

= Home Soil =

" Home Soil " is the 18th episode of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation . It first aired in broadcast syndication on February 22 , 1988 . Robert Sabaroff , Karl Geurs and Ralph Sanchez developed the story , with Sabaroff producing the teleplay . " Home Soil " is one of five episodes of the series directed by Corey Allen .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the Starfleet crew on the Federation starship Enterprise @-@ D. In the episode , the crew of the Enterprise investigate the murder of a crewman on a terraforming colony and discover a crystalline life form possessing intelligence .

The production team encountered problems with the sets , casting , and scheduling . Due to issues with the script , it was delivered to Allen just one day before shooting . Nine million viewers watched the episode , the second lowest number of viewers for the first season of The Next Generation . Critical reception was mixed , with one reviewer noting that unlike the original Star Trek series , " Home Soil " explored the realm of hard science fiction . Critics compared the appearance of inorganic life forms in the story to the plot of the original Star Trek series episode , The Devil in the Dark .

= = Plot = =

The Enterprise arrives at the terraforming colony on Velara III , as the project is behind schedule . The director , Kurt Mandl (Walter Gotell) , insists they are on time but Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) orders an away team to the surface after Counselor Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) senses that Mandl is hiding something . After they arrive , one of Mandl 's team is killed by a malfunctioning laser drill . During Lt. Commander Data 's (Brent Spiner) inspection of the tool , it begins to fire at him , but his quick android reflexes allow him to dodge the shot and render the drill harmless . He finds the programming of the laser was rewritten to fire upon the staff . Nearby , a crystal is discovered giving off irregular light and radiation patterns . The crystal is brought aboard the Enterprise to study and Picard orders a halt to the terraforming .

Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) and Data discover the crystal may be alive . When the crystal attempts to interact with the Enterprise 's computers , it is placed into a containment force field . The crystal begins to grow and gains access to the computer 's translation program and attempts to communicate with the crew , treating the humans as an enemy , derisively calling them " ugly bags of mostly water " . Picard discovers that Mandl and his team previously encountered the crystals ; at the time , they had considered the possibility that the crystals were alive , but Mandl insisted on continuing to terraform . The terraformers used a drilling process responsible for removing the saline water layer from the water table of Velara III . This saline layer acted as a conductor , allowing many separate crystals to function as one life form . In a defensive response to the drilling , the crystal life form rewrote the laser 's software and attacked the terraformers .

Data hypothesizes that a single crystal is not intelligent , but when linked to other crystals , their intelligence is formidable . As the crystalline life form accesses higher @-@ level functions of the Enterprise 's computer , Picard and the crew try to transport it to the surface but the crystal blocks all attempts to transport it off the ship . Data and Lt. Geordi La Forge (LeVar Burton) discover the presence of cadmium in the crystal and suspect it has photoelectric properties . They disable the lights in the medical lab and the crystal immediately begs for life . Picard peacefully negotiates to return the crystal life form to the surface of the planet where Starfleet will institute a quarantine , leaving the life form to live in peace .

= = Production = =

Re @-@ writes on " Home Soil " continued throughout shooting , with Corey Allen receiving pages on the day before filming , something that Allen described as a " struggle " . Of the story in general , The Next Generation writer and producer Maurice Hurley said it was " An interesting idea , but the execution fell apart . " He felt that in addition to the script , there were issues with casting , sets and

the time in which to shoot . The story bears similarities to the Space : 1999 episode " All That Glisters " , which also featured intelligent water @-@ ingesting rocks that communicated with humanoids .

Andrew Probert created a matte painting of the outside of the terraforming station which never made it into the show . The guest stars in " Home Soil " included Walter Gotell , who was better known for appearing in the James Bond film franchise as General Gogol . The crystalline life form 's description for humanoids in the episode spawned the phrase , " ugly bags of mostly water " , which has been used as the title of a documentary about Star Trek fans , and as the name of a song by the band Streetnix , as well as being referenced by Dream Warriors in the lyrics of My Definition of a Boombastic Jazz Theme . [1]

= = Reception and home media release = =

The episode first aired on February 22 , 1988 . It received Nielsen ratings of 9 million on the first broadcast , which was a decrease of over a million from the previous episode " When the Bough Breaks " , which received ratings of 10 @.@ 2 during the previous week . The next new episode was broadcast three weeks later , when " Coming of Age " gained ratings of 10 @.@ 1 million . " Home Soil " was the second lowest viewed episode of the first season , with " The Last Outpost " viewed by 100 @,@ 000 fewer viewers .

Several reviewers re @-@ watched the episode after the end of the series . Keith DeCandido reviewed the episode for Tor.com , saying that " while this episode has its flaws , it 's a wonderful example of science fiction , one that doesn 't skimp on suspense , action , and Trek 's trademark compassion . " He didn 't like the film direction by Allen , saying that the director had a " bizarre insistence on unnatural , stage @-@ y blocking and positioning and obsession with extreme closeups " . DeCandido also thought that the plot suffered " amnesia regarding the Horta " from The Original Series episode " The Devil in the Dark " . He gave " Home Soil " an overall score of seven out of ten . Michelle Erica Green , in her review for TrekNation , thought that the episode was " less interesting " than the " Horta attacks and mind @-@ melds " of " The Devil in the Dark " . She also felt " Home Soil " was too similar " in the science fiction and in the storytelling " to the previous episode , " When the Bough Breaks " .

Zack Handlen , who watched the episode for The A.V. Club , thought that the " hard sci @-@ fi " worked well as it was an area that The Original Series never went near . He thought that the story was different enough from " The Devil in the Dark " ? although the Horta was silicon based , it was at least easily recognisable as an alien creature . " This makes it less exciting as a creature , but more intriguing as an idea , " Handlen argues . While he felt that the episode was a " winner " , he conceded that it was " a bit on the dry side " . James Hunt , whilst writing for the website Den of Geek , noted that the Enterprise fought a space @-@ bound crystalline entity several episodes earlier in " Datalore " , which he considered " a lot more impressive than these crystal microbrains ... Okay , it wouldn 't talk to them , but nor did it die the moment someone switched the frickin ' lights off . " He felt that " Home Soil " was a generic Star Trek episode and thought that it was similar to The Original Series in tone .

" Home Soil " was first released on VHS cassette in the United States and Canada on August 26 , 1992 . The episode was later included on the Star Trek : The Next Generation season one DVD box set , released in March 2002 . The most recent release was as part of the season one Blu @-@ ray set on July 24 , 2012 .