

= Devil 's Due (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Devil 's Due " is the 13th episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , originally aired on February 4 , 1991 in broadcast syndication in the United States . Based on an episode written by William Douglas Lansford for the planned Star Trek : Phase II (1978) television series , it was adapted for The Next Generation by Philip Lazebnik and directed by Tom Benko .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Starfleet starship USS Enterprise @-@ D. In " Devil 's Due " , the crew of the Enterprise confront an individual claiming to be Ardra (Marta DuBois) , a mythological entity from the planet Ventax II . She claims that the planet , and the orbiting Enterprise , are her legal property due to an agreement signed a thousand years earlier . Together , Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) and the crew reveal Ardra to be a con artist , leading to her arrest by the Ventaxian authorities .

Numerous changes were made from the original Phase II script , with only the general theme of the episode remaining . Originally pitched for use during season three , following changes made it was added to season four . Critical reception of the episode has been mixed , with it generally being thought to be very reminiscent of Star Trek : The Original Series .

= = Plot = =

The USS Enterprise receives a distress call from Dr. Howard Clarke (Paul Lambert) , the leader of a Federation scientific delegation on Ventax II , where the population is in a state of panic because they are convinced that their world will soon end . After the Enterprise arrives , they rescue Dr. Clarke who brings them up to date : a thousand years ago , according to Ventaxian history , the population entered a Faustian deal with Ardra , their mythology 's devil . In exchange for ending wars and restoring the ecological balance , and improving their heavily polluted planet , the population would become the personal slaves of Ardra a thousand years later . As the millennium is about to come to a close , the planet has recently begun experiencing mild earthquakes as well as seeing images of Ardra in the skies . These were said to be signs of her arrival .

As Captain Picard and Commander Data (Brent Spiner) discuss the matter with the Ventaxian leader (Marcelo Tubert) , a woman appears in the chamber , announcing herself as Ardra . She proves her identity by starting an earthquake at will , and transforming into both the Christian and then the Klingon devil . Ardra states that she has come to claim the planet . Picard is instantly suspicious and orders Data to examine the contract that supposedly was signed by Ardra and the leaders of the planet a thousand years ago . Picard returns to the Enterprise afterwards , and Ardra appears on the bridge sitting in the Captain 's chair . Security Chief Worf (Michael Dorn) tries to remove her without success , Data returns just then and confirms the language of the contract as well as Ardra 's claim to the planet , including anything in orbit , including the Enterprise .

Later , in a meeting with the senior staff , Picard expresses his belief that she is a con @-@ artist and points out that all of her " powers " can be recreated with theatrically delivered technology . After the meeting , Picard goes to bed for the evening . As Picard sleeps , Ardra appears and tries to seduce him but he rejects her . She transports him to the planet dressed in his pyjamas . Data comes to collect Picard by shuttle after Worf is unable to transport him back the normal way . When Picard and Data attempt to return to the Enterprise , the ship disappears . Not knowing what to do , they return to the planet .

Citing old legal precedent , Picard calls for a Ventaxian arbitration hearing , which Ardra agrees to as long as Data acts as the arbitrator , as he will act with impartiality , to which Picard agrees . During the course of the hearing , Chief Engineer La Forge (LeVar Burton) and Clarke discover that Ardra has a cloaked ship nearby , that she is indeed using technology to simulate magic , and that she is a known criminal . Picard has an away team led by Commander Riker (Jonathan Frakes) take control of Ardra 's ship , giving Picard control of Ardra 's " powers " . He demonstrates the fraud and she is taken into custody by local authorities . Picard explains to the leader of the planet that the people themselves improved their planet gradually through hard work and dedication .

= = Production = =

The episode was originally developed from a premise for the cancelled *Star Trek : Phase II* , although it underwent significant changes . It first appeared in a memo dated August 16 , 1977 , as part of a status update for the cancelled series . The only other episode of Phase II to be redeveloped for *The Next Generation* was " The Child " from season two .

In the original version , the *Enterprise* visits Naterra and meets the planet 's leader , Zxolar , who is concerned that Captain Kirk is an alien called Komether who is due to return within twenty days to destroy their world . Zxolar suddenly collapses and Doctor McCoy tries to help him but an energy surrounds the doctor 's head and he runs at a wall and disappears . The landing party search for McCoy but to no avail and Zxolar is beamed to the *Enterprise* . Doctor Chapel attempts to help him but the energy appears around her and she passes out . Xon and Kirk discuss the energy and realise it wants Zxolar to die as it has attacked anyone who helps him . The pair beam back down the planet to investigate the palace they met Zxolar in and discover an archive which shows them the original agreement made by six philosophers , including a much younger Zxolar , and Komether a thousand years earlier . They note one of the philosophers is Zxolar and the Komether is the energy being which attacked the two doctors . As in the later version used on *Star Trek : The Next Generation* , the agreement was that the being would correct the pollution of the planet in return for ownership of the planet a thousand years later . Xon and Kirk decide to move Zxolar to a life support table and ask for other volunteers as it is apparent that Komether will attack them as they attempt to save him . Scotty , Sulu and Chekov all volunteer as well , and the alien disables each of them as they move Zxolar . It is only because of Xon 's strength as he is being attacked that they manage to attach Zxolar to a life support machine and his life signs immediately improve . Zxolar tells Kirk about the contract , who retrieves it from the planet 's surface and challenges it . Komethar appears and agrees to a trial with the *Enterprise* 's computer acting as an impartial judge . Kirk realises that Komethar was created by the six philosophers and so as the last remaining , Zxolar is in control of it . Zxolar manages to defeat the creature using his will and releases the stunned crewmen . He finds that McCoy was trapped in the wall itself and releases him too , the *Enterprise* departing shortly thereafter .

The story was once again brought up during a story pitch for season three of *Next Generation* , and it was modified by several staff writers . Michael Piller made several changes , including making the devil character female . Marta DuBois was cast as Ardra , after Stella Stevens and Adrienne Barbeau were also considered . Paul Lambert had previously appeared in the episode " When the Bough Breaks " as a member of the Aldean race . This episode illustrates Arthur C. Clarke 's Third Law : " any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic . "

= = Reception and home media = =

Several reviewers re @-@ watched *Star Trek : The Next Generation* after the end of the series . Keith DeCandido watched the episode for Tor.com , and thought that Marta DuBois ' performance was " the only reason why this episode is in any way watchable . Barely " . He thought that the episode felt more similar to an original series story than a normal *Next Generation* story , and that was due to the episode 's origins . He said " overall , it ? s just dumb " and gave it a score of two out of ten . Zack Handlen thought more positively of the episode when he reviewed it for the A.V. Club . He did think that Captain Picard was pretending to be Captain Kirk for most of the episode and that it didn 't have any real drama but that it was " silly , goofy fun for the most part " . He thought the episode was " cute " and gave it an overall score of B + .

Robert Blackman was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Costumes for a Series for his work in this episode . It was instead awarded to Bill Hargate for his work on the *Murphy Brown* episode " Eldin Imitates Life " . Blackman would go on to win the award for the following two years for the episodes " Cost of Living " and " Time 's Arrow , Part II " . The episode was first released on VHS cassette on May 21 , 1996 . The episode was later included on the *Star*

Trek : The Next Generation season four DVD box set , released in the United States on September 3 , 2002 . The first Blu Ray release was in the United Kingdom on July 29 , 2013 , followed by the United States on July 30 .