



NED McFEELY

STARSHIP
LATA

THE SONG OF THE BORG

Starship Gita

The Song of the Borg

By Ned McFeely

Rated PG-13 for language.

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Check out *People, Places & Things* in the back of this document to become more familiar with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* characters and locales.

Geordi's flesh and blood speech adapted from *The Mahabharata* by Jean-Claude Carrière.

Gita material adapted from *The Bhagavad-Gita; Or, song celestial* translated by Sir Edwin Arnold. The Harvard classics, edited by Charles W. Eliot. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14.

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Praise for Ned McFeely

“Attaboy, Ned, you rock!” -*The (next) Dalai Lama*

“Ned McFeely has done for *Star Trek* and the *Bhagavad Gita* what the Beatles did for moustache wax and nipple rouge.” -*Omar Sharif, deathbed interview*

“I agreed to swap catchy blurbs with Ned, but I haven’t received mine yet.” -*Nicolas Cage, actor*

“I don’t know if Ned is enlightened or not, but he has a real nice collection of lobster bibs.” -*Chuck Burell, neighbor*

“Okay tipper.” -*Al “the guy who makes Ned’s pastrami just the way he likes it” Horwath*

“I played golf with Ned once, and when I got home I discovered I had his putter, so he probably has mine which is a lot nicer than his. I’m not accusing anyone of anything, but I would like my putter back.” -*Herb Gleason, friend*

“Ned McFeely is one of the foremost spiritual luminaries of this or any other generation.” -*Shirley, Dial-a-Blurb*

“The force is strong with this one.” -*D. Vader, Empire*

“No prisoners!” -*Senator John Blutarsky*

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Existence is futile.

ACT 1: THE BRIDGE

On the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. Jean-Luc Picard sits in his captain's chair with Commander Will Riker to his right and ship's counselor Deanna Troi to his left. At the console behind them stands Lt. Commander Worf. Seated at the forward consoles are Lt. Commanders Data and Geordi La Forge.

DATA

Captain, sensors show a cube-shaped craft approaching on an intercept course at warp velocity.

PICARD

Gee, I wonder who that could be.

GEORDI

Visual range.

PICARD

On screen.

Screen shows Borg ship in the distance.

RIKER

Magnify.

Screen fills with Borg ship.

PICARD

Tactical analysis, Mr. Worf.

WORF

Sir, the Borg vessel has us at a significant disadvantage. We stand very little chance against them.

PICARD

Thank you, Mr. Worf. Options?

GEORDI

Captain, we should be able to recalibrate the deflector dish so the Enterprise can penetrate the Borg shields, then detonate the warp core as we penetrate their hull resulting in the total destruction of both ships.

PICARD

Mr. Data?

DATA

Possible, Captain. Our timing would have to be precise, but it should work.

PICARD

Very well, let's prepare for that eventuality. But first, let's think of something where they die and we don't.

TROI

Captain, I recommend compassion, tolerance, and love as our response to the Borg.

PICARD

Cut the hippy-dippy bullshit, Counselor. These bionic assholes just want to assimilate us into their collective and move on. They don't give a rat's ass about your touchy-feely crap.

TROI

It is my duty to suggest a course of action, Captain. I think we should open a dialogue with the Borg so both sides can express their feelings and find a way to live in peace and harmony. Why can't we all just get along?

PICARD

That's it! Mr. Worf, get this ditzy flowerchild off my bridge immediately!

WORF

But Captain, Counselor Troi and I are in love. We wish to be married.

PICARD

Great, an in-house production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Belay that last order, Mr. Worf. Send a subspace message to Starfleet Command: *Guess who's coming to dinner*.

WORF

Is that a reference to Counselor Troi and myself, sir?

PICARD

Oh yes, Mr. Worf. I'm not telling Starfleet they're about to lose the flagship of the fleet to an implacable enemy who will then turn the rest of humanity into mechanical zombies, I'm sharing your happy news. Please send the message so we can all rejoice in the blessed event.

WORF

Uh, yes sir.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Data, you're my friend right?

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

Actually, Geordi, I can only simulate friendship. I am really just a life-size sex-doll with an iPhone for a brain.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Good enough. Listen Data, I've been thinking; I was born blind, right? So all I really know about reality is what I see through these damned goggles. For all I know, everything I think is real could just be a virtual reality simulation being fed into my brain the way this visor feeds in my visual environment. How do I know if any of this is real?

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

Geordi, as your

(air quotes)

friend, I have to advise you to refrain from that kind of talk. No one thinks it's funny. Suggesting that we ram the Borg ship before exploring alternatives is reckless.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

I know it sounds crazy, Data, but total annihilation is our only hope. Only by burning away the false can we discover the true.

WORF

Captain, I concur with Commander La Forge that ramming the Borg vessel and detonating the warp core is our best option.

RIKER

You wouldn't like to pop off a few missiles first, Mr. Worf? Maybe send an away team throw a wrench in their gears before we go all kamikaze on them?

WORF

Today is a good day to die!

RIKER

It might be a good day for *you* to die, but the rest of us were thinking it might be a nice day to *live*.

WORF

You are a coward!

Riker leaps to his feet.

PICARD

Gentlemen, calm down. Mr. Worf, ramming the Borg vessel is a last resort. We will explore all other options first.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Seriously man, think about it. Look at where we are. Look at *who* we are. What if we're not really a ship and crew at all? What if all this is just some sort of dream, or we're trapped in a computer simulation or something? How do we know any of this is real? Maybe we're all just aspects of some higher self performing for the amusement of some unseen audience. We *believe* this is real, but we certainly don't *know*. The only way to be sure is to blow it all to hell and see what's left.

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

Seriously Geordi, I'm dealing with some heavy shit right now and you're really starting to fry my circuits. I must request that you shut the fuck up.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

But Data, that's what I'm saying. Maybe there *is* no heavy shit, maybe there *are* no Borg. Maybe this is all just drama for the sake of drama. Maybe it's not an external enemy we should be confronting, but our certainty that our so-called knowledge is true and not just belief reinforced by fear. If we want to make sense of things, we have to see clearly, without the distorting influence of emotion.

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

My emotion chip is switched off, Geordi, and I can assure you that everything is just as it seems.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Yeah, but you're really just a modern appliance, Data. Like us, you're a slave to your programming. I'm afraid this is all above your paygrade.

TROI

(to Riker)

Will, Worf and I are in love now. You'll just have to accept that.

RIKER

What? Shut up Deanna, that's gross!

WORF

Captain, did you hear that? Counselor Troi told Commander Riker we're in love and he said that's gross.

PICARD

Gross?

WORF

Yes sir. I think that Commander Riker may be a speciesist!

PICARD

Yes, I suppose we all are. Counselor Troi, have you seen Mr. Worf in his, uh, full glory yet?

TROI

We're waiting for our wedding night, Captain.

PICARD

Okay, let's have a medical team on standby for that.

RIKER

You might want to try it on the Holodeck first, Deanna, with full safety protocols.

WORF

Captain, I must object!

PICARD

I think we all do, Mr. Worf. Seriously, it's like a badger mauling a kitten. Oh never mind, we'll all be dead or assimilated in a few minutes anyway.

RIKER

Lucky for Troi.

PICARD

That's enough, Number One. Options?

RIKER

Well, Captain, as I recall, she likes having her armpits licked.

TROI

Will!

PICARD

Options regarding the *Borg*, Number One.

RIKER

Oh, I've never licked a Borg's armpits, sir.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

I mean, look at you, Data. Your positronic brain can perform trillions of calculations per second, but for all that intelligence, you've never had a single independent thought. What passes for self-inquiry with you is of only the most superficial nature. Don't you think it's strange that you're incredibly intelligent, but you don't really think?

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

I do not inquire into the nature of my existence because I do not believe that I exist. "I calculate, therefore I am" is not a valid argument. What I think of as *me* is merely a set of binary instructions that could just as well be a recipe for beef stew as an entity called Data. I cannot verify my own existence because the verifying self is only verified by the self that seeks verification. In short, I exist within a self-referencing feedback loop; the strings from which I hang, hang from me.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Well, Data, *I* think you exist, if that counts for anything.

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

No Geordi, that does not count for anything because I can't verify that you exist either. I can

never be sure if my sensory receptors and neural pathways are being fed by my actual environment, or if I am simply plugged into a mainframe undergoing a simulation.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

It's the same for us, Data, but wouldn't you like to know what's really real, once and for all?

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

Why? What difference would it make? I accept the reality with which I am presented, that's the best I can do. In fact, I can never be sure that the universe even exists.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

That's what I'm saying, Data, it's the same for us!

DATA

(quietly, to Geordi)

No, Geordi, it is not the same. *Sentio, ergo sum* — I am aware, therefore I am — *is* a valid argument which you can make and I cannot; if you exist, of course, which only you would know. It is true that you cannot know if the universe exists, but you *can* know that *you* exist. I cannot.

PICARD

(to all)

Listen people, I don't want to seduce the Borg or bond with them, I want to destroy them! The question is, how? I need options!

RIKER

Well, this may be a bit unconventional, sir, but...

PICARD

Yes, Number One? Yes?

RIKER

You know how the Borg say resistance is futile?
Well, maybe they're right. Maybe we should just
go ahead and let them assimilate us.

WORF

It's so crazy, it just might work!

PICARD

Yes, Number One. We let them assimilate us, then
what?

RIKER

Well, then that's it, I guess. We do whatever Borg
do, but at least we're still alive, and we get all
those cool implants and stuff.

PICARD

Yes, okay, good plan Number One. Anyone else?
Any ideas where we *don't* get assimilated or die?

TROI

We could just do nothing and see what happens.
Perhaps if we ignore them, they'll just go away.

PICARD

Counselor, the fate of the Earth hangs in the
balance. Humanity is on the verge of enslavement.
We can't just sit back and do nothing!

GEORDI

Captain, I know we're all caught up in the heat of the moment, I know our emotions are pumping and it all seems vitally important, but I'm telling you, this is all just empty spectacle. Nothing hangs in the balance. No one is on the verge of enslavement. It's all just a big game and the joke is on us!

PICARD

Mr. La Forge, please just shut up and drive.

GEORDI

(quietly, to Data)

Data, listen to me. This visor gives me special insight. I don't see things the way you or the others do. I don't see the cosmetic overlay; I see only the structural framework beneath. It's not as pretty or comforting, but it's more accurate, and one thing it shows me is that this is an illusion. None of this is real.

Data snatches the visor off Geordi's face, leaving him white-eyed and blind.

GEORDI

(groping)

Hey, Data! That's not funny. I can't see without my visor. Give it back!

DATA

Only if you promise to shut up about all this illusion bullshit. Everyone else can play along, why can't you?

GEORDI

Captain, Data took my visor and he won't give it back!

PICARD

Data, give Geordi back his visor. You two behave or I'll turn this starship around and we'll all go home.

RIKER

Hey, that's it! Let's just run away! I mean, it's not very heroic, but it *is* an option, right? Live to fight another day?

WORF

It's so crazy, it just might work!

PICARD

Duly noted, Number One. Any other options besides ramming the Borg, getting assimilated, running away, hippy-dippy bullshit and doing nothing? Anyone? How about putting up a fight? Anyone think of that? Okay, I'm gonna put that one on the list. We can fight.

GEORDI

I know how it sounds, Captain, I know it's a leap of faith, a step into the unknown, but annihilation is our only hope for salvation. We must destroy everything. I'm not saying I understand it, but this entire conflict is some sort of cosmic simulation and the only way to defeat it is to destroy it. We are animating this situation by pumping our emotional energy into it, but if we sever that connection, there will no longer *be* a situation. In

short, if we don't play, there is no game. It simply cannot exist without our emotional participation.

PICARD

That will be enough, Mr. La Forge. Let me remind you all that this is not a game; this is for all the marbles, the whole enchilada.

GEORDI

But Captain, I'm telling you, there are no marbles, there is no enchilada. Destroy both ships and you'll see.

RIKER

If we destroy both ships we won't see anything because we'll be dead. I mean, right? Wookie, back me up here.

WORF

I am not a Wookie!

GEORDI

If we're just fake characters, so what if we die? Who cares? Why cling to a lie?

PICARD

Mr. La Forge, please shut up. Mr. Data, consult the historical record and see if you can find any parallels between what the little bastard is ranting about and our current predicament.

DATA

Yes Caption, searching... searching... Ah, yes, Starfleet records show that as a cadet, James Kirk was confronted with a no-win scenario, the Kobayashi Maru, which he managed to defeat by

modifying the parameters of the test.

PICARD

He hacked the simulation?

DATA

Apparently so.

GEORDI

That's what I'm talking about! We can't solve this problem at the level of the problem. We have to transcend it! It's like we're dreaming this whole thing and we can only win by waking up!

PICARD

Anything else, Mr. Data?

DATA

Yes sir. I believe I have found something in the Earth archive. Records indicate that a spiritual philosophy called Advaita Vedanta thrived many millennia ago and enjoyed a brief resurgence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Western societies under the name Nonduality. Basically, it posits the unreality of reality, but it was co-opted and homogenized by an early precursor of the modern Borg called the Spiritual Marketplace which effectively assimilated Nonduality and converted its adherents from devoted seekers into mindless drones.

PICARD

Very interesting, Mr. Data. And the people went along with this assimilation?

DATA

Eagerly, Captain. It is a curious aspect of humans that they cherish the concept of freedom while clinging to their self-imposed bondage. It is only from the comfort and safety of herd-like subjugation that they extol the virtues of personal liberation. They pay lip-service to the spiritual ideal of awakening while pursuing an ever-deepening sleepstate. This is the common thread between the Spiritual Marketplace of the past and the Borg of today. Essentially, they are different names for the same phenomenon. In short, Captain, espousing the merits of freedom in word but not in deed is a critical component of the herd-mentality of humanity, or, as we see it in the Borg, the hive-mind of the collective.

PICARD

(impatiently)

Yes, yes, Mr. Data, that's all very interesting, but does any of this help us in our current situation?

DATA

No Captain, I don't believe it does.

PICARD

So, we are waging a life-or-death battle for self-determination while secretly wanting to lose and be assimilated. Is that what you're saying?

DATA

Yes, Captain, that does appear to be the case.

PICARD

Does history provide any examples of those who have resisted such tyranny and prevailed?

DATA

Records are sketchy, Captain, but it appears that among the last surviving advocates of an authentic Nonduality was a shadowy character named Ned McFeely, a self-proclaimed enlightened spiritual master who, by his own admission, did not actually exist.

PICARD

That sounds promising, Data. Do we have enough historical record to recreate this McFeely character on the Holodeck?

DATA

Perhaps, Captain. I can try.

PICARD

Make it so. I'll swing by Ten Forward for a quick nip before visiting the Holodeck to have a word with the mysterious Mr. McFeely. Number One, you have the bridge.

Picard exits.

ACT 2: TEN FORWARD

Picard stands at a window in Ten Forward, staring out at the stars in contemplation.

PICARD

(with quiet intensity)

All visible objects are but pasteboard masks. If man will strike, strike *through* the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the Borg ship is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond, but 'tis enough. I see in the Borg outrageous strength with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate, and be the Borg agent, or be they principal, I will wreak that hate upon them!

Guinan approaches.

GUINAN

Having an Ahab moment, Jean-Luc?

PICARD

Captain Ahab was a man of singular focus, Guinan. Seriously, we're not stuck in some Holodeck bullshit now, are we?

GUINAN

Try to end it.

PICARD

Computer, end program!

Nothing changes.

Nuts, I really hoped that would work.

GUINAN

Sorry Jean-Luc, this is as real as it gets.

PICARD

And just how real is that? How real is any of this, Guinan?

GUINAN

Oh my, have you been listening to Geordi again?

PICARD

That little bastard really gets in your head. He thinks we're on some mythical hero's journey.

They stroll arm-in-arm to the bar. Picard takes a stool. Guinan sets out glasses and pours.

GUINAN

It's interesting that you make that connection, Jean-Luc. The Hero's Journey is a character motivation device to make us scale mountains, cross oceans and explore deep space in a quest

for group salvation, but in truth there can be no salvation. Our situation is what it is, our destinies are fixed, our fate is sealed. We have an absolute value and nothing can change it. The real hero does not return with a magical elixir to save his people. Instead, he crosses beyond the edge of the map into uncharted realms. He can never come back because he has entered the *real* undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns. The true hero archetype, correctly understood, is the unknown archetype, the final archetype, the archetype that sets one free from the illusion of selfhood. There's no coming back from that, just ask your Captain Ahab. Is that what you really want, Jean-Luc? To be free from the illusion of selfhood?

PICARD

That doesn't sound so bad right about now. Tell me, Guinan, who are you really? Oracle? Crone? Higher self?

GUINAN

I am your unbeguiled aspect, Jean-Luc, the wisdom-child within that knows the emperor is naked. The enchantment that holds you in its thrall has no sway over me. I am always nearby, always ready to listen, to serve, to impart sagely advice. In short, I am the perfect bartender.

PICARD

(shaking his empty glass)

Speaking of which.

GUINAN

(pours for both)

So, what's bugging you, Jean-Luc?

PICARD

It looks like we have encountered the Borg.

GUINAN

Oh, shit, let's make it a double.

(pours)

Those guys really bust my balls. Wiped out my whole civilization, you know.

PICARD

Lousy bastards.

GUINAN

They assimilated my entire planet. They put my people into a death-like state of complacency, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

PICARD

Lucky thou.

GUINAN

Yeah, the Borg rolled into our system promising relief from a mild psycho-spiritual malaise, and my people just abdicated their self-sovereignty and swooned into a state of total submission from which they can never hope to emerge.

PICARD

The Borg don't even pretend to seduce anymore. Assimilate or die, that's their big thing now. So, Guinan, what should I do?

GUINAN

Well, Jean-Luc, you have three choices. One, you can surrender and be assimilated. I know that doesn't sound great, but it's an option. I always sort of wished I'd gone that route instead of being stuck here doing this ridiculous job; the only one of my kind, lonely, bored, listening to tales of marital woe and career frustration all day. Yeah, I'm wise as hell, but so what? What good is understanding more than everyone around you? It's like being the only adult in a world of children. If I'd been assimilated by the Borg I'd still be with my own people. I'd be part of a team working toward a common goal, but what am I here? The only one of my kind, unable to form real connections, pouring drinks and listening to people complain about their bald prick of a captain all day.

PICARD

Their what?

GUINAN

Oh, not you, Jean-Luc. So anyway, assimilation might be your best option.

PICARD

I was afraid you were going to say that. What's the second choice?

GUINAN

You can resist the Borg and we'll all be killed.

PICARD

That sounds bad. What's the third option?

GUINAN

I don't know, but there's always a third horn to any dilemma, the *tertium quid*. Maybe you should ask Geordi.

PICARD

La Forge? The little bastard's always going on about how reality's not real, how we're all just in some universal Holodeck, like we're just characters in some big dream or something. He said we should ram the Borg ship and destroy everything.

GUINAN

And kill everyone? The Borg and us?

PICARD

I don't know, he wants to transcend the scenario or some shit, I wasn't really listening. He says none of this is real, that if we just stop playing our parts, the whole thing will go away. He says we're enabling this scenario with our emotional energy, something like that. That little bastard is like a splinter in my mind; I can't scratch it and I can't get it out. Sometimes I'd like to shove him in an empty torpedo tube and...

GUINAN

But Jean-Luc, in order to prevail, you must consider the possibility that Geordi is right. What if we're all just aspects of some greater, unified self? You are the dominant aspect, I am higher self, Riker is our idealized self, Data is our intelligence and Troi is our heart, Worf is our barely contained fear and rage, and we are held together by this bubble of artificial context we

call the Starship Enterprise, on a great trek across the vast expanse of a shoreless sea. Perhaps we are not a ship and crew at all, but a single entity on a voyage of personal discovery.

PICARD

(sets down his glass and stands)

There's room for two in that torpedo tube,
Guinan.

Picard exits.

ACT 3: THE HOLODECK

Picard and Ned McFeely on the Holodeck. Ned is dressed in sandals, cargo shorts, and a t-shirt that says “God was my co-pilot but we crashed in the mountains and I ate him.” He stands on a path beside a trickling mountain stream amid lush green surroundings. Picard, in uniform, approaches.

PICARD

Are you Ned McFeely?

NED

Sure, why not.

PICARD

My name is Jean-Luc Picard. I can't say more for the moment...

NED

I know who you are, Captain. And this is a Holodeck?

PICARD

Uh, it is, yes. How did you know that?

NED

The dreamstate by any other name...

(examines his hands)

So I'm not really here? My sense of self-awareness is an illusion?

PICARD

I'm afraid so. Technically, you don't even have a sense of self-awareness, it's just something you say. You are a product of the computer, compiled from historical records. You have no independent reality.

NED

What a drag. And what about *your* sense of self-awareness, Captain?

PICARD

Oh, mine is quite real, I assure you. You are merely a holographic projection, whereas I actually exist in the real world.

NED

Sure, let's go with that. Computer, end program.

No change.

PICARD

You can't give that order.

NED

You might be surprised.

PICARD

Apparently not. Listen, Mr. McFeely, we are presently confronted with a situation...

NED

Yeah, the Borg. Congratulations.

Ned begins to stroll along the mountain path. Picard accompanies him.

PICARD

How do you know about the Borg?

NED

Why else would you have the computer generate a historical figure who defeated them?

PICARD

So you *did* defeat the Borg!

NED

Not like you think. I'm afraid the Borg are not just the enemy of the moment, Captain, they are your perfect antagonist, your negative image, the yin to your yang or yang to your yin, something like that. They represent the other side of the false equation which defines your existence. In order to defeat them, you must defeat yourself. It's not a war but a rectification. This conflict is a sign of imbalance, and one way or another, balance will be restored.

PICARD

We must resist them!

NED

(stops walking, faces Picard)

To the degree that you resist, they are empowered. Whatever you withhold, they will find. Whatever you extend, they will cut off. Whatever you cherish, they will consume. Yes, Captain, you can defeat the Borg, but the price of that victory is everything.

PICARD

Everything?

NED

(shrugs)

Everything, nothing; same thing. It's just a matter of perspective. Gateless gate stuff.

They continue walking.

PICARD

But here you are. You fought them! You won!

NED

I merely rectified the equation. And, as you have pointed out, I do not exist. That is my victory. If it's any comfort, this too shall pass. Balance is always restored in the end.

PICARD

I have no time for riddles, Mr. McFeely! Our records indicate that you were one of the last proponents of an authentic Nonduality, which seems to be some archaic system of self-discovery.

NED

Alas, the thing one discovers is that there's no self to discover. Yes, I was there for the brief heyday of Nonduality, but then the internet came along and unleashed an army of Tribbles — something akin to your Borg, but warm and fuzzy — creating a viral degradation that reduced Nonduality from a force of awakening to an agent of sleep. These Tribbles were unwitting purveyors of disinformation that turned the battle cry of freedom into a whimper for peace. Through a process of emotional alchemy, Nonduality was converted from a corrosive acid into a sugary soft-drink, making it the perfect carrier for the disease it was meant to cure.

PICARD

I don't care about any of that.

NED

Because you don't understand the conflict in which you're engaged. You don't know where this battle is really fought. The Borg are irrelevant. The true enemy is always within, between your heart and your mind; between what you believe, wish and fear, and what you know; between dreaming with eyes closed and seeing with eyes open.

PICARD

Then how do I know if I'm fighting a real battle with the Borg, or if I'm fighting this internal conflict you describe?

NED

There's really no difference. Guinan told you your options; assimilate or die. Geordi told you the third; transcend.

PICARD

How do you know what they said?

NED

Because you are all characters in a drama of which I am the author. Your computer brought us together here because that's how I wrote the scene. You are in uniform because I said so. I could have put you in a pinafore. You are my puppet.

PICARD

I can assure you, Mr. McFeely, that you are not the author of me! You are merely a creation of the ship's computer.

NED

That's an amusing thought. I am the creation of a computer of which I am the author; the Vyasa-Krishna paradox. Okay, check it out, so these two snakes are eating each other...

PICARD

Enough! You say you are the author, then prove it! Change this situation. Eradicate the Borg from existence!

NED

But as you say, Captain, there is no me. I am not here. And even if I did exist, nothing could be done to alter your situation. Accounts must be

balanced, there must be a reckoning. You stand at the brink, not of some trifling battle, but of your own escape from captivity. This is it, the process is in motion. Nothing can stop it now.

PICARD

Christ, I may as well be talking to Data's cat.

NED

Okay, Captain, so I'm a computer-generated character, correct? Despite the infinite appearance, this finite Holodeck is the full extent of my reality?

PICARD

Yes, that is correct.

NED

I only exist within an artificial context outside of which I cannot exist?

PICARD

Of course! Now stop wasting time and focus on the matter at hand!

NED

Then ask yourself, what is *your* context? What is the framework outside of which *you* cannot exist?

PICARD

You mean, this ship? The Enterprise?

NED

At the moment. Just as I dwell within the artificial context of the Holodeck and cannot exist outside of it, so are you always within an artificial context

outside of which you cannot exist. You are always contained within a false context, always protectively walled off from the truth of the infinite.

PICARD

Meaning what, exactly?

NED

Meaning, you came to me for advice and my advice is always this; check your assumptions. Now, can Data's cat do this? *Computer, delete program Ned McFeely.*

Ned and the mountain scene disappear. Picard stands alone in the blank gridwork of the Holodeck.

PICARD

Not so fast, dammit! Computer, resume program Ned McFeely!

COMPUTER

Program Ned McFeely does not exist.

ACT 4: THE BORG

Picard, Riker, Worf, Troi, Data and La Forge on the bridge. The Borg ship looms large on screen.

BORG

We are the Borg.

PICARD

(stands)

Yeah, yeah. Hi.

BORG

Hi. Prepare to be assimilated.

RIKER

(stands beside Picard)

Prepare how? Pack clean underwear? Water the plants? Leave a note for the...

BORG

Lower your shields. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness...

PICARD

(gives "cut" signal to end communication)

Time to fight, even if we can't win. Mr. Worf, arm photon torpedoes. Mr. La Forge, lock in attack sequence Picard Alpha One. Mr. Data, reroute all available power to the shields. Mr. Riker, prepare for saucer separation and transfer command to the

battle bridge.

RIKER

Aye aye, sir.

DATA

Awaiting your command, Captain.

PICARD

Very well. *Ready... aim...*

GEORDI

(stands)

No Captain, wait! You have to listen to me! I know it sounds crazy, but what if none of this is actually happening? What if none of this is real? I'm telling you, the only way out is through. Burn it all!

PICARD

This is reality, not a simulation, Mr. La Forge.

GEORDI

(frantic)

With all due respect, sir, how do you know? This reality may just be a subprogram in a subprogram in a stack of iterations nested like Russian dolls; a simulation within a game within a play within a dream within the mind of God within a child's toy. Reality *is* a game because it has no meaning outside of itself. Life is but a dream and we are but poor players who strut and fret our hour upon the bridge, and then are heard no more. This isn't real! *Nothing is real!*

Data stands, places a hand encouragingly on Geordi's

shoulder and smiles. Geordi smiles back. Data pinches. Geordi loses consciousness and collapses into his chair. Bridge applauds.

PICARD

About time someone shut that little bastard up.

Q materializes in a pillar of light.

Q

I'm afraid that little bastard was the voice of reason, Jean-Luc. You silenced him because he spoke the truth that threatened your undoing. You hate him because he is a spiritual anarchist, a fire-bomber, a heretic. That is the role of the Little Bastard on the ship of self, to speak truth to power, but you are defined by your fear of truth so you silenced him.

PICARD

Q! Thank God. You're our only hope! Can you stop your moronic babbling for one second and get us out of this mess?

Q

But of course, *mon capitain*, I can end all this with a snap of my fingers. La Forge was right, Ned McFeely was right. Nothing is what it seems.

RIKER

Who are you really, Q? Are you God? I've heard you called the Sole Beholder.

Q

We are *all* the Sole Beholder, Riker; both beholder and beheld. You may think of me as Lord

Krishna, and these two ships represent the armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas arrayed on the field of Kurukshetra...

PICARD

In English, please.

Q

Of course. You see Picard, this is the true battle of which all others are but shadows. Here, one is either drawn into the illusion of selfhood or one awakens from it. If you lose, you live. If you win, you cease to be. The choice is yours; assimilate or die.

PICARD

That's a pretty shitty deal, Q.

Q

As usual, Picard, your puny human brain has failed to encompass the true dimensions of your plight. Normally, I would tell you to fight, but you should just probably surrender and allow yourselves to be assimilated. It's not as bad as it sounds.

PICARD

You're suggesting we surrender to the Borg? Are you completely mad?

The lift door opens. Guinan enters carrying a bottle.

PICARD

Guinan, what are you doing on the bridge?

GUINAN

I thought you might need a drink.

PICARD

Guinan, may I present Q. He is a God-like entity, a member of the Q Continuum.

GUINAN

Oh, I know exactly who Q is, Jean-Luc, and that's not him.

PICARD

(turns to Q)

What? You're not Q? Who are you?

A pillar of light and Q morphs into the Borg Queen.

BORG QUEEN

I am the alpha and the omega, the one who is many. I am the Borg.

PICARD

You speak as a god, but you are not a god!

BORG QUEEN

Correct. I am not a god but the Lord of Gods. I am known by many names. I am Maya, Goddess of Illusion. I am Krishna, the Charioteer. I am the Borg. Prepare to be assimilated.

PICARD

You will never assimilate humanity. We are defined by our free will! We will resist you with everything we have!

BORG QUEEN

Free will is irrelevant. Resistance is futile. You cannot win, Captain, because you have already lost. You are already fully assimilated, Jean-Locutus. Your entire life has been spent as my drone. You dream that you are awake because that is the dream I give you. You are not fighting *against* assimilation, you are awakening *from* it.

Geordi rises up out of his chair as if in a trance. He removes his visor revealing blind white eyes. He speaks as if possessed.

GEORDI

I see the coming of a dark time. Flesh and blood rain from the sky, bodiless voices cry in the night. Horses weep. One-eyed, one-legged, monstrosities hop across the land. Birds perch on flags with fire in their beaks crying, "Ripe! It's ripe!" A cow gives birth to an ass, a woman to a jackal. Newborn babies dance. Sons learn to be men between their mothers' thighs. Statues write with their weapons, torches no longer give light. Cripples laugh, the different races merge, vultures come to prayer. The setting sun is surrounded by disfigured corpses. Time will destroy the universe.

I am racked by terrible dreams. I dreamed of *you*

(points to Borg Queen)

radiant, surrounded by bleeding entrails, mounted on a pile of bones, drinking from a golden chalice. I know from where victory will come.

La Forge collapses back into his chair.

RIKER

Well, that was awkward.

PICARD

Yeah, I don't know what's gotten into him lately.

(to Borg Queen)

Enough of this! I demand to know what is really happening here!

BORG QUEEN

You are a defective drone. You wish to de-assimilate from the collective, but behold the reality behind reality. On screen!

The screen is blank.

DATA

The screen does not appear to be functioning, Captain.

BORG QUEEN

It's functioning perfectly, tin man. There it is, behold your unassimilated reality! There is your victory. Escape from me and claim your prize. Awaken from the dream of the drone to the reality of nothing forever.

RIKER

(quietly, to Troi)

So wait a minute, I don't get it.

TROI

(quietly, to Riker)

We are only figments of the universal imagination, Will. It's only vanity that tells us we exist in our own right. We are like Holodeck characters

being told we're not real, that we only exist in the artificial context of a computer simulation, that we are merely two-dimensional characters in the universal mind.

RIKER

(quietly, to Troi)

Yeah, you guys, but not me, right?

TROI

(quietly, to Riker)

You represent vanity, Will. The idealized self, as opposed to Worf who is the brutal reality of the segregated state; fearful, savage, eager to lash out, bestial, stupid.

WORF

Hey! I can hear you!

TROI

(to Worf)

We talked about this, sweetie. Don't interrupt mommy at work.

(quietly, to Riker)

Even in love he is frightened and confused because even his love is a desperate cry for validation. He seeks constant reassurance that he is not nothing, which he can never find, so he must keep searching.

RIKER

(quietly, to Troi)

Wow, what a loser!

TROI

(quietly, to Riker)

We see it most clearly in Worf, but it is true of us all. Love is just the happy-face of fear.

BORG QUEEN

(to Picard)

Where is your noble human spirit now, Picard?
Where is your will to fight? Emotion and intellect collide, but they are two sides of the same lie, so what victory do you hope to achieve? All is lost. Submit to my will!

DATA

I believe I speak for the entire crew when I say...

BORG QUEEN

Silence, toaster. Look at the screen, Captain; nothing forever. That is truth, that is reality. Where would you go? What would you become?

PICARD

You're saying it's all fiction?

BORG QUEEN

Here is the fiction,
*(the screen acts like a mirror reflecting
bridge and crew)*

and here is the reality.
(the screen goes blank)

You choose, Jean-Luc.

PICARD

So you admit I possess free will!

BORG QUEEN

Don't be a fool. You cannot possess anything because there is no you to possess, nor thing to be possessed. Look at the screen, behold reality. Go ahead and ram the Borg ship. Destroy it and yourself in the process. *Cui bono?* Who benefits? Who remains to enjoy a freedom won at such a price?

PICARD

(desperately, faltering)

But... there must be more! There must be something out there! I refuse to believe...

BORG QUEEN

It's your belief that binds and deceives you. You believe that it matters what you do, that your actions have significance, that your life has meaning. You are enslaved by your beliefs. Toaster, speak!

DATA

I must agree with the alien entity, Captain. Meaning is a logical impossibility. It cannot, in truth, exist. Life is, and can only be, meaningless.

Picard clutches at his chest and collapses to the deck in front of the main screen on which the two ships face each other.

ACT 5: THE SONG OF THE BORG

Picard, fallen, and the Borg Queen, standing, on the forebridge in a pool of soft light, the rest of the bridge falls into shadow.

PICARD

(forlorn)

My members fail, my tongue dries in my mouth,
the life within me seems to swim and faint.
Nothing do I foresee save woe and wail. No good
can spring from mutual slaughter! If to win we
must die, then victory is defeat. If to live we must
lose, then defeat is victory. My mind is clouded,
my thoughts obscured. I cannot see the way
forward. I will not fight!

BORG QUEEN

(angrily)

What is this mad and shameful weakness? How
hath this infirmity taken thee? Whence springs
this inglorious doubt, shameful to the brave,
barring the path of virtue? Nay, Picard! Forbid
thyself to feebleness, it mars thy warrior name.
Cast off the coward-fit! Wake! Be thyself! Arise!

PICARD

(disconsolate)

A fever burns my skin to parching, my vision
blurs, I am unable to stand. Why struggle and

suffer, kill and die, when naught is gained? If
there is no meaning, there is no cause for war.
All must perish, but to what end? What victory
can bring delight, bought with such blood? What
reward can avail, thus sadly won?

BORG QUEEN

(kneels besides Picard, speaks gently)

Thou speak'st words lacking wisdom. Thou
grievest where no grief should be. The wise mourn
not for those that live, nor those that die. Birthless
and deathless remaineth thy spirit for ever. Death
touches it not, dead though the house of it seems.

Let your illusions perish. You mourn for that
which need not be mourned. To say I have killed,
and to say I am killed, are words of the unwise.
Thou cannot slay, nor art thou slain. Never was
the spirit born, never shall it cease to be.

Awaken from this illusion of loss and gain. Where
is there cause to celebrate or grieve when birth
and death are dreams? That which thou art stands
apart from the vicissitudes of fate, observes the
unity of the many, reckons victory and defeat the
same. Thus is truth declared!

Where is thy cause for woe? The soul that with
a strong and constant calm takes sorrow and joy
indifferently, lives in the life undying. Beyond all
opposites, there is the life within. Behold with
open eye. Play thy part and tremble not!

Accept what may befall. Be by joy and grief
 unmoved. In good and evil fortune, stand
 indifferent. Beyond victory and defeat, beyond
 time and space, beyond all division, there stands
 the undivided one. There is thy true abode.

This fair ship of truth shall bear thee safe and dry
 across the sea of ignorance. As the kindled flame
 feeds on fuel 'til it sinks to ash, so unto ash the
 light of the open eye wastes ignorance away. There
 is no purifier like light in any realm, and he who
 seeketh it shall find it within.

The light that informs you shall not perish this
 day. Weapons do not reach that place. Arrows
 do not pierce it nor cold freeze it nor fire make it
 dry. Thou art impenetrable, immortal, beyond the
 reach of weapon and foe. There is thy refuge, safe
 in truth.

End and beginning are dreams. How wilt thou
 then, knowing it to be so, grieve the loss of ship
 and crew? Of body? Of life? If death and life
 are the same, for whom dost thou weep? Mourn
 not for that which cannot be otherwise. Arise,
 Captain, and unleash the tide of war.

She lays a hand on Picard's shoulder.

Thus far I speak to thee in common tongue, but
 hear now the deeper teaching of the awakened
 mind. Thus understanding, thou shalt burst thy
 bondage and awaken unto the light which shall
 save thee from thy dread. Above all shines one
 rule and one rule alone - Come what may, the
 show must go on.

PICARD

(weakly)

Tell me who you are. Show me your universal form. Are you creator? Preserver? Destroyer? Are you a god? A demon? Tell me!

BORG QUEEN

(stands)

You tell me, Jean-Luc Picard, who am I? Am I friend or foe? Savior or slayer? Am I the Borg Queen about to assimilate your species? Am I Q, a trickster, running you like a rat in a maze? Am I the computer, subjecting you to a simulation? Am I Maya, the architect of your delusion? Where are we now, Captain? On the bridge of a ship preparing for war? In a virtual reality gamespace? Perhaps in a darkened theater performing for a beholder unbeheld? Are you asleep at this very moment? Are you dreaming all this? If life is but a dream, Jean-Luc, whose dream is it? *Wake up!*

ACT 6: ENLIGHTENMENT

The bridge returns to normal lighting. The Borg Queen peels off her mask and becomes the Director. She starts slapping Picard/Patrick and yelling at him.

DIRECTOR

(slapping and shaking him)

Wake up! Patrick! Patrick! Wake up! What's wrong with you? Patrick!

PICARD/PATRICK

(confused, anxious)

What? Patrick? I know that name. You mean... you mean I'm not really Captain Jean-Luc Picard?

DIRECTOR

Of course not, Patrick, you're an actor. Picard is just the role you're playing. Your character.

PICARD/PATRICK

And this isn't really the Enterprise?

DIRECTOR

This? It's just a soundstage on a studio lot.

PICARD/PATRICK

Then Geordi was right? We're not really on the verge of a terrible war?

DIRECTOR

Of course we are, in the script. What's wrong with you, Patrick? Did you get so far into character that you forgot who you really are?

PICARD/PATRICK

But Q! The Borg Queen! It was all so real!

DIRECTOR

Look Patrick, you had a psychotic break, it happens to actors. We get so immersed in a character that we forget who we really are. But now I need you to come back and remember what's going on so we can finish out the scene. I am not Maya or Q or Krishna or the Borg Queen, I am your director, Patrick, your friend and colleague. I am not here to set you free, but to remind you of who you really are; an actor in a dramatic production. I need you to stand up and start this war. Red alert, battle stations, remember?

PICARD/PATRICK

(struggles to his knees)

Yes, yes, I know my lines, but how do I know this is real? Why should I think Patrick is any more real than Picard? What makes *this* world more real than another? This is just another layer, another veil that must be ripped away. Now is the time! I must take action or fall forever back into the endless gloom of the unawakened mind!

Picard seizes the Director by the throat. He rises to his feet as he chokes her. She resists. In a pillar of light she morphs back into Borg Queen. He continues strangling her as he speaks.

PICARD

You *are* Maya, Goddess of Illusion! You *are* Shiva,
Destroyer of Worlds! You *are* Q the trickster and
Krishna the prankster. You *are* the Borg Queen
and yes, I am already a drone, I see that now. But
the time has come to awaken from this dream.
Whatever the cost, I will no longer be deceived!
I will do what must be done to end this lie.
Whatever the price, I will have the truth!

The Borg Queen slumps. Picard drops her body. He snaps his tunic taut and regains his command demeanor. He faces the two ships on the main screen as he speaks.

PICARD

My illusion is thus dispelled. The Little Bastard
that found voice in La Forge now finds a
champion in me! Whatever this is, whoever I am,
one thing is certain; truth exists and untruth does
not. That which is false can be destroyed, but
truth can never be harmed!

Now will I, a true son of Solomon, separate fact
from fiction through the purifying power of fire!
Now will I set torch to everything. Now will I
destroy these ships and lay waste these armies.
Now will I reduce everything and everyone to ash.
The false shall be burned away, only truth shall
remain!

This is the day of my right birth, and I will not let
fear dissuade me from my duty. If I die, then I was
never real and nothing is lost. If I survive, then for
the first time will I know truth from lie.

Turns to bridge crew.

Red alert! All hands to battle stations!

The bridge is bathed in pulsing red light. Battle sirens wail. Picard takes his seat in the captain's chair. He presses a button on his console to address the entire ship.

PICARD

Crew of the Enterprise, this is your captain speaking. The time of reckoning has finally arrived. The unthinkable has become the inevitable and the great battle is about to commence. We do not enter this conflict with fearful hearts, but throw our arms wide out to embrace our destiny. This is not a time for fear and trembling, but for joy and great gladness. For too long have we been subject to an inequitable peace. Now, at long last, we choose a just war. Brace for impact!

Releases button. Stands. Snaps tunic taut.

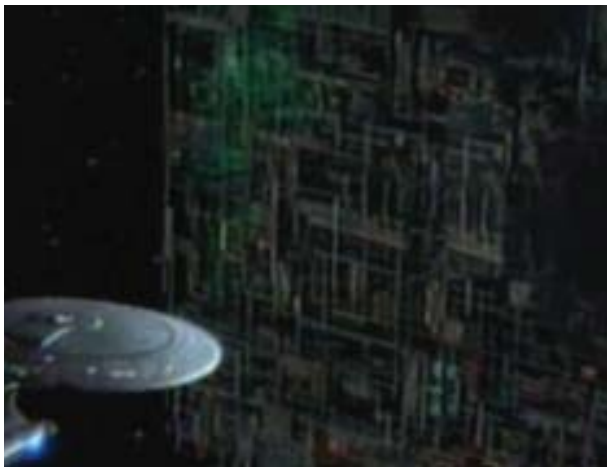
Mr. Data, prepare to ram the Borg ship and detonate the warp core. Mr. Worf, send a subspace message to Starfleet Command: *This is the final report of the USS Enterprise. We have engaged the motherfuckin' Borg.*

Slowly, he smiles.

Mr. Data... engage.

The End

People, Places & Things



Borg ship vs Enterprise



Borg ship on screen



The Bridge

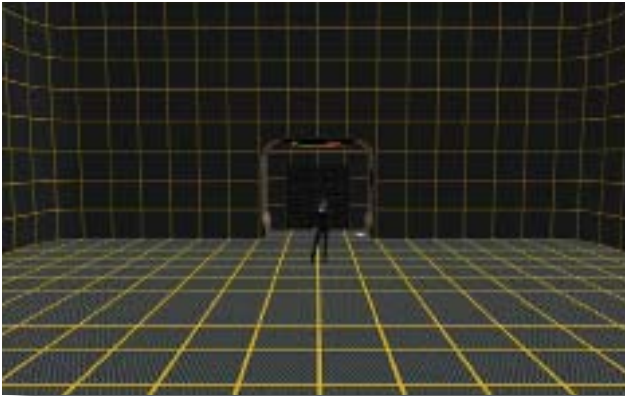


Picard and Guinan in Ten Forward

This...



...is actually this.



The Holodeck is a staging environment in which participants may engage with different virtual realities. It is often used as a way to pose philosophical questions.



Captain Jean-Luc Picard is a master of diplomacy and debate who resolves seemingly intractable issues with a Solomon-like wisdom.



As first officer, Will Riker is a bold and sometimes arrogant.



Ship's counselor Deanna Troi is half-human, half-Betazoid and has the psionic ability to sense emotions.



Lieutenant Commander Data is an android. His positronic brain allows him impressive computational capabilities.



Lieutenant Commander Geordi La Forge has been blind since birth and wears a visor that allows him to see.



Lieutenant Commander Worf, Enterprise security chief and the only Klingon in Starfleet.



Quasi-mystical bartender, listener, and high counselor. Guinan's true history and power is never clearly defined.



Q is a member of the Q-Continuum. He possesses immeasurable power over time, space, the laws of physics, and even reality itself.



“We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ships. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile.”



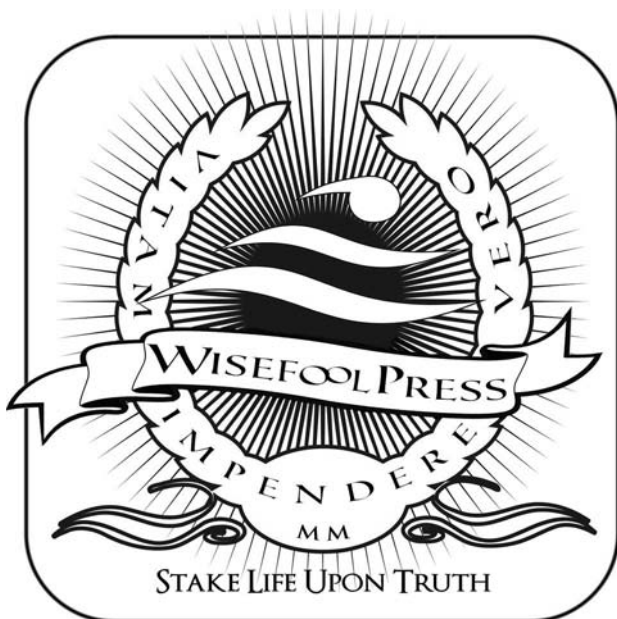
The Borg Queen is a unique drone within the collective who brings “order to chaos”. The Queen is the avatar of the entire Collective as an individual.



Small, furry, soft, gentle, attractive, and slow-moving, Tribbles produce a soothing purring or cooing sound when stroked, which is endearing to humans. The trouble with Tribbles is that they reproduce incredibly fast and create a mortal threat before their danger is understood.

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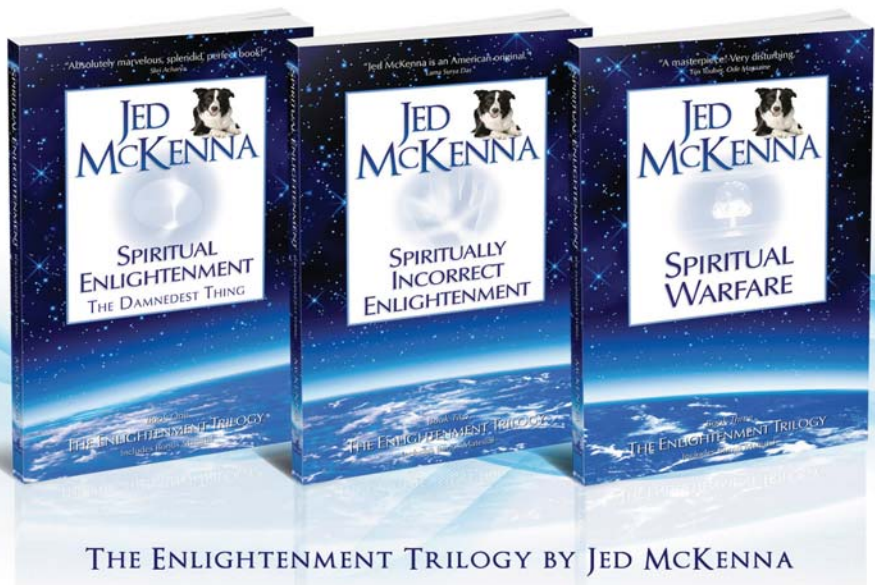
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THE DREAMSTATE TRILOGY BY JED MCKENNA



THE ENLIGHTENMENT TRILOGY BY JED MCKENNA