

Rejoicing As An Integer

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1220) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1220>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Star Trek: The Next Generation
Relationship:	Data/Geordi La Forge
Character:	Data , Geordi La Forge
Additional Tags:	First Kiss , Fluff , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of --holy the clocks in space--
Stats:	Published: 2023-12-08 Words: 3,690 Chapters: 1/1

Rejoicing As An Integer

by [NothingEnough](#)

Summary

"Enjoy, want, concern. Nothing Data was capable of experiencing, as Geordi had been told too many times to count. He still didn't quite believe it. He had no idea if that meant he was perceiving something no one else did, or if he was anthropomorphizing his friend. Maybe he'd never have an idea."

(Set after s4e25, originally published on ao3 on 28/01/2017.)

The turbolift carried them away from another hour passed on the holodeck. Geordi had convinced Data a week ago to give an Auguste Dupin story a try, pointing out that while there were nowhere near as many Dupin mysteries, their parentage of Holmes, and the change from England to France, might provide Data with a new sort of stimulus.

He had a feeling after tonight that Data was humoring him. He'd been... well, he didn't want to use the word "distracted", since that implied some kind of malfunction, but that was close. He seemed too eager to solve the mystery and end the session. But once it was solved, he spent a good four minutes explaining to a bewildered 19th-century Parisian police officer why it was biologically impossible for an orangutan to behave as portrayed in the story, and explicating the obviousness of naming the street the Rue Morgue. And he'd sometimes taken as long as a half-second before replying to Geordi, or to the holodeck characters.

Maybe he *was* malfunctioning. Data didn't usually have that kind of lag time. Or maybe, and Geordi could just hear the Commander's objections now, maybe he didn't enjoy Dupin, wanted it to be over with, and was too concerned for Geordi's good time to say so.

Enjoy, want, concern. Nothing Data was capable of experiencing, as Geordi had been told too many times to count. He still didn't quite believe it. He had no idea if that meant he was perceiving something no one else did, or if he was anthropomorphizing his friend.

Maybe he'd never have an idea.

Usually Data got chatty after a holodeck session, discussing how he might behave in a more human fashion the next time around, or the facets of human relationships he pretended at so well but professed to misunderstand. Now the turbolift doors opened and Data had yet to say a word. Geordi wasn't sure Data had even blinked once during the trip.

"You okay?"

Data tilted his head, righted it again. "Of course. Why would I not be?"

"I'm just saying, maybe you need to run a self-diagnostic. You're acting a little..." Geordi shrugged, the shoulders of his Dupin's Unnamed Friend's suit straining with the motion. Didn't quite fit him, not like the Watson suit. "Never mind. This is my stop. I'll see you to--"

"May I walk you to your quarters?"

Geordi's eyebrows rose, then narrowed against the warmed metal of the top of the VISOR. This was, well, outside the parameters of Data's expected behavior, and his friend wasn't the kind of person who functioned well in those circumstances. Something was up. Let it play out. If Data was malfunctioning, he was best off in the company of the Chief Engineer. "Sure...?"

Data nodded, "hm"ed, and stepped off the turbolift. Geordi followed. He watched each slight move of the android's body as he walked slightly ahead, looking for signs of any potential issues. His thermal vision suggested Data was running slightly hotter than usual. His motion sensors detected only the slightest change in Data's walk-cycle, something he couldn't pin down.

He thought, and the noise from his VISOR drifted from his usual focus to bands of light normally reserved for mantis shrimp and Erigaths, revealing colors Geordi could never explain to any of the crew. He saw stress-fissures in something very similar to blue running along the walls, indicating points where, some decades in the future, the ship's structures would break down. An officer passed them by, their skin a rainbow of impossible colors (they were a chimera), their hair a network of gems, the tricorder in their hands a delicate construct, nearly invisible. In this light, every fault was revealed--he'd once detected a flaw in the warp core by peering into this band and seeing the problem, a cloud of sick not-white against the pure not-black of dilithium crystals.

He hated staring into it too long because it felt like everything breaking and dying around him.

He looked at Data, briefly, and saw the seams along which Data's skull opened. Slight chips and flaws in his skin, invisible and near-pink and unrepairable. He saw the energy coursing through Data's positronic matrix as a color beautifully dark and eternally shifting like smoke. And... nothing. Not a thing wrong with him.

Geordi thought and his awareness sunk back into the expected rainbow of thermal/UV imaging. The slight nausea passed, and he nearly bumped into Data, who had paused outside Geordi's quarters.

"Sorry," Geordi mumbled, pulling at his string tie.

"I apologize for failing to anticipate your movements," said Data. He stood there, completely still. Not blinking. Staring.

"O... kay. You're fine, Data." Geordi glanced at his own front door. Back at the android. Standing and staring. "You are fine, aren't you?"

"I am, yes."

"Good. That's good. Well, I'll see you tomorrow. I get off at 2300, so if you want to m--"

Data moved so fast his VISOR registered it as a fuzzing rainbow blur and then the pressure on Geordi's lips told him what happened and oh. Oh. This was happening.

Data leaned against him and all that plastisteel weighted him back and Geordi felt his back slam against his own door but all he really felt was the pressure of thin warmth, the pressure of, well, when you broke it down, plastic and metals and silicons against carbon and hydrogen and oxygen, and oh, this was happening and then the pressure vanished.

Data stepped back. His face was a zero.

"Something hit the ship," said Geordi, "modify the phase variance on the shields."

"You are incorrect, Geordi. Perhaps you are not feeling well. I will help you into your quarters."

"Yeah. You do that." Geordi touched a hand to his own lips. Cupped over his mouth as he flicked out his tongue. He tasted something vaguely reminiscent of rubber. "... we need to talk."

He stepped up to his door. It slid open. In he walked, the steady, predictable footfalls of the android behind him. A few seconds later, he heard it shut. He ignored it. He half-stumbled to the nearest appropriate surface--in this case, the sofa--and fell, rather than sat, down.

"Was my technique too aggressive?" asked Data.

Geordi spread his hands over his face, and rested his elbows on his knees. He heard his friend move across his room, 19th-century hard-heeled shoes barely muted against thin, flexible carpeting. A pause, then the creak of the chair across from the sofa accepting Data's weight.

"Perhaps you feel the timing was off," said Data. Whatever had made him hesitant and silent before, it didn't stop him now. "My understanding of human romantic interactions are that a certain amount of time, depending on the individuals involved, must elapse before it is appropriate to express affections with a kiss. Generally, the third date is agreed on as being an appropriate time to attempt the maneuver. Tonight was our fifth date, and I therefore concluded you were waiting for me to 'take the initiative', but I may have--"

"Data!" The name blurred against the palms of Geordi's hands. At least it shut the android up for a second. Geordi kept thinking a vulgar word more commonly verbalized by sailors five centuries past. How did... what was... did he... but then...

His head murdered him. The surprise of it all--Data being, for all his supposed reliance on programming, spontaneous was just the first of many surprises--augmented the VISOR-fueled headache into something monstrous. He hated doing this when he wasn't about to sleep, but he had to quell the agony somehow. His fingers curled around the edge of the VISOR. He slid it out of place. The last thing he saw was Data's face affecting something like concern and then the pain retreated along with his vision.

He set the VISOR on his lap. Sighed. Tilted his head back.

Very quietly, he heard Data speak. "I did not merely miscalculate the right moment for a kiss. I miscalculated the nature of our friendship. We are not dating, are we?"

"... I didn't think we were, no. Usually, people talk about it before they date. At least once."

"But we have. Fifteen days ago, in Ten Forward. I asked you--"

He let Data ramble, but Geordi tuned him out. He knew the story. Data had just been dumped by Jenna. Data had, for reasons known only to himself, asked Geordi what had gone awry with his romantic program. What mystical quality about "dating" he'd missed. Geordi'd tried to describe what dating was, while not admitting that he himself had been on exactly six dates in his entire life, all of which had been first-and-last dates. And at some point, Data had given him that pensive look, eyes darting from side to side, and he'd observed that Geordi's description

of dating sounded much like the relationship he and Geordi now had. The engineer had laughed, shrugged, and said maybe Data was right.

And that stupidly clever brain of his had busily filled in all the gaps.

"... to try and take it, metaphorically, to the next level. However, it is now clear I have seriously violated your boundaries, and potentially, hurt our friendship. I apologize, Geordi."

"What are you talking about?" The pain was fading fast, and he could finally, really focus on the conversation.

"I said I violated your boundaries."

"It was just a kiss, Data. It's not like you slugged me. Punched me, before you ask."

"Still, within the context of a friendship, a kiss of that nature should, by typical social expectations, be requested, not taken. I should have considered that, even if we were in a romantic relationship, you may not desire a kiss, now or at any point in the future." Geordi heard the spare whisper of artificial flesh on flesh, and imagined Data briefly dry-washing his hands. "I did not, which was unfair to you."

"Well, why didn't you calculate it?"

Pause. A natural pause for a human. Infinitely too long for Data. "I am uncertain."

"Did you reload your romantic program?"

"No, Geordi. I deleted it. I cannot recover it."

"Did you write a new one for this..." Geordi gesticulated vaguely, pointing the VISOR at he knew not what. "For this new relationship?"

"No. I believe my failure to compose an appropriate program for Jenna is indicative of a generalized failure to write a program appropriate for a relationship with any biological organism."

"So you studied. And you waited. And when you thought the time was right, you..." His surprise, faded along with the pain, was replaced by something he didn't expect. Geordi grinned. "You kissed me. Out of the blue."

"Not at all, Geordi. I premeditated doing so before we met at 1845."

Now he laughed, and he could just imagine the look of puzzlement on his friend's otherwise-stoic face. "I thought you were having some kind of breakdown. But you were... you were just nervous!"

"I am incapable of feeling nervousness."

"Don't toy with me, Data!"

"I would not--"

"You were nervous about kissing me!"

"I had considered the possibility that you would be repelled by my technique, or displeased with the texture or flavor of my lips, which are not precise duplications of their human equivalents."

"Right, you considered it."

"Yes."

"For over an hour."

"Yes."

"About whether or not I might end up rejecting you."

"Yes."

"How is that not being nervous?"

"I have been previously rejected, Geordi. In that light, I would consider my behavior entirely rational."

Suddenly, the situation didn't tickle Geordi quite as much. He felt the smile vanish from his face and his thoughts.

"Ultimately, I was postulating using a set of facts which proved to be incorrect. I apologize for my mistake. With respect to our friendship, I would strongly suggest we agree that this was an unfortunate incident, and it is not to be repeated. I am certain you will find the rest of your friends will find it as amusing as you have--Commander Riker, in particular--but I request we not discuss it any further."

Okay, wait, wait. Maybe Geordi *was* anthropomorphizing Data. Reading emotions that weren't there into his stilted speech patterns. But he'd been listening to that voice for over four years. He could hear the difference between Data On The Job and Data Holmes and Data The Actor and His Friend Data. And he heard something in that voice. Peevishness, almost. Embarrassment? Like he was extraordinarily ready to be out from under this conversation.

He heard Data stand up. Geordi almost stood up himself. The VISOR slipped off his lap. He tried to catch it, and fumbled it onto the carpeting.

“Allow me.”

That gave him the two seconds he needed. He heard Data’s knees on the carpeting as he picked up the VISOR and Geordi said: “Just because we weren’t dating doesn’t mean we can’t.”

“I do not understand your meaning.”

“I’m not rejecting you, is my meaning. I... this is all very sudden. I’d never thought of you as a potential... well, a potential partner. But, you know, just because I hadn’t thought of it before, doesn’t... I’m thinking about it now.”

A hand capable of crushing his own to a pulp gently enveloped his wrist. The android pressed the VISOR into Geordi’s grasp. He balanced the VISOR in each hand and held it back up to his face. The headache would be worth seeing what the hell was going on with Data.

The visual world turned from nothingness to its expected rainbow. Data knelt on the floor before him. His face, a landscape of reds with bluish tinges over the cheeks and throat, looked... well, if Geordi made that face, he’d be taken for nervous. The slight worry-line between his eyebrows, the edge of a frown.

Geordi patted the sofa-cushion next to him. “Sit down.”

Data obeyed. He sat far enough away to avoid even accidental physical contact. His hands folded into a tight shelter over one knee.

“Look, Data. I’m not really much of a dater.”

“I formulated that hypothesis based on the evidence, Geordi, but I lacked the evidence to prove it, as well as the opportunity to create an experiment.”

“Well, there’s your answer. I don’t date. When I do, it goes badly. A lot of the time, it hurts. When it goes wrong, that is. But sometimes... I’m glad. I’ve never really thought of myself as a relationship kind of guy. I’m happier working on the warp core or solving some puzzle with the computer than I am trying to win over a partner.”

“Then what would cause you to suggest the possibility of dating me?”

“Because...” Geordi shrugged and cleared his throat. “Because you’re different.”

“Do you refer to my identity as a male, or do you refer to my being an artificial life form?”

“Neither? I don’t think? It’s just... you’re my friend. We’re already close. I’d rather spend time with you than work on the engine, and that’s saying a lot. Trust me.”

“You have performed repairs on me, just as you have with the ship.”

“Yeah, but I’m not saying you’re attractive because you’re an object, you’re not an object. It’s that I already care about you. I get why you thought we were dating. You were right. Everything we do together, how we treat each other, we’re pretty much a couple already. And it might be time for us to, yeah, take the next step.”

Data considered that for a much shorter period of time. “I feel it is prudent to disregard my previous research into the topic. I am, therefore, uncertain as to the nature of the next step.”

“Well, what do you want out of a romantic relationship with me?”

“Precisely what we have at the present time, with one exception. We would increase our level of physical interaction to include more contact, including sexual encounters.”

If Geordi hadn’t put his VISOR back on, he’d have dropped it in shock. This was possibly the best news he’d heard since he listened to the message welcoming him to Starfleet Academy. This was the kind of moment to be immortalized in song and epic poetry. He cupped his hands over his uncontrollable wide smile. “You. Want. To have sex.”

“No, Geordi. I do not want--”

“You wanted our relationship to become romantic, but the only difference would be if we had sex. You want to have sex with me.”

“That is an emotional characterization of my assessment.”

“Sssh. Let me have this one. Nobody’s ever wanted to have sex with me before, not that much.”

“That cannot be accurate.”

“I’ve had sex twice in my life.”

“Then you have had sexual intercourse twice as often as I.”

Geordi uttered a sound somewhere between a laugh and a bawk. “Here, but look, it’s not like I’ve been dying for it. I’m not a very sexual guy, either, it’s not just dating. I like it, but it’s not my number one goal when I date. Or even on the top ten list.”

“If you would prefer we not have sex, I will accept less intense forms of physical affection.”

“Maybe we will. But not tonight, and probably not for a while. I’ve gotta get my head around this before I’m ready for, uh, for that.”

Data nodded once. "Then I will leave you to consider--"

"Not yet."

That knocked Data for a loop; finally, Geordi wasn't the only one stunned by this conversation. His head tilted in a processing jerk twice before he spoke. "What is it you require?"

Geordi grinned. He reached out. The rich glow of his hand interfered with the crisper heat from Data's face. His fingers cradled his friend's jaw. "I require some of that less intense physical affection."

This marked the first occasion in Geordi La Forge's life where he initiated a kiss successfully; later, he'd wonder how he could mess such a simple thing up so frequently, and then, get it right on the first try.

He leaned in and Data angled his head as though processing what was happening and his lips met his friend's and there was no shock this time, no surprise, there was time to get acquainted. That flavor of something non-organic, kind of like rubber and kind of like copper but too pleasant for either, absorbed his attention first. Then the texture of Data's lips, like the texture of his hair and his skin, almost human but not quite, and Geordi zeroed in on the not-quite--the smoothness of lips that never chapped or burned, the warmth of his skin chosen precisely for Geordi's comfort, the rough of his fingertips against Geordi's throat, fingertips which would never wrinkle or scar.

He pressed deeper and Data's mouth opened, he didn't know what part of Data's programming led to that reaction, his tongue urged between those deathless lips and now he tasted warm liquid silicon. Tasted better than he thought it would. Rich. Earthy. Almost sweet.

He heard a soft sound and understood after a moment that Data had vocalized. It sounded like no other vocalization Data had ever produced.

He caught the tip of Data's tongue with his own and he heard that *sound* again and he knew--unscientific, sure, but right now he was barely a thinking human, much less a scientist--he knew. Data's erotic subroutines were too advanced to result in a sound resembling a misfiring of his vocal center, a stuttering *d-d-d-d-d!*.

It wasn't a moan Soong installed in his creation. It wasn't a new program designed for Geordi's benefit. That was just Data. Moaning like an android. Because of him.

The thought blew out of the back of Geordi's head like a bullet. He pulled back. He saw his friend remain still for a moment, mouth still open, tongue curled in anticipation, eyes wide open. Then his tongue vanished back where it belonged and his mouth clicked shut. He straightened up. Pursed his lips.

"I will develop an array of vocalizations more pleasing to the human ear," Data said. "That was a momentary glitch related to the sudden increase of sensory information, and from your reaction, it was not a pleasing one."

"Don't you dare fix what's not broken." His other hand moved to Data's face. He couldn't stop smiling. He'd accomplished so many firsts tonight, he might as well add one more to the list; he used a phrase he'd never found occasion to say in all honesty before. "That was kind of hot."

Data blinked. Then blinked again. "You found a malfunction of mine to be erotically exciting?"

"Yes. And I can't wait for you to malfunction like that again." Geordi kissed his friend's forehead. "Tomorrow?"

"Why are you unwilling to do so tonight?"

"Anticipation, Data, is one of the greatest, underappreciated parts of the romantic experience. You remember how--" Geordi almost said *you felt*, but that would start him on a tangent he didn't want to run down right now "--how you experienced our date tonight? How you kept thinking about what would happen at the end of it?"

"My memory system is fully intact and operational."

"Now think of that, only instead of wondering if I'll reject you, knowing that I'll accept you."

"... ah. I can perceive that the same experience, now focused on a positive outcome, will have positive effects."

"Same for me."

"We agree, then." Data stood up, pulling out of reach so quickly that Geordi's hands brushed down his chest as he moved. "Geordi?"

"Yeah?"

"I do not care for the Dupin mysteries. While I have nothing against Edgar Allen Poe as a writer, I do not find his detective as engaging as Holmes. May we find a different scenario to enact tomorrow?"

"Yeah. We'll enact dinner at my place. I'll get the silicon suspension if you'll get some decent wine from Ten-Forward."

Data "hm"ed, nodded, and moved to the door. As the door slid open, Geordi finally realized what had been different in Data's walk-cycle earlier, because it was back.

He had a little spring in his step.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!