STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

Hide And "Q"
#40271-111

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STAR TREK: Hide And "Q" - 9/25/87 - CAST

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STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
Hide And "Q"

CAST

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. ENTERPRISE IN SPACE (OPTICAL)

The great ship streaks through space at warp speed.

2 INT. ND CORRIDOR

Two crewmembers, their arms loaded with supplies, race along the corridor. They pass DOCTOR CRUSHER in the corridor.

3 NEW ANGLE

Beverly checks her Staff as they pass with emergency medical packets on way to turbolift.

BEVERLY
Include a burn unit with each kit. On arrival, identify the most critically injured and beam them up to Cargo Bay Six...

PICARD'S COM VOICE
(interrupting)
Doctor Crusher, this is the Captain.

BEVERLY
(touching wall panel)
Doctor Crusher here.

PICARD'S COM VOICE
Additional information. The number of colonists at the site is five hundred-four - including thirty-eight children.

4 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD is in his Command chair, TROI to his left. WORF at the Aft Station. GEORDI has the Conn, DATA on Ops. TASHA at Tactical.
The tension level is very high. The mission is urgent. As Picard answers, Riker enters from the turbolift, crosses the bridge and takes his position.

**PICARD**

So far nothing more than the initial message. Explosion - cause unknown - many injured. Are you prepared, Doctor?

**BEVERLY'S COM VOICE**

We believe so, sir.

**GEORDI**

Captain, we are now at warp nine point one.

**DATA**

Which will bring us into the Quadra Sigma System in three point two hours.

Riker takes his position.

**RIKER**

Captain, I have a schematic of the explosion site. It suggests the cause as a methane-like gas seeping in underground...

**TROI**

(with alarm)

Captain, I am...

Her face is full of apprehension.

**TROI**

I am sensing what we encountered months ago...

Interrupted by the sound of the bridge alarm.

**ANGLE ON PICARD**

He turns. Klaxon honking - lights flashing.
The Main Viewer SHIMMERS as an unusual SHINING, SPARKLING GRID SHAPE APPEARS, seeming to stretch across the whole of the galaxy ahead of them.

He recognizes the shape - he has seen it before en route to Farpoint Station.

DATA
The "Q" Entity, sir? It is identical to the grid we encountered when...

WORF
It reads solid, sir. If we hit it... !

PICARD
Not now, damn it, "Q"... (to Helm)
Emergency full stop!

GEORDI
Yes, sir.

TASHA
Shields and deflectors, up, sir.

The familiar SHIMMERING GRID on the viewer is now very close to the Enterprise. Forward movement stops.

The words overlapped by something akin to ROLLING THUNDER, accompanied by a BRILLIANT and SUSTAINED FLASH which becomes RAPIDLY ROTATING, BLINDINGLY BRILLIANT, DIAMOND-BLUE LIGHT. While there is no hard-edged Shape, it is of about the same volume of a very large man.
"Q" (V.O.)
(amplified and powerful)
Humans, I thought by now you would have scampered back to your own little star system.

PICARD
(waiting, then)
If this is "Q" I'm addressing, our vessel and crew are on a mission of rescue where a group of badly injured...

"Q" (V.O.)
(interrupting)
We of the "Q" have studied our recent contact with you... and are impressed. We have much to discuss, including perhaps the realization of your most impossible dreams.

The expressions of the bridge crew reveal they are intrigued by this statement... and in the potential of the "Q" entity to do remarkable things, however annoying its actions in the past. Even Picard takes a moment to absorb this.

PICARD
(sarcastically)
However intriguing we may find that to be, we are now in the midst of an urgent journey. Once we have completed that...

"Q" (V.O.)
(louder; angrier)
You will abandon that mission, Captain. My business with you takes precedence!

INT. MAIN BRIDGE - ANGLE ON BRIDGE CREW

Reflections of the BRILLIANT DIAMOND-BLUE LIGHT on their faces as they look ahead toward this newest Shape of "Q". They shield their eyes from it.
"Q" (V.O.)
If my magnificence blinds you,
then perhaps something more
familiar...

An explosion of sudden HISSING SOUNDS startles the
bridge crew into expressions of mixed surprise, fear
and loathing.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON "Q" SERPENT

A WRITHING SNAKE with snapping fangs, continuing mixed
HISSING, DARTS toward them from whence came the "Q"
light image.

REVERSE ANGLE

Both Worf and Tasha vaulting down onto the Command
deck, instinctively drawing phasers as they try to
position their own bodies between the frightening
Snake-thing and the bridge Crew, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

FADE IN:

13  INT. MAIN BRIDGE - ANGLE ON TASHA AND WORF

First one, then the other, discover phasers inoperative. The snake head seems an instant away from fangling them...

    WORF
    Damn, the phasers are useless!

    PICARD (V.O.)
    "Q", STOP THIS!

14  EMPHASIZING PICARD AND RIKER

    on their feet.

    PICARD
    Stop this and we agree to talk for a moment!

At which WE SEE the reflection of a familiar BRILLIANT LIGHT FLASH, blinding Picard and Riker again. Then as they lower their protecting hands, they REACT at the sight of:

15  ANGLE EMPHASIZING "Q"

    in the full-dress uniform of a Starfleet ADMIRAL.

    "Q" (ADimirAL)
    Starfleet Admiral "Q" at your service!

    PICARD
    You are not a Starfleet admiral, "Q"...

    "Q" (ADimirAL)
    Neither am I an Aldebaran serpent, Captain. But you accepted me as such.

Riker nods, a hint of the irony of this on his features.
CONTINUED:

RIKER
He's got us there, Captain.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
(nods)
The redoubtable Commander Riker whom I noticed before. You seem to find this amusing.

RIKER
I might, if we weren't trying to rescue a group of suffering and dying humans who...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
Your species is always suffering and dying...

PICARD
(interrupting)
No, Lieutenant Worf...!

ANGLE TO INCLUDE WORF

trying to ease himself into a clear line of fire toward "Q". He freezes at Picard's order, eases his almost hidden small phaser back into his belt.

PICARD
You'll make no move against him unless I order it.

"Q" smiles toward Worf.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
Pity. You might have learned an interesting lesson. Tsk, a macro head, a micro brain.

Worf is obviously unrepentant. Picard, thinking furiously, tries another direction.

PICARD
"Q", you said you had the realization of "some impossible dreams" to offer us. Once this rescue is complete, I'll listen seriously to whatever proposal you wish to make and then, subject to it being acceptable...
"Q" bursts into what sounds like genuine LAUGHTER.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
"... subject to" your foolish human values? Picard, why do you people distrust me so?

Picard starts to open his mouth, shuts it.

DATA
Sir, if...

Picard shakes his head, forcing Data into silence... also clearly including the rest of his bridge crew in this.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
Yes, Captain, it is best they don't answer that. But you... you, Picard, I grant the freedom to answer me honestly. Why do you distrust me so?

PICARD
"Q", right now humans may be dying because you...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
(angry now)
SPEAK! Why do you distrust me?

PICARD
(beat)
Why? On our first meeting, "Q", you seized my vessel, condemned all humans as savages and on that charge, you tried us in a post-atomic twenty-first century court of horrors where you attacked my people... then you again seized my vessel...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
How that angers you: "Seized my vessel, seized my vessel... "
PICARD
(without pause, ignoring this)
... and then proceeded to interfere with our Farpoint mission, threatening to convict us as ignorant savages if, in dealing with complex and powerful life-forms, we made the slightest error... and when you failed even there...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
(interrupting)
At that point, the "Q" became interested in you.
(turns to include bridge crew)
Cannot some of you understand your incredible good fortune?!
(to Picard, mimicking)
"Seized my vessel, seized my vessel... " The complaint of a closed mind too accustomed to military privileges.
(to Riker)
But you, Riker, and I remember you well, what do you make of my offer?

RIKER
I stand with my Captain.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
(smiles)
Of course, you do. Commendable loyalty.
(indicating bridge crew; to Riker)
And what of these others? Since humanity now interests us, how shall we come to know them better?

RIKER
We don't have time for these games.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)
Ah, yes! A game... for interest's sake, a deadly game. To the game!

And, at a wave of "Q"'s hand, the entire bridge crew except for Picard... DISAPPEARS, leaving Picard alone on the bridge.
17  EXT. PLANET PLAIN (OPTICAL)

The bridge crew are standing in approximately their previous bridge positions on a treeless planet plain. They have just been snatched from their ship, their captain and they are understandably confused and uncertain except for Tasha and Worf whose security orientation have them immediately combat ready. This place is bright, hot.

18  EMPHASIZING RIKER

looking up.

19  RIKER POV - TWIN SUNS (OPTICAL)

close together (avoiding the necessity of twin-shadows), apparently rotating about each other. Both suns are brilliant but the smaller sun, about one-quarter the size of the larger, is not quite as brilliant as the large one.

20  BACK TO EXT. PLAIN (OPTICAL)

Data and Geordi, looking up too, move in next to Riker.

   DATA
   Obviously a Class-M world, gravity and oxygen within our limits...

   GEORDI
   ... but a twin sun? Where are we?

   DATA
   Considering the power demonstrated by "Q" the last time... Anywhere! Assuming this place even exists.

   RIKER
   But this won't be boring. If "Q"'s anything, he's imaginative.
   (to the others)
   Apparently the captain wasn't meant to be with us here.

   TASHA
   (overlapping)
   Sir! Over here...!
who stands where a rock formation has previously hidden him. He is now wearing a French MARSHAL'S uniform, circa the Napoleonic Wars. As Riker, very curious, moves toward "Q", CAMERA MOVES AND PANS TO REVEAL also a headquarters-type campaign tent of the same era, complete with shade canopy and transportable field furniture. "Q" indicates two such chairs with a small table which holds a pair of tall, cool drinks.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Join me, Riker. A good game needs rules and planning...

Riker hesitates.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(continuing)
Wasn't it your own Hartley who said "Nothing reveals humanity so well as the games it plays?"
(smiles; nods)
Almost right. Actually, you reveal yourselves best in how you play.

Data has moved in next to Riker and speaks quietly.

DATA
Sir, what he has in mind could provide us with vital information.

Riker nods, moves toward the campaign tent. "Q" sits, waves invitingly toward the empty seat. He also picks up one of the tall drinks and WE CAN HEAR ICE CLINKING in it.

as Riker inspects the remaining drink without sitting yet, picks it up and looks a question toward Troi.

TROI
(registering surprise)
What I sense is... pleasure, sir.

Riker sips the drink, registers surprise too.

RIKER
Incredible. I was just thinking of an old-fashioned lemonade...
CONTINUED:

"Q" (MARSHAL)
... and so it became that. An excellent thirst quencher; it becomes quite hot out on this plane.

RIKER
What about my people?

"Q" makes a waving gesture.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Whatever they want, of course!

ANGLE INCLUDING OTHERS

REACTING to the fact they suddenly have tall drinks of various colored liquids in their hands. Hesitantly, a couple of them sip. Worf, however, tilts his glass pouring the contents out onto the sand. Strangely, this pleases "Q"'s sense of humor.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
The rigid Klingon code! Drink not with thine enemy!
(to Riker)
Which explains something of why you defeated them.

RIKER
Still arguing the human past?
Perhaps you're not that original.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Au contraire! It is the human future that now intrigues us... and should concern you most. Of all species, yours cannot abide stagnation... change is at the heart of what you are. But change into what? That's the question!

DATA
That is what humans call a truism.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(annoyed)
Meaning "hardly original"...
CONTINUED:

RIKER
   (hint of humor)
You're the one who said it. And while we're at it...
   (indicating "Q"'s uniform, tent)
... this isn't part of any human future...

"Q" (MARSHAL)
True, I borrowed this from your stodgy captain's mind. It is dressing for the game we will play and games require boundaries, dangers, rewards, familiar settings, that sort of thing.

Riker looks over "Q"'s uniform, the tent, etc.

RIKER
It's not that familiar to me...
   (calls)
Data?

DATA
   (stepping in)
It is from Europe's Napoleonic Era, sir, late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries. This is a campaign headquarters tent, his uniform is that of a French Army marshal, the...

RIKER
   (to "Q")
And a marshal outranks even an admiral...

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Would I go from a Starfleet admiral to anything less?

RIKER
   (hint of a smile now)
Of course, you wouldn't.
   (indicates)
But Napoleonic equipment on an alien planet with dual suns... ?
"Q" (MARSHAL)
As you've said, I'm nothing if not imaginative. And the game should reflect that. Shall it be a test of strength? Meaningless, since you have none. A test of intelligence? Equally meaningless...
(eyeing Riker)
A game needs risk... Something to win; something to lose.

RIKER
If we must play a game, what would we win?

"Q" (MARSHAL)
The greatest possible future you can imagine!
(beat; thinking)
Which, of course, requires something totally disastrous if you lose!
(thinking again)
The point of this game will be whether any of you can stay alive.

24  EMPHASIZING TASHA AND WORF (OPTICAL)

As the others react, Worf responds:

WORF
If your "game" is fair, we will.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
For shame, Lieutenant Worf. Fairness is a human concept.
(to Riker)
Think imaginatively! It will, in fact, be completely unfair...

TASHA
You've gone too far.

She is drawing her phaser but "Q" is pointing his finger at her just as fast.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Game penalty!
Visible even in this bright desert setting, a FLASH OF LIGHT in which Tasha DISAPPEARS. Reacting, Riker turns angrily to "Q".

RIKER
Where is she, "Q"? You can forget your game if...

"Q" (MARSHAL)
To use a twentieth century term, Commander, she's in a... a "penalty box." Where she can remain unharmed unless one of you merits a penalty.

(smiles)
Unfortunately, there is only one penalty box. If any of you should be sent there... dear Tasha must give up the box to you.

GEORDI
And... where does she go?

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(to Geordi)
Into "nothingness."

(looking to the Others, individually)
I entreat you to carefully obey the rules of the game. The only one who can destroy your Tasha now... is you.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

25  EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

but not in orbit of a planet. Instead, it seems to
be traveling somewhere at what we know as normal warp
speed. MUSIC only.

26  INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Picard at a turbolift, touches the door, without
effect. Then he tries to bang it.

    PICARD
    Turbolift Control, do you read?
    This is the captain.

No response. Picard CROSSES to his bridge position,
touches his panel controls.

    PICARD
    (continuing)
    Engineering, this is the bridge.

No response.

    PICARD
    (continuing)
    Security -- this is the Captain.

Again -- nothing.

    PICARD
    (continuing)
    Computer?
    (waits)
    Computer on!

The computer still doesn't respond. He's cut off.
Isolated. Picard touches his insignia.

    PICARD
    (continuing)
    Captain's log...

The SOUND is wrong, indicating that:
CONTINUED:

PICARD
(continuing)
Damn... I can't even make a log entry.

TASHA (O.S.)
I wish I could help you, Captain.

WIDER ANGLE

as Picard, startled, whirls toward the VOICE. It is Tasha who stands at her familiar position at security. Unusually for Tasha, she is showing some strain over what has been happening.

PICARD
What... what are you doing here?

TASHA
I... well, this sounds strange, but... I'm in the penalty box.

PICARD
You're what?!

TASHA
(tightly)
In "Q"'s penalty box. As I said, it sounds strange but it definitely isn't. Somehow I know that one more penalty... by me or anyone... and I'm gone.

Curious and concerned, Picard moves toward her.

PICARD
Gone?

TASHA
(distraught)
Please do not keep reminding me...

PICARD
I'm sorry...

TASHA
(instantly)
No, I'm sorry. It's so frustrating to be controlled like this...
CONTINUED:

There's a half-SOB in the ordinarily strong and controlled VOICE and Picard REACTS to it.

PICARD
Lieutenant...Tasha... it's all right...

TASHA
(astonished and angry)
What the hell am I doing? Crying?

PICARD
Don't worry. There's a new ship's standing order.
(smiles)
When in a penalty box, some tears are permitted.

Tasha looks up warmly, comforted by this.

TASHA
Captain... if you weren't a captain...

"Q" (MARSHAL) (O.S.)
(interrupting)
Consorting with lower rank females, Captain?

ANGLE TO INCLUDE "Q"

seated in the Captain's Command position. He smiles, enjoys having startled Picard this way.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Destructive to discipline, they say. But you are, after all, only human, eh?

Picard has made his way down to the Command level where he now looks "Q" and the uniform over.

PICARD
A marshal of France? Ridiculous!

"Q" (MARSHAL)
One takes what jobs he can get. For example, your log entries.
(MORE)
"Q" (Cont'd)

(looks up)
Starship log, stardate today...
This is "Q", speaking for Captain Jean-Luc Picard, who we consider too bound by Starfleet custom and tradition to be useful in this activity.

PICARD
But who proved himself a resourceful opponent when he defeated you at Farpoint.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(with "log" tone again)
The Enterprise is now helpless, stuck like an Earth insect in amber while its bridge crew plays out a game whose real intent...
(aiming this at Picard)
... is to test if their first officer is worthy of the greatest gift the "Q" can offer.

Picard takes a long moment to absorb this, then he nods.

PICARD
So, you're taking on Riker this time.
(smiles)
Excellent! He'll defeat you just as I did!

"Q" (MARSHAL)
A wager on that, Captain? Your command of this starship against... ?

PICARD
Against your staying out of humanity's path... forever! Done?

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Done!
(smiles)
And you've already lost, Picard. You see, Riker is to be offered something impossible to reject.

"Q" storms toward the Ready Room.
29 EXT. THE PLANET

All but Worf are there, studying a point on the distant terrain.

RIKER
Geordi, can you still see Worf?

GEORDI
(nods)
I'd see the freckles on his nose, if he had them, sir. He's at the third ridge now...

TROI
The third ridge...?

GEORDI
Moving well.
(distracted)
Oh, oh!
(peers)
Good, he sees them. They look like sentries, sir.

30 EXT. THIRD RIDGE

Worf -- the trained warrior -- approaches with caution. It is indeed a bivouac area. Worf can hear the unseen men SPEAKING IN FRENCH. He edges closer.

31 ANOTHER ANGLE

Worf pushes through the rocks, FREEZES.

32 ROCKS - WORF'S POV

Two sentries are walking a perimeter patrol. They are dressed as Bonapartist soldiers, carrying muskets. As they approach, WE SEE their uniforms look genuine enough... but then we make out their faces! Humanoid but with fearsome, fanged, unhuman features.

33 BIVOUAC AREA

Worf reacts at this. Then he moves as close as he dares. Those in the camp appear to be preparing for a battle. But where human troops would be yelling, these soldiers are GROWLING, SNARLING. Over that, the CLATTER of caissons -- equipment being assembled.
He hears a squad approaching -- slips back among the rocks and disappears.

Picard comes to the door. "Q" is sitting in the chair with his back to Picard.

"Q", listen to me. You seem to have some need of humans...

"Q" (MARSHAL)
Or concern regarding them.

Whichever it is, why try to solve it through this confrontation with us? Why not a simple direct explanation, a statement of what you seek? Why these games?

"Q" turns and we see he is holding Picard's complete works of William Shakespeare. He indicates the books.

"Q" (MARSHAL)
I'm surprised you have to ask when your human Shakespeare has already explained it so well.

Indeed he did, "Q". But careful you don't depend too much on any single viewpoint he...

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(ignoring this; interrupting)
Why these games I require of you? A pity you're not familiar with the contents of your own library. Hear this, Picard, and reflect.

(lifts book, quotes from it)
"All the galaxy's a stage, and... "

"All the galaxy?" "All the world's a stage... "
"Q". (MARSHAL)
Oh, you know that one? Then how about, "... Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

PICARD
And so you say, how we respond to a game tells you more about us than our real life, a "tale told by an idiot."
  (still amused)
Interesting, "Q".

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(lifts book)
Shall I quote from Hamlet?

PICARD
No. I know Hamlet. And what he said with irony I prefer to say with conviction.
  (quoting)
"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty. In form, in moving, how express and admirable. In action, how like an angel. In apprehension, how like a god..."

"Q" (MARSHAL)
(upset; interrupting)
You don't really see your species like that?!

PICARD
I see us one day becoming that, "Q". Is that what concerns you?

"Q" comes angrily to his feet, SLAMMING the volume down and DISAPPEARING in a FLASH. A startled and puzzled Picard watches him go, then turns to ponder the meaning of "Q"'s anger.
36 EXT. PLANET

The same plain. Riker, Troi and Data watch as Geordi scans the distant desert ridges.

RIKER
Can you still see Worf?

GEORDI
(shakes head)
It's hard to keep him in sight, sir. But the soldiers there... they've formed a "skirmishing line," I think you'd call it... and they're headed this way.

RIKER
Carrying ancient powder and ball muskets?

GEORDI
That's what their weapons look like, sir.

DATA
Muskets are appropriate to the 1790 - 1800 French army uniform.

(shakes head)
But it is hardly a "weapon" by our standards, sir. A lead ball propelled by gunpowder -- one-hundred meters at most with any accuracy...

GEORDI
Against phasers? Just one of our hand phasers could finish off an entire regiment of them.

RIKER
Except for one thing...

(to Troi)
That hardly sounds like "Q", giving us an advantage like that. (puzzling; then REACTING) Unless...

37 SPECIAL EFFECT ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Suspecting some kind of trap, Riker draws his own hand phaser. He checks its setting, aims it well away from everybody else... touches the trigger lightly for just an instant.
CONTINUED:

The PHASER SOUND precedes an EXPLOSION OF DUST AND DIRT
at a point where Riker was aiming the phaser. It
causes a hole at least the size of one caused by a
howitzer shell.

ANOTHER ANGLE

It also produces another effect -- the FORM of Worf,
large phaser in hand, propelling itself INTO SCENE,
rolling to a stop where the Klingon is aiming his
phaser, seeking the away team's "assailant" which fired
the phaser blast.

WORF
(growling it)
DROP YOUR WEAPONS!

He aims this way, then that, attempting quickly to spot
who or whatever is menacing his friends.

RIKER
(exhibits hand phaser)
I'm afraid it was me, Worf.
Making certain our phasers still
operate.

Worf returns his own phaser.

WORF
A warrior's reaction.

GEORDI
Incredible, Worf! You came out
of nowhere!

RIKER
(to Worf)
Report. What did you find?

WORF
Sir... what they're wearing may
be old Earth uniforms, but what's
inside those uniforms isn't human
at all. More like vicious animal
things.

GEORDI
Oh, oh! Good old "Q". But how
can even the most savage animal
forms threaten us if they're armed
with the equivalent of popguns?
STAR TREK: Hide And "Q" - 9/25/87 - ACT TWO

39 SPECIAL EFFECTS ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Geordi, who has been scanning the terrain, now turns to Riker.

GEORDI
They're moving in fast, sir.

40 ANGLE EMPHASIZING RIKER

Data's back is to him.

RIKER
Data, if you've got a theory on what's happening...

Data's FORM turns, REVEALING IT IS NOT DATA AT ALL, BUT "Q" -- and using his own VOICE despite the Data clothing.

"Q" (DATA)
Think fast, Commander Riker.
(REACTING; pointing)
And move fast... !

"Q" is pointing at two of the fierce-looking Animal Things in French uniform that have moved INTO SIGHT, aiming their "muskets" at Geordi who jumps behind a rock. TWO PHASER BLASTS. The first hits a rock near Geordi. The second BLASTS A BROAD FURROW in the desert floor.

RIKER
That's no "musket!"

41 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

"Q" is REACTING to the uniformed Animal Things seeing them now, swinging its weapon in their direction. Riker spins, FIRES HIS PHASER, DEMATERIALIZING both his opponents.

RIKER
(anxiously)
Troi, Geordi, Worf... !

"Q" pulls him down as:

"Q" (DATA)
You have only one chance to save them, now. Send them to your ship!
CONTINUED:

RIKER
You'll let me beam them?

"Q" (DATA)
(shakes head)
Send them the same way as I do.
I've given you that power.

Geordi comes scrambling INTO VIEW.

"Q" (DATA)
(continuing)
Do you understand? I've given
you the power of the "Q".
(demonstrates with
sweeping gesture)
Use it!

Worf and Troi come INTO VIEW too.

ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Riker becomes aware of someone scrambling toward him.
It's Data, the real Data using his own body. "Q" has
gone. CAMERA JIGGLES WITH ANOTHER MAJOR PHASER HIT.

"Q" (V.O.)
(echo chamber)
Use your power!

With little other choice, Riker makes a hand gesture --
causing FLASHES OF BLINDING LIGHT in which
Data, Geordi, Troi and Worf DISAPPEAR. On Riker's
stunned expression:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

43 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

The bridge is empty -- the displays and readouts are still frozen. The ambient noise is still absent. SLOW PUSH IN to Tasha sitting on the bench beside Riker's position. Head in hands, she stares at the floor. Suddenly the room noise changes and on the SOUND her head comes up.

44 WIDER ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

The display screens are alive. All the bridge's ambient SOUNDS are back. Tasha looks over to Picard's Ready Room.

45 READY ROOM DOOR

Picard STEPS OUT. He too has heard the change. He walks to his Command position.

        PICARD
Take the Conn, Lieutenant.

Tasha rises.

46 ANGLE ON PICARD

He sits and touches his arm-panel.

        PICARD
Engineering -- this is the bridge.

        ENGINEER'S COM VOICE
Engineering here, sir.

        PICARD
Are all systems back on line?

        ENGINEER'S COM VOICE
Back on line, sir? They were never off.

47 ANGLE ON TASHA

at the Conn position.
CONTINUED:

TASHA
Captain, you had better look at this.

Picard walks over to Tasha.

ANGLE ON TASHA AND PICARD
He looks at the readout.

TASHA
There has been no interruption in course or speed. Both have remained constant. Captain -- it's as though we never stopped.

Picard straightens up.

PICARD
We never did. "Q" suspended time.

WIDE ANGLE - MAIN BRIDGE
FLASHES OF LIGHT and the members of the bridge crew REAPPEAR except for Riker. Alive and unharmed.

INTERCUT ANGLES OF CREW
All of them are naturally disoriented -- the shock of the experience cannot be instantly thrown off.

TASHA
Where's Commander Riker?

They look around.

WORF
He was with us.

GEORDI
He must still be on the planet.
(to Picard)
We were under attack by... by animal things...

PICARD
Animal things?
CONTINUED:

GEORDI
Animal things in uniform, sir...
(quails at Picard's expression)
Which I think Data could probably explain better, sir.

As Picard turns to Data, the android decides he wants no part of this.

DATA
You may find it aesthetically displeasing, sir. I could just file a computer report on that...

TROI
(interrupting)
Sir, the important thing right now is why is Commander Riker missing?

PICARD
Understood, Counselor, but Will is almost certainly safe...
(troubled)
... at least "safe" in a physical sense. "Q" has an interest in him... in fact, "Q"'s entire visit has something to do with our first officer.

DATA
And the reason for that, sir...?

PICARD
I wish I knew. "Q" became interested in him at Farpoint.
(shakes head)
I've no idea what it means.
(to the others)
Meanwhile, we must proceed with our rescue mission...

EXT. DESERT
Empty -- no Riker. But there are footprints in the sand indicating a direction toward which is a jagged rock formation on the otherwise unbroken sandscape.
54 ANGLE AT ROCK FORMATION

REVEALING Riker who has managed to find himself a little shade. He sits, leans back against a rock. Then, starts to laugh. It is a deep, satisfying laugh from one who has just been let in on a cosmic joke.

"Q" (O.S.)
Something amuses you?

Riker looks up.

55 ANGLE UP ON "Q" - RIKER'S POV (OPTICAL)

Standing on a ledge above Riker, heavily back-lit by the two suns. (If possible, formed here by two brightly illuminated OUT-OF-FOCUS balls as described earlier.) We'll see more clearly in a moment also that "Q" wears rank and uniform identical to Riker's.

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Perhaps you would share the joke with me?

56 ANGLE ON RIKER

as "Q" moves down into TWO SHOT. Riker eyes "Q" for a long beat, then:

RIKER
The joke is you, you silly son of a bitch.

"Q" glares at Riker who now seems confident and at ease about something.

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Strange gratitude from one who has been granted a gift beyond any human dream. How can you not appreciate being able to send your friends back to their ship...

(the sweeping gesture)
... or sending the soldiers back to the "nothingness" from which they came?

"Q" takes a beat, sits on a piece of rock next to Riker, leans toward him confidentially.
"Q" (COMMANDER)  
(continuing)  
Certainly, you understand that at this moment you can send yourself back to your ship... or to Earth, or change your shape and become anything else you want to be...

RIKER  
(interrupting; strongly)  
What do you need, "Q"?

"Q" (COMMANDER)  
"Need?"

RIKER  
You want something from us, "Q". Desperately! What is it?

"Q" (COMMANDER)  
Want something from you foolish, fragile, non-entities? Careful, Riker, you're beginning to sound like your captain.

RIKER  
(grins)  
Now that's a compliment, "Q". But it's not an answer.

Stung by this, "Q" comes to his feet, raising a hand as if to make the gesture we've seen before... finds Riker still smiling up at him. He turns, walks angrily a few steps away, then a few back as if bringing his anger under control.

"Q" (COMMANDER)  
(clipped; angry)  
Riker... we have tried to offer you a gift beyond all other gifts... !

RIKER  
... Out of the "goodness" of your heart?

They exchange looks for a long, long moment. Then "Q" seats himself again, and finally:
"Q" (COMMANDER)
After Farpoint, I returned to
where we exist... the "Q
Continuum."

RIKER
Which means exactly what?

"Q" (COMMANDER)
(trace of annoyance)
The limitless dimensions of the
galaxy in which we exist. We
could hardly be capable of acting
in ways that seem so astonishing
to you... if we were limited to
the primitive dimensions in which
you live, dimensions which would
make us prisoners of time and
space.

RIKER
(beat; absorbing this)
What do you mean by we?

"Q" (COMMANDER)
(more annoyance)
In our Continuum the terms we
and I mean much the same.

RIKER
I don't understand...

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Of course you don't, and you never
will until you become one of us.

RIKER
(reacting)
Until?... Would you mind going
over that again?

"Q" (COMMANDER)
(nods)
If you'll stop interrupting me.
This really isn't the time to
teach you the true nature of the
universe.

(MORE)
"Q" (Cont'd)
(leans in again)
At Farpoint, we saw you as savages only, and thought to frighten you into scurrying back to your system. We discovered instead, that you are an unusual creature in your own limited ways... ways which in time may not be so limited.

RIKER
(nods)
We're growing. Something about us compels us to learn, explore...

"Q" (COMMANDER)
(nods)
The human compulsion. And, unfortunately, for us, a force that will grow stronger century after century, eon after eon...

RIKER
Eons! Have you any idea how far we'll advance?

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Perhaps in a future you cannot yet conceive... even beyond us. And so, we must know more about the human condition. We have selected you, Riker, to become part of the "Q"... to bring that human need and hunger to us so that we may understand it.

RIKER
(ponders, then)
I... suppose you mean that as a compliment, "Q"... or maybe it's my limited mind...
(stands)
... but... to become part of you?! I don't even like you!

"Q" looks at Riker, seeming amused.
"Q" (COMMANDER)
You're going to miss me!

"Q" makes the sweeping gesture and it produces the familiar BLINDING LIGHT FLASH in which "Q" DISAPPEARS. And almost immediately, the startled VOICES of the bridge crew, with Riker whirling in that direction:

TROI
Oh, no!

GEORDI
Come on, not again!

OMITTED

GROUP SHOT

where the entire bridge crew, including Picard and WESLEY, find themselves facing a line of the French uniformed "animal soldiers," who menace the Enterprise people, ATTACHING LONG AND DEADLY-LOOKING BAYONETS ONTO THEIR MUSKETS, clearly intending to use them.

WESLEY
(totally confused)
What's happening, Commander Riker?
I was sitting in school...

TASHA
(interrupting)
My phaser's gone. Worf, are you armed?

Worf checks, shakes his head, but nevertheless he and Tasha move to place themselves between the bridge crew and the danger. Picard has moved quickly to Riker.

PICARD
Where is "Q"? If you have any answer to this, Number One...

Interrupted by an animal soldier lifting a bugle, blowing the OLD FRENCH ATTACK CALL. A SNARL AND ROAR from an animal soldier with sergeant's stripes and the line of soldiers advance, bayonets leveled at the bridge crew.
moving forward to take on the entire attack line. He moves fast, dodges a bayonet, trips, then a second animal soldier slashes him in the back with a bayonet, and Worf goes down in a SPURT OF RED BLOOD.

**SPECIAL EFFECT ANGLE ON WESLEY**

as he FREEZES, shocked.

**WESLEY**

Worf!

Then, the animal soldier who got Worf, pivots fast, leaps at Wesley... and skewers the boy through the middle.

**ANGLE ON RIKER**

Shocked, wildly angered!

**RIKER**

NO! DAMN IT, DAMN IT TO HELL... !

He makes the sweeping gesture he's learned.

**WIDE ANGLE (OPTICAL)**

as Riker's gesture creates a smaller version of the METALLIC GRID. IT APPEARS between where the bridge Crew has instinctively retreated and the advancing line of animal soldiers, blocking them completely. Picard REACTS strongly to what Riker just did.

**PICARD**

Riker, you... you did that?!

**RIKER**

And that's not all!!

Grimly, angrily, Riker makes the sweeping gesture even more strongly, and the ENTIRE SCENE IS FILLED WITH BLINDING LIGHT.

**INT. MAIN BRIDGE - TIGHT ANGLE ON WESLEY (OPTICAL)**

Wesley APPEARS, suddenly feeling at his torso where he was just stabbed. He's no longer hurt. Worf ENTERS SHOT, also whole in body.
ANOTHER ANGLE - INCLUDING PICARD AND OTHERS

Picard looking at Riker almost disbelievingly.

PICARD
That grid, their wounds... only
the "Q" could do that...

He cuts off his words, becoming aware of the formidable expression Riker's face.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
FADE IN:

65 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

with the Disaster Planet in far distance ahead of the starship -- a small ball seen from here.

    PICARD (V.O.)
    Captain's log, stardate 41591.4.
    Twelve minutes out from Quadra Sigma III where the survivors of an underground disaster desperately need our help. Aboard the Enterprise...

66 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker, Troi, Data, Geordi, Tasha and Worf at their positions. Riker's features showing the strain of what has happened, he makes little eye-contact with the bridge crew and they appear equally uncertain of how to handle him.

    PICARD (V.O.)
    (continuing)
    ... First Officer William T. Riker needs help nearly as badly. But this is a subject so far out of my experience... out of any human's experience.

Riker has made for the captain's Ready Room, EXITS into it.

67 INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Riker CROSSING IN and coming to a halt in front of Picard's desk. Picard waves him to a seat, almost angrily.

    PICARD
    Will, how the hell do I advise you what to do?!

Riker looks up sharply at the angry tone... then understands it, nods.
CONTINUED:

RIKER
No one has ever offered to
turn you into "God?"

PICARD
(snaps)
Don't joke with me! What the
"Q" has offered you has got to
be close to "immortality," Will.
They're not lying about
controlling space and time; we've
seen it in what they can do.
But...

RIKER
You've also seen it in what I can
do.

Picard leans across his desk toward Riker, intent.

PICARD
Of all things, that troubles me
most, Will. Are you strong enough
to refuse to use that power?

RIKER
Certainly!

PICARD
No matter how tempted? No matter
how difficult "Q" makes it?

RIKER
(beat; then firmly)
You have my word.

DATA'S COM VOICE
In orbit of Quadra Sigma III, sir.
Ready to beam down rescue team
to underground emergency area.

Picard and Riker get quickly to their feet, EXIT.
INT. PLANET DISASTER AREA

The Away Reserve Team MATERIALIZES. They are in a passageway which has been severely damaged by explosions. Water SPRAYS from the ceiling and is already ankle deep on the floor. Data scans the area with his tricorder.

DATA
This way.

They push ahead.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CORRIDOR

as they ARRIVE at a doorway. The door has been jammed by the explosion. Data steps over and with his great strength - rips the door off his hinges and clears the opening.

The survivors are here. ABOUT A DOZEN of them, huddled together on the far side. Beverly and her teams wade through the water to them.

ANGLE ON BEVERLY AND SURVIVORS

As she kneels beside an injured WOMAN.

BEVERLY
You are going to be all right, now.

RIKER
Where are the others?

The Woman shakes her head.

WOMAN
Gone. It's just us.

GEORDI
(urgent)
Commander!

Riker turns.

ANGLE ON GEORDI

CAMERA MOVES IN TO E.C.U. Geordi is staring at a pile of rubble.

GEORDI
There's someone there!
With great strength he moves huge rocks with remarkable rapidity.

They stand and look for a beat, then:

As he lifts and carries the limp body of a child.

Beverly rushes over and while Data holds the child, she quickly examines him.

From her expression it is clear the child is dead. All of her skill will not help.

She's dead. If we'd only gotten here a little sooner...!

He steps closer. A dead child. A moment of truth.

Sir, if you indeed have "Q"'s power...

He is fighting his emotions.
84 ANGLE INCLUDING BEVERLY

Puzzled.

BEVERLY
I don't understand. Can you bring her back to life?

RIKER
(long beat)
No!

84A EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

in orbit.

85 thru OMITTED
87

88 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker, followed by Data and Geordi, EXIT the turbolift. Riker CROSSES to Picard. Troi is watching Riker with such intensity she doesn't seem to be breathing.

RIKER
As soon as it's convenient Captain, I insist on a meeting with you and your staff.

There is about Riker now a little of the force, the power, the arrogance of "Q". Modified by the man himself -- but he is definitely carrying himself with more presence.

89 ANGLE ON PICARD

It's as though he's been expecting this since the incident with "Q".

90 ANOTHER ANGLE RIKER AND PICARD

The others are watching this exchange, curious about how Picard will respond.

PICARD
As soon as we are secure from the rescue operation, we'll meet in the Conference Room.
RIKER
Thank you.

Riker turns, stalks to the turbolift. Troi gives him a look of apprehension.

PICARD
Counselor?

TROI
Power -- immense. Frightening. I can't read the intent -- but there is terrible anger in him.

Off Picard's reaction:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR
FADE IN:

91 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker is already there, sits brooding. Picard ENTERS
with Data, Troi, Geordi, Tasha and Worf. As Picard
seats himself:

PICARD
We'll confer on the bridge here
if no one...

Without looking in that direction, Riker gestures
Picard to be silent and, surprised, Picard hesitates
during which Riker turns toward the others.

RIKER
The bridge is fine since I've
called the entire staff...

PICARD
(interrupting)
Correction, Number One; knowing
the decision you face, I've
permitted you this gathering.

Riker seems genuinely amused by Picard's correction,
as if yielding to a bright but headstrong child. Riker
nods, uses a gentle tone.

RIKER
Of course, Jean-Luc.

Riker looks up startled to see Beverly and Wesley ENTER
bridge from the turbolift.

RIKER
(continuing)
This meeting isn't for you,
Wesley!

WESLEY
Why not, sir? You helped make
me a bridge officer...
(corrects self)
... an acting ensign.

Looking from one to the other.
CONTINUED:

RIKER
All right, he stays. The first thing he'll hear is... because I've been given unusual powers, I'm not suddenly a monster. Except for those abilities, and I don't yet know how far they go... I'm the same William T. Riker you've always known.

There's a long silence, no one speaking up.

RIKER
(continuing)
Well? Everyone still looks uncomfortable.

PICARD
Perhaps we're all remembering the old saying... "power corrupts..."

RIKER
..."and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you believe I haven't thought of that, Jean-Luc?

PICARD
And have you noticed that you and I are now on a first-name basis?

A flicker of surprise on Riker's features indicates he really hasn't.

PICARD
(continuing)
Will, something has happened to you already...

RIKER
In what way? Haven't you seen how much I've regretted not saving that child? Captain, using the "Q" power to save her might not have been wrong!

(to bridge crew)
No more than it was wrong to save the rest of you from those soldier things.

PICARD
Let's keep in mind that particular danger was invented by "Q".
CONTINUED: (2)

TROI
What we represent to the "Q",
Will, are lowly animals, tormented
into performing for their
amusement...

RIKER
Actually, they think highly of
us, Troi. We have a quality
of... of growth which they
admire...

GEORDI
Or fear?

PICARD
Number One, we've learned that
the "Q" power does not admire
us... "Q" has muddled your mind
somehow.

RIKER
It's your mind that troubles me,
Captain. Don't you understand
his incredible gift to me?

"Q" (BROTHER) (O.S.)
Are these truly your "friends,"
Brother?

ANOTHER ANGLE
All whirl toward the VOICE. It comes from a far corner
of the bridge where a Figure stands with its back to
us. "Q" turns now, revealing himself draped in what
is recognizable even in this century as the somber
robes of something like the Franciscan Holy Order --
and "Q" is playing it to the hilt with gentle voice,
kindliness shining from his face, fingers pointed
together as in prayer. He CROSSES IN to stand with
Riker, head bowed in humility.

"Q" (BROTHER)
Let us pray for understanding,
for compassion, for...
CONTINUED:

PICARD
(moving to "Q")
Let us do no such damned thing!
(pulls at "Q"s robes)
What is this need of yours for
costumes? Have you no identity
of your own?

"Q" (BROTHER)
(softly; gently)
I come in search of truth.

The expression on Riker's face reveals that he is
growing somewhat uncomfortable with this continuation
of masquerade.

PICARD
You come in search of what
humanity is!

"Q" has withdrawn a large cross symbol from his robes
as if warding off Picard's words.

"Q" (BROTHER)
I forgive your blasphemy...

PICARD
(indicates "Q" to Riker)
Can't you see it, Number One?
He's nothing but a flim-flam man!
That's what he's been since his
first appearance at Farpoint!

WORF
(to Data)
Flim-flam?

"Q" (BROTHER)
(to Picard)
You offer Riker jealousy! What
I offer him is clearly beyond your
comprehension!
(turning to the others
one by one)
How can you claim friendship for
Riker while obstructing his way
to the greatest adventure ever
offered a human?!
PICARD
(alerted)
"Obstruct him?" Then it's not yet certain? He's not yet committed?

"Q" (BROTHER)
(quickly, loudly; overlapping last line)
The truly evil part of this is your jealousy, Captain.
(to Riker)
You love each one of your people! Demonstrate it! You have the power to leave each of them with a gift proving your affection.

Riker isn't sure of this. He looks to Picard inquiringly, but speaks a bit thickly at times.

RIKER
There'd be no... harm, would there, if I, if I gave them something I know they'd like?

Picard's next few expressions are a study in a change of decision. His first instinct is to recommend against it... and he almost voices it. But then, Picard begins to suspect that this may, in fact, give Riker a chance to understand the human effect of near-godlike power.

"Q" (BROTHER)
How touching. A plea to his former captain.
(watching Picard)
"May I please give some happiness to my friends, sir? Please sir?"

PICARD
(beat)
In fact... I authorize and support that idea, Riker.
(to the crew)
And please cooperate with him, if you wish.

TROI
(troubled; cautioning)
Are you certain, sir? If...
CONTINUED: (3)

PICARD
I'm quite certain, Counselor.
(to Riker)
By all means, demonstrate your
gifts of affection.

Troi is clearly still nervous about this. Data too.

"Q" (BROTHER)
(eyeing Picard)
Remarkable! He rises now above
jealousy.

ANGLE EMPHASIZING RIKER
turning to his friends.

RIKER
Don't be frightened. There is
no way I could harm any one of
you. Shall I guess your dreams?

BEVERLY
(quickly)
Leave now, Wesley!

RIKER
No! Wesley, I may know best of
all.
(smiles at Wesley)
Our friendship, our long talks...

BEVERLY
No, please...!

EMPHASIZING WESLEY AND RIKER (OPTICAL)

RIKER
(to Wesley)
Have your favorite wish, my young
friend!

With a LIGHT FLASH, "WESLEY" becomes a handsome young
Starfleet officer of about 25 years.
95 INTERCUT OTHERS

Their REACTIONS. Their surprise is complete. On a very intimate level that concerns themselves, this seems godlike power they are witnessing. Picard, on the other hand, seems to be analyzing, measuring, what is happening.

GEORDI

Hey Wes, you've grown into a very good looking guy!

Tasha gives a "definitely" to that sentiment. Troi is concerned about Beverly who seems stunned as she walks nearer her son, scrutinizing him closely. Data gives Picard a puzzled "what are you up to" look. Picard appears to be holding his breath as he anticipates further developments.

96 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Riker is eyeing Data now.

RIKER

Data...

DATA

(forcefully shaking head)

No!

RIKER

It's what you've always wanted,

Data to become human!

Data almost says "yes," but then:

DATA

Yes, sir, that is true. But I never wanted to compound one illusion with another. It might seem real to "Q" -- even you, sir... but it would not be so to me. Was it not one of the Captain's favorite authors who wrote, "This above all, to thine own self be true?"

(beat)

Sorry, Commander, I must decline.

Riker turns to Geordi. As he moves to him and removes the VISOR, unobtrusively handing it to Geordi:
CONTINUED:

RIKER
Well, my friend, I know what you want. Welcome to the wonderful world of vision.

Geordi looks around in awe. His eyes come to rest on Tasha.

GEORDI
You're as beautiful as I imagined, and more.

RIKER
Then we can throw the VISOR away?

Geordi slowly replaces the VISOR over his eyes.

GEORDI
I think not, sir. The price is a little high for me. I don't like who I would have to thank. I can still steer the ship with this.

ANGLE EMPHASIZING WESLEY AND BEVERLY
as Beverly appraises the new form of her son.

BEVERLY
If you accept this new you, Wesley, you'll lose wonderful times, so many important experiences...

EMPHASIZING WORF (OPTICAL)

as Riker moves to inspect him in turn.

RIKER
And Worf, who wants nothing...

WORF
Except honor and my duty fulfilled.

RIKER (interrupting)
Proud warrior Worf, without a single tie to his own kind...
CONTINUED:

In a LIGHT FLASH, it's not Worf who changes but someone else who APPEARS at his feet -- a Klingon warrioress. Her eyes flash as she looks up at her man Worf, an arm encircles him at the knees -- her other arm holds a Klingon weapon -- a kligat -- as she looks around, sees nothing but sliens. Then moving with surprising speed, she comes to her feet and lashes out with her weapon at Troi, who is the person nearest. Worf moves quickly too, takes the blow intended for Troi, SLAMS the warrioress down. In Klingon tradition, she flattens herself to the floor and crawls, SNARLING to embrace Worf's feet.

WORF
(whirling to Riker)
No! She is from a world now alien to me. I have no place in my life for this now!

ANGLE ON WESLEY
moving to Riker. His voice is that of an adult male.

WESLEY
Mister Riker...
   (shakes head)
... it's too soon for this...

RIKER
If it's because your mother objects...

WESLEY
No, I'd just like to get there on my own. Honest!

Picard is now looking very pleased... both with himself for estimating this correctly, and with his people for their common sense. Riker sees and understands.

RIKER
How did you know, sir? I feel like such... such an idiot!

PICARD
Quite right, you should!

RIKER
But it was... such a pleasure to have been able to do those things.
CONTINUED:

As "Q" PASSES, Picard blocks his path.

PICARD
It's all over "Q". You have no further business here.

"Q" (BROTHER)
Human, you have just destroyed yourself...!

PICARD
But only after you've paid off your wager, "Q".

"Q" (BROTHER)
I recall no wager!

PICARD
I'm sure your fellow "Q" remember you agreed to never trouble our species again. Just as they're aware you've failed to tempt a human to join you. So, "Q", I strongly suspect you have some explaining of your own to do...

A sudden MAJOR FLASH OF BRILLIANT LIGHT... wiping out the entire SCENE for a moment. Then WE SEE REVEALED the bridge crew exactly as we saw them when this ACT began. "Q" is no longer there -- Wesley is fifteen again -- Worf is without his warrioress -- Tasha is the familiar security chief. And all are at their duty positions, with Wesley assisting Data at Ops, Beverly standing near Picard.

ANOTHER ANGLE EMPHASIZING PICARD

Everyone is speechless. Then, Picard breaks the silence.

PICARD
Extraordinary! "Q" sought to discover the distinguishing characteristic of humanity and never learned what Coleridge said: "It must be the possession of a soul within us that makes the difference."

GEORDI
Sir... we show the same "hole" in time again. Our instruments say we've just now beamed up from our rescue mission.
DATA

How can the "Q" handle time and space so well, and us so badly?

PICARD

Perhaps we'll discover some day that time and space are simpler than the human equation.

(toward Riker)

No coordinates laid in, Number One?

RIKER

Uh... yes, sir.

(toward Helm)

You have my coordinates, Mister La Forge.

Geordi gives Wesley a look, and a nod. Wesley calls it out eagerly.

WESLEY

Zero-zero-eight, Mark, three-three-nine, sir.

PICARD

(nods)

Engage!

101 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

as it MOVES AWAY from us.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END