

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

Qpid

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CAST

PICARD	Director
RIKER	Sir Guy’s Page
DATA	Non-speaking:
BEVERLY	various archeology
TROI	council members
GEORDI	computer voice
WORF	troop of men-at-arms
Q	executioner
VASH	castle guards
SIR GUY GISBOURNE	servants
Maid Marian’s Servant	members of the court
Stage Manager	

PRE SHOW

Fifteen minutes before showtime, Actors will be onstage as if it is backstage. Getting ready. Maybe some mirrors and tables. Some might be doing weird vocal or physical exercises. Actors will be free to ad lib what they want until show time. But don’t worry, just do what you need to do to be ready.

SHOW TIME

- STAGE M... Ten minutes, everyone.
- EVERYONE Thank you, Ten
- STAGE M... Hey, double check your props and make sure they are set and DON’T TOUCH PROPS THAT AREN’T YOURS!
- STAGE MANAGER *keeps doing pre-show checks. DIRECTOR enters speaks to STAGE MANAGER about whatever quietly*
- EVERYONE *Actors starting doing weird warm ups* Topeka Bodega
- STAGE M... Joanie isn’t here! We start in ten minutes.
- DIRECTOR Uh, did you call her?
- STAGE M... Oh right (phone)

DIRECTOR Get her here now! Okay, ready everyone? This is an important day! The Trek Players first show at the Eugene Comic Con! How are you guys doing?

ACTORS *(ad lib)* Okay. Nervous. Woo Hoo! Etc

DIRECTOR Don't be nervous. I've done a great job with this show and you all have done my work justice. I think you will find that I have more than adequately prepared you for our opening night.

Actors kind of look confused at each other... roll eyes etc... Joanie enters with HEDGEHOG and says something funny about sick hedgehog or something.

JOANIE Sorry I'm late everyone! My hedgehog was sick!

DIRECTOR Get into costume, Joanie! And uh... Stage Manager, do something with this hedgehog! (Hands hedgehog to Stage Manager who looks like "What the F do I do with, exits etc..)

DIRECTOR Okay, everyone Places!

ACTORS Thank you places

They ALL line up with backs to the audience, facing the black curtain. We hear the DIRECTORs voice.

DIRECTOR Hello audience! I am the DIRECTOR of Trek Players. We'd like to thank you for having us here. Tonight the actors will be performing my production of the classic Star Trek: The Next Generation episode of Qpid. You know, money doesn't grow on trees and we don't charge admission, so if you enjoy the show, please put whatever money you can give in our donations jar. We are totally run by your donations, volunteers, and my brilliance. Please like us on Facebook and check out Eugenetrektheatre.com and be sure to tell your friends and family about us. Now please welcome to the stage TREK PLAYERS!

THEME MUSIC Actors exit through curtains, but come back around out the sides to form the famous line and then saying "SPACE THE FINAL FRONTIER"

EVERYONE *(in unison)* SPACE: THE FINAL FRONTIER. THESE ARE THE VOYAGES OF THE STARSHIP ENTERPRISE ITS CONTINUING MISSION: TO EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS. TO SEEK OUT NEW LIFE AND NEW CIVILIZATIONS. TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE!

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

PICARD (V.O.) Captain's Log, stardate 44741.9. We have arrived at Tagus Three where the Enterprise is to serve as host of the Federation Archeology Council's annual symposium.

PICARD, intensely studying his monitor screen.

PICARD (V.O.) I look forward to giving tomorrow's keynote address with great anticipation.
The DOOR CHIME SOUNDS.

PICARD Come.

TROI I thought you'd want to know, Captain, the Council members have all been beamed aboard and assigned quarters.

PICARD Excellent.

TROI It really is quite late, Captain.

PICARD Tell me, Counselor, in regard to my lecture, which do you suppose would provide greater clarity? A chronological structure, or a division of each excavation's findings into various sociological, religious, and environmental sub-groupings?

TROI I thought you had already decided on a chronological structure.

PICARD Still, there is something to be said for a more scientific approach.

TROI Captain, may I make a suggestion?

PICARD By all means.

TROI Relax! You've written a brilliant speech.

PICARD It needs to be. Tomorrow I'll be addressing some of the greatest scientific minds in the Federation. Switzer, Klarc-Tarn-Droth, McFarland. Giants in the field of Archeology. Next to them I'm nothing but an enthusiastic amateur.

TROI I doubt they think of you as an amateur... not when it comes to the ruins of Tagus Three.

PICARD Well, I have done my homework... I've examined the findings of every archaeological expedition conducted on the planet's surface...

TROI It's unfortunate the Taguans no longer allow outsiders to visit the ruins.

PICARD Indeed. Especially since we still know so little about their origin... Hopefully, I've been able to construct some intriguing theories of my own.

TROI I'm sure the council members will agree that you have.

PICARD Your support is appreciated, Deanna.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

PICARD'S QUARTERS

The door OPENS. Picard ENTERS looking somewhat fatigued.

The first thing he notices -- is a Horga'hn sitting on his desk. Picard looks at it, curious... where the hell did this thing come from? Then...

VASH Bring back any memories?

Picard turns to see VASH stepping out of the shadows near the door. For a moment he's taken completely off-guard.

PICARD Vash? How did you get in here?

VASH I came in through the window.

Picard barely has the chance to regain his aplomb when she snakes an arm around him and they kiss. It's going to last awhile.

PICARD I had no idea you were a member of the Archaeology Council.

Vash only smiles.

PICARD You are a member? *(a beat)* Aren't you?

VASH *(smiling)* More or less.

PICARD Why have you come to Tagus Three?

VASH To see you, of course.

PICARD Is that the only reason?

VASH Isn't it enough?

She's moves closer to him. It's an intimate moment.

PICARD *(smiling)* I wish I could believe you?

VASH *(smiling right back)* I'd be disappointed if you did. *(a beat)* I really have missed you, Jean-Luc.

But before they can act on a mutual impulse the DOOR CHIMES. Picard waits until Vash steps away before answering.

PICARD Come.

BEVERLY I'm sorry I'm late... *(noticing Vash)* Oh, excuse me. I didn't know you had company.

PICARD That's quite all right, Doctor. Beverly Crusher allow me to introduce Vash. A friend of mine with the Archeology Council.

The two women exchange greetings.

BEVERLY *(to Vash)* I didn't mean to interrupt. The Captain and I often have evening tea.

VASH Yes, Jean-Luc has told me all about you.

BEVERLY Really? When was that?

VASH On Risa. Where we met.

BEVERLY I see. *(to Picard)* That must have been during your vacation last year.

PICARD So it was.

BEVERLY *(to Vash)* I'm surprised he never mentioned you.

VASH So am I.

VASH Are you busy, Doctor?

BEVERLY Not at the moment.

VASH I was wondering, I would love to see some more of this marvelous ship...

BEVERLY I'd be delighted to show it to you. If that's alright with you, Jean-Luc.

PICARD Of course.

But he doesn't seem thrilled at the prospect. As Vash passes him on the way out...

VASH *(sotto voce)* Don't worry, I promise to behave myself.

Picard does not look reassured.

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

TEN FORWARD

The lounge is only lightly populated at the moment. Riker is seated alone having a drink.

Beverly and Vash ENTER.

BEVERLY And this is Ten Forward, where the Council's welcoming reception is to be held this afternoon.

VASH I couldn't think of a better location.
Tell me, does Jean-Luc come here often?

BEVERLY No, not often.

VASH I didn't think so.

BEVERLY The Captain is a very private man.

VASH He certainly acted that way when we first met. *(smiling)* But I managed to loosen him up.

BEVERLY Would you like something to drink?

VASH Please.

Beverly walks over to the bar. Vash checks out the view from the window as Riker APPROACHES.

RIKER Eternity never looked so lovely.

VASH Excuse me?

RIKER I was referring to the view. Eternity never looked so lovely.

VASH You must be Commander Riker.

RIKER *(surprised)* I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage.

VASH I didn't mean to interrupt. I believe you were about to tell me that my eyes are as mysterious as the stars.

Riker is intrigued. How the hell did she know?

RIKER You're a Betazoid.

VASH Not at all. It's just that Jean-Luc does quite a good imitation of you.

RIKER He does?

Beverly comes back with the drinks.

BEVERLY I see you two have met.

RIKER Not exactly.

BEVERLY Vash is a member of the Archeology Council. And a friend of the Captain.

RIKER So I've gathered.

BEVERLY They met during his visit to Risa.

RIKER On Risa? *(amused)* That must have been a better vacation than he let on.

VASH You mean he never mentioned me to you either?

RIKER Believe me, if he had, I would have remembered.

VASH *(a bit frustrated)* You'd think he'd have told someone about me.

COMPUTE... Doctor Crusher, please report to Sickbay.

BEVERLY On my way. *(to Vash)* I'm afraid I won't be able to finish up our tour. Perhaps Commander Riker could fill in for me.

RIKER It would be my pleasure.

Beverly leaves. Riker and Vash head for the door.

VASH So you're the one who asked Jean-Luc to buy the Horga'han.

RIKER That was me.

VASH Tell me Commander, do you collect sexual fertility symbols?

RIKER I wouldn't call it a very large collection.

ACT ONE SCENE FOUR

BRIDGE

DATA and GEORDI at Science Station, WORF at Tactical. Riker and Vash EXIT the aft turbolift.

RIKER And that brings us to the Main Bridge, the Command center of the Enterprise, and the end of our tour.

He brings her over to the Science Station.

RIKER Vash, I'd like you to meet Commander La Forge and Commander Data...

An exchange of greetings. Riker gestures over to Worf who looks on with disapproval.

RIKER And this is Lieutenant Worf. *(noticing Worf's scowl)* Something wrong, Lieutenant?

WORF Sir, I was not informed that Council Members had been granted bridge clearance.

RIKER I think we can make an exception in this case, Mister Worf. Vash is the Captain's guest.

WORF *(finally)* Welcome aboard.

VASH Is this where Jean-Luc sits?

RIKER That's the big chair.

To everyone's surprise she sits down in it. It provides a definite sense of power.

VASH I can see where being a starship Captain does have its rewards.

PICARD I'm glad you approve.

All eyes turn to Picard who has just exited the Ready Room. Vash stands.

VASH Jean-Luc. Commander Riker was just showing me the bridge.

RIKER Doctor Crusher was called to Sickbay.

PICARD So, did you enjoy your tour?

VASH Very much.

PICARD Good.

Another awkward moment.

VASH I guess I'll head back to my room now and get ready for the reception.

PICARD By all means.

Well, I suppose I'll see you then.

VASH I look forward to it.

She turns and makes the long walk back up the ramp to the turbolift.

RIKER *(watching her go)* Fascinating woman.

DATA You find something humorous, Geordi?

GEORDI Didn't you notice how ill-at-ease the Captain seemed around Vash?

DATA Yes. However I see nothing amusing in his hostility toward her.

GEORDI That wasn't hostility, Data. *(off Data's look)* He likes her. *(a beat)* A lot.

Still smiling, Geordi turns back to the science monitor. A puzzled Data is left pondering the intricacies of human relationships.

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

TEN FORWARD

The reception. COUNCIL MEMBERS mingle with the crew. A rather informal time is being had by all. Vash has cornered TROI over by a buffet table.

VASH I don't understand, I thought being ship's counselor meant the Captain confided in you.

TROI He does. When he feels it's necessary.

VASH And he never spoke to you about me?

TROI Not that I can recall.

VASH Not even a hint?

TROI You must understand, the Captain is a very...

TROI & VA... *(together)* Private man.

VASH I know...

She spots Picard speaking with someone....

VASH Will you excuse me?

TROI Certainly.

Vash walks off and passes by Worf, Geordi, Beverly and Data.

WORF *(still watching Vash)* Nice legs. *(off Geordi's look)* For a human.

PICARD *(Picard talking to a member of the council)* I agree, the Vulcan excavations on Tagus Three were extensive. Unfortunately, they were confined to the northeastern part of the city.

Vash appears at his elbow.

VASH Jean-Luc, we need to talk.

PICARD *(to the council person)* Pardon me.

He and Vash move to a private spot.

PICARD The reception seems to be a success.

VASH Forget the reception for a moment. How come you've never mentioned me to your friends?

PICARD What would you have me tell them?

VASH Maybe that we met, for one thing. That we had an adventure together. Some fun...

PICARD I'm afraid that wasn't possible.

VASH Why not?

PICARD It would have been... inappropriate.

VASH I wasn't expecting you to go into any intimate details.

PICARD A Captain does not share his personal feelings with his crew.

VASH Is that a Starfleet regulation? Or did you make that one up yourself?

PICARD I'm sorry if you're upset.

VASH And I'm sorry if my being here embarrasses you.

And with that she turns and walks away.

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

BRIDGE

Picard walks past Riker

RIKER How was the reception?

PICARD *(brusque)* Splendid.

He EXITS into the Ready Room. Picard ENTERS and stops as he SEES -- Q seated at his desk dressed in a Starfleet uniform.

Q Jean-Luc! How wonderful to see you again. Well don't just stand there, say something.

Picard advances into the room.

PICARD Get out of my chair.

Q I was hoping for something more along the lines of "Welcome back, Q. It's a pleasure to see you again old friend."

PICARD We are not friends.

Q You wound me, mon Capitain.

There, perhaps now your manners will show some improvement.

PICARD What brings you here, Q? Have you been banished from the Continuum once again?

Q Hardly. They're still apologizing to me for the last time.

PICARD Then what is it you want?

Q Must I always have a reason to stop by. I was in the sector and... *(Picard doesn't buy it)* Alright. You force a confession from me. The truth is I have a debt to settle.

PICARD A debt?

Q To you, Picard. And it gnaws at me. It interferes with each day.

PICARD I have no idea what you're talking about...

Q Without your assistance at our last encounter, I never would have survived. I would have taken my own life but for you, Jean-Luc.

PICARD We all make mistakes.

Q Your good deed made possible my reinstatement into the continuum. And I resent owing you anything... so I'm here to pay up... what shall it be... tell me and I'll be gone...

PICARD Just be gone. That will suffice nicely.

Q No, it must be something... something... *(searching)* ...constructive. My new word for the day.

PICARD Some other time, all right? Right now I have several things to attend to.

Q Yes, your speech. I've read it. I found it dull and pedantic. Much like yourself. *(an idea)* I could help you with it.

PICARD No.

Q You've never actually been to the ruins in Tagus Three, have you?

PICARD They've been sealed off for over a century.

Q How can you write about what you haven't seen? *(brightening)* I'll take you there!

PICARD Impossible. That would mean breaking Taguan law.

Q Must you always be so ethical? *(thinking)* I suppose we could travel back in time. You could see what Tagus was like two billion years ago. They really knew how to have fun in those days.

PICARD I'm afraid my answer is still no. My lecture will have to stand on its own. Now, will you please leave my ship.

Q Then you refuse my help?

PICARD Completely.

A beat as Q broods. Then finally...

Q *(mildly)* You're simply impossible to find a gift for, Picard.

And he's gone.

PICARD *(to Conn)* Commander Riker, report to my Ready Room.

Riker ENTERS.

RIKER Yes, Captain?

PICARD I've just been paid a visit by Q.

RIKER Q? *(concerned)* Any idea what he's up to?

PICARD He wants to do something nice for me.

RIKER I'll alert the crew.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Picard EXITS the turbolift. He heads down the Corridor on the way to meet with one of the Council Officials. At the hall he hesitates, turns left instead of right.

Picard HALTS at a doorway. RINGS the bell.

VASH (V.O.) Who's there?

PICARD It's me.

VASH (V.O.) Who?

PICARD Jean-Luc.

The door slides open. Vash stands in the entrance.

VASH Yes.

PICARD May I come in?

VASH What for?

PICARD To talk.

VASH I'm listening.

PICARD If it's all the same to you I'd rather this discussion not take place in a public corridor.

He slips past her.

The first thing Picard notices are various digging tools piled in a corner. He looks over at Vash.

VASH I thought these were "private" quarters.

Picard picks up a PADD off the table.

PICARD And I thought I was the only reason you came to Tagus.

VASH I never fooled you for a second.

She moves closer to Picard.

VASH Still, you are the most important reason.

PICARD Am I?

Vash steps away.

VASH That's the trouble with being such a well known liar. Even when I tell the truth no one believes me.

Picard refuses to be swayed.

PICARD I'm afraid all this equipment will have to be confiscated.

VASH Is that necessary?

PICARD I could have you placed in the brig.

VASH Why don't you?

PICARD If the Taguans were to catch you down there...

VASH You gave me the same warning about Sarathong Five.

PICARD I remember.

VASH

Well, it didn't stop me from going there. I brought back some very impressive artifacts, too.

PICARD Which you no doubt sold for a nice profit.

VASH *(angry)* It's what I do!

PICARD Not while you're aboard my ship. I will not allow it.

VASH Let's get one thing straight, Picard. I can not change who I am for you or anyone else.

PICARD Nor can I change who I am.

VASH *(calmly)* Then we have nothing more to say to each other.

PICARD So it would seem.

Picard leaves. Vash sits. She's depressed and upset.

Q's head APPEARS from the bulkhead behind her. He's obviously overheard their discussion and found it fascinating.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

PICARD'S QUARTERS

Picard ENTERS, disgruntled. He goes into his bedroom, which is dark. As he enters, Q appears

Q Sleeping alone tonight, Picard?

PICARD I'm in no mood for your foolishness, Q.

Q I thought there was something different about you. You seemed tense, preoccupied. Somewhat... smaller. *(a beat)* At first I thought it was that horrible lecture of yours. But I was mistaken.

PICARD Whatever game you want to play will have to wait until tomorrow.

Q I had such hopes for you, Jean-Luc. I thought you were a bit more evolved than the rest of your species. But now I realize you're as weak as all the others. *(a beat)* Still, it pains me to see the great Picard brought down by a woman.

PICARD What woman?

Q Don't play coy with me Captain. I witnessed your little spat with Vash. Nor will I soon forget that look of misery on your face. The pain. The anguish. If I didn't know better I would have thought you were already married.

PICARD You really must be bored, Q. You're letting your imagination run away with you.

Q This human emotion of Love is a dangerous thing, Picard. You are obviously ill equipped to handle it. She's found a vulnerability in you... a vulnerability that I've wanted to find for years. If I had known this sooner, I would have arrived as a female. Mark my words, Jean-Luc, this is your Achilles heel..

PICARD Believe what you wish.

Q You deny you care for this woman?

Picard doesn't answer.

Q Believe me, Picard, I'd be doing you a big favor if I simply turned her into a Klabnian eel.

PICARD *(very seriously)* Stay away from her, Q.

Q I only want to help... my debt to you...

PICARD *(interrupting)* ... is hereby nullified. I don't want your help... your advice... your favors... or for that matter -- you. Can you understand that once and for all?

Q You would have me stand idly by while she leads you to your destruction?

PICARD Yes!

Q As you wish.

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

MEETING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

As Picard and Riker ENTER...

RIKER Knock 'em dead, Captain.

Picard nods and moves toward the podium; Riker toward the audience.

As he steps up to the podium. He's waited for this moment a long time.

PICARD Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Archeology Council. Welcome. It is the mystery of Tagus Three that brings us together today... a mystery that has invited more argument and deduction than the best Sherlock Holmes or Dixon Hill tale. Well, if you'll excuse the conceit, you're about to hear my own detective story.

Suddenly, a hunting cap, with feather, appears on Beverly's head. As Troi attempts to point this phenomenon out to Beverly, a similar cap appears on her own head. They stare at each other in disbelief.

PICARD (V.O.) For several years, I have been trying to unravel the secrets of Tagus Three. Needless to say, I have not succeeded. However, I have, I believe, turned up some new information, that if nothing else, raises a whole new set of mysteries that I hope we can discuss during our time together.

Riker reacts to the quarterstaff that appears in his hand; Geordi to the mandolin that appears in his.

PICARD (V.O.) There have been nine hundred and forty-seven known Archaeological excavations conducted on the planet's surface.

Data finds himself wearing a cowl... and holding a leg of lamb.

PICARD Out of that number some seventy-four are generally considered to have revealed findings of major importance.

WORF Astounded by the chaperone which has appeared on his shoulders.

PICARD The earliest took place some twenty-two thousand years ago.

who along with the rest of the theater audience is beginning to realize that something peculiar is going on.

PICARD The last was completed within the last four hundred years.

Suddenly he's dressed in a jerkin and cap of familiar Lincoln green. The audience REACTS. So does Picard. Then, as a yeoman's bow appears in his hand...

PICARD What the hell... !

He VANISHES.

FOREST - DAY

Picard, Riker, Geordi, Data, Worf, Beverly and Troi all APPEAR at the same time... all dressed in period costume. Beverly and Troi wear men's clothing. Beverly also carries a sword; Troi a longbow and arrows. Data is bald except for a soupbowl fringe plastered to his forehead. Riker wears a yellow jerkin and carries his quarterstaff. Worf is dressed like a dandy and Geordi still holds his madolin.

As they all react...

PICARD *(raging)* Q!

TROI Is this Tagus Three?

PICARD I doubt there are many oak trees on Tagus. No, my guess is this is supposed to be Earth. *(off reactions)* Sometime around the twelfth century. And this is England, Sherwood Forest to be precise. Or at least Q's re-creation of it.

RIKER That explains these costumes.

PICARD Exactly, Number One. *(a beat)* Or should I say, John Little.

Riker studies Picard to see if he's serious.

BEVERLY If he's Little John, that would make you...

PICARD I know. Robin Hood.

A beat as this sinks in.

WORF Sir, I protest. I am not a merry man.

DATA On the contrary, Lieutenant Worf, your clothing identifies you with the character of Will Scarlett. Just as Geordi's Mandolin suggests he is Alan-A-Dale.

RIKER And you, Mister Data, bear a striking resemblance to one Friar Tuck.

WORF I will not play the fool for Q's amusement.

He takes off his cap, looks at it in disgust, and slams it on the ground.

PICARD You're quite right, Worf. *(loudly)* Do you hear that Q? You may as well return us to our ship immediately.

They react to a horse's shrill whinny and turn to see...

SIR GUY OF GISBOURNE enters Mounted on a sleek charger, sword drawn.

SIR GUY I have you at last, Robin Hood.

As he charges at Picard...

Worf draws his own sword to defend his Captain...

Sir Guy rides past Worf, cutting him across the shoulder with his sword. Worf is ready to fight on, but... Suddenly an arrow slams into a tree next to Picard...

Men at arts Coming over a nearby hill. Longbows at the ready.

Three more arrows strike trees around them. Picard sees there's only one hope to escape.

PICARD Quick. Into the forest.

WORF prepares to cover their retreat. Hanging back as the others disappear into the trees.

PICARD Mister Worf. That's an order.

Worf follows Picard into the forest.

A furious Sir Guy turns to his men, who search the underbrush.

SIR GUY Enough, you fools. We'll never find them in the greenwood.

ACT THREE SCENE ONE

FOREST - A GLADE - DAY

Picard and his crew are resting. He approaches Worf who is being tended to by Beverly (sans tricorder.)

BEVERLY *(applying a makeshift bandage)* I've managed to stop the bleeding.

Q appears on horseback. He's garbed in the cloak and livery of the High Sheriff of Nottingham. An angry Picard approaches Q.

PICARD It's about time you showed up, Q.

Q I'd prefer it if you addressed me as His Honor the High Sheriff of Nottingham.

PICARD We will not share in this pointless fantasy of yours.

Q dismounts.

Q Fine. Wait here and do nothing. By mid-day tomorrow, you'll all be safely back aboard your ship. But you will have to accept the consequences of your inaction.

PICARD What consequences?

Q What's the one thing Robin Hood is famous for?

A beat. Nobody answers. Then...

GEORDI Robbing from the rich to give to the poor?

Q Besides that.

DATA Are you referring to his rescue of Maid Marian from Nottingham Castle?

Q Right you are, Data.

Q looks over at Picard with glee.

Q And it just so happens that Sir Guy of Gisbourne has decreed that Marian's head comes off tomorrow at noon.

PICARD *(grimly)* Vash.

Q smiles. He's enjoying himself thoroughly.

Q The choice is yours my dear, Robin. You can either take your ease here within the sylvan glade or risk your life to save a woman you care nothing about.

PICARD

My feelings toward Vash are irrelevant. I'd attempt to save any innocent life, as you well know.

Q But what of your merry men? Are you willing to put them in jeopardy as well? Is Vash's life worth losing hers or his or even his... ? *(the last being Worf)* Though I admit he would make a perfect throw rug at Nottingham Castle.

PICARD Q, I ask you to end this now, before anyone else gets hurt.

Q swings up onto the horse.

Q Impossible. You see, I've given this fantasy as you call it, a life of its own. I don't know how things will turn out anymore than you do. *(a beat)* But of one thing I am certain. If you dare set foot in Nottingham Castle, blood will be spilled.

He, and the horse vanish.

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

MAID MARIAN'S CHAMBERS - DAY

A small, stark room in the tower; minimal furniture to include a wooden bench. Vash, dressed in Marian's virginal white, paces the floor. She's watched by her Servant.

SERVANT You'll wear yourself out with all that pacing, M'lady.

VASH I told you to stop calling me that. My name's Vash.

SERVANT My poor lamb, it's a brain sickness you've got for sure. Can't I get you something to ease your suffering?

VASH I could use a drink.

SERVANT It wasn't spirits I was thinking of M'lady.

She picks up a wooden box.

SERVANT I have here some nice fresh leeches to drain the fever.

Vash looks into the box, makes a disgusted look and sound, and bats the box out of her hands.)

VASH Out.

SERVANT *(She picks up the box)* But, M'lady. Those are the best leeches in the land! *(She seems to have forgotten her line)* They cost at least... Twenty dollars.

STAGE M... *(Cues)* Shillings.

SERVANT Yes. Twenty shillings.

VASH Get out.

The servant rushes to the door, but before she can get there it opens and Sir Guy ENTERS.

SERVANT Oh, her mind's in an awful turmoil, Sir Guy. *(She holds the box at Sir Guy, who looks pissed and promptly bats the box out of her hands, and she picks it up)*

Sir Guy stares at Vash with undisguised desire.

VASH Who the hell are you?

SERVANT M'Lady, everyone in Nottingham knows, Sir Guy of Gisbourne.

VASH Sir Guy of what?

Her Servant rolls her eyes towards heaven, and shaking her head hurries out of the room.

Sir Guy closes the door behind her.

SIR GUY Do not mock me, Lady Marian. I'm prepared to offer you one final chance to change your mind.

He grabs hold of her.

SIR GUY Will you marry me?

Vash pulls away and slaps him across the face.

SIR GUY (coldly) I see. Then the execution will proceed as scheduled.

Sir Guy turns to leave.

VASH What execution?

SIR GUY (turning back) I warn you Marian, this pathetic attempt at feigning madness will not save your life.

VASH (shocked) You mean I'm the one getting executed?

Though Vash is at a loss to explain how she came to be in this current predicament, a lifetime of adventure has honed her survival instincts to a razor's edge.

VASH Sir Guy, wait? Can't we talk this over? (a beat) I admit, I haven't been myself lately. (flashing her best smile) Perhaps we've both been acting a bit hasty.

She sits down on the bench. Pats the space next to her.

VASH Please.

Sir Guy smiles. Delighted.

ACT THREE SCENE THREE

SHERWOOD FOREST DAY

We hear bad mandolin playing in the background as crew practices arrows, fighting with swords etcetera. We HEAR the THWACK of impact.

Data enters with an arrow in his chest.

Troi hurries over.

TROI Data, are you alright?

A beat, as Data checks his systems.

DATA The arrow impacted just above my sixth intercostal support, penetrating my secondary subprocessor.

Data moves his arm up and down and in and out.

DATA (continuing) Fortunately, none of my biofunctions seem impaired.

He exits.

Beverly is checking Worf's wound in the background as Geordi sits on a log strumming the mandolin... it sounds like fingernails on a blackboard.

Worf gets up, crosses to Geordi, and takes the mandolin out of his hands. He walks over, and smashes it against a tree. Hands the neck back to Geordi.

WORF Sorry.

Hedgehog crosses stage, Stage manager enters and takes it offstage.

A relieved grin from Riker as he watches Picard buckle on his sword.

RIKER It's about time we got out of here, sir.

PICARD Not we Commander. You and the others are to wait here until I return.

RIKER You're not planning to go after her alone, are you?

The others gather around.

PICARD This is not a mission. It's personal, between Q and myself. I don't want any of you involved.

RIKER But Captain...

PICARD You have your orders, Commander. I expect you to follow them.

With a final glance at his crew, Picard heads off towards Nottingham.

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

COURTYARD INSIDE WALLS OF CASTLE - NIGHT

Vash and Sir Guy, looking surprisingly chummy as they approach from another part of the courtyard. She carries a bouquet of fresh-picked flowers. Sir Guy holds up a pomegranate. Vash smiles and demurely nibbles it. Marian's nurse follows with a the box of leeches.

A suspicious Q approaches them.

Q Such benevolence, Sir Guy, allowing the condemned prisoner fresh air.

SIR GUY You're mistaken, Sheriff. Maid Marian has consented to be my wife.

SERVANT Oh, Sherriff, my lady's come back to her senses and decided to marry.... *(she seems to have forgotten her line.)*

STAGE M... *(Cues) Sir Guy of Gisborne.*

SERVANT Sir Guy of Gisborne. But I've kept the leeches just in case she falls ill again. *(she shoves them in Q's face and he bats the box out of her hands, she picks up the box, looking defeated)*

Q looks at Vash in disbelief.

Q But that's impossible?

Vash motions to a servant who approaches with a tray and two goblets of wine.

VASH *(innocently)* Not at all. Though I admit a maiden seldom has the opportunity to win herself such a noble husband.

She takes a goblet from the tray and hands it to Sir Guy...

SIR GUY A toast to the most beautiful bride-to-be in all of England.

He goes to drink.

Q Hold there, Sir Guy.

He knocks the goblet to the ground.

SIR GUY Have you taken leave of your senses?

Q It could be poisoned. Some foul scheme of Robin Hood. She's in league with him still, I'll warrant.

VASH Robin Hood?

A beat as Vash absorbs this rather bizarre accusation. She has no choice but to bluff her way through it.

VASH Oh, Robin Hood... that was over long ago.

Q Why, all of Nottingham knows you're in love with him.

VASH That's a lie. *(to Sir Guy)* He... bewitched me. Put me under some evil spell.

Sir Guy gives her hand an encouraging pat.

SIR GUY Just as I suspected. *(to Q)* You can add sorcery to the list of charges against that rogue.

Q But Sir Guy, if anyone has been bewitched it's you.

Sir Guy stands. His hand is placed firmly on the hilt of his sword.

SIR GUY Silence. Any further impudence and it'll be your head on the chopping block. *(a beat)* Guards, escort the Lady Marian to her chamber.

VASH *(standing)* But I'd much rather stay with you.

SIR GUY Of course you would, my child. But I have important business to discuss with the Sheriff. *(a beat; then dripping with implication)* And you must prepare for your wedding.

VASH I count the hours.

She kisses him. She allows herself to be led away, but not before her eyes flash him the promise of future delights.

SIR GUY Lovely creature.

Q *(with grudging admiration)* She is intriguing.

Q is determined not to allow his well-laid scheme go astray.

Q Sir Guy, perhaps it would be wise to keep this wedding a secret for now.

SIR GUY What are you babbling about?

Q You still hope to capture Robin Hood, don't you?

SIR GUY I live for the moment.

Q *(thinking of Picard)* Well, if he were to hear that Marian's life was no longer in danger, there would be no need for him to come to Nottingham to rescue her.

Sir Guy slaps Q on the back.

SIR GUY By heavens, you're right. No word of my wedding shall leave these walls. What better way to celebrate a marriage than with an execution.

Sir Guy and Q share a chuckle, then go their separate ways.

Q *(musing)* This could be fun.

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

MAID MARIAN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Vash paces around the room. Suddenly she stops.

Listening to what could be a faint rustling of vines, is coming from outside her open window. She moves towards the embrasure, when SUDDENLY a hand APPEARS on the ledge.

With a final GRUNT, Picard lifts himself through the window. Vash throws herself at him.

VASH Jean-Luc. Am I glad to see you.

She throws herself into his arms, and kisses him.

VASH You would not believe what I've been through. One minute I'm on the Enterprise... the next thing I know I'm here in Nottingham. First, they're going to chop my head off... and now I'm supposed to marry someone named Sir Guy... and everyone insists on calling me Marian...

PICARD Yes, I know.

VASH You do? But how...

For the first time she notices his outfit.

VASH You're Robin Hood?

PICARD My staff and I were brought here by an old adversary of mine named Q. I'll tell you the rest once we're safe.

He leads her towards the window.

PICARD Come, we don't have much time.

VASH Are the others outside?

PICARD They're waiting for us back in Sherwood.

That brings Vash to a quick stop.

VASH You mean you came alone?

PICARD Yes, now let's...

VASH What kind of plan is that?

PICARD An excellent one if you'd only hurry up.

But Vash refuses to budge.

VASH You do realize our lives are at stake here.

PICARD Only too well.

VASH And this is the best strategy you could come up with? One man against an entire castle.

PICARD I suppose you know of a better one.

VASH How about this? You go. I'll stay here.

She walks away from the window.

PICARD And do what?

VASH Marry Sir Guy if I have to.

PICARD *(ironic)* That is brilliant.

VASH If there's a way to escape, I'll find it, eventually. With my head still attached.

PICARD You don't really expect me to leave you here?

He reaches for her. She pulls away.

VASH I can take care of myself.

PICARD Must you be so stubborn?

Suddenly the door is flying OPEN and Sir Guy enters backed by a retinue of SOLDIERS.

SIR GUY There'll be no escape for you this time, Robin Hood.

PICARD *(to Vash)* Behind me.

He steps in front of her and reaches for his sword. But Vash is quicker. She pulls the blade out of his scabbard and points it at his chest.

VASH You should have left while you had the chance.

Sir Guy advances on them, smiling.

SIR GUY Well done, my dear.

VASH *(sweetly)* Consider it my wedding present to you.

The Guards lead Picard away.

Picard and the Guards come down the stairs. He barely glances at a beaming Q as he's hurried away. Sir Guy follows behind.

Q Congratulations, Gisbourne. I see you've snared the jackal.

SIR GUY It's Marian who deserves the credit. Took him with his own sword.

On Q's astonished REACTION...

ACT FOUR SCENE THREE

MAID MARIAN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Vash is seated at a table, writing feverishly. Her SERVANT ENTERS and scuttles across the room to her. She holds the box of leeches.

SERVANT You sent for me, M'Lady?

VASH You must take this letter to Robin's men. *(She bats the box out of Servant's hand and puts the letter into them.)*

SERVANT You want me to go to Sherwood Forest? At this time of night?

VASH You'll leave immediately.

SERVANT *(glancing out the window)* But it's dark. I'll get lost. Besides, it's not safe. What with all them hedge robbers and worse lurking about.

VASH Please, this is urgent.

SERVANT You ask me, you'd be better off staying with Sir Guy. He's got a *(she seems to forget her line. Stage manager appears to cue her, but then she remembers!)* future. Why you'll be living in London before you know it.

VASH But you must go. Otherwise, they're going to kill him.

The door SWINGS open. Servant leaps up dropping the letter on the table as Q ENTERS. Servant leaves the room)

VASH How dare you come barging in here this way!

Q I come to offer apologies for my harsh words earlier. I had no idea you were so ruthless. The cold blooded way you betrayed Robin was most impressive.

Q is now standing right by the table. Vash forces herself not to glance down at the letter.

VASH That's most gracious of you.

Q I admit I was surprised... *(a beat)* Though perhaps not as surprised as Jean-Luc.
Now it's Vash's turn to be surprised.

VASH You're Q.

Q *(bowing)* And you are a very interesting woman.
He notices the letter.

Q What's this?

She tries to snatch it away.

VASH Give me that.

But it's too late.

Q A letter to Riker? *(reading)* Quick... Come to Castle... Must save Captain...
(cheerfully) Why this is wonderful. Such marvelous duplicity. You certainly fooled Sir Guy. And me as well. *(a shrewd glance at Vash)* I do believe you're worth further study.

VASH *(turning on the charm)* Am I?

Q Unfortunately, we won't have the time. *(shouting)* Guards!

They enter.

Q Take this traitor away. *(to Vash)* It appears there's going to be a double execution.

Vash is marched from the room.

And as Q gloats over this latest turn of events:

ACT FIVE SCENE ONE

COURTYARD - THE NEXT DAY

A CROWD has gathered to SEE the show. Sir Guy and Q sit together at a dais at one end of the courtyard.

We HEAR VOICES coming down off-camera, drawing close.

PICARD (V.O.) My fault?

VASH (V.O.) Yes, your fault.

PICARD (V.O.) We'd have been safe in Sherwood if you hadn't grabbed my sword.

Picard and Vash, both wearing shackles, come into VIEW as they walk toward CAMERA...

VASH I grabbed it to prevent you from being killed.

PICARD You should have never interfered.

VASH You were the one interfering.

PICARD I was trying to rescue you.

VASH Next time don't bother.

PICARD I won't.

They come to a halt in front of the executioners block. Q steps forward to meet them.

Q Don't you two ever stop arguing?

No response.

Q Tell me Picard, as you stand here facing the termination of your insect existence, do you see what has led you to this end? *(beat, no reply)* Was she worth it?

PICARD Can we just get this over with.

VASH *(hurt)* Are you implying I'm not worth it?

But Picard keeps his eyes fixed on Q.

PICARD Your game was for my benefit, Q. She is innocent in all this.

Q She is many things, none of them innocent.

PICARD Let her go.

VASH Jean-Luc, you do care.

Q A gallant gesture Picard. But a futile one. *(a beat)* Farewell. I hope you'll both be happy together.

He moves aside as Sir Guy rises to his feet.

SIR GUY *(to Picard & Vash)* You have been found guilty of outlawry and high treason. Do you have anything to say before sentencing is carried out?

Impassive stares from the prisoners.

SIR GUY Ready them for the block.

The Guards remove the chains. Vash and Picard are kneeling at the block.

A group of hooded monks have entered the courtyard. Beneath the hoods are Riker, Worf, Geordi, Data, Beverly and Troi

taking in the scene in front of them. Worf reaches for the sword beneath his robe. Geordi lays a restraining hand on Worf's arm.

GEORDI Too many of them. We'd never get to the Captain...

RIKER Data, we need a diversion. Now.

Data opens his left arm, revealing the circuitry and blinking lights within. He pulls out three small components and fastens them together.

DATA *(to Riker)* Please stand back, Commander. Microfusion cells can be somewhat dangerous under high temperatures...

Riker stands back. Data tosses the components into the Tinker's fire. Tinker's fire is played by the stage manager with red ribbons. Stage manager flails red ribbons wildly and says "KABOOM", everyone looks over and is distracted while the crew goes in.

Amidst the confusion that follows, Picard leaps to his feet and rams his elbow into the executioner's stomach, knocking him to the ground. Picard then grabs hold of one of his guards, and pulls his sword free of its scabbard

Riker, Worf, Geordi, Troi, Beverly and Data (who has closed the panel on his arm) throw off their monk's robes.

VOICES It's the outlaws. Robin's band.

Sir Guy unsheathes his sword.

SIR GUY Guards. Take Marian to the tower.

Vash whirls and punches one of her captors but two others drag her up the stairs.

Picard SEES Vash being taken away and tries to follow. A guard tries to block him and is cut down.

As our crew beats back the attacking soldiers.

Picard comes face to face with Sir Guy.

SIR GUY I'll have you know I'm the greatest swordsman in all of Nottingham.

A quick flurry of cuts and parries as they test each others skill.

PICARD That's very impressive.

They engage again.

PICARD But there's something you should know.

A furious series of strikes ending with their swords crossed at the hilt, their faces inches apart.

SIR GUY And what would that be?

PICARD I'm not from Nottingham.

He pushes Sir Guy away.

Gradually Picard forces Sir Guy up the stairs leading to Marian's room. Sir Guy, panic building, takes a vicious cut at Picard's head. Picard ducks, thrusts upward, and stabs Sir Guy through the body.

Sir Guy tumbles off the staircase. Picard exits

ACT FIVE SCENE TWO

Vash, listens to the SOUNDS of battle.

Suddenly, the door SWINGS and Picard races in.

VASH Jean-Luc.

She runs into his arms. Picard is fed up with all this, tosses the sword to the floor.

PICARD *(shouting)* It's over, Q. Now get us out of here.

Q APPEARS in the room.

Q *(applauding)* My compliments, Captain. I doubt Robin Hood himself could have done better.

PICARD If any of my people are hurt...

Q Sadly, they're all fine... but the point is they could have been killed, and you might have been too... all for the "Love Of A Maid." My debt to you is paid, Picard, if you

have learned how weak and vulnerable you really are... if you can finally see how "Love" brought out the worst in you...

VASH Nonsense. You're absolutely wrong. It brought out the best in him. *(to him, intimately)* His nobility, courage, self-sacrifice. His tenderness.

Q *(to Vash)* You're good. Very good.

PICARD *(end of his patience)* Enough of this.

Q Indeed.

He snaps his finger and Picard DISAPPEARS.

ACT FIVE SCENE THREE

MEETING ROOM

The room is empty. Picard, in uniform, suddenly APPEARS at the podium. Riker and the others APPEAR back in the audience, exactly where they were sitting before. All back in their Starfleet uniforms. They look around in confusion.

RIKER Everybody here?

TROI Where's Vash?

Picard scans the room. No sign of her.

PICARD Computer, locate Council Member Vash.

COMPUTE... Council Member Vash is not aboard the Enterprise.

Off his look of concern...

ALL EXIT AS PICARD ENTERS READY ROOM

ACT FIVE SCENE FOUR

READY ROOM

VASH Vash MATERIALIZES.

Hello, Jean-Luc.

PICARD *(smiling)* Well, this is a relief. I was afraid that Q...

VASH There were a few things he wanted to discuss with me.

PICARD I'm surprised he wasn't too busy gloating over his victory.

VASH *(beat)* He was right about one thing, Jean-Luc. As ridiculous as it was, his game did prove how much you care.

PICARD I may not share my feelings with my crew, but I do have them.

A warm moment passes between them.

VASH I'm going to miss you, Picard.

PICARD I wouldn't be surprised if our paths cross again.

VASH I'll see to it.

They kiss.

PICARD So, where are you off to now?

VASH I haven't made up my mind. Remind you of someone you know?

PICARD *(amused in spite of himself)* As a matter of fact... yes.

Q *(Materializes and speaks to Vash)* We are going to have fun. I'll take you places no human could ever hope to see.

VASH *(to Picard)* Who can resist an offer like that?

Picard sees there's no way to change her mind. He advances on Q.

PICARD As payment in full for your debt to me, you will guarantee her safety...

Q She will not be harmed, Jean-Luc. I promise you that.

Picard looks over at Vash. A silent farewell.

Q Well, aren't you going to kiss her good-bye?

Picard and Vash stare at him until he gets the hint.

Q Oh, all right.

He VANISHES.

Vash smiles at Picard.

VASH Well aren't you?

A final kiss. Then Vash steps back.

VASH Goodbye, Jean-Luc.

She VANISHES

Jean Luc takes a moment.

End of Show.