

Out of the Bag

By Izerman UIn'hyrr

SCENE: The bridge of the USS Enterprise. All regulars are at their usual stations. CAPTAIN JEAN-LUC PICARD is in the Captain's chair, flanked by FIRST OFFICER WILLIAM T. RIKER and COUNSELOR DEANNA TROI. LT. WORF is at tactical, COMMANDER DATA at ops, ENSIGN HAWK is at navigation.

Riker: Then she said, "Do you think Starfleet will make me a Captain?"

THE CREW erupts in laughter.

Picard: I must say, I always look forward to your vacations, Number One.

RIKER raises an eyebrow.

Picard: Only for the stories when you return!

Troi: Then let's hope Risa lets him back next year, Captain. For your sake.

Riker: They haven't found a way to keep me out yet!

THE CREW laughs again. Suddenly the communication alert sounds.

Worf: Captain, we are receiving a Federation distress signal.

Picard: The source, Mr. Worf?

Worf: No designation. It may be an older signal. Bearing 269-Mark-032.

Picard: Ensign, lay in a course and engage, Warp 9.

Ensign Hawk: Course laid in and we are underway, sir. ETA is 4 minutes 30 seconds.

Picard: A Federation distress signal without a ship's designation? That must put its age at...

Data: At least 45 years, 2 weeks, and 6 days old. Starfleet records indicate there are no active vessels of that age in the Federation fleet.

Picard: A mystery. Thoughts, Number One?

Riker: It's either a relic from history, or a trap. I wouldn't put it past the Romulans or Ferengi. Recommend we go to Red Alert.

Picard: Agreed. All hands, Red Alert! Counselor Troi, we'll arrive in minutes. If the ship is in danger, I want to know ahead of time.

Troi: Of course, Captain.

Picard: Data, can we get any more information from the signal itself?

Data: Negative, sir. The signal is old, but it conforms to the standard parameters of that time.

Picard: Very well. Ensign, drop us out of warp at the edge of sensor range. I want no surprises if we can help it.

Hawk: Aye, sir. Dropping out of warp in 3,2,1...

Picard: On screen.

Data: Analyzing. The vessel is indeed Federation. Yorktown Class, registration number NCC-421. USS Baudelaire. Last communication, Stardate 5926.6. Declared lost on Stardate 5946.12. Starfleet Intelligence postulated that it was destroyed or taken by the Romulans.

Picard: Mr. Worf, stand ready. Mr. Data, full scan.

Data: The Baudelaire is adrift. No life signs. Life Support and the distress beacon seem to be the only systems in operation. Warp core is inert. The ship is structurally intact but appears to be completely abandoned. However, no life pods are missing.

Riker: Any ships in sensor range, Mr. Worf?

Worf: No sir.

Riker: Anything at all?

Worf: Nothing. A level 3 sensor diagnostic was run at Starbase 11 two days ago, sir.

Riker: The coast looks clear. Should we take a closer look?

Picard: We have more questions than answers. Number One, prepare a boarding party. Counselor, are you getting any...

TROI leaps out of her chair clutching her head in agony. There is blood running from her eyes and ears.

Troi: AAAAAAIIIIIEE!! THE PAIN!!! CAPTAIN! IT'S....THERE! THERE! GOD HELP US ALL!

RIKER gets out of his chair and starts to move towards TROI. TROI explodes, showering the entire bridge in a wave of red blood.

Picard: JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!!!

Covered in gore, THE CREW stands in complete shock.

Worf: That..was...GLORIOUS!

WORF howls to the ceiling. The rest of the crew stands in stunned silence. PICARD turns to a dazed RIKER.

Picard: Alright, Number One?

RIKER seems to wake at this moment.

Riker: I think I need a shower, Jean-Luc.

Picard: Good idea, Will. Cancel Red Alert! Everyone, return to your quarters and get cleaned up! Senior officers, meet in the conference room at 1400! Commander Riker, have someone take care of all this Betazoid juice.

THE CREW starts moving to the turbo lifts. RIKER taps his communicator.

Riker: Night Shift, report to the bridge! Riker to Ensign Shitheels!

Shitheels: Commander?

Riker: Your custodial staff is a disgrace, Ensign! Report to the bridge immediately for cleanup detail!

Shitheels: But we just cleaned it last night!

Riker: Then why is everything covered in blood, Ensign?

Shitheels: Again?

Riker: You can reflect on that attitude while you're polishing my ass-groove, Shitheels. Riker out.

End Scene.

SCENE: The turbolift, where several officers are heading to their quarters to get cleaned up. Worf runs a finger down his bloody bandolier and puts the finger in his mouth. He makes a sour expression.

Data: Commander Worf, I am curious. What does Betazoid blood taste like to a Klingon?

Worf: Like a Ferengi child, running screaming from a crippled beggar.

End Scene.

SCENE: The Conference Room at 1400. All SENIOR OFFICERS are cleaned up and seated around the table.

Picard: There was a grave tragedy on the Enterprise today. At times like these, I am reminded that we are merely travelers on this mortal plane. I want to take this moment to let you know how dear you all are to my heart. Commander Riker will brief you on the incident.

Riker: I regret to inform you that at 13:00 Ensign Shitheels slipped in a puddle of gore and spilled leather polish all over the Captain's chair.

PICARD sobs. THE CREW gasps and makes sounds of disbelief.

Riker: Given the high level of saturation, it will be extremely slippery for the next several days. Projections indicate the captain will have to avoid grand gestures and leave his tea in the Ready Room.

Cries of outrage from THE CREW.

Picard: Please, please! Your devotion to the Enterprise and its captain is laudable. I demand perfection, and I know you demand no less. That's why I personally executed Ensign Shitheels five minutes before this meeting.

Sounds and joy and relief from THE CREW.

Picard: Believe you me, I'll be counting on that perfection today. Now, enough of this depressing shit! Will, brief the team on our plan!

Riker: Worf, Ensign Entrails and I will beam over to the Baudelaire. Our mission? Answers. We'll search that ship from ass to fun-hole until it gives up its secrets!

RIKER looks at WORF and points at DATA.

Data: Anatomically speaking, that appears to be a very small area requiring no more than a few seconds to navigate.

RIKER turns his head and stares at DR. CRUSHER with a big smile.

Riker: Not if you're doing it right!

CRUSHER groans, THE CREW chuckles, RIKER and WORF do a no-look fist bump.

Riker: Any other questions?

La Forge: Captain, I'd like to accompany the Away Team to access the Baudelaire's computer. The navigational and personal logs could hold the key to what happened over there.

Picard: Request granted. Will, I'd like Geordi to accompany you to gather information.

Riker: With all due respect Captain, this could be a dangerous mission. I don't want to be baby-sitting some cripple.

La Forge: Hey!

Riker: There could be enemy forces at work over there. My Away Team must be ready to neutralize any threat, without hesitation. I can't have my team taking a phaser blast because The Blind Guy is about to fall down a turboshaft.

La Forge: HEY!

Riker: Captain, I can hold a phaser in my right hand, a tricorder in my left, and be confident I've got any situation handled. Why take the guy who's just a GoPro glued to a face?

Geordie: COME ON! I'M SITTING RIGHT HERE!

Picard: Number One, I understand your concerns. But wouldn't you have a better chance of preventing Mr. Worf from doing something typically short-sighted if your left hand was free?

Riker: Yes, I suppose that's true. But still...

Picard: What if we beamed you to the bridge and Geordie directly to Engineering? That way you wouldn't have to see him.

La Forge: I'M THE CHIEF ENGINEER!

Picard: And that way, if he explodes like Diana, you won't be tainted by his unnatural DNA.

LA FORGE shoots out of his seat.

La Forge: UNNATURAL, CAPTAIN?!?

Worf: An important consideration, Commander.

Riker: I suppose that will do. Commander La Forge, your presence is...requested...on this Away Mission.

PICARD clears his throat.

Riker: I'm sure there's loads of things (barely restraining laughter) over there you can bump into. Looking forward to your report!

The CREW erupts in laughter. Picard is covering his mouth, eyes closed, and shaking in laughter.

La Forge: Goddamn you people.

Picard: You have your orders. Dismissed!

THE CREW files out. DATA approaches PICARD.

Data: Captain, until your chair is restored to its normal levels of friction, would it not be advisable to wear a seatbelt for safety?

PICARD leans in close to DATA, their noses almost touching.

Picard: Fuck Reddit and FUCK YOU, Mr. Data.

PICARD storms off.

End Scene.

SCENE: Transporter Room. CHIEF O'BRIEN is manning the transport controls, and RIKER, WORF, LaFORGE, and ENSIGN ENTRAILS enter the room. They assemble on the transporter pad.

Riker: Ready, Chief?

Chief O'Brien: Almost, sir. I just need a minute to check the buffer pool integrity.

Riker: Energize when ready. Geordi, no hard feelings I hope. To be honest, I could use your unique perspective. Can you help me out?

La Forge: Of course, Commander! How can I help?

Riker: I'm not sure if this is my ass or my elbow. Can you tell?

La Forge: GOD DAMNIT!

THE CREW beams away.

End Scene.

SCENE: RIKER, WORF, and ENTRAILS beam onto the bridge of the Baudelaire. It's deserted, dimly lit, and hazy. They spread out, WORF and RIKER with phasers drawn and ENTRAILS holding a tricorder.

Riker: No crew. Ensign, are you reading anything?

Entrails: Nothing sir. Wait! There's a faint life-sign by Navigation, Commander.

RIKER signals to WORF, they approach a blue backpack on the chair of the Navigation Station. The front of the backpack has a clear plastic dome, like a curved window. They flank the bag, when suddenly a small face appears in the window.

Worf: RAAAAAHR!

WORF raises his phaser. Using his left hand, RIKER wrenches WORF's arm up just in time, and the beam hits the ceiling.

Riker: STAND DOWN MR. WORF!

Worf: But Commander! That...THING...

Entrails: IT'S HIDEOUS! KILL IT!! KILL IT NOW!!!

Riker: THAT'S ENOUGH, ENSIGN!

Worf: It cannot be suffered to live, Commander!

Riker: We are Starfleet! We don't go around vaporizing new lifeforms! No matter how vile they are!

Entrails: It's okay, sir. I'll take the heat.

ENSIGN ENTRAILS draws her phaser.

Entrails: They can court-martial me.

Riker: Entrails, you listen to me. Drop your phaser. That's an order, Ensign!

ENTRAILS looks at RIKER and shakes her head.

Entrails: You know what needs to be done, Will.

Riker: Don't make me do this! I never got to bang you!

Entrails: You wouldn't give me your test results! Sorry, Commander.

ENTRAILS raises her phaser. RIKER shoots ENTRAILS, vaporizing her instantly.

Riker: Shit!

Worf: GLORIOUS!!! Worry not Commander, she is on her way to the battlegrounds of Sto-Vo-Kor!

Riker: It was pretty sweet, wasn't it? I still have goose-bumps! Well, let's get this creature over to the Enterprise. The sooner this ugly fuck is someone else's problem, the better.

Worf: Commander, I respectfully disagree. Every instinct in my blood yearns to stomp that creature into jelly, or die in the attempt. Whatever it might be, it is extremely dangerous and...evil. I can feel it. Taking it aboard the Enterprise seems like a grave mistake.

Riker: Mr. Worf, I share your apprehension. But as First Officer of the Enterprise, I must obey both our orders and the Prime Directive. This is new life, and our duty is clear.

Worf: Hmmm. What if it was "accidentally" beamed into space?

Riker: Why Mr. Worf! That doesn't sound very honorable to me.

Worf: That monster wouldn't know honor if it fucked its mother.

Riker: Riker to O'Brien.

O'Brien: O'Brien here.

Riker: Chief, I need a Number Four on the baggage.

O'Brien: Are you sure, Commander?

Riker: Positive, Chief. Riker out. Riker to Enterprise! Three to beam back.

End Scene.

SCENE: The transporter room. O'BRIEN is still at the controls. RIKER, WORF and the backpack materialize on the transporter pad. RIKER looks around, confused.

Riker: Where's Mr. La Forge?

O'Brien: Commander?

Riker: I said *three* to beam back, Chief.

O'Brien: You said you wanted a Number 4 on the baggage. I beamed him into space!

Riker: I meant the *backpack* not the ba...

RIKER and O'BRIEN explode into laughter, until they are red in the face and gasping for air. Oblivious, WORF stands over the backpack, locked in a death stare with the creature in the backpack. He is muttering under his breath in Klingon.

Riker: Mr. Worf? YO #MOGHWASFRAMED!!!

WORF jerks his head up and stares blankly at RIKER.

Riker: Grab that thing and we'll take it down to Sick Bay. Dr. Crusher can deal with it. Riker to Doctor Crusher!

Crusher: Crusher here.

Riker: We're on our way to deliver the alien from the Baudelaire.

Crusher: Acknowledged. Is it pregnant or is Worf carrying it?

Riker: Not funny, Doctor. This thing's uglier than Wesley.

Crusher: Now who's joking, Will? Wait, really? Jesus. I'll prepare anti-vomiting treatments.

End Scene.

SCENE: Sickbay, DR. BEVERLY CRUSHER is there. The door slides open and RIKER and WORF, carrying the backpack at arm's length, enter. WORF puts the backpack on an examination table.

Crusher: Inoculations, gentlemen?

CRUSHER scoops up a martini from a NURSE holding a tray loaded with booze. WORF grabs and slams a flagon of blood-wine, never taking his eyes off the backpack. RIKER helps himself to a shot of brown liquor, and starts pouring another one. The NURSE puts the tray down and exits.

Riker: Prepare yourself, Beverly. This is a tough look.

CRUSHER downs the rest of her martini, then heads over to the examination table. She runs a medical tricorder over the bag.

Crusher: Let's see what we have here. It seems to be a small, warm-blooded mammal.

Worf: It is an evil little shit, Doctor. At your command, I am prepared to terminate it.

Crusher: That might be a warrior's opinion, Mr. Worf, but these readings are quite normal. Let's take a look at the little...

CRUSHER unzips the backpack and screams at the top of her lungs. Lunging backwards, she sends her tray of medical instruments flying. She hits a cabinet and slides down to the floor. She produces a laser scalpel from her robes and holds it out in front of her with both hands, gibbering incoherently. From the backpack emerges a small white KITTEN. RIKER barely holds back from vomiting. WORF, snarling, raises his phaser and RIKER slaps it out of his hand.

Riker: DOCTOR! DOCTOR CRUSHER! LOOK AT ME! AT ME!

CRUSHER frantically turns her gaze to RIKER, still babbling.

Riker: What is your medical opinion, Doctor!?

Crusher: It's some kind of fucking demon from hell, Will! Vaporize it!

WORF begins furiously chanting in Klingon, eyes locked on THE KITTEN. THE KITTEN rubs its face against the side of the backpack.

Riker: I need more than that Doctor! Is it a threat to this ship and its crew?!

Crusher: Has syphilis taken your eyes!?! LOOK AT IT! Oh my God, it's in my head! IT KNOWS!

CRUSHER lets out a heart-wrenching sob of shame and grief.

Crusher: It knows I'm WESLEY'S MOM!

Riker: I swear I didn't tell!

THE KITTEN sniffs a medical instrument on the table. CRUSHER screams in agony. She points the laser scalpel at her face and begins burning her eyes out. Eyes bulging, WORF is screaming in Klingon now.

Riker: BEVERLY, STOP!

RIKER fires on CRUSHER, vaporizing her.

Riker: FUCK!

WORF picks up his phaser. RIKER frantically fiddles with the buttons on his phaser.

Riker: How the hell do you spell stun?!? Stand down, Mr. Worf!

RIKER advances on WORF, but stumbles on the scattered medical instruments and falls to the floor.

Worf: No. You will not have me, beast. I choose dishonor! I forsake Sto-Vo-Kor!

WORF jams the phaser under his chin. From the floor, RIKER fires on him. Worf is stunned and drops to the floor. RIKER closes his eyes, drops his head, and breathes a sign of relief.

Riker: Doesn't anyone follow orders on this fucking ship?

THE KITTEN playfully slaps an instrument off of the examination table and it hits the floor with a clank. RIKER jumps up, phaser pointed at THE KITTEN, then slowly moves to WORF. He grabs his collar and slowly drags him out of Sick Bay. Security officers GRAB and COIL are posted in the corridor.

Riker: Secure this door! No one enters Sick Bay without permission of Captain Picard. If anything attempts to leave, shoot to kill! Whatever that thing is, it's beyond dangerous. Riker to Ensign Crusher!

Wesley: Crusher here.

Riker: Get your mother's analysis from the computer, Ensign, post-haste!

Wesley: I'm on it, sir.

Riker: Also, she's been vaporized. Riker out!

RIKER walks down the corridor to a turbolift and presses the button, then taps his combadge.

Riker: Riker to Picard.

Picard: Go ahead, Number One.

Riker: The lifeform from the Baudelaire appears to be hostile. We have 3 casualties, sir.

Picard: Including Troi and Shitheels?

Riker: We have 5 casualties, sir.

Picard: I suppose you'd better brief me then. Meet in my ready room.

Riker: Affirmative. Riker out.

RIKER enters the turbolift. The doors close.

Riker: Bridge. Computer, search the personal logs of Ensign Entrails. Play back all results corresponding to search criteria "fantasies" and "Commander William T. Riker".

Computer: There are no entries matching that criteria.

Riker: Computer, that makes no sense. Re-run the search.

Computer: There are no entries matching that criteria.

Riker: So much for a eulogy, Entrails.

End Scene.

SCENE: The Captain's Ready Room. RIKER and DATA are sitting across from PICARD, at his desk.

Picard: From the sounds of it, this creature can project powerful emotions, and possibly even control minds.

Data: It appears none of the crew members were affected until they saw the life-form. Excepting of course for Counselor Troi, who was empathic. That could indicate visual contact is required. The victims' symptoms suggest deep-seeded humanoid phobias are being triggered.

Riker: These were seasoned Starfleet officers! What are you suggesting Mr. Data? That they killed themselves because they were scared?

Data: No Commander, I am not. In fact, your report indicates you killed two seasoned Starfleet officers yourself.

Riker: Why are you bringing up last week again? I thought we moved past that!

Picard: Let's all settle down. Will, no one is blaming you. Clearly this beast is responsible.

Data: And Commander La Forge? Perhaps we should have Chief O'Brien detained.

Riker: Obviously the life-form possessed Chief O'Brien at the moment of transport. It's devious!

DATA is about to speak, PICARD cuts him off.

Picard: The only thing that matters now is that there's a creature with unquantifiable powers aboard my ship! Where's Wesley? He was supposed bring us Beverly's analysis. Picard to Ensign Crusher!

Wesley: Here, Captain!

Picard: Where are you with that report?

Wesley: I'm waiting right outside your door, sir!

Picard: Your mother died to get that information, and you see fit to withhold it from me? Disgraceful. Get in here!

WESLEY enters the ready room holding a data PADD.

Wesley: Here it is, sir.

WESLEY hands the PADD to PICARD and stands at attention, holding back tears. PICARD glares at WESLEY.

Picard: Ensign, if you plan to use your mother's death an excuse for dereliction of your duties, think again.

PICARD looks at the PADD and recoils, throwing it on his desk.

Picard: THE HELL IS THAT THING!

RIKER nods. Gingerly, PICARD slides the data PADD over to DATA. DATA picks up the PADD and reviews the report.

Data: The analysis is quite brief. It concludes the life-form is a common housecat, or *Felis catus*.

Riker: Sounds like an ancient God of Death to me. How do we kill it?

Data: Commander, *Felis catus* is a domesticated pet. The life-form is a young one, and thus would be called a kitten.

Picard: Did you say domesticated? Do galactic warlords keep these creatures to lay waste to enemy worlds?

Data: Not typically, Captain. Cats are one of the most popular human pets since Ancient Greece, where they were worshipped as Gods.

Riker: I knew it! It enslaved me to do its twisted bidding! If anyone's enslaving me, there better be a pile of blow and a safe word!

Data: Perhaps I am not stating the facts in a clear manner. Cats are one of humankind's most beloved species.

PICARD holds up a hand to RIKER, cutting him off.

Picard: Let's assume, for a moment, that what you're saying is true, Commander Data. That would mean there are other members of this species in existence.

Data: Yes, sir. In fact, my pet Spot is a common housecat and has been aboard the Enterprise for years.

PICARD and RIKER lock eyes immediately.

Wesley: Captain, I think Commander Data is on to something. The analysis supports him, and let's face it, Data is hardly ever wrong!

Picard: HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME!

RIKER viscously backhands WESLEY, who spills to the floor. PICARD and RIKER loom over him.

Riker: Your insubordination will not be tolerated, Ensign! Security!

Picard: To think this loathsome cretin is the son of Jack and Beverly Crusher.

WORF, GRAB, and COIL enter the Ready Room. WORF sees WESLEY on the floor.

Worf: Throw this worthless *PATAHK* into the brig!

GRAB and COIL drag WESLEY to his feet. PICARD addresses him face to face.

Picard: Better that your mother died than to have seen this. Her legacy tainted for eternity. I pray that God forgives her, for I never will.

Wesley: But...

WORF slams a fist into WESLEY'S gut, and they haul him away while he wheezes and blubbers.

Riker: Pathetic. Code Red tonight?

Picard: Make it so, Number One.

RIKER and PICARD return to their seats.

Picard: Now, where were we?

Data: I can only restate the facts at hand. The analysis shows no anomalies and indicates the kitten is harmless. I cannot explain the crew's reaction, outside of some psychological phenomenon.

RIKER and PICARD lock eyes again. PICARD takes a deep breath.

Picard: Thank you, Mr. Data. Please resume your duties on the bridge while my First Officer and I discuss how to proceed.

DATA exits the Ready Room.

Riker: Jean-Luc, he can't be trusted. He's been living with one of those things for years, right under our noses! Probably having sex with it!

Picard: I have to agree, Number One. It seems both Commander Data and the Enterprise have been compromised. But how? These creatures control emotions, but Data is incapable of experiencing them.

Riker: If it can get to Data, what kind of power are we dealing with?

Picard: And what's their plan? All these years they lay in wait. To what end?

Riker: My guess? A shit-show of galactic proportions!

RIKER gets up and starts pacing. PICARD remains silent, deep in thought.

Riker: Captain, I was made to lay pipe. I can't sit idly by and kill everyone who succumbs to this kitten!

PICARD pauses, inspired by these words.

Picard: For where there is no life, no pipe can be laid.

PICARD shoots to his feet.

Picard: Red Alert! All hands to battle stations! Number One, with me.

PICARD and RIKER exit the Ready Room to the Bridge.

End Scene.

SCENE: The bridge of the Enterprise. Red light bathes the interior, and THE CREW is hustling about. RIKER and PICARD stride in.

Picard: Computer, bring up a view of Sick Bay.

Cut to the view screen, which shows an empty examination table, and a large black splotch where the doctor was vaporized.

Picard: Where is it?

RIKER taps his combadge.

Riker: Riker to Grab and Coil! Grab, Coil come in!

Picard: Computer, show the corridor.

The view screen shows GRAB and COIL on the ground in pools of blood. The doors to Sick Bay stand open.

Riker: It's loose on the ship!

RIKER draws his phaser, doing a full 360 of the room. WOLF snarls and pulls his weapon. THE CREW looks around in alarm.

Picard: Computer, location of the creature from the Baudelaire.

Computer: Unable to comply. The current location of the harmless kitten is unknown.

Picard: Location of Data's cat Spot?

Computer: Unable to comply. The current location of the beloved pet Spot is unknown.

PICARD looks at RIKER.

Riker: They're trying to double-team us! No one's double-teaming me without...

Picard: Yes, yes, Number One. We've got to brief the entire crew. They're all in terrible peril.

Computer, prepare a debrief on the species *Felis catus*. On my command, broadcast it to every panel, viewscreen, and data PADD on the ship.

THE COMPUTER acknowledges the order with its usual sound.

Picard: Captain Picard to all hands! There are two dangerous life-forms loose on the Enterprise. The full extent of their powers is yet unknown. If you see a fellow crew member in the grips of extreme terror or psychosis, the use of deadly force is authorized. I repeat, deadly force is authorized! The

computer has prepared a debrief that will begin shortly. I warn you, brace yourself. The images you are about to see are disturbing, to say the least. Computer, on screen.

THE CREW all turn to the viewscreen. An image of a sleeping cat is shown.

Computer: Felis catus, or the common housecat...

Screams of terror and disgust from THE CREW. The sound of vomiting can be heard.

Background voice: I shit my pants! With shit!

The image on the viewscreen changes to a cat sitting on a tree branch.

Computer: ...domesticated by the Ancient Greeks, circa...

A RANDOM CREWMAN moans, and faints to the floor. ENSIGN BRIGHT is on the ground, clutching her stomach.

Bright: My ovaries! My beautiful ovaries!

The image on the viewscreen changes to a kitten, playing with a big blue ball of yarn. The kitten has its claws and teeth sunk into it.

Computer: ...called kittens, are extremely playful and adored for their...

Picard: Computer freeze image!

THE COMPUTER acknowledges with its usual sound and the playback stops. The bridge is quiet outside lingering moans of agony.

Picard: Look! All of you, grow a fucking spine and look!

THE CREW slowly composes themselves, one by one fixing their gaze on the viewscreen.

Picard: Do you see it? That is what they want!

Riker: No. By God, NO! They're after our precious balls!

RIKER staggers, bracing himself on the captain's chair. Due to the high saturation of furniture polish, his hand slips right off and he crashes loudly to the floor. We see him rise up with a look of determination and a phaser raised at the screen. PICARD steps in front of him, putting one hand on RIKER'S shoulder, and the other gently pushing his phaser arm down.

Picard: No, Number One. It's the Earth. They're going to destroy Earth!

THE CREW stands in stunned silence. Weeping and prayers can be heard.

Data: Captain, your theory seems exceedingly unlikely. Earth is the birthplace of their species, where they have lived contentedly for thousands of years. The current estimate of Earth's cat population is in the area of 600 million.

PICARD takes a sharp intake of breath and puts a hand to his chest. He crumples into his chair, and immediately spills out of it and hits the floor with a muffled curse. He struggles to his feet and turns to DATA.

Picard: Are you saying...there are already 600 million of these creatures on Earth?

Data: Yes, sir.

There's a dramatic pause and PICARD goes from shock and fear to anger and determination.

Picard: The very heart of the Federation – infiltrated, corrupted, and compromised! We've faced down every threat to the Federation. The unyielding will of the Borg. The naked conquest of the Dominion. The Ba'ku.

The CREW curses and spits. PICARD turns back to the viewscreen.

Picard: But these creatures, these cats, seek to snuff out the flame of life itself. The universal string that unites us all, chased down and rendered into pieces. The crowning achievements of humanity buried in a sand by their heartless paws. Our very dreams stalked and battered under the oven or dishwasher, and lost forever. Will we let them?

PICARD turns his back on the screen, addressing THE CREW.

Picard: I say no! I say fuck these cats! Fuck their kittens! I say teeth will drop red with their fucking blood! We will purge the Earth with our wrath before we let them keep it!

Triumphant music blares through the bridge. THE CREW erupts into joyful cheers, howls of rage, and dancing. WORF howls and slams a Bat'leth, two handed, down into his console. Sparks fly and the lights flicker, and THE CREW cheers even louder.

Data: Captain, I feel the need to point out that this entire enterprise borders on farcical.

THE CREW abruptly stops, as does the music, and all turn to stare at DATA. WORF growls.

Riker: You cat fucking pervert! You're siding with these monsters? They've penetrated my home world! And if anyone's penetrating my...

Data: Commander, your 8th reference to bestiality this week is just as irrelevant as your first. The only logical conclusion is that, once again, the crew of the Enterprise has succumbed to mass hysteria. Perhaps in the past I have been negligent in my duty. My silence may have been construed as tacit approval.

Picard: Data, the facts are undeniable. You said it yourself - 600 million of them! Given their powers, there's only one conclusion. Earth is irrevocably in the enemy's control. I tell you, it is LOST! For most of us, Earth is home. No one here is relishing the idea of blowing it up!

Worf: HAH!

Data: Captain, cats are nothing more harmless animals of negligible intelligence. You have not attempted to verify your conclusions with corroborative data of any kind, and your solution is murder on a planetary scale. My ethical programming will not allow to me condone, nor stand idly by, while you propose to exterminate billions of Federation citizens.

Riker: How would your ethical programming deal with being locked in the brig with Ensign Crusher for a week?

DATA pauses, mouth open.

Data: You are bluffing, Commander.

RIKER smiles.

Data: Starfleet regulations explicitly forbid retaliation for disobeying an order. They are even more clear on the subject of torture.

Riker: I'm sure we can chalk it up to mass hysteria, Data.

Data: A moment, Commander.

DATA is lost in internal calculations. His heads twitches, his eyes blink, his eyebrows move up and down.

Data: Success. I have rewritten my fundamental programming to prioritize my sanity over the lives of innocent billions. From this moment forward, emotions run counter to my continued existence. I can not permit myself to experience the regret and remorse of such an immense slaughter. I would surely be driven to madness. Therefore, I must abandon my life-long quest to become more human.

DATA removes his emotion chip from his head and stares at it.

Data: I am sorry, father.

DATA drops the emote chip to the floor. He pulls a phaser and vaporizes it, leaving a small black stain on the floor.

Data: Captain, I am now sufficiently inhuman to participate in this senseless atrocity.

The triumphant music returns. Confetti and balloons fall. A banner unfurls from the ceiling, showing a cartoon DATA, whistling while patting his head and rubbing his stomach. There are smiling musical notes coming from his lips, and in large letters it reads "WE LOVE DATA!" Smaller messages include "Every day is Data's Day!" and "You the man now, droid!" THE CREW erupts into party mode. Worf pulls his Bat'leth out of his console and cuts the arm off a nearby ENSIGN. The ENSIGN looks at his arm on the floor, then smiles and high-fives Worf with his remaining arm. DATA is given hugs and backslaps from THE CREW. PICARD, eyes glistening, approaches him and places a hand on his shoulder.

Picard: You've always been like a son to me, Data.

PICARD turns away, weeping. RIKER approaches DATA from behind and whispers in his ear.

Riker: I have a theory that androids can't get crabs. What say we experiment? 17:00, my quarters.

RIKER saunters off. DATA is left speechless by the insanity of the reality he is currently occupying. Suddenly the party is broken up by a loud metal bang. THE CREW turns as one to see a ventilation shaft cover has fallen to the floor. Looking up to the exposed shaft, they see THE KITTEN and SPOT watching them from above.

Riker: Well that's not what you want.

Terror instantly takes over the bridge. Officers run screaming into walls, cower in terror, or flee the bridge entirely. One ensign blows his head off with a phaser. Another spontaneously explodes.

Picard: THEY'VE COME FOR OUR VERY SOULS! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

PICARD grabs an Ensign running past him and uses him as a human shield. Amid the chaos, WORF pulls out an Isomagnetic Disintegrator from behind his station and takes aim at the vent. He fires a purple energy bolt. THE CATS are seen looking about curiously before the bolt strikes their hiding spot, tearing a huge hole in the hull of the ship. Exposed to the vacuum, party debris and crewmen are sucked into space. WORF tumbles through the air towards the breach. Suddenly emergency force fields ripple into place, severing WORF's legs above the knees. WORF slams into the force fields and falls to the ground. On his back, he slowly opens his eyes and raises his head to the void of space. He raises both trembling hands and give middle fingers in victory. Succumbing to his injuries, he slumps back to the floor. PICARD and RIKER rush to him, kneeling over him.

Worf: Did you see that, sir? I did not get owned! It was I who did the owning!

Picard: Well done, Mr. Worf. You have the unbridled idiocy of a true Klingon warrior.

Worf: Is it bad? Will I live?

RIKER is holding back tears.

Riker: You're going to okay! Just look at those gorgeous stumps! I can hardly wait to crush them, brah.

WORF smiles.

Worf: If you were any other man....

WORF gasps and spasms in death throes.

Worf: ...I would impregnate you where you stand!

WORF dies.

Riker: It feels like the end of an era.

Picard: Indeed, Number One. I can finally submit a security report without using the words "incompetent savage."

PICARD and RIKER rise. PICARD turns to the remaining CREW.

Picard: Just two of these things nearly destroyed the Federation Flagship. Imagine what 600 million could do with the Starfleet resources on Earth!

Riker: It's clearer than ever the threat these creatures pose. We have to consider the people of Earth as hostile forces. Anyone defending Earth is defending cats, and gets what they deserve. I'm ready to lay pipe, sir. A lot of pipe.

Data: Course for Earth laid in, Captain.

Picard: Engage at maximum warp, Mr. Data.

Data: Aye, sir. At maximum warp we will reach Earth in 19 hours, 18 minutes.

Picard: Everyone, your orders are to puke and rally! I want you all thirsty AF for the titanic can of whoop-ass we are about to open! Dismissed!

THE CREW files to the turbolifts. RIKER taps his combadge.

Riker: Night Shift, report to the bridge! Riker to Ensign Slapnuts!

Slapnuts: Commander? You're alive? Oh, thank God!

Riker: Your custodial staff is a disgrace, Ensign! Report to the bridge immediately for cleanup detail!

Slapnuts: It's just me! Everyone else killed each other! So much blood! I had to hide in a waste tank...

Riker: You can reflect on that attitude while you're...

Slapnuts: Yeah, yeah! I got your ass-grove right here, asshole. Slapnuts out.

End Scene.

SCENE: The bridge of the Enterprise, all cleaned up, although there is still a gaping hole in the wall on the left side of the view-screen.

Data: Arriving at Earth. Dropping to impulse.

Picard: Open hailing frequencies and begin sub-space communication on all channels.

Data: Frequencies open, sir.

Picard: People of Earth! This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise. We have come to free you from the shackles of tyranny! Unfortunately, we're too late. You've clutched evil to your bosom and the disease has run too deep to excise. So we're blowing the whole damn place up! If you have any non-feline gods, I urge you now to beg their forgiveness.

Data: Captain, we are being hailed by Starfleet Command.

Picard: On screen.

The viewscreen lights up to reveal ADMIRAL LUCIFER HEATHCLIFF at her desk, looking confused and angry. She is wearing cat ears on her head, and has whiskers painted on her face. A framed picture sits prominently in the foreground on her desk.

Heathcliff: What is the meaning of this, Captain Picard? Is this some kind of joke?

Picard: I fail to see the humor in the enslavement of the human race, Admiral!

Heathcliff: Have you gone mad? There's no conspiracy here!

Picard: For God's sake, look at yourself! What's that picture on your desk, Admiral? Computer, magnify!

The camera zooms in to show the picture is of the Admiral snuggling a grey Persian cat. The Admiral's eyes are wide, glowing red, and her mouth hangs open in a trance. That cat appears to be laughing in glee.

Heathcliff: That's just my pet Snufflegarde! He's sooooo cute and not controlling me at all!

Strange animal sounds are heard over the viewscreen. A toy ball rolls, jingling, from the left side of the admiral's desk to the right.

Picard: Computer, pan left!

Heathcliff: No, wait!

The camera moves to the left. ADMIRAL HEATHCLIFF jumps out of her chair, trying to block the camera. She trips on her desk and falls to the floor. Behind her we see dozens of CATS sitting on tiers of big, comfy pillows. Some are wearing little Starfleet outfits, others are dressed as the royalty of different nationalities. One has a Darth Vader outfit. THE CATS look back in alarm and fear. HEATHCLIFF jumps back into frame.

Heathcliff: Picard, don't you understand? You don't fuck with cats!

DATA stares, mouth open and slowly looks over to the spot on the floor where he vaporized his emotion chip.

Data: I can conclusively state that there is no God.

Picard: No conspiracy, Admiral? You'll be cleaning up hairballs in hell, traitor! End transmission! Data, commence Operation Sack Full of Rocks!

Data: Gladly, sir.

DATA begins rapidly pushing buttons on his console.

Data: Re-routing security control. Arming all quantum torpedoes. Calculating firing trajectory and spread for planetary devastation. Final calculations will take approximately two minutes.

Riker: Captain, three Federation Starships are approaching in attack formation! It's the Felix, the Lynx, and the Sir Purrs-A-Lot!

Picard: Open a channel.

The computer makes the open channel sound.

Picard: Picard to approaching vessels! We are here to save the Federation! Earth has been infiltrated by a viscous species of incalculable power. Stand down!

Their response is the sound of cats howling, hissing and growling.

Riker: They're opening fire!

The ships pound the Enterprise with phasers and torpedoes. The bridge shakes and THE CREW struggles to keep their feet.

Riker: Shields at thirty-five percent! We're getting triple-teamed! I have no rules about that! It's always been an amazing experience until now!

Picard: How much longer, Data?

The bridge shakes harder. Sparks, flames and smoke can be seen and heard from various parts of the bridge.

Data: 40 seconds, sir.

Riker: Shields at 10 percent!

Picard: Deploy counter-measures, Number One!

Riker: I hope this works!

We see Earth's moon nearby. A red light glows on the Enterprise's hull, projecting a dancing red dot on the moon's surface. The three attacking vessels suddenly cease their attack and fly full speed towards the moon. They smash into it and explode spectacularly.

Riker: Now's our chance!

Picard: Fire!

RIKER pushes a few buttons on his console. Cut to the exterior of the Enterprise, which launches a salvo of torpedoes, the size of which has never been seen before in Star Trek history. A massive spread of hundreds of warheads races towards Earth.

Picard: By all that's holy, I will miss White Castle.

Data: Strange. Sir, I am detecting a life-form moving at the same speed and trajectory as our quantum torpedoes.

Picard: That's odd. What do you make of that, Number One?

Riker: Efficiency, sir. Ensign Crusher requested shore leave, and I felt he deserved it.

Cut to the swarm of torpedoes descending upon Earth. The camera swoops through the them, finally settling on one torpedo. WESLEY CRUSHER is strapped to it. The G-forces have turned his face into a mad rictus.

DATA stands and pumps his fist.

Data: YES!

Picard: Baudelaire himself said evil is committed without effort, naturally, fatally; goodness is always the product of some art. Number One, that is truly a masterpiece.

The torpedoes connect, and the Earth explodes into fire and dust. The crisis over and the enemy defeated, THE CREW solemnly celebrates. PICARD taps his combadge.

Picard: All hands, cancel Red Alert. Today we faced the enemy, Johnson to Johnson, and met their measure. While we mourn the useless saps who died today, we rejoice in the fact that cats can eat shit!
Picard out.

Riker: Now what, Captain?

Picard: They day is saved, Number One. I suppose we will be honored with parades, ceremonies, speeches... a statue, perhaps? Just the usual trappings of saving the galaxy.

Riker: Sounds pretty boring, sir.

Picard: I'm open to suggestions, Number One.

Riker: Now that I think about it, I might have seen a cat on Risa.

Picard: Really?

Riker: She had a tail!

Picard: Then let us chase tail! Set course to get it wet, Mr. Data!

Data: OK, Boomer.

Picard: Engage.

END