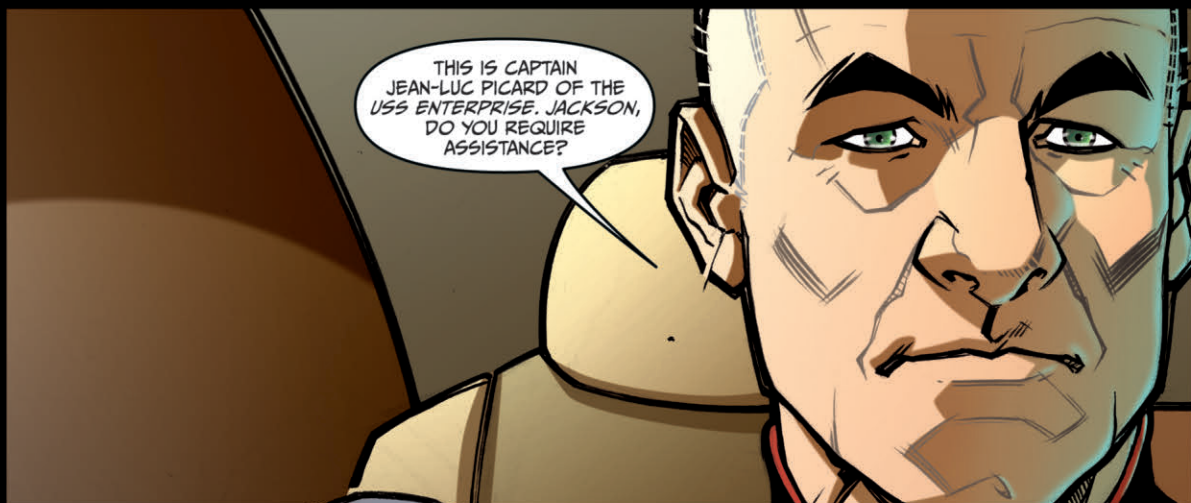


NO OTHER DETAILS, SIR. ONLY THE PRIORITY-1 SIGNAL. RECORDS SHOW THE JACKSON AS HAVING LEFT STARBASE 215 THREE DAYS AGO.

A PRIORITY-1 ISN'T SOMETHING TO THROW AROUND LIGHTLY.

AGREED, NUMBER ONE. ENSIGN, SET COURSE FOR THE JACKSON. WARP FACTOR 7.









A PRIORITY-1 FROM THE JACKSON? WE DON'T HAVE AN EMERGENCY... OH. DAMN HIM.

CAPTAIN?



FIND THAT SIGNAL, ENSIGN, AND TURN IT OFF!



A PRIORITY-1 SIGNAL IS HARDLY SOMETHING TO TRIFLE WITH, CAPTAIN. IT'S A SERIOUS MATTER...



I KNOW, CAPTAIN, AND I'M SORRY. THERE IS NO EMERGENCY. WE'RE HAVING A... PROBLEM WITH OUR NEW ENGINEER.



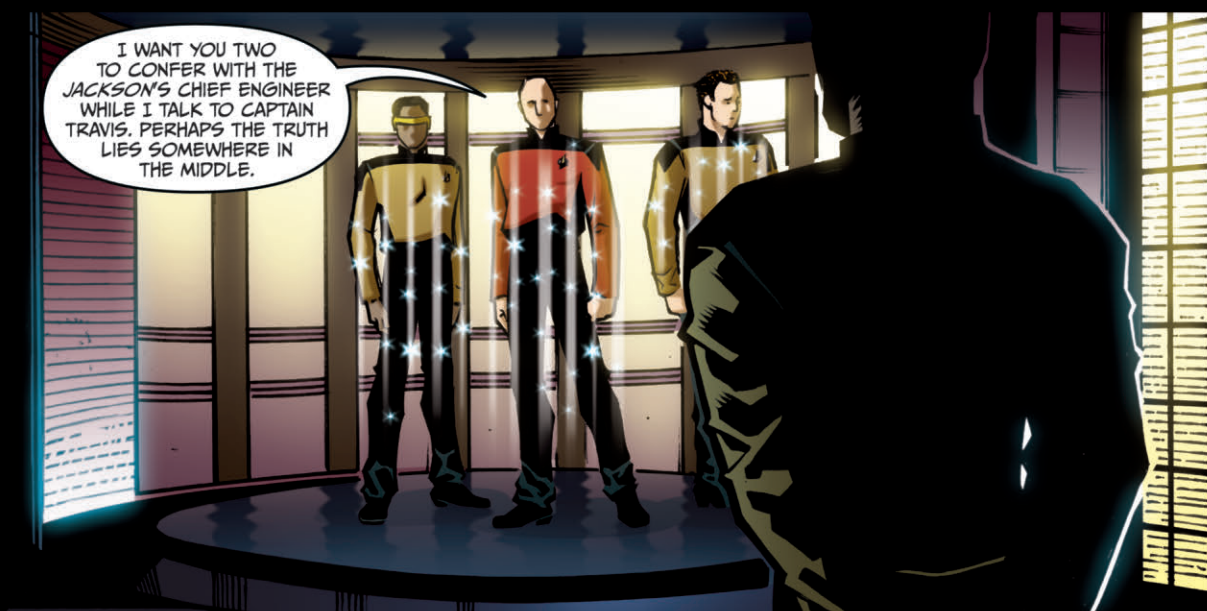
CAPTAIN, DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT TO SPEAK PRIVATELY?



CERTAINLY. HOW ABOUT IF I BEAM OVER WITH MY CHIEF ENGINEER?

EXCELLENT.









CARLL HASN'T BEEN WITH US THAT LONG. MY ORIGINAL CHIEF ENGINEER RETIRED SIX WEEKS AGO, AND THE TRANSITION... WELL, IT HASN'T BEEN A SMOOTH ONE.

HOW SO, CAPTAIN?



I'VE HAD NOTHING BUT COMPLAINTS ABOUT HIM FROM HIS SUPPORT STAFF, SAYING HE WON'T DELEGATE, AND REFUSES TO TAKE ANY SORT OF SUGGESTION OR OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE.

STILL, I FIGURED, IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, JUST A PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT. IT'LL SMOOTH ITSELF OUT.

BUT SOMETHING CHANGED YOUR MIND.



YOU MIGHT SAY THAT. AS OF THIS WEEK, CARLL STARTED WARNING US ABOUT PROBLEMS THAT *JUST AREN'T THERE*.





LOOK, I KNOW I'M NOT THE MOST POPULAR FELLOW ON THIS SHIP RIGHT NOW, BUT I'M TELLING YOU, WHEN I GOT HERE, THE JACKSON WAS A MESS.

MY PREDECESSOR MUST NOT HAVE BELIEVED TOO MUCH IN UPDATES, BECAUSE MOST OF THE ENGINEERING PROTOCOLS AND FAILSAFES AROUND HERE DATED BACK 15 YEARS.

WELL, THE EXCELSIOR CLASS HAS BEEN AROUND FOR DECADES...



I KNOW THAT, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROCEDURES IN THE PAST!

IT'S TAKEN ME ALMOST EVERY MINUTE SINCE I GOT HERE UPDATING THINGS TO CURRENT SPECS MYSELF BEFORE I CAN REASSIGN MY CREW. THEY'D WORKED WITH HIM SO LONG, THEY'RE COMPLETELY RESISTANT TO CHANGE!



MAYBE THAT WAS WHY NO ONE BELIEVED ME WHEN I DISCOVERED THE MANTLEAU WAVE...





AND EVEN AFTER EVERY OTHER ENGINEERING CREWMAN ON THE SHIP CAME UP WITH NOTHING, CARLL STILL WOULDN'T SHUT UP ABOUT THIS "MANTLEAU WAVE" HE CLAIMS TO HAVE FOUND IN THE ANTI-MATTER STREAM!

FINALLY, I HAD TO CONFINЕ HIM TO QUARTERS, AND HE STILL MANAGED TO FIND A WAY TO DRAG YOU ALL THE WAY OUT HERE!

AND YOU'RE CERTAIN THERE'S NOTHING TO HIS CONCERN?



GEORGE COULTON WAS CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE JACKSON FOR 15 YEARS, AND HE SERVED UNDER ME FOR THE LAST 18 MONTHS. I KNOW HIM. HE TRAINED THOSE ENGINEERS OUT THERE, AND IF THEY TELL ME THERE'S NOTHING WRONG, THERE'S *NOTHING* WRONG.



THE CAPTAIN CAN TALK ABOUT HOW WELL COULTON TRAINED HIS CREW ALL HE WANTS, BUT I KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN SEEING.

THERE'S A SPORADIC, UNPREDICTABLE MANTLEAU WAVE IN THE ANTI-MATTER STREAM, AND ALL IT NEEDS IS THE RIGHT HARMONIC FREQUENCY TO CREATE A DISSONANCE IN THE MATTER/ANTI-MATTER CHAMBER, AND THEN—

—AND THEN THERE GOES THE WARP CORE.

AND THERE GOES THE JACKSON.





A MANTLEAU WAVE IS EXCEEDINGLY RARE, CARLL. WARP DRIVES WERE RECONFIGURED TO ELIMINATE THEM EVEN BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE OLD CONSTITUTION CLASS STARSHIPS. THERE'S NO REASON YOU SHOULD BE SEEING THEM.



I KNOW THAT, LAForge. BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN I'M WRONG. AND IT'LL BE SMALL COMFORT TO THE 428 SOULS LOST WHEN THE JACKSON BLOWS UP LIKE A SUPERNOVA.



I'M SORRY YOU WASTED YOUR TIME, CAPTAIN. BUT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY SHIP EXCEPT FOR ITS CHIEF ENGINEER. A SITUATION I PLAN TO RECTIFY IN THE MOST IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.





WELL, GENTLEMEN? CAPTAIN TRAVIS REMAINS CONVINCED THAT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THE ENGINES. HE CERTAINLY HAS NO CONFIDENCE IN MR. CARLL.

CARLL DOES SEEM A LITTLE OVERWROUGHT, AND A MANTLEAU WAVE IS PRETTY FAR-FETCHED, BUT... I'M INCLINED TO BELIEVE HIM.



AND YOU, CHIEF? YOU SEEM RATHER QUIET.



I DON'T KNOW, SIR. I WAS TRAINED TO VALUE LOYALTY OVER ALL, AND IF TRAVIS TRUSTS HIS LAST ENGINEER, I'D BE INCLINED TO AGREE.

EXCEPT... WHAT IF WE LEAVE, AND THEN THE WORST HAPPENS? I COULDN'T LIVE WITH THAT.



AGREED. I THINK I CAN CONVINCE CAPTAIN TRAVIS TO LET THE TWO OF YOU ACCOMPANY MR. CARLL TO ENGINEERING, MERELY AS A PRECAUTION. THEN I'LL RETURN TO THE ENTERPRISE WHILE YOU RUN A FULL DIAGNOSTIC...











EMERGENCY. WARP CORE BREACH  
IMMINENT. ESTIMATED TIME  
UNTIL BREACH: 17 MINUTES.

DAMN.

YOU KNOW,  
I TAKE VERY  
LITTLE PLEASURE  
HERE IN BEING  
RIGHT...

EMERGENCY. WARP CORE BREACH  
IMMINENT. ESTIMATED TIME  
UNTIL BREACH: 17 MINUTES.

WHAT THE  
HELL? ENGINEERING,  
REPORT! CARLL, WHAT  
DID YOU DO?!

THIS IS LAFORGE.  
YOUR CHIEF ENGINEER  
WAS RIGHT, CAPTAIN. THERE'S  
A MANTLEAU WAVE BUILDING IN  
THE ANTI-MATTER STREAM,  
AND IT'S ALREADY BEGUN  
INSTIGATING A WARP  
CORE BREACH.

WE'VE GOT JUST  
UNDER 17 MINUTES TO  
TRY AND COUNTER THIS  
SOMEHOW... BUT IN THE  
MEANTIME, YOU NEED  
TO MAKE SOME  
ARRANGEMENTS.  
LAFORGE OUT.







ESTIMATED TIME UNTIL  
BREACH: 14 MINUTES.

TRANSPORTER  
ROOMS 1, 3 AND 4 ARE  
ALSO IN OPERATION. ALL  
CREWMEN REPORT TO  
NEAREST TRANSPORTER  
ROOM.



THE WAVE'S  
TRIANGULATION  
PATTERN IS ESCALATING  
WILDLY. MAYBE WE  
CAN COUNTER IT  
SOMEHOW...

THIS DOESN'T  
MAKE ANY SENSE! THIS  
SHIP WAS SPECIFICALLY  
DESIGNED TO DISPERSE A  
MANTLEAU WAVE BEFORE  
IT COULD EVER AFFECT  
THE WARP CORE. THIS  
CAN'T HAPPEN.

WE DON'T HAVE  
TIME TO RECALIBRATE  
THE SYSTEM. THERE'S  
GOT TO BE SOMETHING  
CAUSING THIS. NOW THAT  
IT'S FULLY REALIZED,  
CAN'T WE TRACK THE  
WAVE EMANATION TO  
ITS SOURCE?

LET ME GIVE  
THAT A SHOT...  
NEVER HAD  
THE CHANCE  
BEFORE...

THERE IT IS!  
JEFFERIES TUBE  
37A. FOLLOW  
ME!

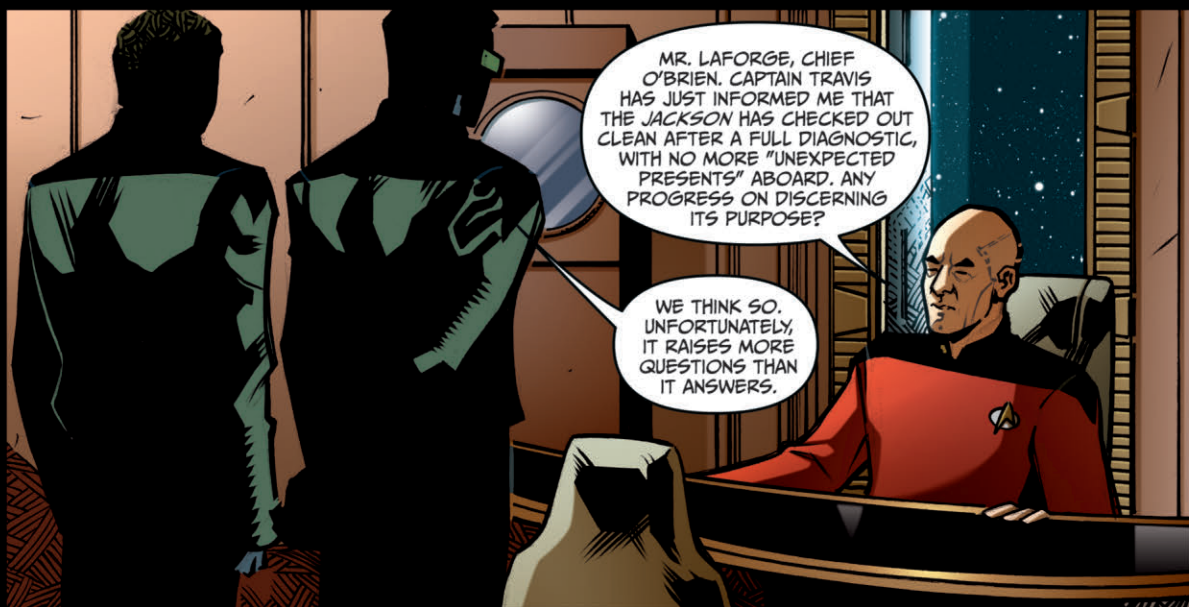












MR. LAFORGE, CHIEF O'BRIEN. CAPTAIN TRAVIS HAS JUST INFORMED ME THAT THE JACKSON HAS CHECKED OUT CLEAN AFTER A FULL DIAGNOSTIC, WITH NO MORE "UNEXPECTED PRESENTS" ABOARD. ANY PROGRESS ON DISCERNING ITS PURPOSE?

WE THINK SO. UNFORTUNATELY, IT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS.



WHAT THIS LITTLE CONTRAPTION DOES IS CREATE AN ILLUSION OF WARP INSTABILITY IN ANY SYSTEM IT'S ATTACHED TO.

WE WERE NEVER EVEN IN ANY DANGER—JUST MEANT TO *BELIEVE* WE WERE.

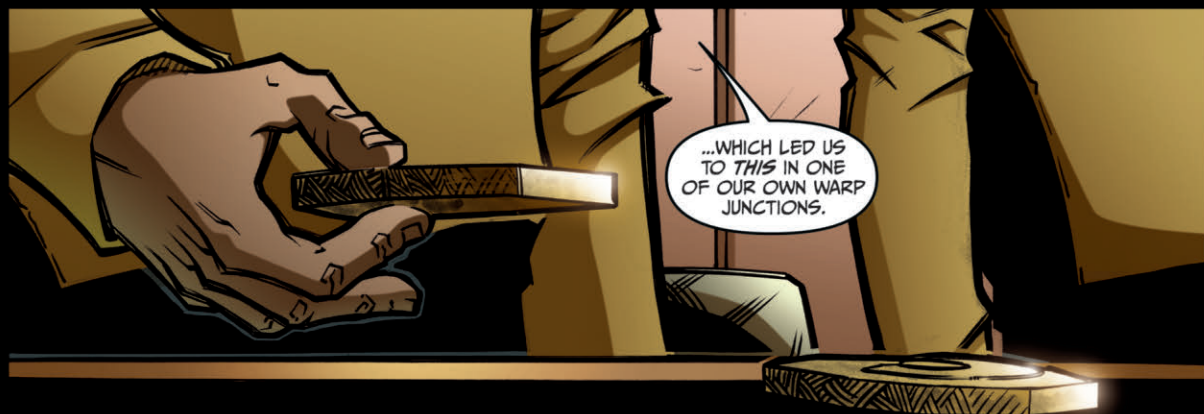
AN ILLUSION? TO WHAT END?



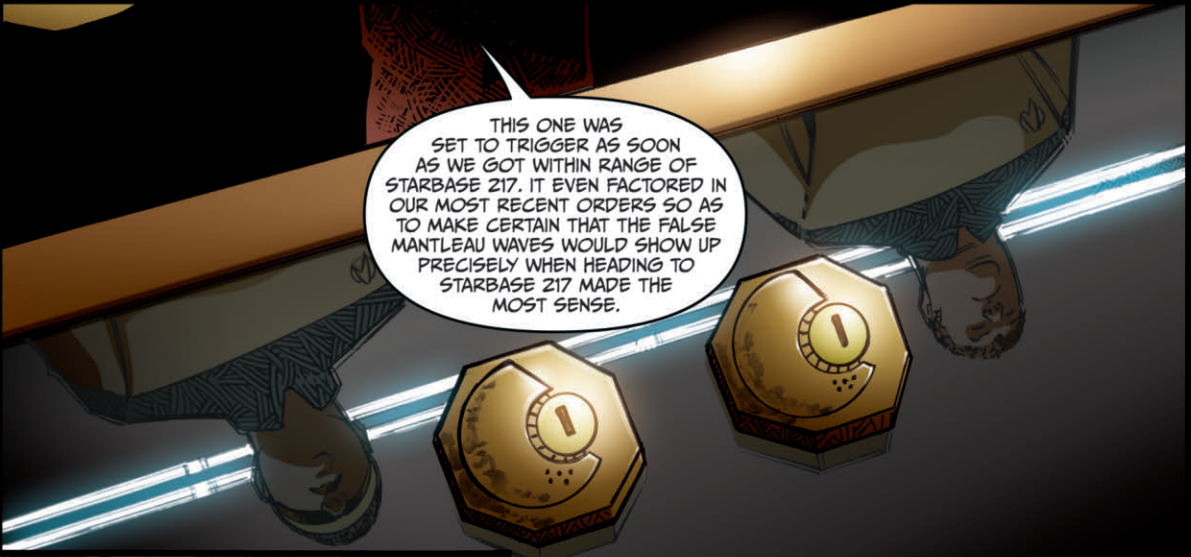
WE HAVEN'T FIGURED THAT YET, SIR. WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT IT WAS CONFIGURED TO GO OFF ONCE THE JACKSON REACHED A PRECISELY DESIGNATED DISTANCE FROM STARBASE 215.

SO IT'S YOUR CONTENTION THAT THE JACKSON WAS SABOTAGED AT A STARBASE?










THIS ONE WAS SET TO TRIGGER AS SOON AS WE GOT WITHIN RANGE OF STARBASE 217. IT EVEN FACTORED IN OUR MOST RECENT ORDERS SO AS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE FALSE MANTLEAU WAVES WOULD SHOW UP PRECISELY WHEN HEADING TO STARBASE 217 MADE THE MOST SENSE.



WHAT KIND OF SABOTAGE DOESN'T DO ANY DAMAGE? AND WHY THESE TWO VESSELS?



IS IT POSSIBLE WE'RE BEING LED SOMEWHERE?













REPORT,  
NUMBER  
ONE.

PAKLED'S,  
CAPTAIN.

THREE  
SHIPS. WE'VE  
TRIED HAILING THEM  
REPEATEDLY...



...BUT THEY'VE  
REJECTED ALL ATTEMPTS AT  
CONTACT, AND HAVE MAINTAINED  
A HIGH-SPEED INTERCEPT  
COURSE WITH THE ENTERPRISE.



TACTICAL,  
MR. WORF?

NORMALLY,  
PAKLED SHIPS WOULD  
BE NO THREAT TO THE  
ENTERPRISE, SIR.

BUT SENSORS  
INDICATE THAT THESE  
SHIPS HAVE HAD THEIR  
WEAPONS SYSTEMS  
SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED.  
I RECOMMEND A  
DEFENSIVE  
POSTURE.



VERY WELL,  
MR. WORF.  
SHIELDS UP.





PAKLED'S  
TYPICALLY DO  
NOT BEHAVE THIS  
AGGRESSIVELY. THE  
PAKLED CREW THAT  
KIDNAPPED  
GEORDI!—



YEAH,  
DON'T REMIND  
ME.



THEY ARE  
BEGINNING AN  
ATTACK RUN,  
SIR.

WHAT? THIS IS  
RIDICULOUS. DATA,  
GET ME THEIR  
COMMANDER.



TRYING,  
SIR. THEIR  
COMMUNICATION  
SYSTEM IS  
REMARKABLY  
PRIMITIVE.



PAKLED  
VESSELS! CEASE  
HOSTILITIES OR WE  
WILL BE FORCED  
TO DEFEND  
OURSELVES.

WE HAVE NO  
HOSTILE INTENT  
TOWARDS YOU.





YOU  
THINK WE ARE  
STUPID.

BUT WE  
ARE SMART. WE  
WILL DESTROY  
YOUR SHIP.




WE HAVE NO  
DISAGREEMENT  
WITH YOU. SURELY,  
LET US TALK...

REQUEST DENIED.  
WE WILL... SCAVENGE THE  
REMAINS OF YOUR SHIP FOR  
TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIALS  
THAT WE CAN USE TO EXPAND OUR  
EMPIRE OR SELL TO THE HIGHEST  
BIDDERS. PREPARE... FOR...  
OUR... ATTACK...



EXPAND THEIR  
EMPIRE? THERE'S  
NO PAKLED EMPIRE.  
DEANNA, WHY ARE  
THEY TALKING  
LIKE THAT?





THREE DIRECT HITS. SHIELDS DOWN NINE PERCENT. THEIR DISRUPTOR BEAMS ARE SURPRISINGLY EFFECTIVE. SENSORS SHOW THAT THEIR DRIVE SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED, CAPTAIN.




COMMANDER RIKER IS RIGHT, CAPTAIN. SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT HERE.




WORF PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US AND THOSE SHIPS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, COUNSELOR?



SOMETHING OR SOMEONE IS CONTROLLING THEIR MINDS. THEIR ACTIONS ARE NOT THEIR OWN.



CAPTAIN, THEY ARE COMING IN AGAIN. THIS TIME ON A COLLISION COURSE.

EVASIVE MANUEVERS! FULL IMPULSE!









ALL THREE PAKLED VESSELS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED, SIR. SHIELDS AT 78 PERCENT. DAMAGE TO HULL INTEGRITY NEGLIGIBLE.



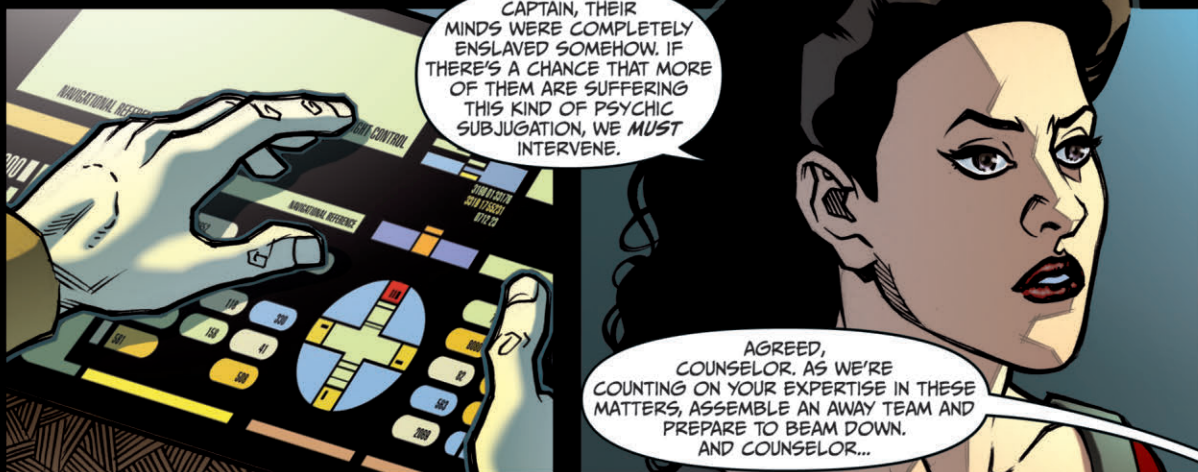
DAMN.

DATA. IS THERE ANY WAY TO BACKTRACK THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THE PAKLED SHIPS TRAVELED?

I BELIEVE SO, SIR. PAKLED VESSELS ARE NOTORIOUSLY ILL-MAINTAINED AND INEFFICIENT. IF IT IS UNCLEAR ENOUGH, I MAY BE ABLE TO TRACE THE RADIATION FROM THEIR ENGINE'S PLASMA EXHAUST.



I HAVE IT, SIR. THE PLASMA TRAIL LEADS BACK TO THE SIXTH PLANET IN THE BARUGON SYSTEM. IT IS FAIRLY CLOSE, LESS THAN FOUR HOURS AWAY AT CURRENT SPEED.



CAPTAIN, THEIR MINDS WERE COMPLETELY ENSLAVED SOMEHOW. IF THERE'S A CHANCE THAT MORE OF THEM ARE SUFFERING THIS KIND OF PSYCHIC SUBJUGATION, WE MUST INTERVENE.

AGREED, COUNSELOR. AS WE'RE COUNTING ON YOUR EXPERTISE IN THESE MATTERS, ASSEMBLE AN AWAY TEAM AND PREPARE TO BEAM DOWN. AND COUNSELOR...



"...EYES OPEN."



THE PLACE LOOKS  
DESERTED. COUNSELOR,  
ARE YOU GETTING  
ANYTHING?

NO.  
NOTHING AT  
ALL.



MAYBE  
WE'RE JUST NOT  
LOOKING IN THE RIGHT  
PLACE. DICKERSON,  
DECAMBRA, YOU TWO  
COVER ME.















TRANSPORTER ROOM TO THE CAPTAIN!

GO AHEAD, CHIEF.

SHE STRUCK YOU?

CAPTAIN, COUNSELOR TROI, DR. CRUSHER AND ENSIGN RO JUST RETURNED TO THE ENTERPRISE—ALONE—AND WHEN I ASKED THEM WHERE THE REST OF THE AWAY TEAM WAS, ENSIGN RO ABOUT NEAR TOOK MY HEAD OFF.

YES, SIR. I JUST CAME TO. THEY'RE GONE NOW.



PICARD TO AWAY TEAM, REPORT! DICKERSON, DECAMBRA, REPORT!

NO RESPONSE. COMPUTER, LOCATE COUNSELOR TROI, DR. CRUSHER AND ENSIGN RO.

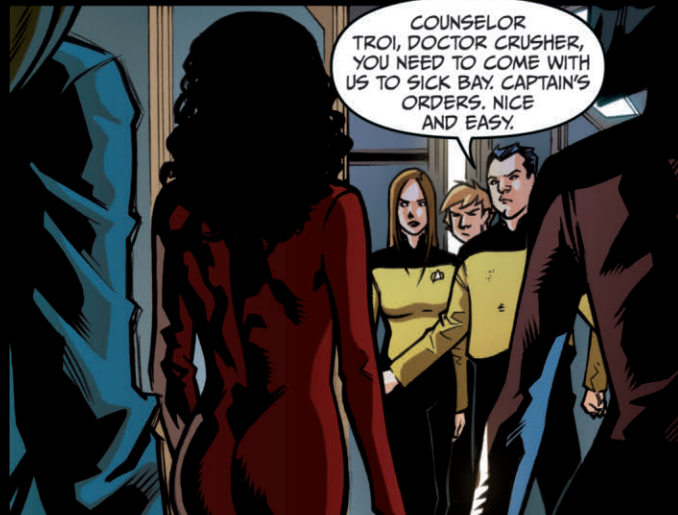


COUNSELOR TROI, DR. CRUSHER AND ENSIGN RO ARE IN TRANSPORTER ROOM THREE.

HRMPH. THEY'VE DISCARDED THEIR COMBADGES. NOW THE COMPUTER CAN'T LOCATE THEM. LIEUTENANT WORF, PUT OUT AN ALL-STATIONS ALERT. I WANT TO KNOW WHERE THEY ARE...



"...AND I WANT TO KNOW WHERE THEY'RE GOING."



COUNSELOR TROI, DOCTOR CRUSHER, YOU NEED TO COME WITH US TO SICK BAY. CAPTAIN'S ORDERS. NICE AND EASY.









THIS IS  
*RIDICULOUS*.  
IT WASN'T ALL THAT  
LONG AGO THAT YOU AND  
TROI WERE POSSESSED  
BY THOSE UX-MALLIAN  
PRISONERS. THIS IS  
GETTING TO BE A HABIT  
AROUND HERE.



A SIMILAR  
SITUATION  
OCCURRING WOULD  
SEEM UNLIKELY,  
COMMANDER.  
HOWEVER...

WE'RE TOO  
LATE. ARE THEY  
STILL ALIVE?

...THE  
EVIDENCE IS  
COMPELLING.



RIKER  
TO BRIDGE,  
REPORT! WHERE  
ARE THEY?

AFFIRMATIVE.  
THEIR INJURIES  
APPEAR SERIOUS  
BUT NOT  
FATAL.



THEY'VE JUST  
BEEN SPOTTED  
LEAVING A TURBOLIFT  
ON DECK EIGHT,  
NUMBER ONE.

DECK  
EIGHT?  
OH, NO.

THE  
BATTLE  
BRIDGE.









RO! RO,  
CAN YOU HEAR  
ME? DATA, IS  
SHE—

SHE  
APPEARS TO  
BE IN A STATE  
OF CATATONIA,  
COMMANDER.



COMMANDER,  
WE HAVE NO WAY OF  
KNOWING IF THE SECURITY  
OFFICER'S PHASER STUN  
TRIGGERED ENSIGN RO'S  
CATATONIA. NOR IF THE  
CONDITION IS  
PERMANENT.

UNDERSTOOD,  
DATA. WE'LL JUST  
HAVE TO TRY AND GET  
BY WITHOUT PHASERS  
IF WE CAN.



BOOP BEEP BOOP  
BEEP BIP BEEP  
BOOP BIP



BEEP BOOP  
BOOP BEEP BIP  
BIP BOOP BIP



TRY TO  
RESTRAIN THE  
DOCTOR. I'M GOING  
TO SEE IF I CAN GET  
THROUGH TO DEANNA.

UNDERSTOOD,  
SIR.











CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL.

I'VE SENT COMMANDER RIKER AND LT. Worf BACK DOWN TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR MISSING PERSONNEL AND TO DISCOVER A WAY TO TREAT DR. CRUSHER AND ENSIGN RO, WHO BOTH REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF SOME SORT OF EXTERNAL FORCE.



COUNSELOR TROI REMEMBERS NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED DOWN HERE, SELAR?

NO, SHE DOES NOT. DR. CRUSHER UNFORTUNATELY REMAINS UNCOMMUNICATIVE.



COMMANDER! OVER HERE!



I WAS AFRAID OF THIS. ARE THEY...

THEY ARE DEAD, COMMANDER.

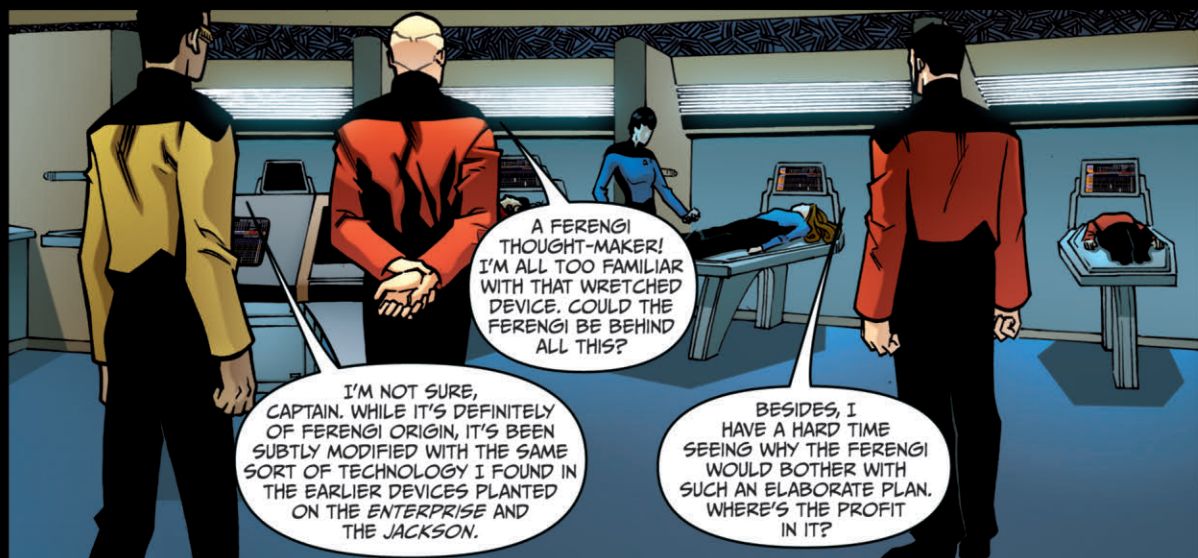


THESE BURN MARKS INDICATE DISRUPTOR FIRE.

COMMANDER, LOOK AT THIS.

WHOA. THAT LOOKS FAMILIAR. NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE ONE OF THESE AGAIN.





A FERengi  
THOUGHT-MAKER!  
I'M ALL TOO FAMILIAR  
WITH THAT WRETCHED  
DEVICE. COULD THE  
FERengi BE BEHIND  
ALL THIS?

I'M NOT SURE,  
CAPTAIN. WHILE IT'S DEFINITELY  
OF FERengi ORIGIN, IT'S BEEN  
SUBTLY MODIFIED WITH THE SAME  
SORT OF TECHNOLOGY I FOUND IN  
THE EARLIER DEVICES PLANTED  
ON THE ENTERPRISE AND  
THE JACKSON.

BESIDES, I  
HAVE A HARD TIME  
SEEING WHY THE FERengi  
WOULD BOTHER WITH  
SUCH AN ELABORATE PLAN.  
WHERE'S THE PROFIT  
IN IT?



AGREED.



COMMANDER  
LAForge  
DEACTIVATED IT,  
CAPTAIN...

GOOD. AND  
THE SECURITY  
OFFICERS?

...AND THE NEURAL  
IMPULSES TO ENSIGN RO  
AND DR. CRUSHER HAVE  
STOPPED. THEY'RE  
RECOVERING NOW.

ALL THREE  
WERE KILLED  
BY DISRUPTOR  
FIRE.

THEY WERE  
CAUGHT BY  
SURPRISE.



FIRST, WE'RE  
BEING LED AROUND BY  
THE NOSE, AND NOW MY  
PEOPLE ARE DYING. I'VE  
HAD ENOUGH. LET'S  
GET TO THE BOTTOM  
OF THIS.





LATER...

YOU INDICATED YOU HAD SOMETHING NEW TO REPORT, DATA?

YES. I HAVE BEEN EXAMINING WHAT THEY WERE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH HERE IN THE BATTLE BRIDGE.



IT APPEARS THEY WERE TRYING TO ALTER THE COORDINATES OF OUR CURRENT COURSE, TO STEER US IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION.



CAN YOU DETERMINE THE INTENDED DESTINATION?





YES.  
THE INTENT WAS  
TO TRY TO DIVERT  
US *HERE*... TO THE  
KAFARI TIBB  
SYSTEM.

THE MESSAGE  
THIS TIME IS FAR LESS  
SUBTLE. THE QUESTION  
REMAINS—WHY GO TO  
ALL THIS TROUBLE  
TO DIRECT US  
SOMEPLACE?



ANOTHER  
RIDDLE. ONLY  
NOW THE GAME  
HAS TURNED  
DEADLY.



CLEARLY  
THIS IS A  
TRAP.



IT WOULD  
BE A TRAP IF  
WE DIDN'T KNOW  
SOMETHING'S  
WAITING FOR  
US.

AS OF  
NOW, IT'S AN  
APPOINTMENT—AND  
ONE I INTEND TO  
KEEP.



CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 45939.6.  
THE ENTERPRISE, IT SEEMS, IS A TARGET.

## Chapter Five



AFTER TWO ATTEMPTS AT SABOTAGE, WE  
REMAIN ON THE ALTERED COURSE SUPPLIED  
BY OUR MYSTERIOUS PUPPETEERS.



I HOPE TO DISCOVER THE INTENT BEHIND  
THESE ATTACKS AND PUT A HALT TO THEM  
BEFORE WE ARE SURPRISED AGAIN.



I DISLIKE BEING THE VICTIM OF  
PETTY MANIPULATIONS. NOW I  
INTEND TO RETURN THE FAVOR AND  
MAKE USE OF A DEGREE OF  
SUBTERFUGE OF MY OWN TO FIND  
OUT WHO'S BEEN BEHIND ALL THIS.

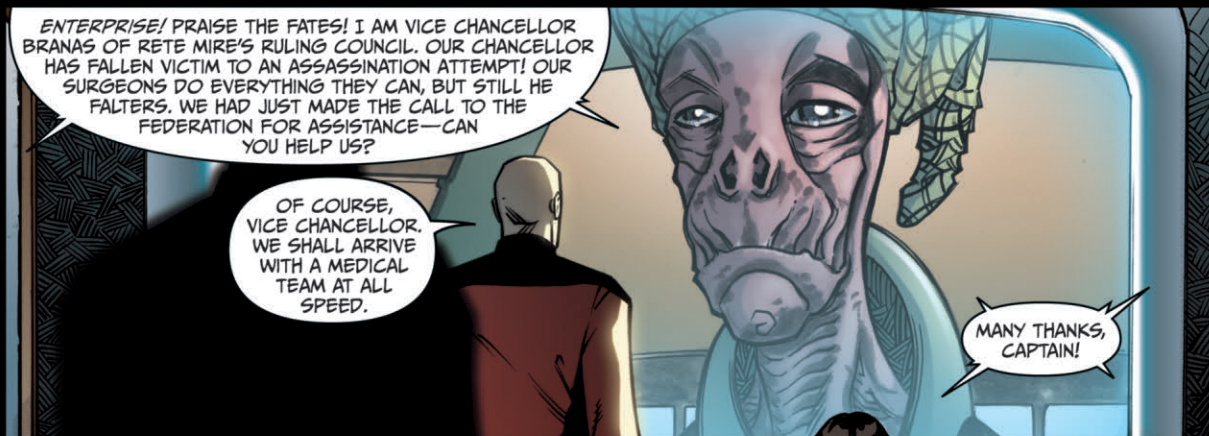






CAPTAIN, WE ARE RECEIVING A DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE OF THE PLANET RETE MIRE.

OF COURSE WE ARE, MR. DATA. RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.



ENTERPRISE! PRAISE THE FATES! I AM VICE CHANCELLOR BRANAS OF RETE MIRE'S RULING COUNCIL. OUR CHANCELLOR HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT! OUR SURGEONS DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN, BUT STILL HE FALTERS. WE HAD JUST MADE THE CALL TO THE FEDERATION FOR ASSISTANCE—CAN YOU HELP US?

OF COURSE, VICE CHANCELLOR. WE SHALL ARRIVE WITH A MEDICAL TEAM AT ALL SPEED.

MANY THANKS, CAPTAIN!



SO. IT SEEMS WE'VE ARRIVED EXACTLY WHEN WE'RE NEEDED. HOW CONVENIENT.

VERY.

DATA, I WANT YOU TO ACCOMPANY THE MEDICAL TEAM TO RETE MIRE.

SOMEONE MAY HAVE GONE TO A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE TO GET US HERE, AND IT'S VERY POSSIBLE THAT DR. CRUSHER IS THE TARGET.

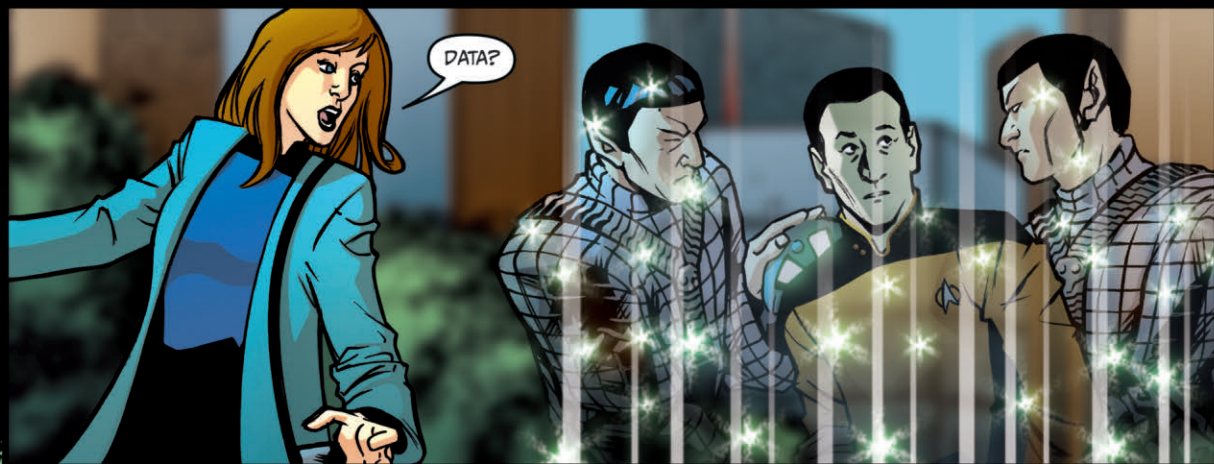


AYE, SIR.













CRUSHER TO ENTERPRISE!

GO AHEAD, DOCTOR.

JUST APPEARED?

CAPTAIN, DATA IS GONE. AS WE WERE ARRIVING AT THE MEDICAL CENTER, TWO FIGURES JUST APPEARED AND SNATCHED HIM UP BEFORE WE COULD EVEN REACT.

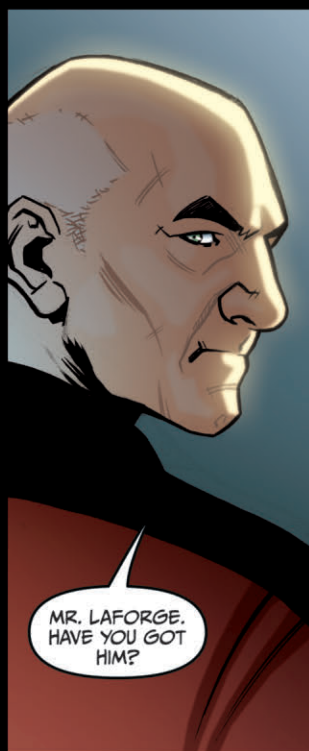
YES, SOME SORT OF TRANSPORT BEAM. CAPTAIN—WHATEVER ELSE IS GOING ON HERE, THE SITUATION WITH THEIR CHANCELLOR IS VERY SERIOUS. IF THERE'S EVEN A CHANCE TO SAVE HIM, I'D NEED TO OPERATE IMMEDIATELY.



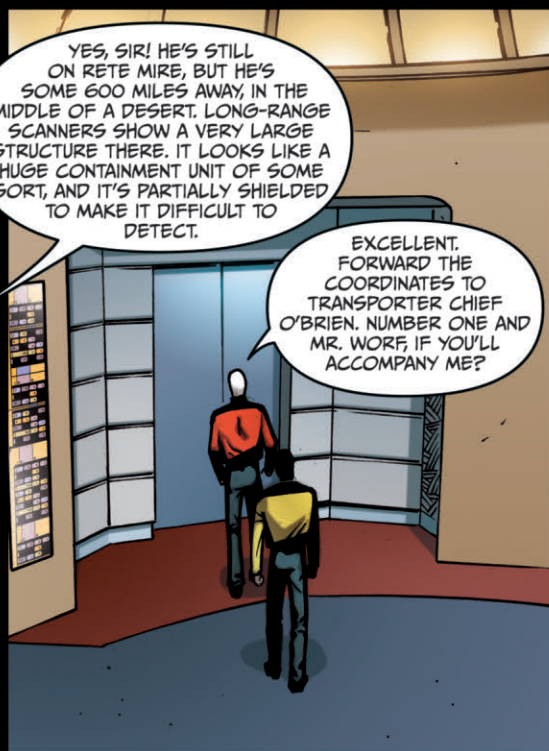
UNDERSTOOD. CARRY ON. PICARD OUT.

YOU DIDN'T SEEM TOO SURPRISED ABOUT DATA'S DISAPPEARANCE, CAPTAIN.

DATA AND I DISCUSSED JUST SUCH A POSSIBILITY AFTER THE ROMULANS EXPRESSED THEIR INTEREST IN HIM BACK ON DAYSTROM ONE. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF MR. LAForge, WE PLACED A SUBCUTANEOUS HOMING BEACON IN DATA'S FOREARM, SHOULD SUCH AN INCIDENT RECUR.



MR. LAForge. HAVE YOU GOT HIM?



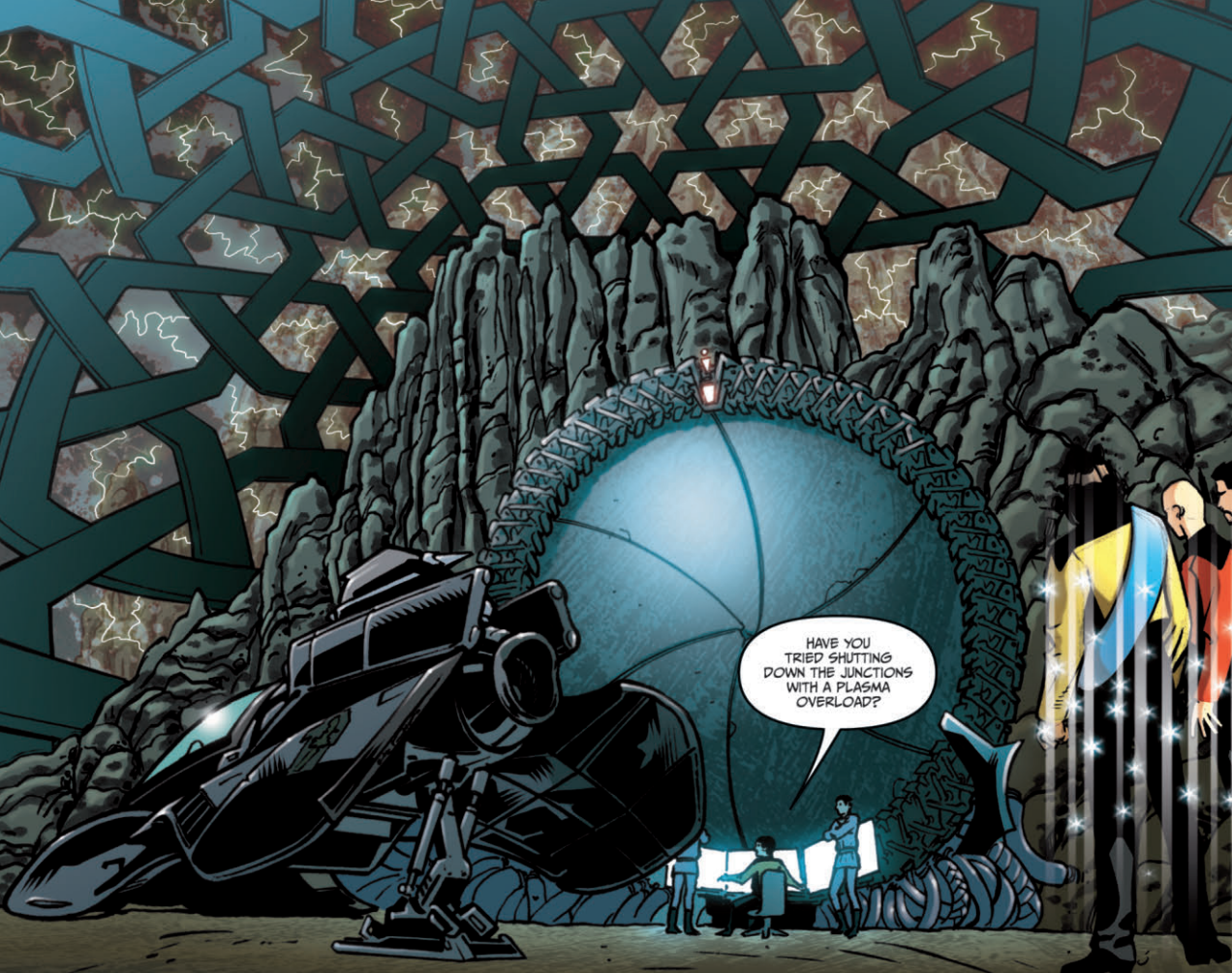
YES, SIR! HE'S STILL ON RETE MIRE, BUT HE'S SOME 600 MILES AWAY, IN THE MIDDLE OF A DESERT. LONG-RANGE SCANNERS SHOW A VERY LARGE STRUCTURE THERE. IT LOOKS LIKE A HUGE CONTAINMENT UNIT OF SOME SORT, AND IT'S PARTIALLY SHIELDED TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO DETECT.

EXCELLENT. FORWARD THE COORDINATES TO TRANSPORTER CHIEF O'BRIEN. NUMBER ONE AND MR. Worf, IF YOU'LL ACCOMPANY ME?

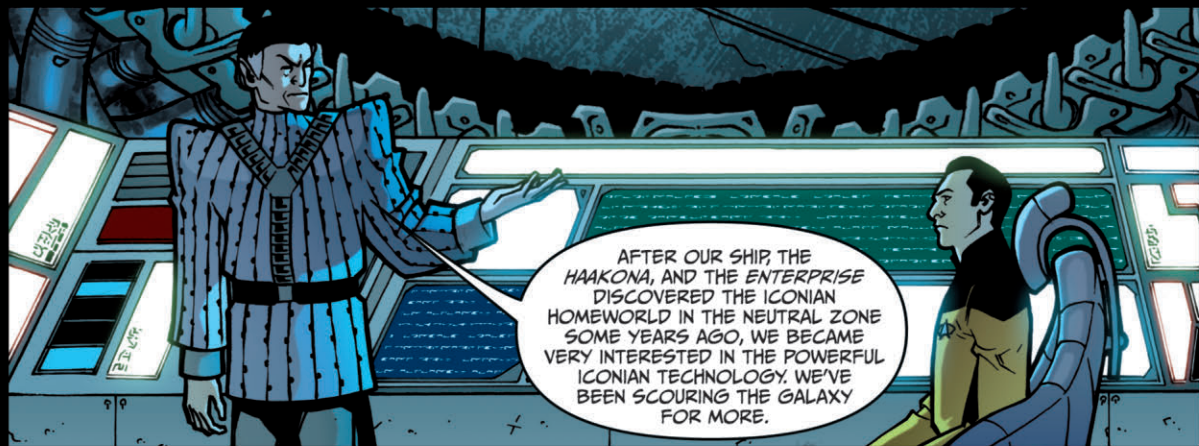












AFTER OUR SHIP, THE HAAKONA, AND THE ENTERPRISE DISCOVERED THE ICONIAN HOMEWORLD IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE SOME YEARS AGO, WE BECAME VERY INTERESTED IN THE POWERFUL ICONIAN TECHNOLOGY. WE'VE BEEN SCOURING THE GALAXY FOR MORE.



FINALLY, OUR SEARCHING WAS SUCCESSFUL—WE FOUND ANOTHER ICONIAN GATEWAY LIKE THE ONE ON THEIR HOMEWORLD. THAT DISCOVERY LED US TO THIS SITE, AND WHAT WE BELIEVED TO BE A SIMILAR DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY HIDDEN IN THIS MOUNTAINSIDE.



WE CONSTRUCTED THIS DOME TO WORK UNDETECTED IN PEACE AND SOLITUDE.



LET ME GUESS. YOU COULDN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO OPERATE THIS NEW DISCOVERY, SO YOU DECIDED TO KIDNAP MY OFFICER TO DO IT FOR YOU?

WELL, NOT EXACTLY, PICARD. WE DID MANAGE TO OPEN IT.



BUT IT TURNED OUT THAT OUR ATTEMPTS TO OPEN THIS GATEWAY ACTUALLY CREATED WHAT OUR SCIENTISTS CAN ONLY TERM AS A "RIFT," AND AS TO WHERE IT LEADS... IT'S NOT SOMEWHERE ONE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT.



TOMALAK.  
WHAT HAVE YOU  
DONE?

AFTER THE FIRST ONE CAME THROUGH, IT KILLED FOUR OF MY MEN. FORTUNATELY, WE WERE ABLE TO KILL IT AND PUT UP THIS TEMPORARY FORCE-FIELD BARRIER BEFORE THE RIFT GOT LARGER AND MORE OF... *WHATEVER* THOSE ARE... CAME THROUGH. WE STILL CANNOT CLOSE THE RIFT, AND WE CALCULATE WE HAVE THREE DAYS BEFORE THEY FINALLY BREAK DOWN THE BARRIER THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF NUMBERS.

AND IT GETS WORSE, PICARD. PROBES WE HAVE SENT INSIDE THE RIFT INDICATE SOMETHING ELSE IN THERE—SOMETHING MAMMOTH. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT ITS ARRIVAL COULD DO TO THIS PLANET, THIS SYSTEM—AND IN TIME, THE EMPIRE.











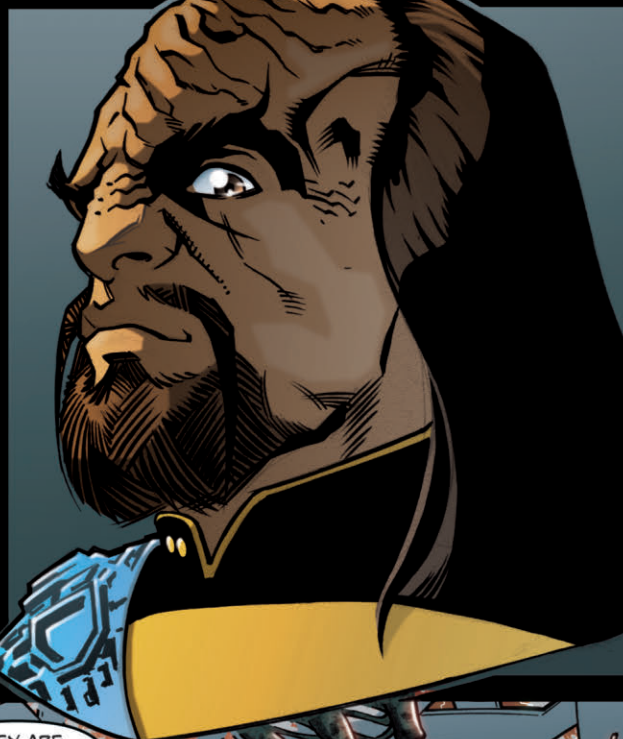
















SUGGESTIONS,  
NUMBER ONE?

NOT AT THE  
MOMENT, SIR,  
YOU?



MR. Worf!  
WELL  
DONE.

I THOUGHT  
WE NEEDED A  
BIGGER  
STICK.





SOMETHING'S PUSHING THROUGH THE RIFT. IT'S HUGE.

AND NOW EVEN MORE OF THAT UNNATURAL SHRIEKING!



THE SHRIEKING APPEARS TO VARY IN INTENSITY. HAVE YOU TRIED THE UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR?

WITH THESE DEMONS? HARDLY. WE'VE SEEN NO SIGNS OF INTELLIGENCE. YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY IT, IF YOU WANT TO WASTE YOUR TIME.

SKREEEEEEEE SKREEEEEEEEEEEE



SKREEEEEEEEEEEE — WILL DIE... ALL WHO ARE NOT OF THE WHOLE MUST BE CONSUMED—THAT WHICH IS OTHER WILL BE CONSUMED—YOUR YOUNG, YOUR FEMALES, YOUR WORLDS—ONCE WE HAVE CLAWED OUR WAY INTO YOUR PLANE WE SHALL CONSUME ALL—THEN ONLY THE WHOLE WILL REMAIN—YOU ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE END OF EVERY ONE OF YOU—



TURN THAT DAMNED THING OFF!

TOMALAK! THIS IS YOUR BLOODY MESS—HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET OUT OF IT?

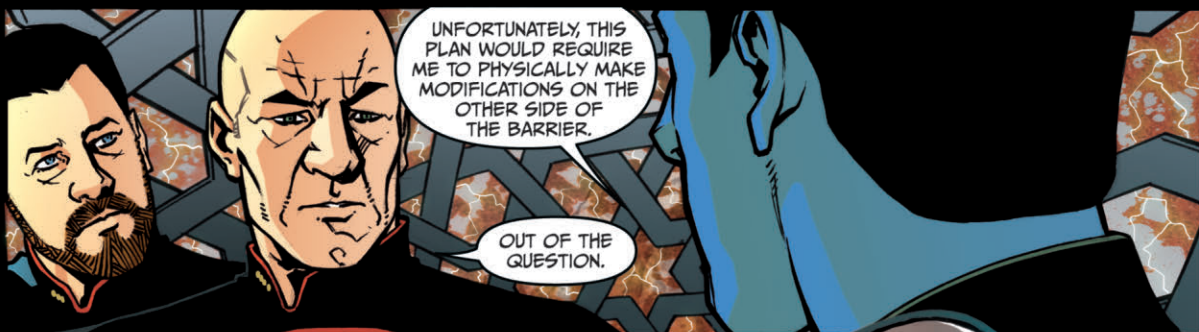






CAPTAIN, USING THE CALCULATIONS OF THE ROMULANS AND MY KNOWLEDGE OF ICONIAN TECHNOLOGY, I THINK I HAVE A WAY TO CLOSE THE RIFT.

IF WE FLOOD THE POWER JUNCTIONS OF THE ICONIAN CIRCUITRY WITH A HIGHLY CHARGED PLASMA FLOW, THE RESULTING EXPLOSION SHOULD SEAL THE RIFT.



UNFORTUNATELY, THIS PLAN WOULD REQUIRE ME TO PHYSICALLY MAKE MODIFICATIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BARRIER.

OUT OF THE QUESTION.



I AM THE LOGICAL CHOICE; I HAVE THE FASTEST REACTION TIME AND AM FAMILIAR WITH THE TECHNOLOGY.

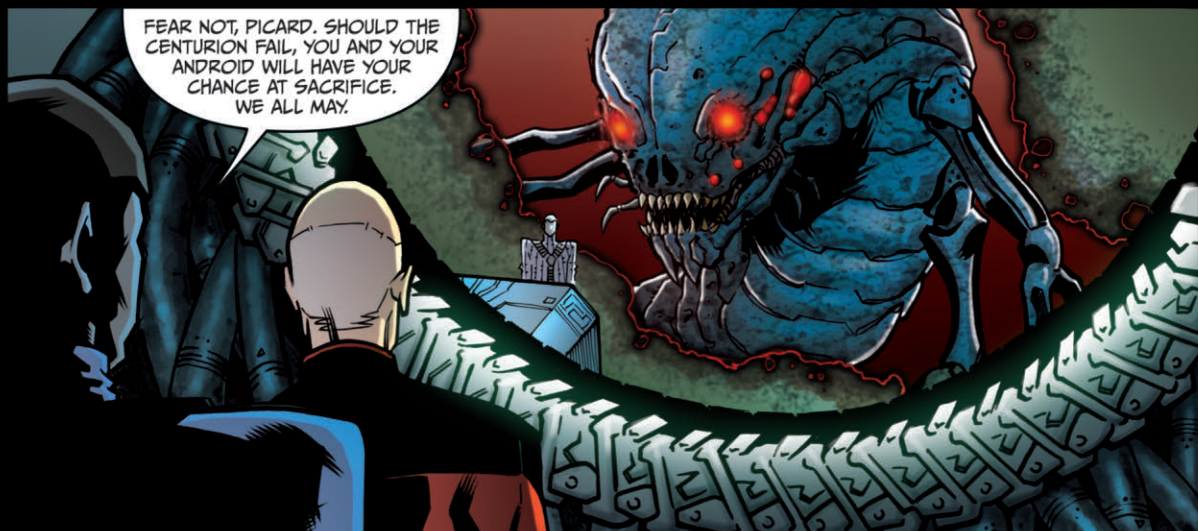


YOU'D NEVER GET BACK BEFORE THOSE MONSTERS WERE ON YOU. IS THERE ANOTHER WAY THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE YOUR SACRIFICE, DATA?

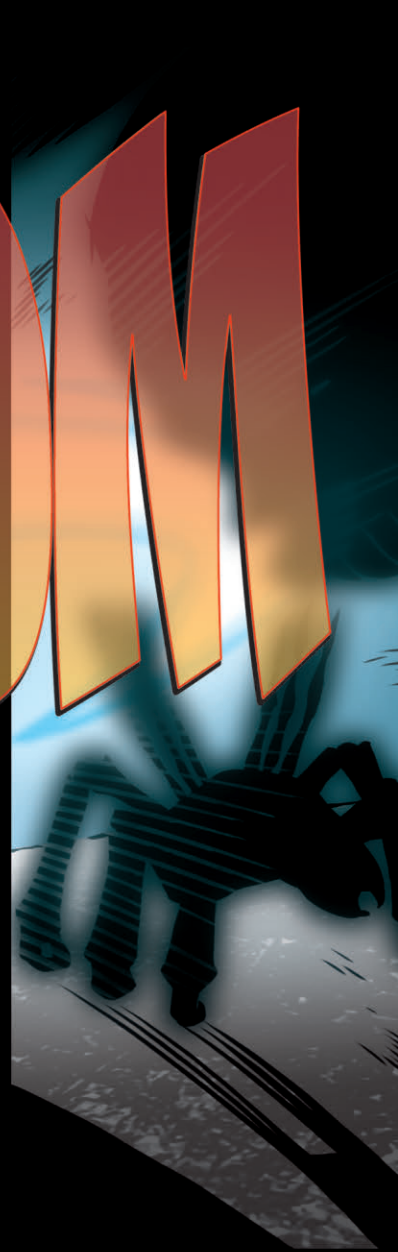




















ALL TO GET US  
HERE. PERHAPS NEXT  
TIME, COMMANDER, YOU  
MIGHT SIMPLY ASK FOR  
ASSISTANCE?



WHAT IS IT  
THEY SAY, CAPTAIN?  
"ROMULANS FEAR  
DISGRACE MORE  
THAN DEATH."



AT LEAST  
ONE OF YOU  
UNDERSTANDS  
US.

END.













LEFT: COVER #1B - JOE CORRONEY  
ABOVE: COVER #2A - DAVID MESSINA









LEFT: COVER #2B - JOE CORRONEY  
ABOVE: COVER #3A - DAVID MESSINA









LEFT: COVER #3B - JOE CORRONEY  
ABOVE: COVER #4A - DAVID MESSINA









LEFT: COVER #4B - JOE CORRONEY

ABOVE: COVER #5 - DAVID MESSINA



# STAR TREK

## THE NEXT GENERATION®

### INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

# CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES



**DAVID MESSINA**

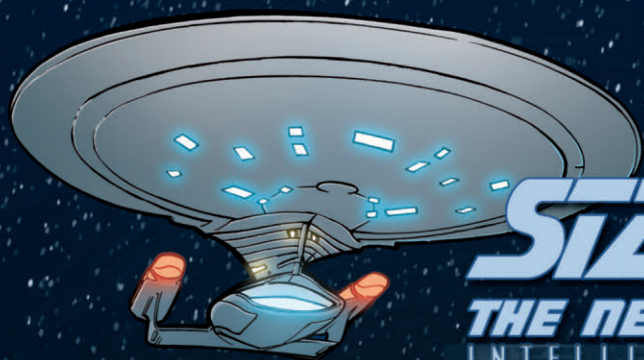
After finishing his art studies, David worked in animation (storyboarding and character design) and graphic advertising before breaking into comics. He has worked extensively for IDW Publishing, drawing three *Angel* series (*The Curse*, *Old Friends*, *Auld Lang Syne*) and various one-shots, including the story "Unacceptable Losses" in the best-selling *Angel* Halloween special *Masks*. His recent IDW work includes *Klingons: Blood Will Tell*, also with the Tipton brothers, and has drawn parody comics for various publishers across Europe. He has also taught art at the prestigious *Scuola Internazionale di Comics* in Rome since 2002, and his art blog can be found at: [www.davidmessinart.blogspot.com](http://www.davidmessinart.blogspot.com)

Scott Tipton and David Tipton may have only been writing STAR TREK for about a year or so, but they've been discussing it for more than three decades, since their childhood days watching Trek every afternoon on their local Channel 2. Both editors and writers by profession, the brothers have together written *Klingons: Blood Will Tell*, *Alien Spotlight: Gorn* and *Alien Spotlight: Orions* for IDW Publishing's line of TREK comics. Born and raised in Northern California, the Tiptons both have an eye for history, but of decidedly different varieties. Scott is a self-styled comic-book historian, having provided weekly "lessons" on the history of comics for over four years in his weekly column **COMICS 101**, appearing at the Web site of the same name. David, on the other hand, studied real-world history and brings knowledge of the ancient and medieval worlds. People often ask them how they divide the writing duties. Simple: Scott writes the nouns and David writes the verbs, and for everything else they flip a coin.



**SCOTT & DAVID TIPTON**





# STAR TREK

## THE NEXT GENERATION®

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING



Captain Jean-Luc Picard and the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* return in an all-new adventure! What seems to be a series of unrelated missions is soon revealed to be part of a larger conspiracy involving a threat unlike any that Picard has ever faced.

Can the *Enterprise* crew piece together the puzzle before it's too late? From writers **Scott & David Tipton** and artist **David Messina**, the team that brought you the acclaimed miniseries *Klingons: Blood Will Tell*, comes a *Next Generation* epic like you've never seen before!