

May 13, 1987

=====

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"BLOOD AND FIRE"

=====

First Draft Teleplay

by David Gerrold

REPRESENTED BY:

SHAPIRO-LICHTMAN  
8827 Beverly Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

(213) 557-2244

CHARACTERS:

PICARD

RIKER

BEVERLY

WESLEY

DATA

TASHA

GEORDI

TROI

WORF

CON

FREEMAN - a medical technician

HODEL - a computer technician

EAKINS - a security officer

JONAH YARREL - a Starfleet Military Specialist

MACKEL BLODGETT - a Regulan Scientist

AHRENS - an infected Copernicus crewman

COPERNICUS SURVIVOR

ASSORTED ENTERPRISE CREWMEMBERS

ASSORTED COPERNICUS SURVIVORS

**SETS:**

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

ENTERPRISE LOUNGE

READY ROOM

TRANSPORTER ROOM

SICK BAY

COPERNICUS BRIDGE (REDRESS STAR TREK IV BRIDGE)

COPERNICUS CORRIDORS (REDRESS ENTERPRISE)

COPERNICUS CARGO BAY (REDRESS HOLODECK)

**MINIATURES:**

COPERNICUS (ALREADY EXISTING MINIATURE)

TEASER

FADE IN:

ANGLE. ENTERPRISE MOVING THROUGH SPACE. APPROACHING:

THE COPERNICUS. A SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH VESSEL.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's Log. Stardate 41202.5.  
Approaching the Copernicus, a scientific  
research vessel. The emergency distress  
signal continues to repeat, but the  
Copernicus appears to be adrift. There  
have been no answers to any of our  
signals and our scanners are showing  
confusing and contradictory readings.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM.

PICARD is briefing RIKER. BEVERLY is briefing FREEMAN, a  
medical technician. (He is carrying a portable medical kit.)  
TASHA and GEORDI and EAKINS, a security officer, are waiting  
for Riker on the platform. HODEL is working with the WOLF at  
the console.

ESTABLISH that Eakins, Hodel and Freeman are carrying  
tricorders. As Beverly finishes briefing Freeman, he steps  
up onto the transporter platform next to Eakins and pats his  
shoulder affectionately; these two are obviously good  
friends.

These are the last few preparations before the mission team  
beams over, with almost-overlapping conversations.

HODEL

(finishing at the console)

All tricorders are transmitting, Mr.  
Riker. Whenever you're ready ....

(he crosses to the transporter  
platform)

RIKER

Good. Dr. Crusher?

BEVERLY

(turns to Riker)

Auxiliary sick bay is active. All units  
standing at ready.

RIKER

Good.

PICARD  
(to Beverly)  
You can monitor your medical team from the bridge -- if you want. Commander Data is acting as Mission Officer; he'll set it up.

RIKER  
(turns to Geordi and Hodel)  
La Forge, Hodel -- Commander Data will want the log from the Copernicus downloaded as quickly as possible.

GEORDI  
Right, sir.

HODEL  
Yes, sir.

INSERT -- Worf AT CONSOLE

Worf  
We're in transporter range, Captain.  
(adds:)  
Bridge reports a repulsor field centered in the Copernicus cargo bay.

BACK TO ANGLE

RIKER  
A repulsor field -- ?

PICARD  
(guessing)  
They're trying to isolate something --

RIKER  
Suggestions, sir?

PICARD  
It's your call, Number One.

RIKER  
Thank you, sir. We'll start with the bridge.  
(to the transporter chief)  
Use the top deck coordinates, Chief.  
(to his team as he steps up onto the transporter platform:)  
All right, let's go --

GEORDI  
-- and watch out for Sparkle-Dancers and man-eating tribbles.

RIKER

(gives Geordi an annoyed look,  
then:)  
Energize.

MED ANGLE -- WORF AT CONSOLE

He works his controls.

MED. WIDE ANGLE -- THE AWAY TEAM ON THE TRANSPORTER PLATFORM.

FX: TRANSPORTER. We see the transporter effect pile up in the air. WE HEAR the familiar transporter sound. Our people twinkle and fade out.

FADE OUT.

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INTERIOR -- COPERNICUS CORRIDOR. (REDRESS ENTERPRISE)

The corridor is dark, shadowy, and very mysterious.

SFX: A different sound quality than the Enterprise. None of the familiar background noises of a living ship are present. The silence should be eerie. This ship is deserted.

FX: OCCASIONAL PINK AND GOLD FLICKERS IN THE AIR. Only a few, very small, very bright, very quick -- almost subliminal. They exist at the fringes of our vision. They look like tiny stars twinkling for only the briefest of instants (two or three frames) and then they are gone.

IMPORTANT: WE WILL SEE THESE FLICKERS THROUGHOUT THE COPERNICUS.

FX: TRANSPORTER EFFECT PILES UP. THE AWAY TEAM BEAMS IN.

CLOSER ANGLE ON THE AWAY TEAM.

As they look around and spread out. Freeman and Hodel activate their tricorders and begin scanning.

RIKER  
(holds up a hand)  
Listen --

All stop. All listen.

HODEL  
I don't hear anything.

GEORDI  
That's just it. The monitors are down.

TASHA  
This ship is dead.  
(she takes out her phaser)

GEORDI  
(noticing the phaser)  
Afraid of ghosts?

TASHA  
Nope. Just don't want to be one.

Riker looks grim. He motions Tasha and Eakins and Hodel one way. He and Geordi and Freeman move the opposite way.

ANGLE -- CORRIDOR INTERSECTION. RIKER, FREEMAN AND GEORDI.

FX: MORE PINK AND GOLD FLICKERS.

Eakins' tricorder picks up a clustering of flickers. He frowns.

FREEMAN  
Sir?  
(he points)

RIKER  
(sees the flickers)  
Geordi?

GEORDI  
(looks, then shakes head)  
Some kind of wavicle. I can't tell.

The flickers are drifting toward our people. They look harmless. They circle like fireflies, flickering in an out of existence. Geordi waves at them, trying to catch one in his hand. And then ... they're gone.

GEORDI (Cont'd)  
(As the last of the flickers  
vanishes, he giggles:)  
Hey! That tickles!

RIKER  
(concerned)  
Freeman?  
(indicates Geordi)

FREEMAN  
(scanning Geordi, and reading his  
tricorder, he shakes his head)  
I can't identify it, sir. The Enterprise  
will have to work on this one.

INTERIOR. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE.

Picard has been watching on the main viewer. He looks to Data.

DATA  
Working on it now, sir.

BACK TO THE COPERNICUS -- ANOTHER PART OF THE CORRIDOR

Tasha, Eakins and Hodel come to a place where a door has been blasted shut or somehow permanently sealed.



EAKINS  
(examining the door)  
It's sealed. Welded shut.

HODEL  
This is spooky. There's no one here.  
(to Tasha)  
You ever seen anything like this before,  
Lt.?

TASHA  
I've heard about ships found floating  
empty in space -- never seen one.  
(beat)  
Until now.

They exchange troubled looks and head back in the direction  
of Riker and the others.

BACK TO CORRIDOR INTERSECTION.

Riker looks up as the others approach.

TASHA  
That end is sealed off. No survivors.  
No bodies.  
(beat)  
No ghosts either.

RIKER  
(one last look around)  
All right. We'll use the manual access  
to the bridge.  
(points)  
That way.

INSERT -- BRIDGE OF THE ENTERPRISE. FAVORING PICARD, DATA,  
BEVERLY AND TROI.

They are watching the main viewer. Troi looks troubled.  
Data is at a science station, next to Picard. He is  
frowning.

DATA  
Mr. Riker. We're picking up scattered  
life readings throughout the Copernicus.  
But very faint.

RIKER (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Any specific area?

DATA

No, sir --

(this is the hard part)

I can't localize them at all.

INSERT AS NEEDED. BRIDGE POV -- THE MAIN VIEWER SHOWS THE  
POV OF THE AWAY TEAM.

We are moving through the Copernicus corridors.

BACK TO ANGLE.

Picard is tight-lipped and grim. Ditto, Beverly and Troi.

RIKER (O.S.)

(filtered)

What about the wavicles?

DATA

(very unhappy)

Still searching for a match, sir.  
There's nothing in the primary data  
banks.

INTERIOR. COPERNICUS BRIDGE. DARK AND SILENT.

(This is a redress of the Enterprise bridge from STAR TREK  
IV.)

The Away Team enters the bridge silently. They are struck  
with the mystery of what has happened here. Geordi moves  
immediately to the forward consoles -- CAMERA PUSHES IN ON  
GEORDI as he stops in surprise and dismay!

GEORDI

(screams in surprise  
and horror)

GEORDI'S POV. THE DESSICATED BODY OF A CREWMAN.

The body has fallen from the forward work station. It is  
HALF-HIDDEN IN SHADOW; we do not see it clearly -- we have  
only a hint of the horror here. The crewperson looks  
mummified. What we can see suggests that the body is frozen  
in a position of horror or agony.

BACK TO GEORDI -- HE BACKS AWAY QUICKLY.

WIDER ANGLE -- MATCHING.

May 13, 1987

As the rest of the team comes up quickly. Freeman steps forward professionally. He begins scanning the body with his medical tricorder.

TASHA

Now we know who sent the distress signal.  
(beat)  
Poor bastard.

RIKER

Freeman?

FREEMAN

(doesn't like what he reads)  
Sir? There's no blood in this man's  
body. No blood at all.

INSERT -- EAKINS AND HODEL

HODEL

(only half-joking)  
Vampires! Space-vampires!  
(shudders)

WIDER ANGLE. MATCHING. INCLUDING RIKER, GEORDI AND TASHA

RIKER

(annoyed)  
Belay that!

Riker sees that Geordi is still focused on the dead body --  
horrified and entranced.

RIKER

(to Geordi)  
La Forge. Download the log --

GEORDI

(startled out of his  
horror)  
Yes, sir!  
(he steps away from the body  
to the forward console)  
Sir -- ?  
(looks back to Riker)

INSERT -- THE FORWARD CONSOLE

A large phaser burn scorch. The console is obviously  
unworkable.

INSERT -- ANOTHER BRIDGE CONSOLE. HODEL.

This console is similarly out of commission.

HODEL

All the work stations are out.

Tasha steps into shot, frowning. She peers at the scorch.

TASHA

(recognizes the work)

That's a phaser blast.

ON RIKER

RIKER

What the hell?!

INSERT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE. REACTION SHOT. PICARD.

All the consoles are destroyed?

PICARD

Will. I want the log of that ship.

RIKER (O.S.)

(filtered)

Acknowledged.

ANGLE ON DATA AT A SCIENCE STATION.

Data is frowning at the readings on his screens.

DATA

(to the Away Team)

Mr. Riker -- ! I've got a focus on those  
life form readings. They're very ...  
strange.

Picard comes up behind him and looks over his shoulder. We see his concerned reaction.

DATA

And, sir -- ?

(beat while he studies  
his console)

The life forms are moving toward you.

BACK TO THE COPERNICUS -- ANGLE ON ALL

Eakins is studying his tricorder.

EAKINS  
I'm reading it now too, sir!

Tasha, Geordi and Hodel draw their phasers.

EAKINS (Cont'd)  
(he looks up and  
points)  
It's coming from --

ANGLE ON TURBO-LIFT DOOR

As it slides open and reveals AHRENS, a young Copernicus crewmember. He looks haggard and very sick. His skin is pale and puffy. He is wild-eyed with fear. He half-staggers, half-falls into the room.

Our people are startled and back away from him -- all except Freeman, who is a medical technician. He steps forward professionally and begins scanning Ahrens with his medical tricorder throughout the following:

AHRENS  
(gasping and coughing)  
You're too late! They're all dead!  
Everyone is dead! You'll see! You're  
next!

INSERT -- REACTION SHOT OF RIKER, TASHA AND GEORDI.

BACK TO AHRENS -- AND FREEMAN SCANNING HIM.

Freeman looks up from his tricorder and shakes his head at Riker. This man is dying.

FREEMAN  
(hitting the man with a hypo-spray)  
Here. This will ease the pain --

AHRENS  
(it doesn't work)  
Oh, no! It's happening! Oh, please, no  
--  
(to Tasha)  
Kill me! Oh, God, please kill me!  
(falls to the floor, clutching  
his belly -- a dark red stain  
begins to spread across his torso)

Kill me! Quickly! God Damn You!

ON TASHA AND RIKER

TASHA  
(reporting)  
Enterprise. Your mysterious life forms  
are here. An injured crewman.

DATA (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
I'm not talking about the crewman. The  
life forms are still moving toward you.

She and Riker look up startled. Exchange a glance.

BACK TO AHRENS AND FREEMAN. INCLUDE GEORDI.

The distraction was all that Ahrens needed. He leaps and  
grabs Geordi's phaser. He clutches it to himself and --

FX: Ahrens disintegrates in a multi-colored phaser burst.  
We see a cloud of sparkling gold and pink wavicles appear  
with the burst. They spread out quickly -- including into  
our Enterprise people -- and vanish.

BACK TO RIKER AND TASHA.

Horrified. Riker notes the appearance of the wavicles and  
touches his communicator.

RIKER  
Enterprise. Did you get all that?

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE -- FAVORING PICARD. INCLUDE CON AT FORWARD  
STATION.

All are stunned.

RIKER (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Enterprise. Acknowledge.

CLOSER ON PICARD. INCLUDE TROI, BEVERLY, AND DATA AT AFT  
SCIENCE STATION.

Picard massages his temple wearily. He touches a button on  
his chair arm.

PICARD

(hard to speak)  
We saw it.

BACK TO RIKER

RIKER  
We have to assume the whole ship is infected. Some kind of -- we don't know. Did you see the wavicle burst? We must also assume that we are all contaminated.

BACK TO ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

BEVERLY  
What about the transporter bio-filter?

PICARD  
It won't filter out wavicles. Half-wave, half-particle, they'd slip right through.

BEVERLY  
We could beam them to an isolation bay.

PICARD  
Same problem. Wavicles can't be contained.  
(to his Science Officer:)  
Data?

DATA  
(he knows something)  
I have to agree with Mr. Riker.

BACK TO RIKER

RIKER  
Captain. We can't beam back.  
(takes a breath)  
We can't risk infecting the Enterprise.  
Do you agree ... ?

BACK TO PICARD

PICARD  
Yes, Will. I do.  
(without emotion, as if  
quoting the book:)  
The safety of the Enterprise has to come first.

BACK TO RIKER

He exchanges a grim look with his colleagues. They all understand that this is now a one-way mission.

BACK TO PICARD. INCLUDE TROI.

Picard sees how troubled Troi is by this.

PICARD

(To Troi)

Your assessment?

TROI

(forcing herself to be professional)

I'm sensing a great deal of fear and anger from the Copernicus. It's possible that the survivors have isolated themselves inside that cargo-bay repulsor field. They may not have any way to get a message out to us.

PICARD

Will?

(Did you hear that?)

RIKER (O.S.)

(filtered)

We copy. We'll investigate.

PICARD

Get the log from that ship first. See if you can find working access, attach a terminal and start a total download.

RIKER (O.S.)

(filtered)

Will do.

Data and Beverly steps into B.G. shot.

DATA

(softly)

Captain?

Picard looks up.

DATA

(trying to be discreet)

May we speak to you please?

Picard realizes that Data does not want what he has to say to be heard by the Away Team. He gets up and crosses to Data's science station at the rear of the bridge. CAMERA MOVES WITH.



AT THE AFT SCIENCE STATION. PICARD, DATA AND BEVERLY.

Data and Beverly both look very grim. Data indicates the readouts on the console.

DATA

(very softly)

Captain ... I've been checking the historical records and ... the observed phenomena on the Copernicus matches the description of ... plasmasesites.

BEVERLY

(beat)

Also known as ... bloodworms.

Picard reacts sharply. Bloodworms?!!

DATA

The only recorded plasmaseite infection occurred on the third planet of the Regular system. That planet has been quarantined for nearly 150 years.

BEVERLY

(puzzled)

But I still get a 93% probability match on the symptoms -- ??

PICARD

(extremely concerned)

Have you told anyone else this?

DATA

No, sir.

PICARD

Good. I don't want this discussed.

DATA

Captain --

(there's more bad news)

The historical precedent was -- the complete and total destruction of every infested ship. Including crew and passengers. Rescue was not to be attempted.

(reluctantly)

Too many ships were lost attempting rescues.

Picard looks at them both. His expression is unhappy.

PICARD

There's got to be a way. That was ... a hundred and fifty years ago.

BEVERLY

(and now the really bad news:)

The problem is --

(it's hard to say)

-- There's no known cure. There's no record that anybody has ever survived plasmasites ....

Picard's expression tightens with anger. As if he is reminding himself that he must not kill the bearer of bad news. No matter how bad.

CAMERA PULLS OUT as Picard looks worriedly toward the forward viewer.

And we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

AS BEFORE -- ENTERPRISE AND COPERNICUS

PICARD

Captain's Log. Stardate 41202.6. Our Away Team has been exposed to plasmasite contamination aboard the Copernicus. We cannot beam them back. We have still had no contact with the Copernicus survivors ... if any.

INTERIOR COPERNICUS CORRIDOR. HODEL AND EAKINS.

A wall panel has been opened up revealing a set of computer access connections. Hodel is tracing the lines with a logic probe. He is ready to connect his tricorder to a computer node.

HODEL

(talking to himself while he works)  
Blue fiber to blue insert. Green to green. Just like home. Now -- I need -- that!

(speaking to Eakins, but not looking up from his work)  
So how long have you and Freeman been together?

EAKINS

Is it that obvious?

HODEL

Yeah, it's that obvious.

EAKINS

Since the Academy. Two years.

HODEL

(he finds the connection he's been looking for)  
Ah! Here. This one's live!  
(reaching and stretching)  
There! Got it.  
(beat)  
Enterprise -- ?

DATA (O.S.)

(filtered)  
We're copying. Download is initiated.

HODEL

What the hell -- ??

INSERT -- HODEL'S POV

A light cable inside the wall panel. A single red worm is crawling along the cable.

HODEL AND EAKINS

They both stare at it.

EAKINS

We better show that to Mr. Riker.

HODEL

Yeah.

He produces a small plastic sample case and flicks the bloodworm into it with his logic probe.

SFX: The bloodworm TRILLS angrily. But not very loud.

Both grin. Now, Hodel reaches deep into the access panel with one hand --

HODEL

All right. Let me just put a tracer on the main channel --

(puzzled look)

Oww! What the -- ?!!

He pulls his hand back out of the access panel. There are several slimy red bloodworms on his hand!

SFX: ALL THE BLOODWORMS ARE TRILLING ANGRILY. This is much louder.

HODEL (Cont'd)

(screams!)

Hodel tries to shake the worms off his hand!! He screams in pain. Eakins leaps back! He touches his communicator!

EAKINS

Mr. Riker!!

VERY RAPID MONTAGE OF SHOTS:

CLOSE ON THE ACCESS PANEL

Suddenly, more worms begin to slide down out of the wall

panel. A slippery wet mass of slithery red worms.

SFX: Establish a distinctive slobbery sound for the bloodworms, but with just a hint of music in it.

ANGLE ON HODEL

On the floor, trying to get the worms off his hand. It is having the opposite effect. There are worm around him on the floor. Some of them are on his feet.

REACTION -- EAKINS

He fires his phaser!

ON THE WORMS

They are hit by the phaser beam.

FX: THE phaser burst disintegrates the worms into clouds of wavicles.

SFX: THE ANGRY TRILLING GETS LOUDER AND ANGRIER!

ON HODEL

Now the worms are onto his shins. The man is in agony.

REACTION -- EAKINS.

He doesn't know what to do. He fires again.

AS BEFORE -- THE PHASER HITTING THE WORMS

FX: More wavicle bursts! More angry trilling.

ON THE ACCESS PANEL

Now a great wet mass of angry bloodworms comes sliding, oozing, blubbering down out of the wall panel. CAMERA PULLS BACK as the worms pour down, spreading out across the floor.

SFX: VERY ANGRY TRILLING.

ON HODEL

HODEL  
Danny! Help me!

ON EAKINS

He backs away, horrified!

BACK TO HODEL

The worms are all over him now. They are up to his chest!

BACK TO EAKINS.

EAKINS  
(with great pain)  
God forgive me -- !!

He fires his phaser.

ON HODEL

FX: Hodel is disintegrated! Again, a pink and gold wavicle burst when the bloodworms are hit by the phaser.

The bloodworms continue to pour, all wet and slithery, down from the access panel.

ON THE WORMS

The worms are spreading out across the floor! Like a red carpet, they will consume everything in their path.

ON EAKINS

Firing and firing his phaser. Almost in a frenzy! He wants revenge! Riker and Tasha come running up! They come skidding to a horrified halt!!

RIKER  
Eakins!!

TASHA  
(grabs Eakins' arm)  
Let's get out of here!

They turn and run for the corridor entrance!!

ANGLE -- CORRIDOR ENTRANCE

They come scrambling around the corner just as Geordi and Freeman arrive, phasers ready. Tasha hits the wall panel and the CORRIDOR DOORS SLAM SHUT!

SFX: Muted sounds of the bloodworms behind the doors. It's horrible.

REVERSE ANGLE -- THEIR REACTION TO THE SOUNDS.

RIKER  
Will that door hold them?

TASHA  
It's a Class A security door! It had better!

RIKER  
Or what?

TASHA  
(gets the joke)  
Or -- I'm going to complain to the manufacturer.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- FAVORING FREEMAN AND EAKINS

FREEMAN  
(To Eakins)  
Are you all right?

EAKINS  
(trying to explain)  
I couldn't stop them! Every time I fired, they got angrier! They just kept coming! I couldn't save Mike. I had to  
--

(turns away to hide his grief)

Freeman touches his arm concernedly.

EAKINS  
(waves him off)  
I'm all right. I'll be all right.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- FAVORING RIKER

PICARD (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Will -- listen to me. Those are plasmasites. We don't know how they got aboard the Copernicus, but the

identification is now a hundred percent certain.

GEORDI  
(to Tasha)  
Plasmasites -- ?

TASHA  
(explains)  
Regulan Bloodworms.

GEORDI  
Oh no --  
(he points)  
Mr. Riker.

ON THE CORRIDOR DOOR. THE CLASS A SECURITY DOOR.

There are three little worms just crawling down from the top of it.

BACK TO ANGLE

RIKER  
Captain. They're coming through the door.

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE. ON PICARD. INCLUDE DATA, TROI AND BEVERLY.

PICARD  
Will, our scanners show that whole part of the ship is heavily infested. They're moving toward you. Now, listen. We're going to beam you up --

RIKER (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Captain, you can't!

PICARD  
-- and put you down in the center of that repulsor field. We think that's where the rest of the Copernicus survivors are.  
(to someone O.S.)  
Transporter Room, stand by.

INSERT ON THE AWAY TEAM

Spacing themselves appropriately.



BACK TO PICARD.

PICARD  
Beam them over.

INTERIOR. COPERNICUS CARGO BAY.

FX: TRANSPORTER EFFECT PILES UP. The surviving members of the Away Team materialize, phasers ready for anything.

SFX: Establish distinctive high-pitched warbling of the repulsor field.

The Away Team looks around and sees:

WIDER ANGLE. MATCHING. THE COPERNICUS SURVIVORS.

Our team lowers their phasers. There are only fifteen survivors, total. They are haggard, sick and dirty. Freeman immediately goes to their aid. Eakins and Geordi assist.

JONAH YARELL and MACKEL BLODGETT approach Riker and Tasha anxiously.

RIKER  
(grimly)  
First Officer Riker, The Enterprise.  
What's your situation here?

BLODGETT  
We've lost the Captain and most of the crew. Most of our people are showing advanced plasmasite infections. We've been here three days.

YARELL  
Jonah Yarell, Starfleet Preparedness Officer. This is Mackel Blodgett, from my research division.

BLODGETT  
There are only fifteen of us left, Commander. The Copernicus left port with a hundred and twenty-three.

RIKER  
(interrupting)  
Mr. Yarell -- did you violate the Regulan quarantine?

YARELL  
It was an authorized mission, Commander.

A top secret, research operation -- to see if we could find a way to neutralize the plasmasite infestation.

BLODGETT

We were very close to an answer here. A real breakthrough.

TASHA

(looking around skeptically)  
Yes, it's obvious.

RIKER

(cautioning)  
Lieutenant --

BLODGETT

My research showed that the spores are attracted to certain oxygen-binding enzymes found primarily in human blood. Eventually, those spores will start growing and eating -- and then they become bloodworms and --

TASHA

(grimly)  
We've seen.

BLODGETT

Then you know. We're all infected. Including yourselves. The spores are in all of our bloodstreams.

GEORDI

(stepping in to report)  
Mr. Riker, the repulsor field is surrounded by bloodworms.

All turn and look.

INSERT. THEIR POV.

FX: Looking down a corridor. At the end of the corridor is a throbbing glow of light. The repulsor field. On the other side of it, we can barely see a squirmy red carpet.

BACK TO ANGLE.

BLODGETT

They smell our blood.

GEORDI

As the power to that field weakens, the

pulses are going to come slower and slower. Within a very short time, that repulsor field will no longer be impermeable to the worms.

YARELL

You've got to start now, Mr. Riker!

RIKER

Start what?

YARELL

Rescue! Of course!

RIKER

(to the Enterprise)

Captain? Are you following this?

ON THE BRIDGE

BEVERLY

(quietly)

There is a chance, Captain.

(to his look)

If we can suppress the key enzymes in a person's bloodstream --

DATA

(reporting)

The plasmasites in the blood would die almost immediately.

PICARD

You can't be certain of that.

DATA

The creatures are vulnerable in their particle form.

BEVERLY

It'd be risky, yes. Once the plasmasites were neutralized, we'd have to beam the person back to the Enterprise for a complete blood replacement. But time would be critical. We'd have less than ten minutes to make the transfusion -- or the person dies.

BACK TO THE COPERNICUS. RIKER, YARELL AND BLODGETT.

YARELL

Captain -- ? Captain Picard?

PICARD (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Go ahead, Mr. Yarell.

YARELL  
Captain, you'll have to rescue Blodgett  
and myself first.

PICARD (O.S.)  
(filtered, astonished)  
I beg your pardon?

YARELL  
(only a little embarrassed)  
There's a Starfleet Regulation. Order  
Number 238 --

PICARD (O.S.)  
(filtered) (interrupting)  
I know the order.

YARELL  
Then you know that it mandates that in  
situations of dire emergency, critically  
important Starfleet personnel must be  
rescued first.

TASHA  
(snorts in contempt)  
Right. "Women and children last."

YARELL  
(officiously)  
You said something, Lieutenant?

RIKER  
(to Picard)  
Sir, there are people here in very bad  
shape.

PICARD (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Sorry, Will. Mr. Yarell has the  
precedent on his side. Whatever he and  
Blodgett know about the plasmasites is  
too important to risk losing.

RIKER  
Dammit, sir --

BACK TO THE BRIDGE

PICARD  
I know how you feel, Will.

(He feels the same way.)  
Dr. Crusher -- ?

He looks around abruptly. Where's Beverly?!!

DATA  
She's already on her way to the transporter room.

TRANSPORTER ROOM. BEVERLY STEPPING ONTO PLATFORM.

Picard enters angrily -- sees Worf at console and Beverly on the platform. Also, a portable medical kit on the platform.

INSERT AS NECESSARY -- REACTION SHOTS. WORF

PICARD  
What the hell do you think you're doing?!  
(he pulls her off the platform)

BEVERLY  
This isn't negotiable, Captain. Those people need a doctor who knows what she's doing. I'm it.

PICARD  
(angry)  
I can order you not to go.

BEVERLY  
On what grounds?

PICARD  
You're a sole-surviving parent.

BEVERLY  
(stiffly)  
That's beneath you, Captain.  
(a different tone)  
Wesley and I have had this conversation ... many times. He knows I'm a Starfleet Officer. I can't shirk my duty to this ship or my oath was meaningless.  
(with great intensity)  
Now let me do my job!  
(she steps onto the platform)

PICARD  
(in a softer tone)  
Beverly --

She stops and looks back at him.

PICARD (Cont'd)

(he fumbles, he doesn't know  
how to say what he really  
wants to say; finally he  
waves her on)

Never mind.

(adds)

Good luck.

BEVERLY

Thank you, Captain.

(to Worf)

Energize --

Worf looks to Picard. Picard reluctantly nods. Worf energizes.

ON TRANSPORTER PLATFORM. BEVERLY BEAMS OUT.

ON PICARD AND WORF.

Picard is alone with his very complex feelings. Abruptly, he realizes that Worf is looking at him. Picard looks at Worf. Yes -- ? You have something to say?

WORF

(scratches himself thoughtfully)

You're asking me as a Klingon?

(beat)

Beat her.

(another beat)

As a professional?

(beat)

She was right.

PICARD

(looking at the platform  
and admiring Beverly's courage)

Yes. She was.

And then he exits grimly.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

ENTERPRISE AND COPERNICUS IN SPACE.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's Log. Stardate 41202.7. Dr. Crusher has beamed over to the Copernicus to attempt a treatment and rescue of the survivors of the plasmasite infestation. As soon as the plasmasites in each person's blood have been neutralized, they will be beamed back to the Enterprise for a complete blood replacement.

INTERIOR. BRIDGE.

Con approaches the Captain.

CON

Sir?

PICARD

Yes, Con, what is it?

CON

Captain --

(embarrassed to do this)

I -- I've been asked to represent some of the ... families. They want me to ask you -- to not proceed with the rescue operation. They know the danger -- and they're afraid that the Enterprise will be infected.

(this is very hard for him)

After all, if the Copernicus, with all of its precautions could be infected, what protection do we have?

PICARD

(firmly)

Con. This is not a democracy. You don't get to vote on it. We're not abandoning our shipmates. And we're not throwing away half the human race because the other half is scared. Report to your station.

CON

Sir! I'm going to log a formal protest.

PICARD

(turning away, couldn't care less)  
You do that.

Picard returns to his chair and sits down and looks glumly at the forward screen.

INTERIOR COPERNICUS CARGO BAY.

SFX: The warble of the repulsor field is lower pitched now.

Yarell and Blodgett are lying on mats between Beverly and Freeman who are scanning them with medical feinbergers. Beverly is just giving Yarell a hypo-spray injection.

BEVERLY  
Enterprise. Stand by. We have Yarell  
and Blodgett working.

WORF (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Auxiliary sick bay is standing by.

FREEMAN  
(reading his tricorder)  
Plasmasite level is dropping rapidly.

BEVERLY  
(to Yarell)  
As soon as you get to the Enterprise,  
they'll fill you up with nice fresh  
artificial blood.  
(to Blodgett)  
Answer a question?

BLODGETT  
What?

BEVERLY  
Are these things native to Regula? What  
controls them in their own environment?

BLODGETT  
These things aren't native to anywhere.  
There aren't any controls. They were  
created to be a weapon. There was a war  
on Regula. And these things were  
unleashed.

BEVERLY  
(astonished)  
With no way of controlling them?

BLODGETT



They were a doomsday weapon.

BEVERLY

I'm sure the creators were pleased to see how well their weapon worked.

BLODGETT

(grimly)

They were.

FREEMAN

(off his tricorder)

Time.

BEVERLY

Enterprise. Go!

She and Eakins step back away from Yarell and Blodgett.

FX: Yarell and Blodgett beam out.

ANOTHER ANGLE. GEORDI, TASHA AND EAKINS.

SFX: Warble of the repulsor field dips to a low pitched throb for a moment, then shifts back up again, but not as high as it was before. All of our people stop and react.

TASHA

The repulsor field is starting to fail.

GEORDI

(listening to the tone)

I give it -- forty minutes.

(looks nervously down the corridor)

TASHA

(looks around, gauges)

We'll make it. But just barely.

GEORDI

What if you're wrong?

TASHA

(grins)

I'll be in no position to worry about it.

We see Eakins troubled reaction to this banter. He crosses to Freeman and the two exchange reassuring glances.

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE.

Wesley enters and crosses to Picard.

WESLEY  
(very stiff, very proper)  
You wanted to see me, sir?

PICARD  
I ah -- thought you might want to monitor  
the rescue operation from your mother's  
station --

WESLEY  
(looks at the chair cautiously)  
Thank you, sir.  
(But he doesn't sit.)

PICARD  
Is something the matter, son?

WESLEY  
No, sir.  
(beat)  
Yes, sir. Are you trying to prepare me  
for something?

PICARD  
(startled)  
Is that what you think? That people are  
only kind to each other when there's bad  
news.

WESLEY  
No, sir -- not people.  
(beat)  
Just you.

Picard controls his reaction. Is that how he is perceived?

WESLEY (Cont'd)  
Can I ask you something?  
(to Picard's nod)  
Why does Starfleet send families into  
space -- and let them be exposed to  
dangerous situations like this?

PICARD  
Because --  
(takes a breath, this is a hard  
one:)  
Because our ancestors took their children  
with them when they crossed the oceans in  
ships and the continents in covered  
wagons. Because -- you are our children  
and we cannot leave you behind.

INSERT. WESLEY'S REACTION

Is that it? He doesn't buy it.

BACK TO TWO SHOT. PICARD AND WESLEY.

PICARD  
(to his look)  
I agree with you. It is an unsatisfying  
answer.  
(beat)  
Would you rather have stayed behind?

WESLEY  
(considers it)  
No, sir.

PICARD  
Then sit down and join me.

Wesley takes his mother's seat, next to Picard and turns his attention forward.

ON THE COPERNICUS.

Freeman is monitoring the progress of two more Copernicus patients. Perhaps one is an attractive young woman. Eakins comes and sits down across from him.

FREEMAN  
Stand by, Enterprise.  
(to the patients:)  
Just a little bit longer. We're almost  
there --

PATIENT  
Will it hurt?

FREEMAN  
No, but --  
(gently kidding)  
-- I can arrange it if you want.

PATIENT  
No thank you.

FREEMAN  
(to Eakins, very  
conversationally)  
Y'know it's funny.

EAKINS  
What is -- ?

FREEMAN

How much I worry about you -- being on Security Detail and all. I'm always afraid that --

(stops himself)

Never mind.

EAKINS

(Shakes his head.)

Hey. There's nothing to worry about. Really.

(a joke:)

We don't have bulls-eyes on our uniforms any more.

FREEMAN

(gently)

Yeah, you can joke, but --

(shakes head)

I know the odds, Danny. I --

EAKINS

Hey!

(points, speaks firmly)

Don't talk like that.

PATIENT

(Has been following all this)

Are we going to die?

FREEMAN

(exchanges a serious look with Eakins)

I don't plan on it.

(lightens up)

Hey -- when we get back to the Enterprise, I'll buy you a drink and tell you about the Sparkle-Dancer. It dances through space, looking for spaceships to sing to.

PATIENT

(skeptical)

Spare me. I'd rather hear the one about the leprechauns and the penguin.

FREEMAN

(grins and points)

My partner here will have to tell you that one.

(looks at his scanner)

Time. Enterprise, beam them over.

WORF (O.S.)

(filtered)

Beaming.

MED. CLOSE ON BEVERLY -- AT HER PORTABLE MED-LAB.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY WITH DATA AT HIS SCIENCE STATION.

She is holding a single red bloodworm in a glass beaker. It looks harmless enough, but she is frowning. She puts the beaker into some kind of scanning box and switches it on.

BEVERLY

Data, are you reading this? This creature's metabolism is not making sense.

DATA (O.S.)

(filtered)

Agreed, Dr. Crusher. It is attracted to the enzyme, but it doesn't seem to make any use of it. The more it eats, the more it wants.

BEVERLY

(thoughtfully)

Very effective as a weapon -- but not as a life style. I wonder what would happen if it could metabolize the enzyme.

FX: Abruptly, the creature in the scanning box explodes in a cloud of wavicles.

DATA (O.S.)

(filtered)

It doesn't like being scanned either.

BEVERLY

That's going to complicate this job no end.

(shift in tone,  
she is recording)

Medical Log. The natural form of the plasmasites is the wavicle spore. The bloodworm is an aberration. You can't kill a bloodworm, you can only shatter it into more plasmasites. Phasering them will produce the same result. Even scanning is dangerous.

(not recording her opinion)

What a nasty business!

(recording again)

Theory: Suppose the plasmasites were deliberately mutated to keep them from metabolizing the enzymes they need. Is it possible to neutralize that infection?

(to the Enterprise)  
Commander Data. Have you located Dr.  
Blodgett's notes yet?

DATA (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Sorry, Doctor.

BEVERLY  
Damn.

ANOTHER ANGLE. FREEMAN AND BEVERLY.

FREEMAN  
(he is worried)  
Dr. Crusher?  
(to her look)  
We have a problem.

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE. ON PICARD.

SFX: COMMUNICATOR BEEP.

PICARD  
Picard here.

BEVERLY (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Captain, listen carefully. There isn't  
going to be enough artificial blood to  
treat everybody. I'm sorry. We weren't  
prepared. We didn't expect that we'd  
have to completely replace the blood of  
twenty-one people. Captain, you're going  
to have to ask for blood donors.

PICARD  
Blood donors?

BEVERLY (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
I know. It's a barbaric custom -- taking  
blood out of one person's body and  
putting it into another's. But it's the  
best way we've got to save the last six  
lives.

REACTION SHOT -- PICARD. INCLUDE WESLEY.

PICARD  
The last six lives --

WESLEY

(counts on his fingers)

Riker, Tasha, Geordi, Freeman, Eakins --  
and my mother.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

(filtered)

We'll need at least seventy-two donors.  
Ensign Morwood will match the blood  
types. But you'd better get on it right  
away.

PICARD

Right.

(a shift in tone)

Now hear this:

INSERT AS NECESSARY -- REACTION SHOTS OF CREW THROUGHOUT  
ENTERPRISE.

Include Con at the forward station -- realizing his own shame  
at what he said before.

PICARD (Cont'd)

(SFX: his voice is amplified  
throughout the ship)

This is the Captain speaking. We need  
blood donors to help save the lives on  
the Copernicus. We need seventy-two  
volunteers.

(corrects himself, he's the first)

Seventy-one. Dr. Crusher assures me that  
it doesn't hurt -- but it sure as hell  
will help. Volunteers report to sick bay  
on the double.

BACK TO BRIDGE. PICARD AND WESLEY.

WESLEY

(rising with Picard)

Seventy. Let me donate too! Please!  
You have to! I'm type AB, the universal  
donor.

PICARD

Wesley, you're a little young --

WESLEY

If I'm old enough to risk my life in  
space, I'm old enough to donate a pint of  
blood.

PICARD

(the logic is flawed, but -- )  
All right. If the Doctor says it's okay.  
But you'll have to get in line behind me.  
(rises)

Con steps into shot, blocking Picard's way..

CON  
Captain -- request permission to leave  
the bridge?  
(beat)  
So I can donate blood too.

Three other crew members step forward as well.

PICARD  
(slow smile)  
Permission granted.  
(adds)  
But -- one at a time, please. Somebody  
has to mind the store.

CON  
Thank you, sir.

PICARD  
Thank you.

They lock eyes in a moment of understanding. Picard nods,  
pleased. They head for the turbo-lift.

FADE OUT.



ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

ENTERPRISE IN SPACE. COPERNICUS IN B.G.

PICARD

Captain's Log. Stardate 41202.75. The rescue of the Copernicus survivors continues. Jonah Yarell and Mackel Blodgett, the first to be rescued, have already been beamed aboard the Enterprise.

INTERIOR BRIDGE. AFT STATIONS

Establish Data working at his science station -- fast scanning the downloaded log of the Copernicus. He is frowning. Something does not make sense. Picard is looking over his shoulder. Perhaps he is rubbing his sore arm thoughtfully. Wesley is no longer on the bridge.

DATA

The Copernicus log is incomplete, Captain. And parts of it are badly scrambled. I don't know how much I'll be able to reconstruct.

SFX: TURBO-LIFT DOORS.

Picard looks over and sees:

ANGLE. TURBO-LIFT.

Blodgett and Yarell, escorted by two security men, enter the bridge.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- FAVORING PICARD

Picard steps down to meet them. He points toward the Captain's ready room like a principal with two small boys he has to scold.

PICARD

Commander Data -- ?

Data is reluctant to leave his console, but he joins Picard and the two of them follow Yarell and Blodgett into the ready room.

INTERIOR READY ROOM. PICARD. DATA. BLODGETT. YARELL.

PICARD  
Gentlemen ....

YARELL  
Captain Picard.

BLODGETT  
(nods)

PICARD  
(all business)  
All right -- I want some answers and I want them now. How did the Copernicus get infected? What was the real purpose of that ship's mission? And who authorized it?

YARELL  
I authorized it, Captain.

PICARD  
You did?

YARELL  
Captain, an undeclared state of war exists between us and the Ferengi Alliance.

(to Picard's raised eyebrow)  
Can you imagine what would happen if they were to spread bloodworms throughout Federation space?

DATA  
The destruction of red-blooded life forms on a catastrophic scale.

YARELL  
Precisely.  
(to Picard)  
The purpose of the Copernicus mission was to explore ways of containing and controlling the plasmasite infestation in the event of open hostilities. The Ferengis are vipers. They cannot be trusted.

Picard is disquieted by Yarell's ferocious militarism; we see him trying hard to stifle his distaste. He looks to Blodgett.

BLODGETT  
(sadly)

There were twelve of us on the primary team. Good men and women. Brilliant scientists all. We -- must have made a mistake. We had the plasmasites in repulsor jars. We had made real progress, and then --

PICARD  
(looking to Data)  
Data?

DATA  
(shakes head)  
I haven't found any of that in the Copernicus log, sir --

PICARD  
(to Yarell)  
??

YARELL  
When it became apparent that we might not survive, I ordered the appropriate parts of the ship's log wiped and the main computers destroyed. We couldn't take the chance of it falling into unsympathetic hands -- like the Ferengis.  
(to Picard's look)  
Something disturbs you, Captain?

PICARD  
Mr. Yarell, I grant you that the mission of the Enterprise includes the military defense of Federation worlds, if necessary -- but that is not our primary purpose. The Starfleet Charter has five initiatives for diplomatic services and scientific research. There is only one article concerning military operations.  
(carefully)  
Your work with plasmasites concerns me because wherever a weapon exists, there also exists the temptation to use it. I would hope that no such temptation exists here.

YARELL  
Captain Picard, I will give you this thought only to consider. The most expensive armada in the galaxy is the one that's second best.

Picard reacts strongly to that. He steps to the door -- it slides open for him.

PICARD  
(to the waiting security guards)  
Escort Mr. Yarell and Dr. Blodgett to  
their quarters -- and see that they stay  
there.

MED. ANGLE. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE.

Picard enters from the ready room and crosses to Data's  
science station.

PICARD  
Status?

DATA  
Dr. Crusher is in recovery. La Forge and  
Lt. Yar are aboard and being transfused.  
Riker and Freeman are beaming next. Lt.  
Eakins will be the last one out.

PICARD  
(nods)

DATA  
-- and the repulsor field on the  
Copernicus is failing rapidly.

Both look grim.

ANGLE ON COPERNICUS IN SPACE.

INTERIOR COPERNICUS CARGO BAY.

Riker, Freeman, Eakins are the last ones in the cargo bay.  
Freeman and Eakins are glaring at each other.

SFX: The frequency of the repulsor warble is noticeably  
lower and slower.

RIKER  
(trying to end the argument,  
to Freeman)  
You know, I can solve this by ordering  
you to go --

FREEMAN  
I'm the only one who knows how to monitor  
the blood enzyme levels. You and Eakins  
have to go next.

EAKINS  
(to Riker)

They'll monitor me from the bridge. I'm  
security. It's my job to go last.

Abruptly, Freeman hits Eakins with the hypo-spray injector.  
Eakins looks at Freeman, betrayed.

FREEMAN

There. The argument's over.  
(turns to Riker and hits him  
with the spray too)  
You too, sir.

EAKINS

That was not fair.  
(points, angered)  
You haven't heard the end of this, Paul!

FREEMAN

You'd better lay down, Danny. You're  
going to start feeling weak in a minute.  
(to Riker, much more  
respectfully)  
You too, sir.

They do so.

EAKINS

I mean it, Paul.

FREEMAN

Shut up and let me win one for a change.

This is the first time Riker has worked with either Freeman  
or Eakins. While Freeman scans the two of them  
professionally with his medical feinberger, Riker studies him  
curiously.

RIKER

You're very good.

FREEMAN

Thank you, sir.  
(adds)  
All I ever wanted was to serve in  
Starfleet. My grandfather served on the  
original Enterprise with James T. Kirk.

RIKER

Really?  
(perceptively)  
Are you trying to live up to his record?

FREEMAN

(shakes head)  
Nope. Just my own standards.

RIKER  
Is that why you did it?  
(meaning the hypo)

FREEMAN  
(shakes head)  
I made a promise to myself that you and  
Danny would both get back safely.

RIKER  
Especially Danny?

FREEMAN  
(nods without comment)

Riker considers this thoughtfully.

EAKINS  
(starting to weaken)  
Paul? Here. Take this.  
(hands him his phaser)

FREEMAN  
What's this for?

EAKINS  
It'll make me feel better --

Freeman shrugs and takes the phaser. It is clear he has no  
intention of using it on anything; he is humoring Danny.

FREEMAN  
(studies scanner, then decides)  
Enterprise. Two to beam over --

WORF (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Stand by.

Freeman steps back away from Riker and Eakins.

ON FREEMAN

SFX: TRANSPORTER SOUND.

As the transporter sound fades away, Freeman looks around the  
empty cargo bay of the Copernicus. And shudders.

SFX: The THROBBING sound of the repulsor field SLOWS DOWN.

FREEMAN  
Uh oh.

ANGLE. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE.

Con looks up from his station to Picard.

CON  
Sir?

PICARD  
(crosses to station)  
What have you got?

CON  
The repulsor field on the Copernicus just  
went down --

PICARD  
Transporter room -- !  
(stops himself)

CON  
Sir?!

The two men lock eyes.

PICARD  
(realizing)  
We have no place to beam him to.  
(one of the hardest decisions  
of his life)  
We can't do anything. Except hope that  
we have enough time.

WORF (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Transporter room, standing by --

CON  
(frustrated)  
Stand by.

INTERIOR SICK BAY.

Beverly is monitoring the blood transfusions of Riker and Eakins. Troi is holding Riker's hand. He and she are smiling at each other, glad to be reunited.

TROI  
I'm glad you're safe.

RIKER  
I'm glad that you are too --

CAMERA MOVES to Beverly and Eakins.

FREEMAN (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Enterprise --

All stop. All listen.

INSERT AS NECESSARY -- REACTION SHOTS.

PICARD ON BRIDGE OF ENTERPRISE.

CON AT FORWARD CONSOLE

RIKER AND TROI IN SICK BAY.

BEVERLY AND EAKINS IN SICK BAY.

FREEMAN (Cont'd) (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
The repulsor field is completely down.  
(pause)  
I can hear the bloodworms coming down the  
corridor.  
(beat)  
I've just injected myself with the enzyme  
suppressant. This is going to be a close  
one.  
(beat)  
God, they sound awful.  
(beat)  
Danny, it looks like I might need your  
phaser after all.

CLOSE ON EAKINS. HIS REACTION. INCLUDE BEVERLY AND RIKER.

Eakins is horrified.

FREEMAN (O.S.)  
Don't worry, Danny. I'll make it.  
(beat)  
I'm starting to feel the effects of the  
suppressant now. It doesn't hurt, but it  
sure does make me feel ... dizzy. I'm  
going to lay down.  
(beat)  
Enterprise -- better be ready to beam me  
fast.

SFX: Distinctive sound of bloodworms entering the cargo bay.

FREEMAN (Cont'd)  
Oh Damn!



SFX: PHASER FIRE.

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE. ON CON AND PICARD.

CON  
(studying his console)  
We're locked on to him, Captain --

PICARD  
(points over Con's shoulder)  
Look at the readings from his medical tricorder. He's still carrying live plasmasites.

FREEMAN (Cont'd) (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
I thought I had more time!

SFX: ANOTHER PHASER BURST.

Picard and Con look up.

INTERIOR SHUTTLECRAFT. CLOSE ON EAKINS

EAKINS  
(screams)  
Paul!!

FREEMAN (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Danny, I'm sorry --  
(SCREAMS)  
Oh, God --

EAKINS  
(screams in horror)  
No, Paul, no!!

SFX: PHASER BURST. AND THEN THE STATIC OF AN EMPTY CHANNEL.

ENTERPRISE BRIDGE. FAVORING CON AND PICARD.

Con looks at Picard. It's over. Picard turns and crosses back to his command chair. Con stares after him. Picard sits down and shades his eyes with his hand.

CAMERA PULLS BACK, leaving Picard alone in the center of the bridge.

SFX: STATIC CONTINUES.

PICARD

(very quietly)  
Shut that damn thing off.

The static continues for a second or two longer than the:

FADE OUT.

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

ENTERPRISE IN SPACE.

PICARD

Captain's Log. Stardate 41202.8.  
Medical Technican Paul Freeman has been  
killed in action, the second Enterprise  
casualty on this mission. All of the  
rest of the Away Team and the Copernicus  
survivors have been rescued. We are  
preparing to destroy the Copernicus.

INTERIOR BRIDGE.

Beverly enters the bridge, crosses to Picard and Data.

BEVERLY

(to Picard's look)

They're all safe. Sick bay is completing  
full work-ups now.

PICARD

How are you feeling?

BEVERLY

A little tired. But I'm fine.

PICARD

Good. I'll want Riker on the bridge as  
soon as he's able. Oh, and that security  
officer too. Eakins.

BEVERLY

Captain, we still have a problem.

(to his look)

It may not be safe to destroy the  
Copernicus. We run the risk of releasing  
a large cloud of plasmasites into space.  
It's just possible that as wavicles they  
could find their way to another ship --  
or a planet.

PICARD

Data?

DATA

It's unlikely. But it's possible.

BEVERLY

We can't take the chance.

PICARD

What if we plunge the Copernicus into a star?

BEVERLY

(shakes head)

I'm not even sure that would work.

PICARD

(perceptively)

You do have a solution, Doctor?

BEVERLY

I think the spores are trying desperately to become something else. The fact that they can't is what makes them so crazy and vicious.

(explains)

On the Copernicus, I was able to identify specific binding sites in the bloodworms. Dr. Blodgett and I have synthesized a -- a cure for the thing that keeps the plasmasites hungry. We think. The problem is ... there's only one way to expose the plasmasites to it.

PICARD

In a human bloodstream?

BEVERLY

We'd need a volunteer.

They lock eyes. They both understand that she is talking about a suicide mission.

BEVERLY (Cont'd)

Right. It'd be suicide.

PICARD

(shakes head)

We'll have to find another way.

DATA

Captain, there's something else you should know.

(indicates his console)

ANOTHER ANGLE.

Picard steps over to Data's science station.

DATA (Cont'd)

I've extrapolated the Copernicus' course.  
(indicates his board)

Picard looks, studies, and reacts sharply.

PICARD  
Security. On the double.

INTERIOR. ENTERPRISE LOUNGE.

The lounge has been cleared and Picard is alone.

He is staring grimly out into deep space at the motionless stars. Two security men escort Yarell and Blodgett into the room, followed by Data. The security men exit.

YARELL  
Captain Picard?

Picard turns to look at him.

PICARD  
Mr. Yarell. I think it's time for some straight talk. Your mission had nothing at all to do with ending the plasmaste infestation at all.

DATA  
(quietly)  
The Copernicus was headed for Ferengi space ....

YARELL  
Captain -- you have no idea how deeply infected our whole society is with this Ferengi menace. I've been studying the Ferengis for fifteen years. The pattern! The pattern of sabotage and conspiracy is unmistakable. I'm an expert. I see it --

PICARD  
Or perhaps ... you see only what you want to see -- ?

YARELL  
Captain, isn't it just as possible that you don't see a conspiracy because you don't want to see one?

PICARD  
(carefully)  
I'd look for the ... evidence first.

YARELL  
But would you even recognize it? These are not fools we're dealing with,

Captain! These are evil beings!  
Terrible and vicious and utterly  
ruthless. We dare not underestimate  
them. We have to be every bit as  
ruthless. We have to be dangerous!

(beat)

That's why we have to do this, Captain.

PICARD

Do what?

YARELL

Spread the bloodworms throughout the  
Ferengi worlds -- and rid the galaxy of  
the Ferengi curse!

DATA

(horrified)

Genocide -- ?

PICARD

(recognizes the madness,  
speaks carefully:)

Mr. Yarell -- this is a Starfleet vessel.

YARELL

You said it yourself, Captain.  
Starfleet's duties include the defense of  
the Federation.

PICARD

This is not defense. This is blind,  
unreasoning hatred.

YARELL

So they've gotten to you too!

PICARD

(This is going nowhere;  
he decides:)

Security.

BLODGETT

(a cautionary note)

Captain --

Two security men enter, but stop short of grabbing Yarell.  
Yarell has produced a small vial -- filled with PINK AND GOLD  
FLICKERS!! Plasmasites!! Picard is horrified.

YARELL (Cont'd)

A repulsor jar, Captain. Yes.  
Plasmasites. On the Enterprise.

(beat)

And unless you deliver this ship to

Ferengi space ... I'll break the seal.

BLODGETT

If he does, everyone on this ship is dead.

Picard is stunned.

INTERIOR BRIDGE.

Riker and Beverly are waiting for the Captain's return. Establish in B.G. Eakins is also waiting for Picard. All have changed to shipboard clothing or uniforms.

They look up as Picard, Yarell, Blodgett and Data return to the bridge. Picard looks grim.

PICARD

(carefully)

Mr. Worf, would you prepare a set of courses for Mr. Yarell's inspection?

Riker looks up sharply. Say what?

PICARD (Cont'd)

(to Riker)

Mr. Yarell has a very convincing argument.

Yarell holds up the flickering vial. Everyone on the bridge reacts sharply. Especially Eakins.

WORF

(to Picard)

Captain. Number Two Engine is still down for dilithium recalibration. We can't run it with a hot warp.

PICARD

(secretly pleased)

Mr. Worf, I don't want excuses, I want results.

WORF

(not at all chagrined)

Yes sir.

(turns back to console)

PICARD

(to Yarell)

I'm afraid there'll be a slight delay.

YARELL

(not fooled)

I'm a patient man, Captain. I can wait.

PICARD

(to Riker)

The real mission of the Copernicus was to capture and contain plasmasite specimens and infect the Ferengi Nexus. Mr. Yarell is quite insistent that we complete that mission.

(adds quietly:)

Will, let's be very careful here. I don't want anyone trying anything stupid.

RIKER

(nods)

YARELL

I appreciate that Captain.

(to Riker)

I'm running this ship now.

INSERT -- PICARD'S UNHAPPY REACTION.

BACK TO ANGLE

Abruptly, Eakins steps forward, pointing his phaser at Yarell. Yarell is startled backwards --

EAKINS

You son of a bitch! All those people!  
You killed them! You killed Paul!

PICARD

Eakins! Put that phaser down! That's an order!

EAKINS

(not wavering)

I'm sorry, sir -- I can't.

YARELL

(terrified)

Captain -- you know what'll happen to these plasmasites if they're hit by a phaser beam!

PICARD

Don't do it, son.

Thinking quickly, Riker steps in front of Yarell and faces Eakins. Yarell steps backwards into Blodgett, holding the plasmasites outstretched in his hand -- and right in front of Blodgett.



RIKER

Dan, listen to me -- I know what you're going through --

EAKINS

No, you don't. Nobody does! Paul was special. He died for us.

RIKER

Let Starfleet handle this. I promise you, Starfleet will keep Jonah Yarell from ever hurting anyone again. Dan! Give me the phaser.

EAKINS

Stand aside, sir. The man is evil. He man doesn't deserve to live. Let me kill him!

RIKER

No! I won't let you lower yourself to his level! Because hate is a disease -- and I don't want the Enterprise infected with it any more than I want this ship infected with plasmasites. Hate made the plasmasites. Is that what you want to continue?

Riker is right. Eakins wavers.

RIKER

(softly, to Eakins)

Is this what Paul would have done? Do you think he would have wanted you to kill in his name?

EAKINS

(almost weeping)

Damn you! Damn you!

Does he mean Yarell? Or Riker who won't let him kill Yarell. It doesn't matter. He hands the phaser over.

YARELL

(abrupt screaming)

What are you doing?!!

All turn to look:

ANOTHER ANGLE

Blodgett has taken Yarell's little vial of plasmasites. He is holding it to his lips. He is drinking the nutrient

fluid, plasmasites and all!

BLODGETT

Captain Picard, I believe I've solved your plasmasite problem. Will you please have me beamed over to the Copernicus?

YARELL

You disloyal traitor!

BLODGETT

You lose, Yarell. I win.

PICARD

Security -- take Mr. Yarell to the brig. And Dr. Blodgett to sick bay.

Two security men grab Yarell and escort him off the bridge.

BLODGETT

No, sir. The transporter room.

PICARD

(to Blodgett)

We can save you!

BLODGETT

I don't want to be saved, Captain.

(explains)

I made a mistake. I trusted Yarell. And the Copernicus died. All of my friends and colleagues died.

(revealing)

I'll tell you what we discovered. The plasmasites are something beautiful. Not a war weapon -- but a kind of life that's marvelous to see. The Regulans perverted it. We can cure it. We can heal it.

(dead on)

Captain. I say this is where the sickness stops. All the hate. All the dying. I've injected myself with Dr. Crusher's plasmasite cure. Let me do this.

PICARD

It's suicide.

BLODGETT

I believe ... I've earned the right.

PICARD

Nobody's earned the right to decide when a life should end.

BLODGETT

You can believe that if you want,  
Captain. But I've already made my  
choice.

PICARD

(respectful)

You're a proud man, Blodgett.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. COPERNICUS BRIDGE.

FX: TRANSPORTER EFFECT. Blodgett beams in.

FX: Many PINK AND GOLD FLICKERS. They drift toward Blodgett  
-- and into him.

BLODGETT

Enterprise? Are you monitoring this?

PICARD (O.S.)

(filtered)

We're watching.

BLODGETT

It doesn't hurt. It doesn't hurt at all.

WIDER ANGLE -- BLODGETT IN THE BRIDGE

We see the flickering fireflies come sparkling into him from all over the ship. They drift toward him, they arrow toward him. They sleet into him like arrows of light. Blodgett stands there in the center of a BEAUTIFUL glowing cloud of color and light and flickering sparkles. It is an epiphany for him -- a redemption.

INSERT AS NECESSARY -- REACTION SHOTS OF OUR CREW ON THE ENTERPRISE BRIDGE.

Establish Beverly and Wesley.

BACK TO BLODGETT ON THE COPERNICUS.

Blodgett is totally enveloped now in light. He disappears in the glowing, sparkling lights, they turn and twist and dance in the air.

MUSIC: The same harmonies we heard under the bloodworms, but now joyous and triumphant.

BACK TO THE ENTERPRISE.

The watchers are rapturous.

WESLEY  
(amazed)  
It's a Sparkle-Dancer!

We see that Troi is grinning joyously.

TROI  
It's singing!

BACK TO THE COPERNICUS

The bridge is filled with light. And suddenly -- POW! The light explodes in all directions!!

EXTERIOR. SPACE. THE COPERNICUS.

As the Sparkle-Dancer flows out of the Copernicus, reforms itself and dances alone in space. It is a veil of light, shimmering and coruscating with all the colors of the rainbow. Its wings" flicker and sparkle with tiny pinpoints of light as tiny energy mites whirl and dance. It is a colony of dancing butterflies of light and energy.

THE ENTERPRISE WATCHERS.

Wow! They are the first human beings to discover that the Sparkle-Dancer is real!

ANGLE ON THE SPARKLE-DANCER

It curls once around the Enterprise and then vanishes into distant space.

INTERIOR BRIDGE.

Picard sits down in his chair.

PICARD  
Mr. Worf, have you finished your dilithium recalibration yet?

WORF  
(grinning)  
We just completed it, Captain.

PICARD  
Full speed ahead.

WORF  
(proudly)  
Aye aye, sir!

ANGLE ON THE ENTERPRISE -- MOVING OFF IN A DIFFERENT  
DIRECTION.

FADE OUT.