

= The Host (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" The Host " is the 23rd episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation and the 98th episode overall . It was originally released on May 11 , 1991 , in broadcast syndication . Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Federation starship Enterprise . It was the first episode to be directed by Marvin V. Rush , the director of photography , and was written by Michel Horvat .

In this episode , Doctor Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) falls in love with Odan (Franc Luz) , a Trill mediator . But after he is mortally injured , she discovers that " Odan " is actually a symbiotic creature that lives inside a humanoid host body . Commander William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) volunteers to act as a temporary host , complicating the relationship between Crusher and Odan . The mediation proves successful , but after Odan is transferred to a new , female Trill host (Nicole Orth @-@ Pallavicini) , Crusher chooses not to continue the relationship .

At the time of filming , McFadden was seven months pregnant , resulting in filming techniques used to conceal her abdomen . A two part makeup appliance was designed for the Trill host , as well as the symbiont itself which was based on a caterpillar and an octopus . The Trill would subsequently return in Star Trek : Deep Space Nine , although the makeup was redesigned . " The Host " received a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 3 percent during the first week of release in syndication . The ending of the episode has received a mixed reception , with Zack Handlen for the A.V. Club saying that the reaction by Crusher made " perfect sense " , while others suggested that the statement regarding Crusher 's views on homosexuality should have been confined as a character trait rather than a general statement on the opinions of the species .

= = Plot = =

Odan (Franc Luz) , a mediator , boards the Enterprise to negotiate a peace treaty between two hostile races . Doctor Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) is charmed by the man , and the two share a love affair during the trip . Odan refuses to use the transporter and requests that a shuttle and pilot be provided for him ; Commander William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) honors this request . During the mission , the shuttle is attacked by a dissident faction and Odan is mortally injured . While trying to save the alien in sickbay , Dr. Crusher comes to learn that Odan is a Trill , a species which symbiotically lives within its host 's body . It is further revealed by Lt. Commander Data (Brent Spiner) that the transporter would have harmed the symbiotic lifeform . Following the death of Odan 's host body , Commander Riker volunteers to allow Odan use him as a host to conduct the necessary negotiations until a new host arrives .

Odan 's presence becomes dominating over Riker , and Dr. Crusher finds herself initially confused when Odan continues to try to engage with her to continue their relationship . Dr. Crusher is puzzled and full of emotion as she later confides to Counselor Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) and wonders about the true depth of her feelings for Odan . With some effort , Odan in Riker 's body , manages to convince the delegates from the warring planets to work with him . However , Riker 's body begins to deteriorate due to the incompatibility of different biologies . The ship transporting the new host has encountered engine malfunctions . Dr. Crusher does everything she can to extend Riker 's and Odan 's chances while the Enterprise races to meet the Trill ship , and has a deeply emotional moment with Captain Picard .

The Enterprise successfully rendezvous in time to bring aboard the new host , a female (Nicole Orth @-@ Pallavicini) , much to Dr. Crusher 's surprise . She helps with the other Trill to transplant Odan into the new host , and both Riker and Odan fully recover . When Odan attempts to continue their relationship , Dr. Crusher is uncomfortable , knowing both that the Trill appear to have no preferences on gender orientation , and that Odan will continue to live on in any number of hosts ' bodies . Odan admits he still loves Dr. Crusher , but understands her confusion and discomfort , and promises to never forget her or their short time together . And Dr. Crusher replies that she loves Odan too ; in Odan 's new , female host body , Odan then kisses the inner wrist of her hand .

= = Production = =

= = = Direction and writing = = =

" The Host " was written by Michael Horvat and directed by Marvin V. Rush . Rush had been the director of photography for the series since the start of the third season and was the first of three members of the series ' staff to direct an episode . The filming of Gates McFadden 's scenes was complicated by the fact that she was seven months pregnant at the time , requiring different camera angles than would normally be used . Jonathan Frakes , who played Commander Riker , explained later that " they would not address the fact that the actress was pregnant " , requiring the cast and crew to hide McFadden 's stomach from the camera with furniture or by using camera angles which only showed her from her breasts upwards . Rush was not told which episode he was going to direct beforehand , other than that it was going to be a ship @-@ based episode . He later directed two episodes of Star Trek : Voyager and two of Star Trek : Enterprise .

Story editor Brannon Braga was pleased with the episode , calling it " one of the most outstanding stories we 've ever done " as it was originally suggested as a " squirmly worm " story , which was " unique " as it went on to become " the most touching love story " . Ronald D. Moore stated that it had become a Star Trek story by focusing the episode on the relationship rather than on the negotiations . Rush suggested that some viewers were disappointed with the ending , due to Crusher not accepting her lover in his new female body . He said that it was a valid point of view , and that McFadden 's lines in the final scene made it clear that it put forward a hope that homosexuality may be better accepted in the future . The subject matter was revisited in the Star Trek : Deep Space Nine episode " Rejoined " , which featured one of the earliest televised lesbian kisses .

The character of Odan would return in non @-@ canon Star Trek publications , including in the short story " First Steps " within The Lives of Dax anthology . It also made two appearances in licensed comics , first in DC Comics Star Trek : The Next Generation Annual issue four and then in Divided we Fall , a crossover between The Next Generation and Deep Space Nine published under the WildStorm imprint .

= = = Makeup and set design = = =

The makeup for the Trill host featured a separate nose and forehead pieces , as the intention was to retain the general look of a human . Air bladders were placed inside a fake abdomen to create the shot in which the symbiont appeared to move under the host 's skin . A second fake abdomen was created for the surgery scene in which the symbiont is moved into Riker , which worked by having a crew member lie under the surgery table , pulling the symbiont into the opening using a concealed string . The design of the symbiont was based on a caterpillar with an octopus for a head , which featured a further air bladder in order to give the appearance that it was pulsating and painted in fluorescent paint to glow when a black light was shone on it during that scene .

The Trill later recurred in Deep Space Nine , with multiple hosts of the Dax symbiont appearing on screen . The same makeup was initially used as in their originally appearance in The Next Generation , however after two days of filming with Terry Farrell in the prosthetics , she was sent to back to the makeup department to change it . The shuttle set was the same one which had been used previously , with parts created for different episodes since work began in the first season episode " Coming of Age " . In " The Host " , it was named Hawking for the theoretical physicist Professor Stephen Hawking . He would later guest star in the first part of the episode " Descent " at his request .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" The Host " aired in broadcast syndication during the week commencing May 12 , 1991 . It

received Nielsen ratings of 11 @. @ 3 , reflecting the percentage of all households watching the episode during its timeslot . This placed it as the highest viewed syndicated show of the week , despite the ratings being near the average for the season .

James van Hise , in his book *The Unauthorized Trek : The Complete Next Generation* , called the introduction of the Trill an " element crucial " to Deep Space Nine , but was critical of the decision to have Crusher not be interested in Odan once he had transferred to his new female host . This " apparent homophobia " was said to have resulted in the episode being " widely criticized " by David Greven in his book *Gender and Sexuality in Star Trek* . Keith DeCandido , in his article for Tor.com , said it was difficult to give a fair review of the episode due to the Trill being explored in greater depth in Deep Space Nine , and the subsequent alterations made for that series compared to " The Host " . He said more generally of the episode that the romance felt rushed , and he would have liked to see the exploration of Riker 's feelings about his body being used to have sex with a friend . A further criticism was levelled at the ending , as Crusher stated that it was humans who have a problem with homosexuality rather than limiting it to be her own problem . He gave it a rating of four out of ten .

Nick Keppler , writing for Nerve.com , listed " The Host " as one of the " gayest " episodes of the franchise and described the twist at the end of the episode with the gender of Odan 's new host as " sapphic " . He criticised the reaction of Crusher at the end of the episode , saying that she would " get into bed with shifty aliens with weird ridged foreheads but for some reason draws the line at space ladies " . Zack Handlen gave the episode a rating of B + in his review for The A.V. Club , saying that the idea at the core of the episode was better than the execution . But he said that the ending made " perfect sense " as he said that love wasn 't solely spiritual but that " we fall in love with features , with shapes , with bodies , as well as with minds . " He added that Odan 's reaction was also right , as " everyone has a line , and if you love them , you won 't ask them to cross it . "

The first home media release of " The Host " was on VHS cassette , appearing on July 23 , 1996 in the United States and Canada . 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 fourth season was subsequently released on blu @-@ ray in the UK on July 29 , 2013 , and July 30 in the United States .