



STAR TREK

STRANGE NEW WORLDS



STAR TREK: STRANGE NEW WORLDS

EPISODE 002

"Contact"

Written By:

Michael Chang Gummelt

mgummelt@gmail.com

2nd Draft

12/12/2013

BASED ON "STAR TREK"

TEASER

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

McHugh stands staring at the planet below. The message repeats.

ALIEN VOICE (ON SPEAKERS)
Greetings, our children. We bid you
welcome. Our home is yours. Come.
We await you.

McHugh turns to Lexia and Chang. Lexia is ecstatic, Chang seems
pensive.

LEXIA
Well? Aren't we going to reply?

McHugh exchanges glances with Chang, who obviously seems to
think some caution is in order.

MCHUGH
Becker, can you tell - is the message
genuine?

Becker is a little confused.

BECKER
Sir? I don't know how I...

MCHUGH
Does it use the same language, same
frequency-

BECKER
Ah, right - right! Yes, let me see...

Becker does some analysis on the message.

BECKER (CONT'D)
Hmm. Well, it's actually not being
translated. It's being broadcast in
Federation Standard.

McHugh looks surprised at this as does Lexia who has walked up
to look over Becker's shoulder at the analysis. She points to
something.

LEXIA
It's being broadcast on a several
frequencies at once.

Becker nods in recognition.

BECKER
Those are all the same frequencies
that our probes broadcast our reply
on.

McHugh gets it.

MCHUGH

So they learned our language and our methods of communication from the probes. They have been listening.

LEXIA

Then why didn't they reply?

McHugh steps back and thinks for a minute, considering his options.

There is a flash of energy from the nebula which shakes the ship, making McHugh look around in mild concern.

QORA

Shields down to 96%, Captain. The energy bursts are getting stronger.

CHANG

And more frequent.

Kopec leans over and looks at Qora's display, which annoys Qora.

KOPEC

(dismissively)

The energy bolts are low-power. Our metaphasic shielding should hold indefinitely.

McHugh turns to Becker.

MCHUGH

Lieutenant, open all frequencies for our reply.

The crew exchange glances as McHugh is about to send a historic message.

Becker works his console

BECKER

Ready, Captain.

McHugh thinks for a second, then begins to speak.

MCHUGH

This is Captain-

EXT. ENTERPRISE

A bolt of energy shoots from the nebula and arcs across the Enterprise.

EXT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

The crew is caught completely off-guard and hurled across the Bridge. Becker's console explodes and he is thrown from his seat.

END OF TEASER

SERIES MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

EXT. ENTERPRISE

The Enterprise's hull is scarred and residual energy is arcing across it. The Enterprise is slightly adrift.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

The crew is scattered around the Bridge, smoke fills the air and sparks are flying.

Hazard Team members are putting out fires with compact spray devices and breathing masks that cover their noses and mouths. Qora is directing them.

McHugh staggers to his feet, faintly making out Qora through the smoke and amongst the chaos. He can see and hear her, but not clearly.

McHugh turns to see Becker laying on the ground unconscious. He's smoking. His MFID has lit up with a flashing red warning and is speaking.

MFID VOICE

Attention, reduced vital signs.
Medical assistance required.

McHugh staggers over towards Becker, but Dr. Joli arrives first and starts tending to him. She uses her comm to contact Sickbay and presses his MFID to make it display a scan of his body and his medical condition.

McHugh faintly hears an alarm sounding. He looks around, trying to locate the source. He focuses in on it and his senses seem to sharpen as he exerts this effort. His vision becomes clearer and his hearing regains acuity. The alarm is coming from the Helm console.

McHugh rushes over to the console and looks at it.

A graphic on the console shows the *Enterprise* is out of its orbit.

The ship's AI voice detects him and speaks to him.

NOMI

Captain, our planetary orbit is
decaying. Course correction is
advised.

McHugh looks at Viin, who is only semi-conscious, moaning. He works the controls himself, righting the ship.

Viin comes to during this, sees what's happening and sees that McHugh is correcting the course. She goes to help, but he's done.

After he finishes, he puts his hand on her shoulder and looks at her directly, making eye contact, checking to see if she's okay.

Viin nods, indicating she's fine and she takes the controls.

McHugh looks around. The smoke is making it hard to see. He's looking for the rest of the Bridge crew. He starts heading back to his chair where Chang should be.

McHugh can see a shape in the smoke and tries to wave it away with his hand to see who it is.

CHANG
Mr. Daystrom! Emergency
ventilation!

Daystrom is recovering as well, but hears this.

DAYSTROM
Aye, sir!

His NEM flashes a bit and the smoke gets sucked out through vents around the Bridge and the view clears up significantly.

Now McHugh can see Chang standing behind the Captain's chair looking at the rear stations.

McHugh sees several crew on the ground, shaken but not seriously harmed. Lexia, though, lies prone and still. Chang sees her too.

McHugh vaults Daystrom's console and rushes over to Lexia, checking on her.

CHANG
(to Joli)
Doctor!

McHugh has a look of great concern on his face, much more than a Captain should show in front of his crew, but he can't help it. Lexia isn't moving. He goes to lift her, but Joli stops him.

JOLI
Don't move her!

Joli uses her scanner to check her over.

Lexia begins to stir.

Medics rush onto the Bridge and start tending to the other wounded.

Joli gives Lexia a hypospray in the arm.

McHugh watches anxiously. Chang is watching McHugh with some concern. He grabs McHugh by the arm and McHugh looks at him and realizes he's forgetting himself. He walks back down to the Captain's chair.

Lexia opens her eyes and Joli's face lights up with relief. Chang hangs his head, letting the tension go and puts his hand on Joli's shoulder in congratulations. Joli helps Lexia sit up.

Lexia coughs a few times and Joli helps her get it out.

JOLI (CONT'D)
You're okay, just get it out of your system. You inhaled a lot of smoke, but I have you a tri-ox compound. You'll be fine.

Lexia nods, coughing some more. She starts to stand up and Chang helps her.

LEXIA
(rasping)
Thank you, Doctor...

Chang looks around and sees Becker. He's now sitting up and looking around wide-eyed. He's covered in soot, but seems unharmed, if a bit shaken.

CHANG
How's Lt. Becker?

JOLI
He'll be fine, just shaken.

Lexia looks to McHugh, who is standing near Qora and Daystrom. He looks back at her. He wants to run over and take care of her, and she can see it. She smiles at him.

Chang sees this.

McHugh nods and turns back to Daystrom and Qora, all business.

MCHUGH
(to Daystrom)
Damage report.

Daystrom's temple holoprojector displays a diagram of the ship, indicating red-highlighted damaged areas.

Chang walks over and observes as well.

DAYSTROM
(pointing to the damage)
Relatively minor damage - small fires
and shorts, mostly contained to the
upper decks.

McHugh nods.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)
Automated self-repair subsystems are
already active.

QORA
Hazard Teams teams are on scene as
well.

McHugh is relieved.

MCHUGH
Good, good. Keep me posted.

Qora walks back to her console and checks the shield levels.

QORA
Captain!
(pauses in disbelief)
Shields are... shields are completely
down!

Kopec is outraged.

KOPEC
Impossible!

Kopec rushes over to the Qora's. He starts hurriedly working
it himself, to Qora's annoyance.

McHugh and Chang walk over.

CHANG
What was that about the shields
holding, Mr. Kopec? "Indefinitely"?

Kopec holds up a finger and shushes him, trying to concentrate.

KOPEC
Shh!

Chang raises his eyebrows at this. Not exactly the way to
respond to a senior officer. McHugh shakes his head at Chang,
slightly amused. Chang holds his finger up to his lips and
mock-shushes McHugh.

KOPEC (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
The metaphasic shielding was designed
to be able to withstand any variety
of...

Something catches Kopec's eye.

KOPEC (CONT'D)

oh...

Chang and McHugh exchange a "that doesn't sound good!" look and step forward to see what he's talking about.

Kopec brings up the Tactical Station's Holographic (HoloTac) display and points at an analysis the screen that only makes sense to him.

KOPEC (CONT'D)

The first energy bolts held to a certain frequency and power level. Our metaphasic shields had auto-calibrated to them correctly. But the last bolt broke the pattern - it changed frequency and increased in power a thousandfold!

Qora nods, understanding.

QORA

It punched right through the shields like they weren't even there.

Kopec, annoyed at having his explanation completed for him, snaps the display off in a snit.

KOPEC

Yes, well... obviously.

McHugh doesn't like it.

MCHUGH

Can you get the shields back up?

Kopec takes a second to think.

KOPEC

Yes, I think so. I can broaden the range of the variance tolerance and reroute engine power to the-

MCHUGH

Good, just get it done.

Daystrom walks up to McHugh.

DAYSTROM

Captain.

McHugh turns away from Kopec to get a report from Daystrom.

Kopec looks a bit peeved at being interrupted again, but everyone has already moved on. Qora sees him still standing there and teasingly "shoos" him away with her hand.

Kopec sneers and heads for the turbolift.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)

All systems are coming back online, Captain, with the exception of subspace communications. Most of the energy from the bolt centered on the comm relay. It's been completely destroyed. Repair crews estimate 3 hours to replace it. More if they have to EVA.

McHugh looks suspiciously out at the nebula through the viewscreen.

MCHUGH

Can it be a coincidence... that just as we were about to reply, we're struck by the storm and the one system it disables... is our comms?

Daystrom and Qora look at each other, not sure how to interpret it.

DAYSTROM

The probability is... unlikely.

QORA

If it was an attack, we need to be able to defend ourselves. Strike back.

CHANG

Strike back at what?

McHugh walks over to Lexia.

MCHUGH

Scan the nebula for signs of any other vessels. Energy signals like the one that hit us... exhaust trails, subspace echoes, cloak distortions, anything.

Lexia nods and turns around to sit at the fully-equipped Science Station on the wall behind her.

LEXIA

Good morning, NOMI.

NOMI

Good morning, Commander Lexia. How may I assist you?

LEXIA

We've got some work to do.

NOMI
Very well. Shall I prepare you a cup
of janaberry tea?

Lexia smiles in pleasant surprise at this.

LEXIA
... yes, that would be nice...

A cup of tea materializes on the console in front of her. She stares at it, picks it up and sips it. Her face lights up. It's delicious.

Lexia turns to Daystrom.

LEXIA (CONT'D)
I LOVE this lady!

Daystrom nods.

NOMI
Thank you, Commander Lexia. I am
quite fond of you as well.

Lexia smiles and shakes her head, loving the personality of the AI. She sets down the tea and gets to work.

CUT TO:

McHugh is standing in the center of the Bridge, looking back out at the nebula, searching it, as if he can see the answer if he looks hard enough.

Qora calls over, having seen a notification on her display.

QORA
Captain, shields restored. Back to
82%.

McHugh nods.

MCHUGH
(to Chang)
Stand down to yellow alert.

Chang nods and opens the PA on his MFID.

CHANG
(into comm)
Secure from general quarters. All
hands stand down from general
quarters and maintain yellow alert
status. The time on deck is fifteen
thirty-three; on deck, Section One.

The red alert klaxons stop and the alert lights go from flashing red to slowly pulsing yellow.

McHugh walks past Chang on the way to the turbolift.

MCHUGH
All heads meeting, 0200 hours.

Chang nods.

INT. ENTERPRISE - TURBOLIFT

McHugh steps in and the doors close.

MCHUGH
Deck 3.

The turbolift begins to move.

CHANG (ON SPEAKERS)
All Department Heads will muster with
the Captain on the aft quarterdeck at
seventeen thirty.
One-seven-three-zero. That is all.

McHugh steps out of the turbolift.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

McHugh walks in and takes off his charred and smoky tunic. He stops and looks out the window at the nebula.

The nebula can be seen churning ominously outside, energy arcing through it in the distance.

Reflected in the glass, McHugh looks at once pissed and frustrated. So close to the answers they seek, and yet so in the dark and helpless.

In a fit of frustration, he throws his shirt at the window as we:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ENTERPRISE

The Enterprise is in orbit around Cossaea II. The nebula is still thick around the ship and the planet and energy crackles through the clouds intermittently.

MCHUGH (V.O.)
Captain's Log. Stardate 241641.1.
No sooner had we arrived in Andromeda than we received a hail. Apparently in response to the many probes we sent through the Gate over the past several years.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Lexia, Chang and Becker are already seated. McHugh is standing behind his chair, looking restless.

MCHUGH (V.O.)
However. Our attempts to make contact have been hampered by an unexpected nebula surrounding Cossaea II, the source of the signal. And a mysterious energy storm has disabled our communications.

Kopec and Joli are the last to arrive. They come in and sit down.

MCHUGH
Good, is everyone present?

CHANG
Present and accounted for, Captain.

MCHUGH
Let's get started.

Becker hits a control that starts the computer recording.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Daystrom, what's the progress on the comm system?

DAYSTROM
The damage was too extensive to repair internally. I needed to send out remote-controlled repair drones to replace the relay.

MCHUGH
Drones? Why not techs?

JOLI
The radiation from the nebula is
unpredictable and very strong. I
don't know if our EVA suits'
protective fields could withstand it.

McHugh agrees.

MCHUGH
(nods)
Better not take any chances. I don't
want to lose anyone else. How long?

DAYSTROM
I estimate 2.4 hours-

McHugh is about to protest, but Daystrom continues.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)
I am monitoring their progress
closely, Captain.

Daystrom's NEM is very active.

MCHUGH
You're... right now?

DAYSTROM
Yes.

LEXIA
Isn't that distracting?

DAYSTROM
My hyperthreaded neural enhancements
allow me to multitask without
performance degradation in
individual tasks, commander.

Daystrom smiles at Lexia, though it seems like a calculated smile
which makes her recoil a bit.

The others look at Daystrom and each other with unease.

Chang speaks up, breaking the tension.

CHANG
We've completed our PCR on the tunnel
breach, Captain.

McHugh turns to Chang expectantly and nods.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Twenty-eight wounded, no fatalities.

McHugh allows himself a brief look of relief.

CHANG (CONT'D)
But... two unaccounted for.

Joli somberly offers her insight.

JOLI
Crewman Anthony Barbosa and Ensign
Lyta Torrah. They... they were lost
through the breach... in hyperspace.

Lexia gasps and covers her mouth in horror.

Becker is appalled, imagining it.

BECKER
My god... what a terrible way to die!

McHugh tries to control the situation.

MCHUGH
It's a tragic accident, we all feel
their loss-

Becker is losing himself in the horror of the thought.

BECKER
Left to die in intergalactic space,
millions of light years from
anywhere!

Joli takes his arm and he looks at her blankly.

MCHUGH
(firmly)
Lieutenant. Get a hold of yourself.
Now is not the time. We all must deal
with our... feelings about this. But
notnow.

Becker turns to face him slowly, then nods, slowly, trying to
regain his composure. He makes an apologetic gesture as he
gathers himself.

Lexia cuts in, trying to change the subject.

LEXIA
Cole-
(catches herself)
Captain...

McHugh turns his attention to her. She catches a look from Chang
that tells her he noticed she called McHugh by his first name.

LEXIA (CONT'D)
I completed a scan for signs of any
ship that may be hidden in the nebula.

MCHUGH
(nods)
And?

LEXIA
Nothing. There's nobody out here but
us.

QORA
Unless they're hidden behind the
planet.

McHugh considers it.

BECKER
What if it's a kind of ship we couldn't
detect?

Joli thinks Becker is just letting his fear get to him. She's about to say something, but McHugh can see Becker's in control and his mind is working.

MCHUGH
You mean like a cloak?

BECKER
No... I mean... What if their ship is
just structured like nothing we've
ever encountered before? Made from
stuff we would never imagine making a
ship from, propelled by some kind of
exotic matter... what if they don't
even need a ship?

Becker is now staring out the window at the nebula, looking at it in awe.

McHugh seems to consider the idea a bit "out there", as do many of the others, judging by their reactions. Only Lexia is nodding in agreement.

LEXIA
He's right, Captain. For all we
know, the planet could be their ship.

McHugh is at a loss for words.

BECKER
(getting a bit crazy-eyed)
Or the nebula!

McHugh's heard enough.

MCHUGH
All right, enough speculation.
We're just going to have to accept the
unknown elements here and take the
facts we can get.

McHugh looks out the window at the planet and, after a moment, turns to Lexia.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Commander.

It takes Lexia a second to realize he's addressing her, calling her by her rank instead of by her first name, as she's used to.

LEXIA
Yes?

MCHUGH
I want a scan of Cossaea II, check for lifesigns.

Lexia nods. She works her MFID to send a signal to NOMI to begin the scan.

LEXIA
Scan underway.

CHANG
You're thinking it could an automated message?

McHugh nods.

MCHUGH
Whatever it is, I want to know what we're getting ourselves into before we go down there.

Joli can't believe this.

JOLI
Go down there?! You can't be serious!

McHugh is surprised by the rebuke and doesn't appreciate it.

MCHUGH
Excuse me, Doctor?

JOLI
We just got here! We can't just beam down to some unknown planet in another galaxy! Not without doing thorough planetary bioscans first.
(looking around the table)
We don't know what kind of microbes or infectious life forms exist in this galaxy, or what our own microorganisms might do to contaminate-

McHugh nods and holds up a hand, surrendering.

MCHUGH

All right. I understand, Doctor.
Work with Commander Lexia, do your
scans. But I am going down there.
(to Lexia)
Keep me updated.
(to all)
Dismissed.

All rise to exit.

Chang and McHugh are standing together by the exit, having a private exchange. Chang stops Becker and Joli on the way out.

CHANG

Becker.

Becker turns and faces Chang. His face still looks distressed.

Chang glances at Joli as he makes a suggestion.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Look, the comm relay won't be repaired
for another few hours. Why don't you
take some R&R.

McHugh agrees.

MCHUGH

There's nothing you can do right now
anyway.

Becker doesn't answer, he just looks vulnerable. He looks at Joli blankly. She puts her hand on his shoulder, comforting him.

JOLI

Go ahead. You could use the break.

Becker looks back at Chang and McHugh, nods absentmindedly and walks out.

Qora watches him leave and shakes her head in disgust at his weakness.

Joli looks at McHugh with some concern, then leaves with Lexia and Chang.

Qora and McHugh are the last ones in the room. She walks up to McHugh.

QORA

He's got no right being on this ship,
Captain.

McHugh considers how to respond to her.

MCHUGH
We need him.
(pointedly)
And he's got as much right as any of
us, Lieutenant.

McHugh leaves. Qora mentally kicks herself for earning a rebuke from the Captain and follows him out.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

The Enterprise orbits Cossaea II.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

Close-up on the repair drones installing the new comm relay. They lock it in place and seal it in.

One of the robots opens a panel and goes to use a small tool to make some fine adjustments, but something seems to be wrong. It keeps trying the same thing over and over again, but the display flashes red each time.

INT. ENTERPRISE - DRONE CONTROL ROOM

Two techs are sitting in front of a bank of monitors. Two active monitors show the viewpoints of the two drones the techs are controlling.

TECH
Come on!

Daystrom walks over and looks over the tech's shoulder.

DAYSTROM
What's wrong?

TECH
I'm entering the test sequence, but it's not working. Either the drone is malfunctioning or the comm relay needs to be recalibrated by hand.

Daystrom sighs.

DAYSTROM
I'll deliver the bad news.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - AFTERNOON

Becker stands, dressed in high fantasy garb of furs and animal skins, atop a rocky outcrop, looking out over an expanse of

fog-covered terrain. His face is painted for war and his arms are tattooed.

Beside him squats his manservant, FITCH, an elderly, blind Ferengi. He is dressed in colorfully exotic, but tattered clothes.

Becker rests his hands on the hilt of his broadsword, which he has planted in the ground in front of him. He surveys the fog with manly intensity.

BECKER
I smell their foulness on the air,
Decrepit One. They are close.

Fitch looks around blindly.

FITCH
Where, Master?! Show me and I will
cast a spell on them to send them back
to Hell!!

Fitch shakes his fist impotently - in the wrong direction.

Becker smiles a manly smirk at Fitch's antics.

BECKER
Save your wizard's tricks for another
day, Pruned One. This day is for men.
And swords.

Becker hauls his broadsword up above his head.

BECKER (CONT'D)
What are you waiting for, cowards?!
I am here! Kill me, if you can! But
if you cannot, prepare to die by the
edge of my eldritch sword, *Qapla'*!
(shaking his sword)
For I am BECKER THE UNBREAKABLE!

Suddenly, out of the mists rush all sorts of fierce alien warriors. Klingon, Naussican, Orions, etc. All male. 10 or so close in on Becker with many more visible in the background, rising out of the mist.

Fitch cackles, hopping up and down and clapping madly.

FITCH
AHAHAHhHHAAAAA!!!!

BECKER
RAAAAAAHHHH!!!!

Becker whirls his heavy broadsword and lunges into the fray.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE - DRONE CONTROL ROOM

McHugh, Daystrom and Qora are standing behind the drone pilots, looking at the monitors.

McHugh is massaging his temples, not sure what else could possibly go wrong with this first contact.

MCHUGH
(exasperated)
How long.

DAYSTROM
To dismount the relay, bring it back in, service it, then reinstall it remotely... 8 hours.

MCHUGH
8 hours?!!

Daystrom seems chagrined, but covers it up immediately.

DAYSTROM
(hastily)
That's just an estimate, I could run some simulations and-

McHugh cuts him off, declining any amelioration.

MCHUGH
(desperately)
Is there any other way?

DAYSTROM
Only if we send a tech out there. But we don't know how the radiation might effect them.

QORA
Captain. Vegans are naturally resistant to radiation. I could go.

DAYSTROM
Admirable. But we need someone with technical skill for this operation.

MCHUGH
(thinking)
Can you boost the radiation protection on the suits? How long would they need to be out there?

Daystrom has a sudden revelation as his NEM lights up and nearly smacks himself on the head for not thinking of it sooner.

DAYSTROM

Yes, Captain! I could easily amplify the field strength of the shielding on the suit. It would use up its power supply much faster, but the entire operation should take only half an hour since the relay is already installed!

McHugh claps his hands, happy for some good news, at last.

MCHUGH

Great! Get to it, then-

DAYSTROM

(reluctantly)

There is one small issue, though.

McHugh is crestfallen. Of course there had to be something else.

MCHUGH

What.

DAYSTROM

(reluctantly)

My techs are sufficiently competent to install the equipment and initiate the textbook boot up sequence. But when it comes to debugging the software... well, we need a specialist for that. An expert on the system.

MCHUGH

Who...

McHugh realizes who Daystrom means and deflates. He turns to Qora, who is now getting it, too. She understands what McHugh wants her to do.

QORA

He's not going to like this.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - DUSK

Becker the Unbreakable has been fighting for hours. He shows signs of fatigue and is spattered with a rainbow of alien blood. But his last foe falls and he stands, alone, on the body-littered hilltop battlefield. Victorious.

BECKER

Is there NONE that can challenge me?!

FITCH

Master is invincible!
HEHHEHEEEEEHHEEE-

Fitch is cackling madly, but is suddenly thrown aside roughly and knocked unconscious by a large figure.

BECKER
Who dares-?!

Becker whirls to see QORA OF THE WILDS standing before him, at the top of the hill. She wields a long leather whip in one hand and a battleaxe in her other. She is dressed in tight, black leather armor - straps and buckles and metal studs adorn it. Her wild hair blows in the wind, tinged with streaks of silver paint. Her eyes are wild and heavily made up with black eyeliner. She towers over Becker.

QORA OF THE WILDS
Not bad... for a man.

BECKER
I have bested your entire army, Queen of the Savage Lands! What chance stand you?!

QORA OF THE WILDS
You may be the greatest man who has walked upon this plane, "Becker the Unbreakable"... but NO man has ever defeated Qora, Queen of the Wilds!

Qora lets out a shrill, trilling battle cry and hurls herself into combat with Becker.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CORRIDOR

Qora stands outside Lt. Becker's quarters, impatient. Dr. Joli comes running up.

JOLI
I came as quickly as I could! Still no answer?

Qora shakes her head and shows Joli her MFID. It shows Lt. Becker in his quarters.

QORA
Becker's not answering his comm or his door. I'm... concerned he may have...

JOLI
(nods gravely)
NOMI, this is Doctor Firela Zan Joli.

NOMI
Hello, Doctor. Is there a problem?

JOLI
This is a medical emergency!
Override privacy lock on Lt. Becker's
quarters.

NOMI
Of course.

There is a soft chirp and the doors slide open. Joli and Qora run in, but find it empty.

Joli is baffled. Qora looks around the room quickly and efficiently and checks the bathroom. He's nowhere to be found.

Joli sees his uniform on his bed, the MFID laying atop it. She picks it up and hands it to Qora.

Qora investigates it. She talks into her own MFID.

QORA
Computer-

JOLI
(whispers)
"NOMI"

Qora rolls her eyes.

QORA
(sternly)
NOMI.

NOMI's hologram is projected from Qora's MFID.

NOMI
Yes, Lt. Qora?

QORA
Can you locate Lt. Becker?

NOMI
Just a moment. No, Kyle is not
wearing his MFID.

Qora looks at Joli quizzically. She mouths "Kyle?!".

Joli thinks for a moment.

JOLI
NOMI, cross-reference Lieutenant...
Kyle's medical records and scan the
ship for matching lifeform readings.

NOMI
Excellent idea. At once Doctor.
(BEAT)
I found him, Doctor. Kyle is in
Holodeck A.

Joli smiles at this.

JOLI
Thank you, NOMI.

NOMI
Of course, Doctor. My pleasure.

Qora looks infuriated. She throws Becker's MFID down on the bed and storms out. Joli shakes her head in amusement and walks out, the door closing behind her.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - SUNSET

Red-orange light shafts streak across the landscape from the setting sun. The sky is a brilliant orange and pink.

Two warriors stand alone amongst the carnage. Becker the Unbreakable and Qora, Queen of the Wilds.

They are both exhausted and clang their weapons together one last time, before collapsing against each other.

BECKER
(exhausted)
Do you yield?

QORA OF THE WILDS
(equally exhausted)
I yield to NO man!

BECKER
Give up, Warrior Queen. I am
unbreakable...

QORA OF THE WILDS
(appreciatively)
Never have I met a man of such stamina.

BECKER
(bragging)
Many women have said as such.

QORA OF THE WILDS
(lasciviously)
Then let us make better use of such
boundless energy.

Their eyes lock and they throw down their weapons. They embrace each other in a passionate kiss.

Qora easily lifts Becker up in her arms and whisks him away, carrying him off down the hill into the sunset.

Fitch comes to and feels around blindly.

FITCH
What happened? Did someone finally
slay that fool, my Master? Am I free
at last?!!

Just then, a crack appears in the sunset and it opens like a door
to reveal - Lt. Qora, standing in the corridor, looking at first
angry and annoyed, and then horrified.

Becker, arms wrapped around the neck of his Warrior Queen, turns
to see the real Qora standing in the doorway and yelps.

BECKER
Ah!

QORA
What in the name of...!

QORA OF THE WILDS
(confused, on guard)
What is this sorcery, my Love?

QORA
LOVE?!

BECKER
Uh...

Fitch cackles in the background, hopping and clapping.

FITCH
HEHHHEHEHEHHEEHHEEEEEEE--

Qora hits a control on the wall and the entire holographic
simulation disappears instantly.

INT. ENTERPRISE - HOLODECK A

Becker falls out of the air, landing roughly on his rear on the
hard floor.

BECKER
AIOW!

Qora strides over and drags him to his feet.

QORA
Come on, "My Love", you've got a
hopefully fatal assignment waiting
for you.

Becker is rubbing his tailbone as he's led out of the holodeck.

BECKER
Don't these things autolock? The
ones on Earth autolock...

The doors close behind them as they exit and the room darkens.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

A hatch opens on the top of the primary hull and, slowly, Lt. Qora emerges in her EVA suit. She reaches down and pulls Becker through. He carries an equipment case.

Qora activates her magnetic boots, showing Becker how. Becker follows suit. She nods and they start walking towards the relay, which is not far away.

Becker looks up at the great, swirling nebula and its arcing energy. There is a sudden nearby, bright blast in the clouds. Qora notices it.

QORA

We better get moving. Don't want to be out here when one of those hits.

Becker nods and looks up a bit. He sees, to his shock, Cossaea II above them. He suddenly seems disoriented and almost falls forward. Qora catches and stabilizes him.

QORA (CONT'D)

Don't look up. Unless you want to be swimming in your lunch.

Becker nods and focuses himself, breathing deliberately to calm himself. He keeps walking.

BECKER

So how did you get stuck escorting me on the "walk of Hell"?

QORA

Buddy system. Nobody EVAs alone. Standard procedure.

BECKER

Yeah, but - why you?

QORA

What's the matter? I make you nervous?

(smirking)

Or would you prefer I carry you?

Becker's eyes widen in embarrassment and he makes a cutting motion across his throat, indicating she cut it out.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

The entire Bridge crew is watching Becker and Qora expectantly and can hear every word.

MCHUGH
Everything all right out there?

BECKER
(nervously)
Uh, yeah! Everything's fine out
here, we're uh... all good, Captain.
Over and out...

McHugh gives Chang a confused look. Viin shakes her head in embarrassment for Becker. Daystrom drops his head, losing hope that Becker can do this.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

Qora and Becker are now at the panel and Becker is opening his case. Qora rests casually against the comm relay.

QORA
You realize we're on an open channel,
right? You don't have to use voice
procedure.

BECKER
(sighs)
Yes. I know. Communications
Officer, remember?

QORA
Plus, "over" and "out" mean totally
opposite things-

BECKER
I know, I know! Look, I need to
concentrate here, all right?! This
is a very delicate operation!

Qora salutes.

QORA
Roger, wilco!

Becker shakes his head and gets to work. He opens his case and is about to grab a tool, but he notices something on the display.

BECKER
Wait a minute...

He presses a few virtual keys on the display and within a few seconds, it turns from flashing red to green.

Qora sits up abruptly, gawking at the screen.

QORA
Whoa... did you just-

BECKER

I did it! I fixed it!

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Daystrom's head shoots up immediately, surprised.

McHugh steps forward, looking at the viewscreen.

Becker turns to face the camera and looks directly into the Bridge.

BECKER

I did it!

McHugh looks down at the Communications console and the ensign sitting in for Becker nods.

There are smiles all around and McHugh pats Daystrom on the shoulder, which disturbs Daystrom a bit, but he ignores it.

MCHUGH

Good work, Lieutenant! Get back in here and let's make some first contact!

EXT. ENTERPRISE

BECKER

Yes sir!

Qora and Becker are all smiles. Becker packs up his case and they start to head back.

QORA

I have to admit, Becker, I-

A bolt of energy shoots down from the nebula and strikes Becker directly! He is fried with energy from the bolt, sending him flying away from the Enterprise hull, tumbling through space.

Qora looks up at him frantically.

QORA (CONT'D)

BECKER!!!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ENTERPRISE

Becker is flying away from the Enterprise, flipping end-over end.

MCHUGH (V.O.)
Qora! What happened?

QORA
Becker's been hit! He's off
structure! I'm going after him!

Qora looks up at the rapidly-retreating body of Becker. He's beginning to be obscured by the thick nebula clouds.

MCHUGH
Wait, Qora, let us send a rescue-

QORA
No time, Captain!

Qora crouches down and disengages her boots. She shoves off, catapulting herself after Becker, into the nebula.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Daystrom realizes something and he steps forward, his NEM lighting up and patching himself into the conversation.

DAYSTROM
Lieutenant! Your suit's on high
power consumption for the radiation
shielding! You won't have enough
power for your maneuvering jets to get
back! Lieutenant!

Chang puts his hand on Daystrom's shoulder, which startles him.

CHANG
Her comm's out of range. She can't
hear you.

Daystrom shows uncharacteristic worry.

McHugh watches her disappear into the nebula.

MCHUGH
Transporters?

LEXIA
(shaking her head)
The nebula is wreaking havoc with
sensors, we couldn't get a solid lock
on them, especially without comms.

McHugh is out of options.

MCHUGH
(to himself)
Come on, Lieutenant...

EXT. NEBULA

Qora is flying forward, looking for Becker. But he's nowhere to be seen. She looks around, losing hope.

CUT TO:

Becker in the distance, tumbling. He looks completely alone in the huge expanse of the nebula. Energy is arcing all around him in the nebula's clouds.

He tumbles closer and comes into close-up view. He is semi-conscious, though his suit is totally inert and deactivated. Reflected in his faceplate is the nebula and its arcing energy.

Becker stares out at the nebula in awe. He doesn't seem afraid.

He sees swirls of clouds and pulses of energy falling into patterns and rhythms. He is transfixed. He sees something in the nebula and a look of revelation comes over his face.

BECKER
Oh my god...

CUT TO:

Qora, looking around frantically, sees a dark, fleeting image to her left and does a double take. It's Becker! Her aim was a little off and she almost overshot him.

She turns and activates her jets.

SUIT VOICE
Warning: power levels at 35%.

CUT TO:

Becker, staring out at the clouds, eyes darting to every energy burst as it happens.

He starts laughing - either in joy or in madness, it's hard to tell.

Out of the clouds behind Becker comes the form of Qora, quick. She slams into him and grabs him.

QORA
Got you!

SUIT VOICE
Warning: power levels at 15%.

She turns him to see into his facemask. She yells to him.

QORA
Becker? Becker!

From Becker's point of view, we can see she is yelling to him, but he can't hear her. He's still transfixed on the nebula.

BECKER
So beautiful...

From Qora's point of view, we can see Becker's mouth moving, but she can't hear him.

She reaches down and latches their suits together, then holds onto him tightly.

She checks her HUD and sees her flight path projected in 3D. She aims herself back to the origin and hits her jets, shooting them back towards the ship.

Very quickly:

SUIT VOICE
Warning: power levels at 10%.

They keep shooting forward, but power levels are dropping quickly.

SUIT VOICE (CONT'D)
Warning: power levels at 5%.

Qora looks down and presses a control on her belt. Her power levels go back up a bit but her in-helmet HUD flashes a red radiation warning symbol.

SUIT VOICE (CONT'D)
Warning: radiation shield
deactivated. Radiation shielding is
strongly advised.

They keep flying forward. She can't see the ship and is hoping she got the return vector right.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

McHugh looks anxious. Everyone is straining to see any sign of her.

MCHUGH
Come on, come on...

Daystrom sees it first.

DAYSTROM
Captain!

He points. McHugh bolts upright and steps forward. It's Qora and Becker, coming in fast, but off-course!

CHANG
She's off course!

Daystrom is analyzing her trajectory.

DAYSTROM
She's reversing her vector, but the ship is still moving, orbiting the planet...

MCHUGH
Full stop!

VIIN
In orbit...?!

MCHUGH
Full stop! Reverse all thrusters full!

Viin does as McHugh orders.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

Qora sees the large shadow of the Enterprise in the nebula. But she's off course and going to miss.

QORA
Damn!

Qora uses one last burst of jets to correct course.

SUIT VOICE
Warning: power levels at 5%.

Suddenly, out of the clouds the silvery hull of the Enterprise appears and they're hurling at it at very high speeds.

Qora tumbles with Becker so that her body will absorb the brunt of the impact.

She hits with bone-crunching force and reflects off the hull! But she reaches out and grabs on to a protrusion on the hull and catches herself and Becker, nearly dislocating her shoulder.

She pulls herself back to the hull and activates her boots, pulling her back to the hull. She starts walking towards the hatch.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Daystrom looks around, his NEM active as he checks the ship's monitors.

DAYSTROM
She's back on board, Captain!

VIIN
We're losing altitude rapidly!

MCHUGH
(to Viin)
Back to standard orbit!
(to Chang)
Sol, you have the conn!

McHugh runs off the Bridge.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CORRIDOR

Qora is running, still in her EVA suit (but without her helmet), carrying Becker in her arms. Becker is still wearing his suit, also helmetless.

Crewmen quickly get out of her way as she runs into Sickbay.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SICKBAY

Qora runs in and Joli directs her to a medical bed she's prepared. Qora places Becker down and a couple medics remove his EVA suit and secure him. Joli starts running scans on him.

A couple medics start tending to Qora, trying to pull her away, but she shakes them off.

Qora looks concerned and Joli is deep in her scans.

McHugh comes running in. He sees Joli, Qora and Becker and heads over to them.

MCHUGH
Doctor! Is he-?

Joli is very busy, preoccupied.

JOLI
He's alive, that's about all I can
tell you right now, Captain.

McHugh sees Qora. He steps over to her.

MCHUGH
Lieutenant. What you did out
there...

QORA
(a bit in shock)
I almost lost him.

MCHUGH
No, you got him.
(reassuring)
You got him.

McHugh looks on with concern as Joli and her medics work
intensely on Becker.

Suddenly, Becker bolts upright, surprising Joli and the medics.
Qora and McHugh rush over.

BECKER
Captain!

McHugh grabs his arm.

MCHUGH
Lieutenant, what is it?

JOLI
Lie down, lieutenant!

BECKER
Captain! It's... it's beautiful!

McHugh is confused.

MCHUGH
What?

BECKER
So beautiful... Captain, you have to
see it! Can't you see it?

Qora realizes Becker's totally lost it and turns away. She
can't stand to watch.

Joli grabs Becker by the arms and lays him back down.

JOLI
Captain, he needs to rest!

MCHUGH
Just a moment, Doctor.
(to Becker)
Lieutenant... Kyle... what is it?
What did you see out there?

Becker slowly turns and makes eye contact with McHugh.

BECKER
Everything... we need... I need...

MCHUGH
What, Becker? What?

BECKER
Go back...

McHugh and Joli exchange puzzled glances.

BECKER (CONT'D)
Must go back...

MCHUGH
Go back where? To the gate? Out of
the nebula?

BECKER
NO!! No... I have to go back,
Captain... I need to see it again...

McHugh is disappointed. He gives up and lets Joli lie him down.

BECKER (CONT'D)
It's so beautiful... I need to see
it...

Joli takes a sedative in a hypo from a medic and sedates Becker.

BECKER (CONT'D)
(passing out)
No... go back...

Becker slips into unconsciousness. Joli watches his vitals drop and backs off, letting the medics take over.

JOLI
He's clearly in shock, Captain. He
needs his rest.

McHugh nods, understanding.

JOLI (CONT'D)
(reassuring)
I'll take care of him.

McHugh leaves, reluctantly. Qora follows him, despite medics trying to stop her. Joli waves them off, indicating that they should just let her go.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CORRIDOR

Qora catches up with McHugh and walks beside him.

QORA
He's lost it... hasn't he?

MCHUGH
I... don't know.

The two walk on in silence for a bit.

QORA
Maybe if I'd-

McHugh stops and takes her arm.

MCHUGH
Lieutenant. You did everything you
could. You saved him. None of this
is your fault.

Qora hesitates, then nods in reluctant acceptance.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Get situated and report to the Bridge.
We're going to need you.

Qora gets back into professional mode.

QORA
Aye, sir.

Qora heads off in another direction and McHugh watches her go,
then turns and heads off down the corridor.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

The Enterprise orbits Cossaea II. The nebula still swirls
around them and the energy storm is as active as ever.

MCHUGH (V.O.)
Captain's log, supplemental. The
nebula continues to interfere with
our efforts to make first contact in
Andromeda.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

McHugh stands with Chang at the center of the Bridge, near the
comm station. Becker's backup comm officer sits at the console.

MCHUGH (V.O.)
However, our communications are now
back online. I intend to file

commendations for both Lt. Kyle
Becker and Lt. Qora for their
courageous actions.

COMM OFFICER
All hailing frequencies open,
Captain.

McHugh exchanges glances with Lexia and Chang, eager with
anticipation, a bit nervous, but relieved the time has finally
come.

He begins his message and we see close-ups of each of the bridge
crew as he talks.

MCHUGH
To the lifeform who contacted us...
this is Captain Colton T. McHugh of
the United Federation of Planets
starship *Enterprise*. We come in a
spirit of peace and discovery and as
a representative of our home galaxy,
which we call "Milky Way". We have
travelled 2.5 Million light years to
meet you. Please respond.

All wait expectantly for an answer. But nothing comes.

The comm officer is listening closely. But then she turns to
McHugh and shakes her head.

McHugh looks at the planet with consternation. They've come so
far, gotten so close and yet the answers still seem just beyond
his grasp.

Suddenly the comm channel sparks to life with some static. A
voice comes through - the same one that hailed them when they
arrived at Cossaea II.

ALIEN VOICE
Welcome. Your arrival brings us
great joy. Please join us on the
planet below. Coordinates in your
system are being transmitted.

Chang turns to Lexia who works on her console then brings up the
holographic display that shows the planet and the rendezvous
site.

LEXIA
Confirmed, Captain. We have polar
coordinates for a rendezvous site on
the planet's surface.

Chang turns back, beaming at McHugh.

CHANG
It's a date!

There is cheering on the Bridge, but the Captain shushes them with a signal so that he can respond.

MCHUGH
Planetary lifeforms: we confirm,
coordinates received. Please
inform, when should we rendezvous?
What is the purpose of the meeting?
Who... who are you?

There is no response. This time, it's clear they're not going to respond.

McHugh looks at Chang and Lexia, resigned. Chang shrugs.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
I'll take that as an ASAP.

CHANG
Not really talkers, I guess.

McHugh and Chang walk back towards the Captain's chair.

DAYSTROM
Their grasp on our language is
impressive, if utilitarian. They
don't appear to be conversationally
fluent.

Chang looks at Daystrom incredulously.

CHANG
That's what I said!

McHugh considers this.

MCHUGH
We may still need Becker.

DAYSTROM
Or it may still be an automated
message.

McHugh doesn't like that possibility.

LEXIA
We've got to go down there!

MCHUGH
(nods)
What about the life sign scans?

Lexia seems a bit frustrated. She shows the results on her console.

LEXIA
Inconclusive. The nebula's energy storms are just causing too much interference with our sensors. It looks like a lifeless rock from all outward appearances, but we can't be certain without deeper, more thorough scans.

Qora comes onto the Bridge and takes her station, exchanging a quick glance and a nod with McHugh.

MCHUGH
Alright, we're going down.

Lexia looks thrilled, Chang less so.

McHugh walks toward the center of the Bridge.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
I need a landing party. Myself-

QORA
Captain-

Chang waves her off, indicating she should hold her opinion for later.

McHugh acknowledges the outburst, but continues.

MCHUGH
Lt. Qora will provide security.

Qora nods, but really wants to argue.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
(to Lexia)
Commander Lexia. Would you-

LEXIA
YES!

McHugh smiles.

MCHUGH
All right. We beam down-

LEXIA
Captain, transporters won't be able to penetrate the energy storm. It's grown exponentially more active and more powerful since we arrived.

McHugh sighs, turns and puts his hand on Viin's chair.

MCHUGH
Ensign, looks like we'll be needing a pilot. Congratulations!

Viin looks surprised and suddenly very nervous. She stands up to join them.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Meet in the shuttle bay in one hour.

Lexia and Viin head for the turbolift.

McHugh walks towards the rear of the Bridge with Chang towards Qora.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Sol, Qora.

McHugh, Chang and Qora join McHugh by his chair. Daystrom stays nearby, in the background, deep in thought but listening in.

QORA
Captain, I-

McHugh cuts her off.

MCHUGH
I know. I don't want to be caught up in the moment and get a nasty surprise. We're about to go down to an unknown planet in a region of space we know nothing about in a galaxy no-one has ever visited before.
(BEAT)
So what's the security protocol on a situation like this?

McHugh smiles wryly.

QORA
(taking it seriously, at a loss)
Sir, there are no regulations that cover something like this-

CHANG
I think the Captain means, we're going to have to write our own.

Qora nods, getting it now.

QORA
Well, Captain, with all due respect, you should not-

MCHUGH
Lieutenant, try and stop me.

QORA
(flustered)
At least - let me send down a security team to secure the area first.

McHugh shakes his head.

MCHUGH

No, Lieutenant, I appreciate the intent, but a bunch of armed guards is not the first impression I really want to make here.

Daystrom looks deep in thought about the matter.

Qora is about to rebut him, but looks at McHugh and Chang and realizes there's no arguing the point.

QORA

Then... at least take a Hazard Team with you. Me and one other.

MCHUGH

Fine. Anything else?

QORA

Emergency transponders, to beam back to the shuttle immediately in an emergency situation.

McHugh nods.

QORA (CONT'D)

We don't know if our weapons will be effective-

MCHUGH

Just a minute. Nothing lethal.

Qora blanks in disbelief.

QORA

What?

MCHUGH

I'm not about to let someone's itchy trigger finger turn our first contact in the Andromeda Galaxy into a shooting gallery.

QORA

But - what if-

CHANG

Lieutenant. You heard the Captain. No lethal force.

QORA

We'll be defenseless!

MCHUGH
(somewhat flippantly)
Let's not give them a reason to
attack, then.

Qora throws up her hands.

QORA
(sarcastically)
Fine. If the aliens try to eat us, I
know some good Klingon swear words we
can throw at them, maybe hurt their
feelings.

CHANG
(in rebuke)
Lieutenant!

McHugh puts his hand on Chang's shoulder to call him off.

MCHUGH
I'm sure you do, Lieutenant.

Daystrom has been listening and steps forward, inserting himself
into the conversation.

DAYSTROM
Captain. I believe I have something
that may be helpful in this situation.

McHugh and Chang exchange glances.

MCHUGH
Chief...?

DAYSTROM
(thinking for a second)
It would be best if I showed you.

Daystrom gestures toward the exit.

McHugh looks to Chang and Qora. They head for the exit, Qora
mentally kicking herself for losing her cool, then following
behind, reluctantly and a bit embarrassed.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. ENTERPRISE - DAYSTROM'S LAB

McHugh, Qora and Chang watch as Daystrom works on a panel and keeps checking a small round silver device about 1.5 inches in diameter.

Kopec is present as well as another Engineer who is assisting Daystrom.

DAYSTROM

I've been doing some research on Starfleet casualty statistics, as an extension on my work to improve safety and efficiency.

KOPEC

I've heard of some of your proposals. Robotic drones, which were rejected due to concerns about technical vulnerabilities and security concerns.

DAYSTROM

(annoyed)

Well, yes. But the nail in the coffin was the opposition by the android rights groups.

QORA

Android rights?

MCHUGH

(remembering)

That's right. If I recall, Ambassador Data led the opposition personally.

Daystrom grumbles. He picks up the device and carries it to the middle of the room.

DAYSTROM

It's not like they were sentient robots...

Holding the device up in the air around chest height, he presses a control on it, making it emit a soft tone. Red lights pulse across it and it gives off a low, soft, regular clicking sound, like a very faint metronome.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)

My next suggestion was to use holographic engineers.

Kopec audibly scoffs at the idea.

Daystrom steps back and, before everyone's eyes, a holographic man appears. It is a humanoid male, but with generic facial features and no hair and has a completely blank look on his face. He wears a plain gray bodysuit.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)

Imagine - a full team of engineers you could program to carry out my instructions to the letter, without question. An entire Engineering team Operating like a finely tuned machine, all under one direction.

The concept seems to grow on Kopec. He finds it somewhat tempting.

The engineering assistant bristles at the thought.

QORA

Sounds like the Borg to me.

The engineer smiles at this barb. Daystrom shoots her a nasty look and she erases the smile and turns away immediately, trying to look hard at work.

DAYSTROM

Well, regardless of your unfounded, irrational fears, Lieutenant, the Starfleet Corps of Engineers failed to see the potential in my proposal.

KOPEC

I believe it had more to do with the fact that holograms display cohesive instability around warp cores. Potentially leaving a ship without no Engineering crew at all in a crisis!

McHugh and Chang exchange alarmed glances at the thought.

Daystrom scoffs at this, but has no rebuttal.

The hologram is flickering a bit and Daystrom works some controls to make him become more stably solid.

MCHUGH

So what is this? Leftovers from your project?

DAYSTROM

Oh, no, Captain! This is something much more ambitious! I continued to work on the hologram, deciding instead to focus on another field altogether.

Daystrom stands in front of the hologram and makes his pitch to them, eyes wide with his vision of the future.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)

Imagine it: a future where no Starfleet officer must risk life and limb! No crew member must be sent into the perilous unknown or hazardous duty.

(to Qora)

It's a well known fact that the Security Department has the highest casualty rate in the fleet. But there's nothing a security officer can do that my programmable hologram cannot!

With a flourish, he turns toward the hologram and presses a button on his remote.

DAYSTROM (CONT'D)

I give you: ASH. My "Autonomous Security Hologram".

The hologram changes uniform into that of a red-shirted crewman. His face changes to one of defined character and he now has hair. It is ASH. He is handsome, of medium height and build and appears to be in his mid-20's.

Chang's face registers restrained surprise.

McHugh takes a step forward to take a closer look.

Qora is appalled.

QORA

A holographic security officer?!

Daystrom nods.

DAYSTROM

Consider it: always alert, has the senses of a fully equipped tricorder, can sense any threat and has perfect situational awareness and impressive tactical perspective. Not to mention he is a perfect shot, follows orders to the letter and never-

QORA

(angrily)

What a load of-

DAYSTROM

(pointedly)

-Never loses his temper and goes off half-cocked.

Qora turns to McHugh and Chang.



QORA
You can't replace a security officer
with a program! This job takes
intuition, loyalty, self-sacrifice!
(to Daystrom)
Security is about a lot more than
target practice, Daystrom!

McHugh considers it.

MCHUGH
Lt. Qora's right...

Qora looks vindicated and Daystrom is about to argue, but McHugh continues.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
But... that's not to say he wouldn't
be useful in certain situations.
With a... sentient security officer
in the lead.

CHANG
He could be useful out there...

Daystrom seems to accept this. Qora is still irate.

QORA
You're not seriously-

MCHUGH
Has he been field tested?

DAYSTROM
Yes. He's passed full security level
2 training regimens and has passed all
diagnostics.

McHugh turns to Chang. Chang shrugs as if saying "why not?".

McHugh turns to Daystrom.

MCHUGH
Activate him.

DAYSTROM
(a bit confused)
Oh, he's been active...

McHugh is surprised.

MCHUGH
He... has? Why didn't he speak up?

QORA
(grumbling)
Maybe I hurt his "feelings".

DAYSTROM

(proudly)

No - you see, Captain, I have programmed ASH to have none of the personality faults that most holograms are burdened with in order to make them seem more "real". He is simply here to serve. He will speak when spoken to and follow orders to the letter. Everything bythebook!

Daystrom is beaming with pride.

McHugh exchanges glances with Chang and Qora. He moves close to ASH, who shows no sign of being conscious of his presence.

MCHUGH

ASH.

ASH suddenly turns to McHugh and replies.

ASH

Yes, Captain McHugh, what are your orders?

McHugh is a bit startled by this. He circles ASH and the hologram keeps watching him expectantly.

MCHUGH

ASH, this is your commanding officer.
Lt.-

ASH takes a step toward Qora and extends his hand in a greeting. Qora is startled by this and takes a step back.

ASH

Lt. Qora, Service Number
177-J27-Alpha-2-9. Security Chief
of the USS Enterprise, NCC-1701-G.

Qora eyes him up warily.

ASH (CONT'D)

ASH Mark I reporting for duty. What are your orders?

Qora looks at McHugh and Chang, then back at ASH.

QORA

(bluntly)

Go fu-

McHugh cuts in, trying to keep things friendly.

MCHUGH

Lieutenant. ASH. Get outfitted and equipped and report to the Shuttle Bay.

Qora reluctantly follows orders, heading out. She looks back at ASH who is still standing in place.

QORA
(sarcastically)
Come on, boy, here boy!

Qora is patting her thighs, calling to ASH like he's a dog.

ASH looks a bit confused. He looks to McHugh and Chang.

McHugh tilts his head in Qora's direction indicating ASH should follow. He does.

McHugh and Chang exchange amused looks and follow them out. Daystrom looks like a proud father sending his son off to school for the first time.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SHUTTLE BAY

A shuttle sits in the bay, preparing to launch. Techs are fueling it up and checking it over. Other crew are loading supplies onto it.

The shuttle bears the name *Sagan*.

INT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

Viin is at the helm, wearing an environmental suit. The suit has a multifunction belt, shoulder straps, a wrist interface, a compact environmental backpack, and a high-tech looking collar (but no helmet).

She is running through a checklist. Crew members are loading the last supplies and disembarking.

VIIN
Enterprise control, Shuttlecraft
Sagan. Preflight checklist
complete. All systems go for launch.

LAUNCH CONTROL
Roger, Sagan. You are clear for
launch.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SHUTTLE BAY

McHugh, Lexia and Qora come walking in, also wearing environmental suits. ASH walks in behind him, no suit necessary.

Qora is pulling at her suit and is uncomfortable.

QORA
(annoyed)
Are these environment suits really
necessary?

MCHUGH
Dr. Joli insisted. Until we have
more thorough scans, we can't risk
cross-contamination.

Qora is trying to rotate her arm around, but it's too tight in
the shoulder.

QORA
They're so binding.

LEXIA
(sarcastically)
"One size fits all"!

Qora awkwardly pulls at her crotch in annoyance as she climbs
the steps into the shuttlecraft.

INT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

McHugh, Lexia and Qora come in. Viin turns to look at them.

VIIN
Ready whenever you are, Captain-

She suddenly sees ASH, who she's never seen before. ASH is
looking around at the shuttle with wide-eyed curiosity. He's
never been in one before. She finds him immediately appealing.

VIIN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Who...?

QORA
(cynically)
Viin: hologram. Hologram: Viin.

ASH looks at Viin with interest. Viin is surprised.

VIIN
Hologram?

A tech closes the hatch from outside and steps back.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Chang is sitting in the Captain's Chair. Relief crew man the usual stations.



LT. TARA H - A long-haired Andorian female is at the Science station.

LT. NOELLE KTIMBA - a Human/Bajoran female stands at the Tactical Station.



ENSIGN KETAN'DAGA - A Jem'Hadar sits at the Communications console.



ENSIGN TOR - A Breen male mans the Helm.



Daystrom still mans the Ops station.

KETAN'DAGA
Shuttle Sagan is en route to the planet's surface, sir.

Chang nods in acknowledgement.

CHANG
Helm, monitor trajectory. Sensors, give me regular reports on surface scans-

LT. TARA H
Commander! I'm reading a severe spike in nebula activity!

Chang turn to the Tactical Officer.

CHANG
Divert power to the shields!

LT. KTIMBA
Shields to full!

There is a tremendous crackle of energy that is so bright the Bridge crew need to shield their eyes from it. But there's no apparent impact or damage.

Chang looks around expectantly.

CHANG
(to Daystrom)
Damage report?

DAYSTROM
None, Commander. The energy bolt missed-

TOR
Commander!

On the viewscreen, a plume of smoke can be seen in the planet's atmosphere.

CHANG
Magnify!

The viewscreen jumps several zoom levels until the shuttlecraft can be seen barreling into the atmosphere, heavily damaged and trailing smoke and leaking energy.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Tractor beam!

The helmsman tries to activate it.

TOR
Out of range, Commander...

Chang watches the screen with tense expectation, unable to help them.

EXT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

The shuttle is plummeting through the atmosphere, leaving a trail of smoke and energy. Its shields are creating an oval bubble around it, absorbing heat from the entry friction.

INT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

Viin struggling with the controls. Lexia is sitting in her seat, holding on for dear life. Qora and ASH sit in the rear. Qora's look is intense and wide-eyed. ASH has no discernible expression. McHugh is yelling to Viin

MCHUGH
Level us out, Ensign!

VIIN
I'm trying, Captain! We're coming in
too fast!

McHugh starts unbuckling his safety harness.

LEXIA
Cole - no!

MCHUGH
The shields are going to buckle at
this angle! You need to slow us down
and level out or-

VIIN
Inertial braking system is down, I
can't-

McHugh gets up to go help Viin.

MCHUGH
Compensate with the-

A sudden jolt of turbulence sends McHugh tumbling.

Alarmed, Qora tries to unbuckle her safety harness, but it's stuck.

Calmly and quickly, ASH flickers. He's intangible now and stands up, right through his safety harness.

He quickly grabs McHugh and stops him from tumbling. McHugh looks up at him in surprise and gratitude.

ASH helps McHugh to the copilot's chair and McHugh buckles himself in. ASH remains standing behind them, unaffected by the turbulence.

Qora glares at ASH with resentment and gives up struggling with her harness.

McHugh starts working the controls with Viin.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
Come on, Ensign, we can do this
together! We used to train for this
in the old Tycho-class shuttles at the
Academy-

VIIN
(remembering)
Plasma-braking!

MCHUGH
(nods)
I'll brake, you correct!

Viin nods.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
On three! Three... two... one!

McHugh and Viin hit their controls at the same time.

EXT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

Glowing plasma is expelled from the shuttle's nacelles, slowing it down while it levels out. The heat from re-entry seems to wane and the shuttle's shields become somewhat less visibly hot.

INT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

MCHUGH
That's done it! Let's land this
bird!

Viin points to a clear landing site.

McHugh nods.

MCHUGH (CONT'D)
That'll do!

EXT. COSSAEA II - SURFACE

The shuttle - still smoking but under control, now - lands somewhat roughly in a bare patch of land.

The planet has a barren landscape. The dominant colors are a ruddy brown with some light tan patches of irregular flatlands. Hot springs of some sort of yellowish liquids dot the terrain.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHUTTLE SAGAN

The hatch opens and McHugh stands at the hatch looking out.

Lexia is checking a display next to the hatch.

MCHUGH
Activate iso-fields.

Each of them press a button on their wrist interface and their collars light up, extending a force field around their heads.

LEXIA
Atmospheric, gravitic and biological
conditions within suit tolerances.
We should be good.

McHugh is the first one out, stepping through the containment field across the hatchway and jumping down to the ground below (the stairs did not deploy due to exterior damage).

ASH lowers Viin and Lexia out. Qora pulls away from him as he tries to hold her arm to help her out.

Viin checks out the shuttle exterior while McHugh and Qora survey the area.

Lexia uses her tricorder to see where they are.

VIIN
It looks worse than it is, Captain. I
think she's spaceworthy.

MCHUGH
(nods)
Good. And well done, Ensign.

VIIN
(abashed)
Thanks...

Lexia looks up from her tricorder and points in a direction away from the shuttle.

LEXIA
We're only about 2 klicks from the
landing zone.

McHugh looks around at the crew.

MCHUGH
Well, we've come this far, a little
walk won't kill us.

The five head off in the direction Lexia indicated.

McHugh's communicator chirps. A staticy voice comes over the communicator's speaker.

KETAN'DAGA (VIA COMM)
Enterprise to landing party.
Enterprise to landing party, come in!

McHugh takes it out and looks up at the sky.

MCHUGH
McHugh here.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Chang is relieved.

 CHANG
Captain! What's your status?

EXT. COSSAEA II - SURFACE

 MCHUGH
We're fine, *Enterprise*. A little
shaken up, but we're on the surface
and en route to the rendezvous point.
We'll keep you posted.

 CHANG
Glad to hear it, Captain. *Enterprise*
out.

McHugh closes his communicator and continues walking.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Chang turns to the science officer.

 CHANG
Tarah. I'll be damned if those
energy bolts are random. Watch for
patterns; let me know if you see a
build-up coming. I want to know
before it strikes next time.

Tarah nods.

 LT. TARAH
Yes, sir.

Chang activates his MFID.

 CHANG
Chief Kopec.

INT. ENTERPRISE - ENGINEERING

 KOPEC
Kopec here.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

CHANG

Kopec, the nebula is becoming a threat to this mission and this ship. I need suggestions for countermeasures, ASAP.

INT. ENTERPRISE - ENGINEERING

KOPEC

(nods)
Will do, Commander.

Kopec turns and points to several engineers, indicating they come over to him and join him at a table on which he's bringing up a hologram of the ship, planet and surrounding nebula.

EXT. COSSAEA II

Lexia is walking with McHugh.

Qora follows, watching her MFID scanner, but keeping an eye on the horizon and a hand on her holstered phaser.

ASH and Viin take up the rear.

LEXIA

So barren... no signs of life, past or present. Not a single artificial structure or ruin...

MCHUGH

Maybe the inhabitants have been gone for a very long time.

LEXIA

Why bring us here? It's... so dead.

McHugh has no answer.

QORA

Captain.

McHugh turns to Qora.

QORA (CONT'D)

We're here.

McHugh and Lexia look around expectantly. There's nothing here. It looks exactly the same as the rest of the planet.

McHugh activates his MFID.

MCHUGH
McHugh to *Enterprise*.

CHANG (VIA COMM)
Enterprise here, Captain.

MCHUGH
Do sensors indicate anything in our immediate vicinity? Any lifeforms or energy readings?

CHANG (VIA COMM)
Just a moment, Captain...
(BEAT)
Sensors are having difficulty with -
wait-

ALIEN VOICE (O.S.)
Greetings Captain McHugh!

McHugh and the others whirl around to see the an alien figure standing behind them! The ANDROMEDAN is humanoid, though hairless and with generic facial features. It is of indeterminate gender and is wearing plain white robes.

ANDROMEDAN
And welcome home!

McHugh and the others gawk at the Andromedan, speechless. They exchange incredulous glances.

END OF ACT FOUR



TAG

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Chang sits on the Captain's chair, reclines and bored, awaiting word from the planet below. He sits forward.

CHANG
Tarah, any change in the situation on the ground?

LT. TARAH
No sir, they appear to just be... talking.

Chang sighs, wishing he was down there, or at least knew what was going on.

His MFID lights up with a hail from Dr. Joli.

JOLI (VIA COMM)
Commander Chang!

Chang is surprised and hits his MFID to answer it.

CHANG
(light-heartedly)
What's up, Doc?

JOLI (VIA COMM)
It's Becker, Commander.

Chang looks confused and annoyed.

CHANG
Doc, you can update me on Becker's condition later, this isn't-

INT. ENTERPRISE - SICKBAY

Joli is standing at the comm panel.

JOLI
No, Commander... Becker is missing!

Behind Joli, the medical bed that Becker was laying on is empty.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Chang looks suddenly serious and very concerned.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SENSOR CONTROL ROOM

Camera slowly tracks in from outside the room. The sounds of someone working on electronics can be heard. Muttering can be heard.

Becker is sitting in his medical smock, all disheveled, fingers bleeding as he works. He has pulled apart many panels and is rewiring things, making sparks fly.

BECKER

I hear you... I see you... I'm
coming... we'll be together...
everyone will know... everyone will
know...

END OF TAG

END OF EPISODE 002