

## Cat Puberty

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/538) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/538>.

Rating:	<a href="#">General Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: The Next Generation</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Data</a> , <a href="#">Geordi La Forge</a> , <a href="#">William Riker</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Humor</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-04-18 Words: 936 Chapters: 1/1

## Cat Puberty

by [jamaharon](#)

### Summary

How exactly does Spot change from a male Somali to a male tabby to a female tabby, back to a male again in time for ST: Picard?

Only Riker and Geordi know the truth, and neither of them is going to tell.

Geordi was supervising a sonic generator replacement when Commander Riker walked into Engineering holding a shoebox.

“Commander La Forge,” he said pleasantly, with just a hint of steel in his voice. His eyes flashed, silently indicating that he and Geordi should go somewhere a little more private.

“Sir,” said Geordi. He led Riker a few meters down, closer to the warp core, where the low hum of energy would hide their voices. “Can I help you?”

“I’m here to request a favor,” said Riker. He set the shoebox down on the nearest flat surface, pushing a wrench to the floor in the process. Looking somewhat frazzled, he searched Geordi’s face. “You do regular system maintenance on Commander Data.”

“Yes...” said Geordi.

“Well, I need you to do some right now. Today.”

Geordi hesitated. “I wasn’t aware Data *needed* any maintenance,” he said. Subtly, he used his VISOR to check Riker’s vital signs for anything ... weird.

“He doesn’t,” said Riker, voice clipped. “But you’re going to give it to him anyway. I need you to alter his database.”

“I don’t think I can do that, sir,” said Geordi firmly, his skin crawling now. “Sir, are you feeling alright? Can I escort you to sick—”

Riker shoved a handheld PADD into Geordi’s hands. Glancing down at the screen, Geordi saw the exact parameters for Riker’s alterations.

“You want me to... change his memory about cats?” said Geordi slowly.

“If that’s acceptable,” said Riker stiffly. He was rubbing his thumb against his forefinger in a nervous gesture, and only now did Geordi notice that the back of Riker’s hair was sticking up. “Specifically, I need you to make Data believe that when a Somali housecat reaches three years of age, it undergoes...”

“Puberty?” Geordi suggested, raising one eyebrow.

“Puberty,” Riker accepted with a weary shrug. “Which turns it into a short-haired American tabby.”

Geordi glanced down at the screen again. “An *orange* American tabby,” he read.

“Yes,” said Riker faintly.

They stared at each other for a long moment, one of them pleading, the other unimpressed.

"I don't know what kind of prank this is..." Geordi started.

Riker stepped closer, lowering his voice. "Geordi, you know this isn't a prank," he said quietly and fiercely. There was so much sincerity in his voice that Geordi hesitated. "I'm asking you a favor. As a friend, as *Data's* friend."

"It's unethical, sir. I can't just change his memory without—"

Riker turned away. He squared his shoulders. When he spoke, it was with the cool steel of command on his tongue.

"Open the shoebox, Geordi," he said.

Geordi almost protested. But there was little point. He used his light-pen to tip the shoebox's lid onto the tabletop, exposing the contents inside.

He squeaked.

"Is that...?"

"Spot," said Riker, his shoulders wilting.

"*You killed Spot?*"

Riker whirled around, looking more deeply wounded than the time a visiting musician insulted his jazz. "I didn't *kill* him! I found him like that."

"But how...?"

"I didn't stop to perform an autopsy," said Riker, crossing his arms tight over his chest in what looked like a self-hug. He took a hesitant step closer to the cardboard coffin. "Well, okay, I brought him to Doctor Crusher and she performed an autopsy. He was in the hydroponics lab when I found him."

Geordi groaned. "There are lilies in there. Cats can't eat lilies. They'll die."

Riker thinned his lips. Carefully, he covered the shoebox again and hid the cat from sight. "Beverly did a full work-up," he said grimly. "Stims, regeneration, antitoxins. There was nothing to be done."

"God," Geordi breathed. "It'll break Data's heart."

Riker nodded. He gave Geordi an expectant look, one eyebrow raised.

"But it's still unethical," Geordi said.

"Yes."

"Captain Picard would *not* approve."

"No," Riker agreed, but he glanced down at the shoebox and fidgeted, his eyes skittering away. "But are *you* going to tell Data?"

...Fuck no.

Geordi tapped his combadge with a sigh.

"Commander Data," he said wearily, "I think it's time for some maintenance."

He listened to Data's cheerful response with his features set in a death-like mask. When Data signed off, Geordi and Riker looked each other up and down, bracing themselves like they were going into battle.

"Thank you," said Riker, his voice guarded.

"Don't thank me," said Geordi. He pushed out another sigh. "Just tell me one thing."

"Oh?"

"Where the hell did you get a *replacement* cat?"

Riker gave a helpless one-shouldered shrug. "Lieutenant Worf runs Klingon cock-fights on the holodeck. He trains the cats to kill." He rolled his sleeve up and showed Geordi the deep gashes clawed into his flesh. "I had one hell of a time getting it into Data's room."

"Oh man. And Spot's always been so friendly..."

"I think we'll find that puberty also turns Somali housecats into aggressive little hellions," said Riker.

Geordi nodded. He hesitated, eyes darting toward the shoebox.

"And it has to be orange because...?"

Riker threw his hands up. "Next time I'll clone the damn thing, okay? Are you done interrogating me?"

Geordi sighed. "I guess..."

"Good." Riker snatched up the shoebox-coffin with a glare. "Thank you. Because I have to go toss Data's beloved cat out of the airlock now—"

Data rounded the corner just in time to catch that sentence, his eyebrows furrowed. Riker blanched, but caught himself quickly.

"—*which is a very archaic Terran idiom,*" he said loudly, "which means, '*Good luck with maintenance, Commander Data!*'"

"Thank you, sir," said Data. He watched Riker go with a blink, then turned to Geordi, his head cocked. "I learn new idioms every day," he said.

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