

= Conspiracy (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Conspiracy " is the 25th episode of the syndicated American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , originally aired on May 9 , 1988 , in the United States . The premise was conceived by the show 's creator Gene Roddenberry in a single sentence overview titled " The Assassins " , being expanded into a thirty page story by Robert Sabaroff . From this , the teleplay was produced by Tracy Tormé and the episode directed by Cliff Bole .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Starfleet starship USS Enterprise @-@ D. Following a meeting with a fellow Captain , the strange behavior of high @-@ ranking officers leads Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) and the crew of the Enterprise to uncover a conspiracy of senior Starfleet officers possessed by parasitical aliens who are preparing to invade the United Federation of Planets .

Numerous make @-@ up effects were created by make @-@ up supervisor Michael Westmore , including an exploding head using raw meat . There were concerns by producers that some of the effects were too graphic , but after a viewing by a staff member 's son , they decided to broadcast it uncut . The episode has subsequently been included in some best episode lists of the series , and won one of three Primetime Emmy Awards for The Next Generation 's first season . Controversial when originally broadcast , it was initially banned from broadcast in the United Kingdom , and required a warning before airing in Canada .

= = Plot = =

While the Enterprise is en route to Pacifica on a scientific mission , Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) receives a highly confidential message from an old friend , Captain Walker Keel (Jonathan Farwell) of the USS Horatio . Keel refuses to discuss his concerns , even though the frequency he is using is supposed to be a secure channel , and insists on a face @-@ to @-@ face meeting . Once they arrive at Dytallix B for this secret meeting , the crew discover the Horatio and two other Federation ships already present . Picard beams alone to the surface and is met by Captain Keel and the other captains . Keel reports strange orders from Starfleet headquarters and what he implies are suspicious deaths of Starfleet officers , and expresses concern of a conspiracy . Picard refuses to accept this without proof , but Keel warns him to remain wary . When the captain returns to the Enterprise , he is challenged by Counselor Troi (Marina Sirtis) about keeping his contact with Keel secret . Picard is skeptical about the conspiracy , but says that he trusts his old friend completely . The Enterprise resumes its previous journey . Picard has Commander Data (Brent Spiner) review all orders issued by Starfleet Command in the past six months . While the ship is still on its way to Pacifica , a disturbance is detected in nearby space . Upon investigating this , the Enterprise discovers a mass of debris that surely must be the shattered remains of the Horatio . Data completes his study and finds several strange orders from the senior levels of Starfleet . Picard informs his senior staff of the conspiracy theory , and orders the Enterprise to Earth .

As it approaches Earth , the Enterprise receives no response from Starfleet Command . Eventually , a transmission is received from a trio of Starfleet admirals : Savar (Henry Darrow) , Arron (Ray Reinhardt) and Admiral Quinn (Ward Costello) , who recently made an inspection of the Enterprise (in " Coming Of Age ") . They are surprised by the Enterprise 's presence , but invite Captain Picard and Commander Riker (Jonathan Frakes) to dinner . Quinn requests to beam aboard the Enterprise for a tour . Captain Picard recalls being warned by Quinn about some kind of threat to Starfleet when he was last aboard . Upon the admiral 's arrival , Picard discusses matters with him and comes to believe that he is an impostor , or under some sort of alien influence . After warning Riker of his concerns and asking him to watch Quinn , the captain beams down to Starfleet headquarters to attend the dinner . On arrival , Picard is greeted by the other two Admirals who are accompanied by Quinn 's assistant , Lt. Commander Remmick (Robert Schenkkan) . Meanwhile , Riker visits Quinn 's quarters on the Enterprise and questions him about what he has in the small box he brought with him . Quinn tells Riker of a superior life form within the box . Riker attempts to leave but Quinn throws Riker across the room . A security team arrives to subdue Quinn , who is

able to withstand a great amount of phaser @-@ fire before he collapses . The ship 's chief medical officer , Dr. Crusher (Gates McFadden) , finds a small protrusion on the back of his neck . She discovers that a bug @-@ like parasite has latched itself onto Quinn 's brain and is controlling him . Dr. Crusher warns Picard of this incident when he contacts the ship in private . He is advised that the infected person can only be stopped by a phaser set to ' kill ' : the captain points out that he is unarmed . He then has no choice but to go in to dinner with his three superiors .

A bowl of living larvae is served at the meal , to Picard 's disgust . He attempts to leave , only to find Riker blocking his way . The commander appears to be controlled by the parasite Quinn brought to the Enterprise . When the others see a prosthetic protrusion on the back of Riker 's neck , he is accepted as one of them and allowed to dine . They reveal that the parasites are seeking to take over Starfleet , using humanoids as hosts . When he is about to put a handful of the larvae in his mouth , Riker suddenly produces a phaser and fires on one of the Admirals . Picard picks up a fallen weapon and the two Enterprise officers subdue the infected , causing parasites to leave the hosts and flee . One of the parasites scurries under a closed door and Picard and Riker follow it . They find Remmick ingesting the parasite to join several others inside him . Picard and Riker fire upon Remmick , destroying his body but freeing a giant parasite ; the two continue to fire until it is destroyed .

Later , Dr. Crusher reports that the other parasites , including the one in Quinn , have shriveled up as they are unable to survive without the creature that was inside Remmick . As they help to settle matters with Starfleet headquarters , they find that before Remmick was killed , he had sent a signal to a distant quadrant of the galaxy . The signal is thought to be a homing beacon .

= = Production = =

Gene Roddenberry originated the idea for the episode in a single @-@ sentence proposal entitled " The Assassins " . Robert Sabaroff expanded this idea to thirty pages , but his version was seen as too expensive . Tracy Tormé was then given the job of rewriting it , but some producers thought the new version was too dark until Roddenberry saw it and endorsed the new version . In one of the original versions , it was a faction within Starfleet who were conspirators rather than alien parasites , but Roddenberry did not like showing Starfleet itself in such a dark manner . The premise was based on the Iran ? Contra affair .

The director of the episode , Cliff Bole , was a school friend of makeup supervisor Michael Westmore . The scene with Remmick at the end of the episode was added in post @-@ production , as it was originally scripted to have Riker and Picard come face to face with a full @-@ sized mother creature . The part where the parasite enters Remmick 's throat reportedly took many takes because the bulging effect was made by Westmore blowing into air bladders under a false neck , and Bole kept trying to make Westmore hyperventilate from the exertion . The parasites themselves were created by Makeup & Effects Laboratories from a design by Rick Sternbach . A mold of Paul Newman 's face was filled with raw meat and then blown up to create the effect used when Picard and Riker fire on Remmick , but both Rick Berman and Peter Lauritson were concerned that it was too graphic . Dan Curry invited his six @-@ year @-@ old son to watch the episode in order to test how children would react to it ; the boy reportedly liked it so much that he suggested the creation of a Remmick action figure whose head would blow up by pressing a button . This resulted in Berman deciding to air the episode uncut with the full sequence included .

Several props and effects seen in the episode were reproduced from the Star Trek movies , including the shots of Earth and Spacedock One and the painting used of Starfleet Command . The doors to the room where dinner is served were later reused from season 2 onwards on the set for Ten @-@ Forward . The episode also features two first appearances ; the Ambassador class starship was mentioned for the first time (the Horatio was a member of this class , as was the Enterprise @-@ C) and it also marks the first time that a Bolian had been seen on Star Trek , the species having been named after the episode 's director . Although the parasites never appeared again on screen in any Star Trek series , they reappear in the Deep Space Nine relaunch novels , where they are revealed to be mutated Trill symbiotes .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" Conspiracy " aired in broadcast syndication within the United States during the week commencing May 13 , 1988 . It received Nielsen ratings of 9 @. @ 4 , reflecting the percentage of all households watching the episode during its timeslot . This was a decrease of 0 @. @ 3 ratings points from the previous episode , " We 'll Always Have Paris " and was less than the 10 @. @ 2 rating received by the following episode , " The Neutral Zone " . Due to the nature of the content , a warning was aired before " Conspiracy " was screened in Canada . It was initially banned by the BBC in the United Kingdom , but was later aired on BBC Two in an edited form . The episode was nominated alongside " Coming of Age " for Best Makeup at the 40th Primetime Emmy Awards , winning the award , one of three Emmys won by the show that year .

Several reviewers re @-@ watched Star Trek : The Next Generation after the end of the series . Keith DeCandido for Tor.com described the episode as " a nasty episode that doesn 't quite cohere into the level of nasty it could " , but that the series " doesn 't do horror / action all that often , and it serves as a good change of pace if nothing else " . He gave " Conspiracy " a score of four out of ten . Zack Handlen , who reviewed the episode for the A.V. Club , thought that while " Conspiracy " was a " hard episode to forget " , it was not quite as good as he remembered and did not quite " fit " with the rest of the season . He thought that certain parts of the plot were " idiotic " , and the Admirals reminded him of a " Bond villain convention " . He gave the episode an overall grade of B , writing , " fingers crossed that next time we encounter a danger this sinister , the writers know how to handle it " .

" Conspiracy " was included as an honorable mention in a list of the best episodes of Star Trek : The Next Generation by Mike Antonucci of the San Jose Mercury News . It was also included in a list of the best and worst episodes by Scott Thill at Wired magazine as one of the best , describing the reactions to the episode as " polarizing " , and suggesting that " Conspiracy " might be worthy of becoming a plot in a future film by J. J. Abrams . Total Film also suggested the episode as a potential plot for the film that would become Star Trek Into Darkness , and described it as " easily one of the greatest episodes of Star Trek : The Next Generation " . In 2012 , David Brown of Radio Times called " Conspiracy " " a definite high point " in the first season and included it on a list of The Next Generation 's greatest moments .

The episode was released on VHS cassette in the U.S. on May 26 , 1993 . The episode was later included on the Star Trek : The Next Generation season one DVD box set , released in March 2002 . " Conspiracy " was released as part of the season one Blu @-@ ray set on July 24 , 2012 .