

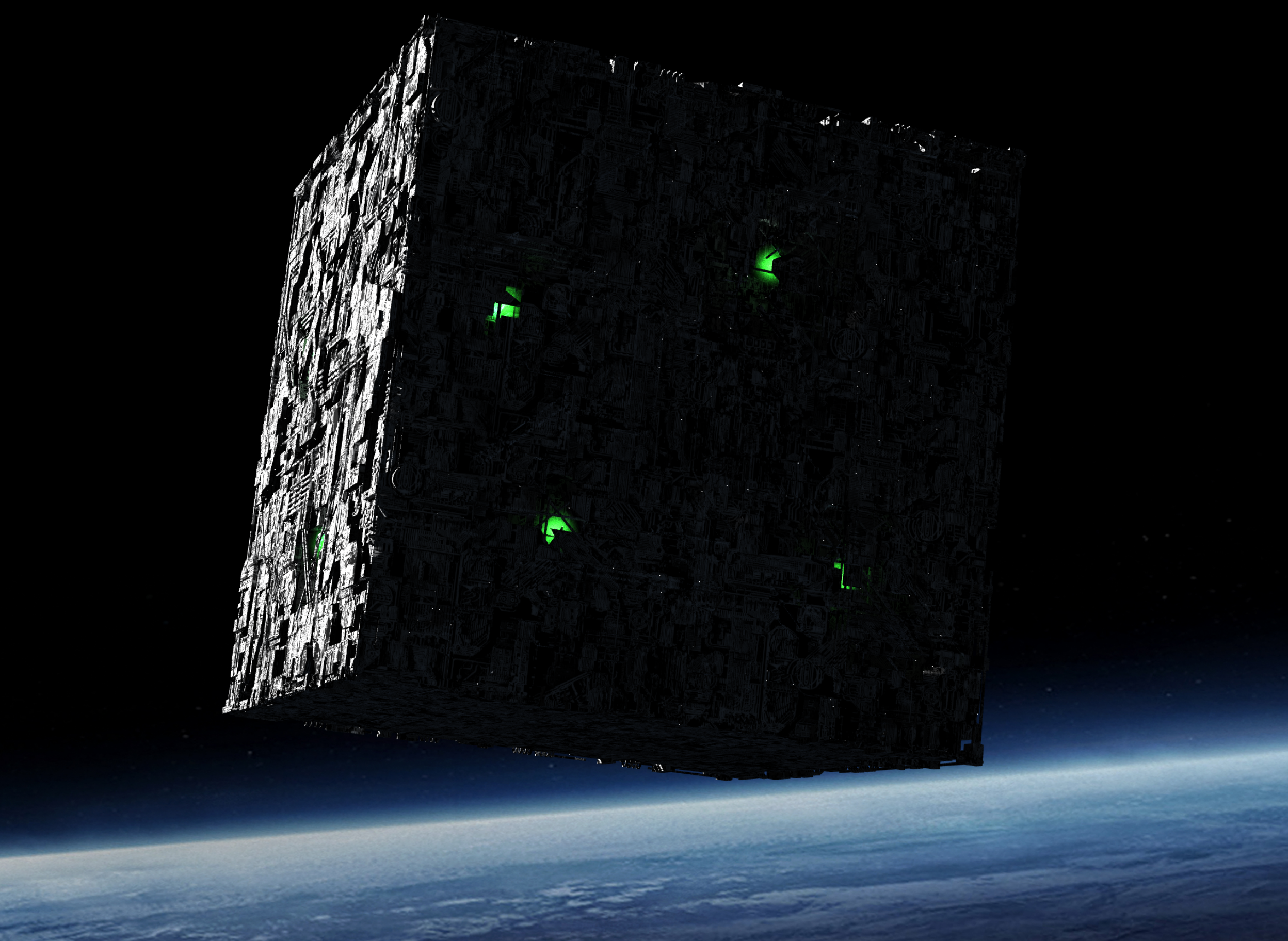
— WE HAVE —  
**ENGAGED**  
THE BORG

**THE ORAL HISTORY OF  
THE BATTLE OF WOLF 359**



**ANDY POULASTIDES & ERIC V. MUIRHEAD**





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# TIMELINE

Beginning with New Providence's founding  
until the 2396 decommissioning of USS *Hood*

## LINEAR COLOR KEY

Galactic Events

USS *Enterprise-D* Events

Borg Incursion

2123

New Providence Colony founded on Jouret IV

## PRELUDE

Historical context to Wolf 359

2293

SS *Lakul* destroyed by energy ribbon, Starfleet first made officially aware of 'Borg'

2311

Tomed Incident — Romulans retreat behind Neutral Zone

2332

Romulans first encounter "Borg"

2343

*Galaxy* class Development Project launched

2350

"Project Corvidae" authorized by Starfleet Intelligence

2363

USS *Enterprise-D* launched

2364

- First encounter with "Q"
- Romulans re-establish contact with Federation reporting missing colonies

2366

The destruction of New Providence  
and the acquisition of Locutus

- Taela Shanathi becomes CINC Starfleet
- Qo-Lan Amitra Sib'xau inaugurated as President

•42761.3

- Q flings 1701-D to J-25, first encounter with Borg
- Admiral Hanson recruits Lt. Cmdr. Shelby to Starfleet Tactical

2365

43997.05

- USS *Lalo* destroyed by Borg
- President briefed about Borg threat

- Crimson Tacit issued, Starfleet recalled to Sol System

- President addresses Federation, "We Must Negotiate" speech

- Hanson and Ross present plan to stop Borg at Wolf 359

- Force of 40 starships assembled and deployed to Wolf 359 system

43975.2

CONTACT LOST WITH NEW PROVIDENCE COLONY

43992.6

- *Enterprise* dispatched to investigate loss of contact with New Providence, Confirm presence of Borg
- USS *Zelensky* joins *Enterprise* over survey of Jouret IV
- *Enterprise* offloads non-essential personnel to Starbase 157

43997.2

- *Enterprise* engages Borg, Picard is hailed directly and ordered to surrender himself
- *Enterprise* flees into Paulson Nebula

43999.8

- *Enterprise* forced to leave Nebula, is engaged by Borg, Picard is taken

44001.4

- *Enterprise* engages Borg ship and attempts to rescue Picard, discovers he has been assimilated
- *Enterprise* fires modified deflector pulse at Borg to no effect, ship is crippled, Borg head towards Earth

44001.6

- USS *Ferrik* diverted to path of Borg cube with information suggesting secret base in Wolf 359, ship is assimilated
- Task force assembles in Wolf 359 System and deploys
- President Amitra and elected officials evacuated to Janus IV



## 44002.3 • 2367

### The Battle of Wolf 359 and Sector 001 Invasion

44002.3

#### BORG ARRIVE AT WOLF 359

44002.350

- 30 minutes after first contact, all Federation ships are destroyed

*Enterprise* arrives at Wolf 359 12 hours behind Borg cube

USS *Excalibur* engages Borg to delay ships arrival to Earth

*Enterprise* engages Borg for third time, is successful in seizing Locutus, Cube resume course for Earth

- Starfleet orders fleet to disperse into Oort cloud and awaits cube's arrival
- Sol Defense League activated
  - Borg ship arrives in Sector 001, destroys SDL Ships

*Enterprise* arrives in Sol System, attempts to access Borg collective via Locutus

#### BORG SHIP IS DESTROYED BY INTERNAL CASCADE FAILURE

44012.3

- *Enterprise* ordered to McKinley Station for repairs

2396

USS *Hood* formally decommissioned  
at Wolf 359 Memorial Station

2376

- Wolf 359 Memorial Station officially opened
- Remains of ships previously removed from system for evaluation (including *Ahwahee* and *Kaneda*) are returned

2373-75

## DOMINION WAR

50058.9

- Min Zife inaugurated as President

50893.5

- Second Borg Incursion

2371

Shanthi Returns as  
CINC of Starfleet

2370

- USS *Hood* formally returns to service following extensive reconstruction and testing

47538.5

- USS *Defiant* launched from Antares shipyards

48650.1

- USS *Enterprise* declared total loss following Veridian III mission

2369

## KLINGON CIVIL WAR

2368

- Starfleet authorizes deployment of *Straal*-class orbital facility to Wolf 359 to assist with salvage operations
- Shanthi Resigns as C-in-C
- Jaresh-Inyo inaugurated as President

44152.6

- J.L. Picard cleared to return to active service
- *Enterprise* leaves Sol System after six month refit

44038.1

Fleet arrives in Wolf 359 led by USS *Endeavour*

## POST-WOLF 359 &amp; ONWARD

Salvage, recovery, and Incursion-related aftermath



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BOLARIUS

USS HOOD • RECOVERED

BENZAR

SOL

WOLF 359

ANDORIA

JOURET

NEW  
PROVIDENCE  
COLONY

PAULSON NEBULA

THE CORRIDOR

4091

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0045

9932

12122





## CHAPTER 2

# NEW PROVIDENCE

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# INTERLUDE

SOL STATION

Stardate 73361.3 – 2396



The recycled air is cool on my face as I walk through Sol Station towards *Hood's* berth; I find it refreshing and comforting. Given the early hour, the lights are dimmed, and hallways largely untravelled. Despite the dock being in constant operation throughout the 24 hours of Earth's day below, circadian rhythms are observed and the station feels like I am the sole occupant of the facility.

Today's event is the culmination of several years of planning and the subject of no small amount of controversy. When Starfleet announced that the *Hood* would be decommissioned there was a particularly nasty fight between the Smithsonian, Fleet Museum, and about a half dozen other institutions that wanted to welcome the ship into their collections. In the end, the final resting place for *Hood* was obvious: she would return to Wolf 359 and stand sentinel over the ships and souls that remain there.

I exit the turbolift and walk along the short corridor towards *Hood's* berth. There are more people here making preparations for her departure; young fresh-faced ensigns and crewmen pass me by as they go about their assignments, off to ensure that *Hood* is ready to leave on time. Most – if not all – are too young to have even been born when the Borg first came. They will never know the Federation that existed before; it feels like it was another lifetime, or something out of a holonovel.

The interface over the departure lounge reads "USS *HOOD* (NCC-42296) - Departure 11:00 UTC." Glancing at my own chrono, I see it is almost 07:00, far too early to go aboard, so I decide to go and find a seat in one of the adjacent lounges. I turn to leave, but striding towards me with a wide smile on his face is a man whose name is forever linked to the *Hood* and the events of Wolf 359: Admiral Robert DeSoto.



"Well, it's good to know I'm not the only one who can't read a chrono," he says as he clasps my hand. His smile is warm and welcoming, and he wears the gray and red uniform of a Starfleet admiral despite his retirement – as is his right.

"Admiral," I say warmly with genuine delight to see him. It is thanks to DeSoto I have been allowed to attend such an auspicious event.

He raises a finger in mock warning. "Now, we have been over this; it's Robert. Even if I wasn't retired, you get to call me Robert. So, have you been aboard?"

"No, I just arrived; I was finishing my introduction across the way," I say, gesturing in the vague direction of the adjacent pier.

"You've finished? That's fantastic; I hope you'll allow me a sneak peak?"

There is a glint of mischief in the admiral's eye. He knows how much I dislike putting my voice forward alongside those who lived through the Borg Incursion. But it was largely through his prompting that I agreed to add an introduction to the work, so I nod and confirm with "Of course."

"Speaking of sneak peaks...what do you say? Shall we go aboard?" Once again there is that glint of mischief in his eye.

"I-I, er – I don't want to get in the way," I start to stammer, but the admiral is already walking.

"Oh I'm sure Brad won't mind. After all, I recommended him for the command!" he says with a wink.

He leads me back around towards the *Hood's* departure lounge, where a large number of chairs and holorecorders are arrayed and a podium is set up at the front. As we enter the vestibule before the airlock, a pair of ensigns walk past us wide-eyed and quickly return to whatever duty they are performing.

The large circular door opens, leading to the clear connecting tube. We walk across into the dock itself – I find there is always a small moment of vertigo as my sense of scale is thrown off. Despite their modest size – compared to, say, a *Ross* or *Galaxy*-class ship – the *Excelsiors* are still massive to behold, and we make our way to the *Hood's* outer airlock door.

The admiral steps aboard and turns to face me. "Permission to come aboard?" I ask almost hesitantly.

"Granted," he says with a grin.

I step across the threshold, and onto the *Hood*...

## EL'RIK ZH'UHEAD

SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH

Stardate 72533.2 - 2395

*Captain Zh'uhead leads us from G&G to the maglev, which runs under the city and connects Starfleet Command with the academy and its spaceport. After a brief ride, we arrive at the Marin Headlands north of the Golden Gate Bridge and Starfleet Academy's campus. We head into sh'Rothress Hall which houses the Department of History. Down a tiled hallway filled with model starships from centuries past and around the corner from an arms room housing the Starfleet Security Historical Weapons Collection, we find Zh'uhead's office.*

You ever seen a tornado?

♦ No, I grew up on Cestus III.

[chuckling] Yeah, me either. The weather control system on Andoria is just as effective as the ones here on Earth. Weather was always either clear and sunny or a gentle, crisp snow; the climate engineers never let any thunderstorms develop to the point they could get really dangerous. Good thing, too! When I started transitioning, I couldn't stand the humidity homeworld storms brought with them, and here my great-great-zhethen would talk about ice cyclones that spat out *hailstones* the size of balls they use in parrises squares!

[He searches through a stack of papers on a bookshelf. Then, he pulls out a folded paper star map that looks like it was issued to a cadet 30 years ago. Zh'uhead grabs a PADD stylus and points to the area of space at the intersection of the Federation, Klingon, and Romulan empires.]

2245: The SS *Kobayashi Maru* is lost at Gamma Hydrae, Section 10.

[He moves the stylus to different nearby points on the map as he speaks.]

2267: The USS *Constellation* is destroyed in System L-374 by a massive machine made of pure neutronium that carved up and ate planets like First Contact Day salmon.

2274: V'ger obliterates three Klingon battlecruisers, followed shortly by the destruction of the Federation monitoring outpost at Epsilon IX.

2286: The USS *Saratoga* is completely disabled and nearly destroyed by the Cetacean Probe as it enters Federation space in Sector Five along the Romulan Neutral Zone.

2311: The Imperial Romulan warbird *Tomed* attacks the Foxtrot Sector, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Starfleet personnel.

2346: Over 4,000 Klingon colonists are massacred on Khitomer...

I could go on, but I think you get the point about this particular corner of space. In any case, this area has earned itself a rather pointed nickname on Starfleet charts.

**[He points to a title on the map in bold letters: "Tornado Alley."]**

Do you get the reference?

♦ No?

Neither did I, but I was a budding historian even as a cadet. I looked it up. Apparently, until the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, the North American Great Plains from Texas to the Dakotas were an area where thunderstorms and natural disasters were so frequent, they were simply a fact of life. People even dug shelters into the ground because bad weather could arrive at a moment's notice, wiping your entire town off the map. It was simply the cost of living. Every bad storm that crossed the old United States found its way to those parts – just like every disaster the Federation faced for over a century seemed to travel *straight through* these four small sectors of space.

**[He stabs his stylus on another point in "Tornado Alley." It's the Jouret System, home of the New Providence colony.]**

Those colonists had seen their fair share of storms in 150 years. They were used to frontier living, and thought they could handle anything. Then it got quiet.

From 2347 to 2366, there wasn't a single major incident anywhere near New Providence. Based on the transmissions and personal logs I studied, they chalked

it up to Starfleet turning their attention across the Alpha Quadrant towards the Cardassians. The Romulans had vanished after the Treaty of Algeron. The Klingons signed the Treaty of Alliance in 2352 and officially became our friends.

The colonists believed that the frontier had moved on. I suppose it was like the sense of safety provided by a weather control system. You feel like disasters and tragedy are things of the past, until finally you can't even find someone who remembers what they look like under the age of 120.

**[He pauses.]**

I took an "Introduction to Earth History" course here at the academy a few decades back. In one of the textbooks was a picture of a town in Oklahoma that was flattened by a tornado in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It stuck in my memory because it was as if the entire population had just been wiped away from the face of the planet. There was nothing left but a few scattered pieces of debris in a sea of empty foundations. Where a few hours before there had been a vibrant, living community, now there was simply nothing.

War is a terrible thing, but at least there's someone to blame. There's an enemy that can be defeated. Death can be avenged. Destruction can be fixed with reparations.

**[He leans back in his chair.]**

But the Borg were not an enemy. What they brought to the shores of the Federation was not war. They were like those ancient cyclones: a force of nature that materializes, strikes, destroys, and moves on to obliterate another day. Just like those poor souls centuries ago, the people in their path back in 2366 had absolutely nothing that could stop them. All they could do was hunker down and hope for a miracle.



## TEBOK

PARADISE CITY, NIMBUS III

Stardate 69181.9 – 2392



Don't look at me like that! Don't tell me you are so naïve as to believe that the Federation would not do the exact same thing given the circumstances. Why, you DID do the exact same thing! When your *Enterprise* – the next one; D was it? When THAT *Enterprise* encountered the *Borg* in the Masi System [J-25] did the Federation think it prudent to notify the Romulan Senate of this extremely powerful and aggressive species that was closer to our borders than yours?

No, of course not. You did not even share that information with the *Klingons* until the *Borg* were already at your doorstep. You saw the empire as a convenient bulwark for the *Borg* to break against on its march to Earth. "The only saving grace is that the Romulans are between the *Borg* and us." Your Admiral Hanson said that; I watched that recording with my own eyes!

[He glares at me for a moment before his mask of geniality returns and he sips from his glass of *kali-fal*.]

In truth, I do not hold that against you. You knew of the *Borg* long before J-25, and we knew that you knew, or at least that some of you knew. That was the life we led in those days. We were keeping secrets from you, Starfleet Intelligence was keeping secrets from Starfleet, the *Tal Shiar* was keeping secrets from everyone, and so on...but I digress; where was I?

#### ◆ The Corridor.

Yes! The Corridor. We knew that the *Borg* wanted technology. If we're being brutally honest, that is one area that the Federation *does* excel at. You Humans are like children: forever inventing and knocking things together, just to see what would happen. It's a miracle you haven't destroyed your own star.

[There is an awkward silence as he looks pointedly at me to see if I will comment on the destruction of the *Hobus Star*. Within Starfleet, some believe the supernova was triggered by the Romulans testing a stellar weapon, but this has never been proven.]

We could have allowed the knowledge of the Federation and Starfleet to fall into the Borg's tendrils. Once again, the Starfleet was kind enough to take care of that for us with those *Aerie*-class ships, but that would not have served our purposes – especially considering a direct course would take them through the very heart of the empire. We had to be more subtle. And if there is one thing the *Rihannsu* are good at, it's subtlety.

Now, the Corridor. In effect, it functions a lot like a stable wormhole, but you do not have to enter or exit at a fixed point. It allows for travel at speeds well beyond anything possible with traditional warp. I do not exactly know the nature of the Corridor; you would have to speak to one of our scientists...if you can find one in this accursed age. One of them tried to explain it to me once, and started babbling something about *mushrooms*. Bah! I did not need to know *how* it works to know that it *did*.

After its discovery, we spent considerable resources attempting to understand and replicate the Corridor. It was a natural phenomenon, and while our scientists would go on about there being some vast, galaxy-spanning network, we could never find a way to access it – except from this single part of space. So, we used it to traverse across the empire, and went to great lengths to ensure neither Starfleet nor the Klingons ever learned of it. We surmised that this was the sort of resource that might attract the attention of the Borg, so we started to leave little...*breadcrumbs* to try and lead their ships towards it. Any ship or outpost out on the fringes that might encounter the Borg had, in their computers, information hidden away about the Corridor, as well as the top secret Tal Shiar research base located within the Neutral Zone.

#### ♦ Was there really a research base?

Almost certainly. You know the Tal Shiar: they are a law unto themselves, but the information within the databases was entirely fictional. So, we sent these fishing expeditions out into the Borg space. They would warp around, cloak and decloak in systems we knew had seen Borg activity...some would come back having never encountered them, some would be destroyed, some would vanish never to be heard from again, but finally – to use a Human phrase – we got a bite!

I was a *rh'iov* [commander] by this time; in command of the *Susse-thrai*, a *D'deridex* warbird, and the "honor" of observing the Borg sphere that was heading to the Corridor fell to me. I suspect I offended someone quite high up for such an illustrious assignment – but as a good and dutiful son of Romulus, I did my duty and the *Susse-thrai* and its pack followed the sphere into the Corridor to see if we had succeeded.

We shadowed the sphere as it made its way through into the Neutral Zone. They had become quite accustomed to our ships following them, and no longer viewed the *D'deridex* as worthy of their attention. Presumably, they had already taken enough to learn all they wanted. The sphere proceeded to attack a number of OUR outposts along the Neutral Zone. It was extremely disappointing, given the time and energy we had put into this endeavor. They had already taken plenty of outposts on the other side of the empire; I don't know what they hoped to achieve. But then! It headed across the zone, and made for the Algeron System and the outposts along the Federation side. Finally, we were making progress!

We maintained a respectful distance while the sphere extracted the outposts from the planets and asteroids they were located on. These were largely automated outposts much like our own, but even so: witnessing the Borg casually lifting entire settlements up out of a planet's gravity well as easily as we might tractor a shuttle into a bay never ceased to be humbling.

We shadowed the ship for about three days as it made its way across the sector, before abruptly the sphere suddenly left: departing at high warp back towards the Corridor. I detached the *Lykos* to follow the sphere and track its course back through Romulan space. But the sphere was able to access parts of the network we had never been able to, and vanished when our ships were ejected into realspace.

I took the *Susse-thrai* and its companion to observe Starfleet's response, and gauge how much they would admit to knowing of the Borg. Would they share this information with us? Could we, perhaps, form an alliance against the Borg?

As it transpired, they sent their newest toy to investigate. A *Galaxy*-class; the *Enterprise*, no less. Did you know that it was the decision to build the *Galaxy*-class that prompted the senate to authorize the construction of the *D'deridex*-class?

[He pours another two glasses of *kali-fal* and hands one to me.]

♦ No, I did not.

A tale for another time, perhaps. We already had extensive knowledge of the ship's capabilities, but it was deemed useful to test their capabilities and to gauge how the ship compared to our expectations. It was a very impressive ship, but it would seem they had not yet ironed out all the bugs. My ships conducted flybys – each time degrading our cloak to see how effective the ship's sensors were. We also wanted to see how they would react both to the disappearance of the outposts, and our presence inside Federation space. I must confess I was a bit swept up in the drama of it all.

"We...are back," I told Picard. It took all my *ereiriov*'s<sup>1</sup> willpower not to roll his eyes. Once we had departed we both burst out in laughter.

[He downs his drink and pours himself another.]

The next time I followed the Borg across the Neutral Zone, when they came for Picard...we did not find it so amusing.

---

1 The Romulan Star Empire term referring to the commissioned rank of "sub-commander," the word encompassing ranks like lieutenant, major, centurion, and in some cases even tribune.

# HEATHER KOTONO

NEW KYIV, ADELPHOUS IV

Stardate 48625.6 – 2371

*The colony of New Providence on Jouret IV was the first location the Borg attacked upon entering Federation space in 2366. First founded in 2123, it was its proximity to both the Klingon and Romulan Empires that brought Starfleet and the Federation to invest so heavily in the colony. As the political climate changed, so too did the colony's importance as a listening post and staging ground – until only the Daystrom Institute Annex remained.*

*Heather Kotono is the captain of the freighter Nassau, which frequents the Qo'noS/Adelphous/Devorus run passing through Klingon, Federation and Romulan territory. She was born on New Providence, and her family were among the original settlers who left Earth in the early 22<sup>nd</sup> century. We meet in her cabin aboard the Nassau. It feels very confined and lived in; she apologizes for the mess, explaining that she doesn't leave the ship much.*

They came across in an old DY-250: the SS *Rhode Island*, which had been retrofitted with a warp drive. Have you ever seen those? They look more like they belong in an ocean – like an old Terran submarine. They were originally sleeper ships from before the nuclear war on Earth and First Contact. Once warp drives started to be available, people would retrofit whatever ships they could get their hands on and hurtle off into the galaxy. I bet it drove the Vulcans mad, but that's always been Humanity's way: show them a horizon, and the first thing they want to do is get across it. But those ships were never meant for interstellar travel. They were cramped, fragile, and more were lost than actually made it to habitable planets. The *Rhode Island* was lucky, and they made it all the way to Jouret IV. Took them almost five years.

When the colonists first arrived, they brought the ship down from orbit and disassembled it to make the first settlement. It was little more than a collection of cargo containers and collapsable hab modules – but it was home, the promise of a new life. Imagine it: these people had grown up in a world stricken by devastation, by nuclear war, by disease and poverty...and then their entire lives were turned upside down by discovering that Humanity was not alone in the galaxy. It just blows my mind a little.



When I was a little girl, we would go to the Founders Park. Nothing remains of the original settlement; it was all recycled and repurposed until the colony became self-sufficient and more permanent structures could be built. But there was a museum which had models and artifacts from the *Rhode Island* – I think it even had an original warp coil! And there was a reproduction of a couple of the original container buildings; they had people who would dress up in period clothes, showing the school kids how the first settlers lived when they arrived.

I never got a chance to go back after finishing school. You know how it is when you are a kid – history is boring, and there was a whole galaxy out there. Why did I want to spend my time learning how the first settlers processed impulse manifolds into plows, or how they had to adjust the soil gradients to allow Earth crops to grow? But I always meant to go back. I just figured there would be time, someday. I mean it's not like it was going anywhere, right?

**[Heather gives a small sad laugh and wipes her eyes on her sleeve.]**

Growing up on New Providence was just like any other Federation colony, really. The Federation and Starfleet had invested pretty heavily there during the previous century, given our proximity to Klingon and Romulan space. My grandfather would tell us stories of how they had drills in the event of a Klingon attack, and how they had shelters below key buildings with transport inhibitors and heavy durasteel doors to keep them out. I loved my grandfather very much, but he was of a time, and some of his views of Klingons were still stuck in the 2260s. Since Khitomer, though, things like the listening station and planetary garrison had been long since removed. There was still the research center – part of the Daystrom Institute – and the dark energy physics laboratory. I think there was some talk about wormholes or transwarp corridors; I honestly didn't pay it much attention. Like I said, there was a whole galaxy out there to explore, so as soon as I was old enough I signed up with the mercantile guild and went out to see it.

New Providence was still home, though. I never lived anywhere else. Even when I got my own ship, home was still down on the surface. I never felt at peace "living" on the ship, although I did find a house on the other side of the city from the family – I still wanted a bit of distance.

After I completed my training and after a few years working my way up to captain, I settled into a route of ferrying supplies across the sector. We ran the

route down along what used to be the Klingon Neutral Zone and down across to Qo'noS, then up to Romulan space to Delta Velorum.

Klingons and Romulans may hate each other, but the Klingons still want their *kali-fal*, and the Romulans still want their bloodwine – go figure. I was on a run to Devoras when it happened.

Crossing the Romulan Neutral Zone is always an experience. Their border ships run cloaked and like to sneak up behind small unsuspecting freighters to decloak right on top of them. I think they make a game of it; how close can they get before tripping the proximity alert? We were about two light-years from Lambda Hydrea when this warbird decloaked right on top of me. Not the usual *Trajan* or *Pretorian* border ships, this was a *D'deridex* – it was *huge*! Almost put Shermi into sus-an.

#### ♦ Shermi?

My engineer. He's a Saurian – when they get really distressed they can go into a catatonic state.

Anyway, this warbird tells us that there is a navy exercise taking place, and that we will have to report to Lambda Hydrea for inspections. Didn't think too much of it at the time; it would hardly be the first time that the *Rihannsu* had decided to make life difficult for freighters. Usually it was sending some message to the Federation or the Klingons or whoever they were mad at – but this was the first time a *D'deridex* had delivered the message.

When we got to the outpost, they were just as confused as we had been. They didn't know of any general policy shift or operation, but we were told that a 10 light-year exclusion zone was being enforced, and that no unauthorized ship was allowed to depart for at least 72 hours – so, we went to the bar.

#### [She is silent for a long moment staring into the middle distance.]

I don't know why I suddenly felt the need to call home, I don't even know why I tried. Usually when the Romulans do these exercises, they also shut down the subspace network. But that was still up – it was early morning ship time and everyone was asleep, so I headed up to the bridge to the small nook that we jokingly referred to as my "ready room." I brought a blanket with me, pulled my legs up into the chair like I used to when I called home from the guild, and

connected to the network.

It was midafternoon there. I think Mom answered; she looked like she had been working in the garden. Had that silly hat to keep the sun off her, shirt sleeves rolled up...they loved that garden.

Dad was out, Mom said, at "a seminar at the institute," he claimed, but she suspected he was hooning around in that damn ATV he'd gotten ahold of. Mom was convinced he was going to roll the thing and get killed, or worse – damage the garden.

**[She laughs, but tears are now flowing freely down her face.]**

She asked if everything was alright with me and why I was calling. I didn't have an answer – said I "just wanted to catch up." I could tell she knew something was bothering me. How do mothers always do that? Even from light-years away? She smiled that knowing smile, but then...but then it all went dark, like a huge shadow was passing over – almost like an eclipse. I asked what it was; she looked up and away, said maybe it was rain, but then the transmission died. I tried to reconnect but it wouldn't; I tried to tell myself that it was just the Romulans messing with the network. I could have tried calling Starbase 157 or 23, but I was telling myself to stop being silly and to go to sleep – so I went back to the cabin and stared at the bulkhead for the next six hours.

We were allowed to depart the next morning, but I still couldn't get through to the colony. Not to anyone. I wanted to head there right away, but we had cargo we needed to deliver. I tried reaching out to Starbase 23 or 157; they told me there was some disruption with the relay network in the sector, and that there was a ship en route to re-establish contact. You can't imagine the relief I felt at hearing that, and it was silly – the Romulans weren't about to start a war against the Federation, and they certainly were not going to start with *New Providence*! But I still felt uneasy, and I still kept trying to connect almost hourly.

When we arrived at Devoras, I told the crew that as soon as we unloaded we were heading straight back to New Providence. Any who wanted could stay or ship out with another freighter, but they were all happy to get back to Federation space; the Klingon food had not agreed with them and Romulan food tends to get a bit bland. As soon as the last cargo had dematerialized and the transit papers had been logged, we broke orbit and headed home.

We were close to the Unroth System when we finally got the news: a direct message from Starbase 157. It was a frequent stop on our route, and the commander knew my dad. He said that the colony was gone. I didn't understand – I kept asking what did he mean “gone.” He said he couldn't say anymore over subspace, but that we should head to 157 and that the Jouret System was off limits. I knew full well that Starfleet barely had any ships in the region, so I asked him how he expected to stop me and killed the connection. Then I tried to push the engines up to warp 8 – *well* past what they're rated for. The ship's doctor, Labelle, and our helmsman had to sedate me. They took the ship to Starbase 157, and probably saved our lives.

**[Heather takes a sip of tea from her cup, holding it almost protectively. She notices my look.]**

It's my lucky cup. Mom brought it for me when I went to the guild, and it's stayed with me ever since...

They didn't want to let us go back to New Providence, told me that there was nothing left – nothing to see or to mourn. They set up an exclusion zone and wouldn't let any ships into the system; they wouldn't even release images. It was infuriating. Even after the Borg had been destroyed, they *still* wouldn't let us go home! When we were finally allowed last year, I understood why.

There was nothing left of the colony. I don't mean that it was rubble and destruction – It was gone. As if a giant hand had just scooped it right up out of the ground.

I remember I had this idea that maybe, *maybe* some people had made it to those shelters my grandfather was always going on about. Maybe some people had survived and that Starfleet had to dig down to them – to rescue them, but the shelters were gone, too.

All that remained of New Providence – of my home, of my family – was a crater, and a hole where my heart used to be.

## ELIZABETH SHELBY

USS ILLINOIS, EN ROUTE TO ZAKDORN

Stardate 47626.9 - 2370



We'd made some real progress – or at least it felt like it. Admiral Hanson was able to convince enough of the top brass that at the very least Starfleet needed to start looking seriously beyond the traditional adversaries such as the Klingons and Romulans. The loss of the *Yamato* went a long way to make the admiralty reevaluate the policy of all the eggs in a few baskets.

♦ **Why was that? I thought *Yamato* was destroyed by a computer virus?**

It wasn't really a virus, per se. More an incompatibility between the Iconians' computer architecture and the isolinear based systems we use – but the net result was the loss of the most technologically advanced starship in the quadrant after less than two years in service. You have no idea of the PR disaster that was for Starfleet – to say nothing of the lives lost.

Suddenly, this technological marvel we created was gone, and the idea of a single *Galaxy*-class replacing a dozen or more *Miranda* or *Excelsior*-class ships didn't seem quite so sound. They issued requests for new ship designs for smaller, more modular starships with a greater focus on interoperability and flexibility. Admiral Hanson was even able to convince Starfleet to conduct *war games*! The first attempt with *Enterprise* ran into some problems, but there was a feeling within Starfleet Tactical that it was no longer a dirty word – that it was okay to acknowledge that while Starfleet's primary mission is and always will be peaceful scientific exploration, it *also* has a duty to defend the Federation, and to be ready to face those challenges. It seemed like my work was done, and I was eager to get my career back on track.

By our best estimates based on the intelligence we had, the Borg were at least five years away from Federation space, and they would have to pass



through the Romulan Star Empire. We anticipated that we would have plenty of time to get the new ships and weapon systems distributed throughout the fleet, and Admiral Hanson wanted to make sure there were commanders out in the fleet who were willing and able to think tactically.

We got a notification that *Enterprise* was heading to the Jouret System to investigate loss of contact with the New Providence colony. The distress call received by Starbase 23 spoke of a cube-like vessel entering the system and descending into the atmosphere over the colony. Obviously the similarities to reports about the Borg started alarm bells ringing, not the least due to how soon after J-25 – less than 18 months. All of a sudden, our assumptions and carefully laid plans weren't worth a whole lot. We needed confirmation. If the Borg had reached Jouret, that suggested they had bypassed Romulan space – or that our intelligence networks inside the empire had woefully underestimated how effective the Tal Shiar were at counterintelligence to keep something like the Borg from us. Turns out that it was our own intelligence doing that job for them.

We were on the *Zelensky* and Admiral Hanson told me that Commander Riker, the *Enterprise's* XO, had been offered command of the *Melbourne*. It was a new *Nebula*-class variant about to be launched from the Utopia Planitia, and Hanson was going to recommend *me* to Captain Picard as his replacement. In hindsight, this was probably a mistake on the admiral's part.

[She takes a sip from her *raktajino* and tries to hide a smile.]

When we boarded *Enterprise*, in my mind I was already the ship's XO, and was already “measuring the windows for new drapes,” as my grandmother used to say. Captain Picard was a legend within Starfleet, and I was giddy with excitement at the prospect of serving under him – becoming his protege. The patronage of Admiral Hanson and Captain Picard would rocket my career into the center seat of a *Galaxy*-class all my own. There was such a warmth and assuredness to him – command seemed to fit him like a well-tailored suit. I was less enamored with Commander Riker.

I had read up extensively on the crew of *Enterprise* following J-25 and the Braslota war games. Here was a man who had been on the fast track to command – served with distinction on the *Pegasus*, the *Potemkin*, and the *Hood* – but after arriving on *Enterprise* seemed to just stop. Starfleet had offered

him two commands; the *Melbourne* was the third attempt to get him into the captain's chair. Now all I could see was a seat filler in my way.

It's safe to say that was not my *finest* hour. I let my ambition cloud my perceptions of the commander and it colored my interactions with him. We ended up butting heads repeatedly, and I struggled to keep my frustration in check. Fortunately, Commander Riker was a consummate professional, and despite my – shall we say *terse* – manner we did work well together...eventually.

The *Enterprise* had been at what remained of New Providence for a little over two days when we arrived. The scans and analysis matched data from the disappearance of Federation and Romulan outposts near the Algeron System about two years prior. At the time, the official line within command was the Romulans had likely destroyed them to disguise some operation, or provide a distraction – destroying the outposts on their own side of the Neutral Zone to provide an alibi. But in the aftermath of the *Enterprise's* encounter with the Borg at J-25, we now had the data which could link the colony's disappearance with the Borg directly.

From what we gleaned through analysis of the *Enterprise* once it returned from J-25, the Borg left unusual and unique magnetic resonance traces throughout the hull and system – a footprint, if you will. These would degrade over time, so there were no traces at the Quebec Outpost – despite the similarities to the destruction and what was observed at J-25. But at New Providence, we were early enough that the traces remained. We had our footprint, and now evidence that the Borg were operating in Federation space.

♦ You make it sound as though you were *excited* by the prospect?

In a way I was; it proved that Admiral Hanson was right, and it validated all the work we had put in over the past 14 months. But I had no idea of what was about to come; none of us did. Admiral Hanson and the *Zelensky* immediately headed back to command, and I remained on *Enterprise* to ascertain the extent of the Borg Incursion, and to discover if the Borg were still here. We had every reason to believe – much like the previous colony disappearances – that the Borg had not remained in Federation space, and instead returned to wherever they had come from.

Looking back, I wasn't worried. Despite everything, I thought I knew about the Borg. Despite witnessing first hand the devastation on Jouret IV – the entire colony ripped from the surface of a planet – I was still convinced that we would prevail and it would be okay. After all, with Captain Picard in command, how could we not?

# TRANSCRIPT OF ADMIRALTY MEETING

ACCESS INCLUDED AUDIO FILE "2.06"

The following is an edited transcript of a private conference call between the Starfleet Vice Chief of Staff and select personnel on stardate 43993.5 (~12 hours after Lieutenant Commander Shelby discovered the Borg were responsible for the destruction of the New Providence colony). Admiral Owen Paris and Vice Admiral Thomas Henry connected from their offices in the Archer Building of Starfleet Headquarters in San Francisco, Earth. Vice Admiral J.P. Hanson dialed in from his flag quarters on board the USS *Zelensky* en route to Starbase III after leaving Lieutenant Commander Elizabeth Shelby on board the USS *Enterprise-D*.

Starfleet Intelligence partially declassified and approved the redacted holorecording for public release on Stardate 63047.71.

## FLAG OFFICERS PRESENT

Admiral Owen Paris

**VICE CHIEF OF STARFLEET OPERATIONS**

Vice Admiral J.P. Hanson

**CHIEF OF STARFLEET TACTICAL**

Vice Admiral Thomas Henry

**CHIEF OF STARFLEET SECURITY**

## OFFICERS REFERRED TO IN MEETING:

Fleet Admiral Taela Shanti

**CHIEF OF STARFLEET OPERATIONS**

Vice Admiral Jennifer Chapman

**CHIEF OF STARFLEET SUSTAINMENT & LOGISTICS**

Lieutenant Commander Elizabeth Shelby

**STARFLEET TACTICAL BORG SPECIAL PROJECTS CHIEF**

Vice Admiral Ellen Hayes

**CHIEF OF STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE**



**PARIS:** [annoyed] What is it, J.P.? I'm a very busy man since Taela had to drop everything for an emergency diplomatic conference. We didn't even have time for a proper handover brief before she left me in charge.

**HENRY:** Owen, I heard the folks over in sustainment and logistics had to pull crisis planning all-nighters for the last three days. What's going on?

**PARIS:** It's a total cluster, Tom. The Ruling Council of Angel One paused their application for Federation membership and President Amitra is livid. She says she and the diplomatic corps are too busy with important Cardassian negotiations to clean up another one of Starfleet's messes and ordered Taela not to return to Earth until she's "fixed the Angel One screw up." So, Taela grabbed Jennifer and a few other members of the S&L staff in the middle of the night last Tuesday, and sprinted straight towards the Angel System at maximum warp.

**HENRY:** [rubbing eyes] What imagined injustice does "Amitra the Ice Queen" accuse us of doing now? [muttering] *I can't wait for the next election...*

**PARIS:** [sternly] I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that, Tom. Besides, you know these meetings are recorded, right?

**HENRY:** [sarcastically holding up both hands] I retract my statement, and have full confidence and respect for the commander-in-chief [CINC] duly elected by the people of the United Federation of Planets. Still, what Starfleet logistical issue could possibly cause an entire *planet* to scrap their membership bid?

**PARIS:** [rolling eyes] You're gonna love this one. Apparently, Mistress Beata is up for re-election, so she's looking for some hot-button issue to energize her base at the polls. She says that Starfleet male uniforms are "not revealing enough" and it would be "immoral to force her brave women warriors to interact with fully-clothed men" on Federation starships and installations. Unless Starfleet dresses their men to show more cleavage and accentuate certain "parts" of their bodies, Angel One will walk.

**HENRY:** So, Beata would be willing to give up membership in the Federation – the most powerful and open union in the Milky Way Galaxy – over *chest hair*? What the hell is wrong with her?

**PARIS:** You know how crazy conservative Angel One is. That place makes Andoria look like *Risa* at times.

**HENRY:** Then let them walk!

**PARIS:** Amitra says their location is too vital. If Angel One joins the Federation, Starfleet can position long-range tachyon sensor grids on its outlying moons to cover the breadth of the Romulan Neutral Zone – all the way from the Typhon Expanse to Starbase 718...

**HENRY:** **[gritting his teeth]** Which means she can order us to decommission even more starships in the next budget...

**PARIS:** On the nose, Tom. Fewer starships means more credits towards her terraforming and transwarp corridor research initiatives...

**HENRY:** So, Amitra would trade theoretical future Federation worlds in the Gamma and Delta Quadrants for security today in our own backyard?

**PARIS:** That's what happens when your cabinet is filled with pissant interstellar relations majors from Harvard, Lor'Tan, and U Mars. She's more convinced than ever that the Klingons are licked, the Romulans are running scared, and you can buy peace with the Cardassians by sharing deuterium reserves and ceding territory in disputed areas. I mean, one of her campaign slogans was "War is Always the Wrong Choice." She's pivoting all the Federation's resources towards Cardassia and Ferenginar, and away from the old Beta Quadrant rivalries. She's even pressuring the Klingons to take more responsibility keeping the Romulans in check under the Treaty of Alliance. Hell – even said in a diplomatic call yesterday that the empire isn't "paying its fair share for defense."

**HENRY:** Unbelievable. I bet K'mpec's ambassador took that one real well...

**PARIS:** Guess making peace with *new* enemies is more important than maintaining peace with old ones.

**HENRY:** I don't care if it gets me a Surak Prize for Peace, Owen; I'm not showing my nipples in uniform to appease Beata. Ham-fisted primadonna with winged shoulder pads and gas giant-sized teased hair–

**PARIS:** **[chuckling]** Don't worry, Tom – if there is one thing that Taela and I agreed on before she left, it's that *NO ONE* wants to see your nipples...

**HANSON:** **[forcefully interjecting]** Plunging necklines and codpieces aside, can we talk about the Borg now?

**PARIS:** Sorry, J.P., sorry; just a little worked up after last week. Your report, please.

**HANSON:** I just received word from Commander Shelby on the *Enterprise*. Her energy readings confirm our worst fears: New Providence was destroyed by the Borg.

**PARIS:** [searches through a stack of PADDs on his desk] Well, I'm trying to figure out how that's possible considering that less than *two months ago*, your best estimates put the Borg more than five years away from our borders. How did they get here so fast?

**HANSON:** Quite frankly, Sir, we don't know. It could be transwarp. Maybe they found a wormhole? Maybe that Q creature snapped his fingers again...*anything is possible*. Regardless, they have reached the edges of the Federation and we need to respond.

**HENRY:** Jean-Luc and the *Enterprise* are securing the immediate area around New Providence, and there's at least nine other starships within a week's warp from that location. If the Borg want to press their luck, we'll give them a bloody nose and make them think twice about further violations of our space.

**HANSON:** I don't mean to sound pessimistic, Tom, but based on the reports from J-25 last year, we should consider creating an ad hoc fleet of at least 40 to 50 ships from the Klingon and Romulan Rapid Response Forces to intercept. I'm not sure a single *Galaxy*-class can slow them down.

**PARIS:** A single *Galaxy* better be able to slow them down, J.P.! Cannibalizing the Klingon and Romulan RRFs would require authorization from the Federation Council and consume *half* our annual emergency response budget; Amitra is already on our ass about cost savings! After I get off the line with you, I have another call with the San Francisco Fleet Yards because I have to figure out how to keep five 90-year-old *Excelsior*-classes in service for another decade, because her administration won't authorize the construction of another *Galaxy* to replace the *Yamato*!

**HANSON:** Sir, the Borg just obliterated an entire Federation border colony without even blinking—

**PARIS:** [holding up his hand] I don't mean to sound crass, but we lose two to three colonies a year to hostile alien action. If the president gets her way with the Cardassian treaty negotiations, we'll lose 10 more colonies overnight in the disputed area. J.P., the deaths of 900 people at New Providence are certainly a tragedy, but I don't see the justification there to significantly alter the Federation's entire strategic posture for an enemy we haven't even *located* yet...

**HENRY:** I think we have enough flexibility in our current lines of funding to redirect those nine ships without justifying any additional spending. Besides, Picard and



the *Enterprise* are pulling lead on this operation. They're our best, and if anyone can figure their way out of a jam, it's them. Once they find the Borg, we'll move to intercept. They can either negotiate, withdraw, or be destroyed.

**[HANSON's console beeps with the distinct tone of an emergency message.]**

**HANSON:** Excuse me.

**[HANSON's image is replaced with the seal of the UFP. After a few moments he returns.]**

**PARIS:** J.P., what is it?

**HANSON:** Careful what you wish for, gentlemen. I think we've found the Borg. Starbase III just intercepted a distress call; it's from the USS *Lalo* near the Zeta Alpha System.

**PARIS:** **[confidently]** How fast can the *Enterprise* arrive to assist them?

**HANSON:** **[downtrodden]** I don't think there'll be a need for that. The *Lalo* is gone...

**HENRY:** **[confused]** Gone? What do you mean "gone"? Destroyed? Captured?

**HANSON:** No, Tom: just *gone*. They've disappeared – just like New Providence. Long-range scans indicate nothing is left; not even a single milligram of debris. They've just...disappeared.

**HENRY:** Well let's not get ahead of ourselves; we don't know for certain that this was the Borg. Have *Enterprise* get out there and assess the situation–

**HANSON:** *Enterprise* is en route, but gentlemen, if our track is correct, there is a high likelihood that the Borg are heading towards the core systems. Their current course could take them to Andor, Vulcan, or *Earth*...

**PARIS:** **[collapsing back in his chair]** I'll get a hold of the president. Tom, find Ellen and have her join us...

**END OF FILE**

# DISTRESS CALL FROM USS LALO NCC-43837

ACCESS INCLUDED AUDIO FILE "02.07"

The following is an edited transcript of a distress call received at Starbase 157 from the USS *Lalo* (NCC-43837), a *Mediterranean*-class support ship. Five hours after departing from Zeta Alpha II en route to Sentinel Minor IV with a cargo of industrial mining equipment, the *Lalo* encountered a Borg cube which moved to intercept them. The distress call abruptly ended less than 60 seconds later. All contact with the USS *Lalo* was lost on stardate 43997.05. 57 souls were aboard. No trace of the ship or any survivors have ever been found.

Starfleet Intelligence declassified and approved the redacted recording for public release on stardate 63047.71.



[The holorecording begins with a view of the *Lalo*'s bridge. A Rigellian helmsman and a Bolian navigator sit at the forward consoles. A Saurian sits in the captain's chair with his Tellarite first officer to his left. A Caitian woman stands behind them at the tactical console.]

**CAPTAIN JENOGII:** To anyone who can hear this message: this is Captain Krota Jenogii of the Federation starship USS *Lalo*. We are five hours out from Zeta Alpha II en route to Sentinel Minor IV. We have encountered an unknown, cube-shaped alien vessel. They appeared directly in our flight path less than two light-years away. We attempted to hail them with messages of peace and friendship on all known frequencies. However, they did not respond, and instead moved to an intercept course. The ship is bigger than any I have ever seen, but it is moving towards at incredible speed. Helm, how fast are they going?

**HELMSMAN:** Warp 9.3, Sir!

**CAPTAIN JENOGII:** They are moving to intercept us at warp 9.3! Our engines are limited to only warp 8; Our engineer is trying to give us more power, but we are quickly being overrun. Please, if you are hearing this transmission: please assist us, Please!

**TACTICAL OFFICER:** Sir, they've closed to less than 50,000 meters!

**[Suddenly, the ship lurches heavily. The entire bridge crew is nearly knocked from their seats. The transmission begins to break up. The audio shrieks with static.]**

**TACTICAL OFFICER:** They've locked on to us with some kind of tractor beam. Shields are being drained, down to only 40 percent!

**CAPTAIN JENOII:** **[shouting nervously]** Engine room, we need more power to the shields now! Please to anybody listening, we need assistance now! Please!

**TACTICAL OFFICER:** Shields are down!

**[The sound of screeching metal echoes across the bridge.]**

**TACTICAL OFFICER:** They've activated a particle beam. It's cutting into the saucer! Hull integrity failing!

**[Sparks fly as consoles explode and EPS conduits overload. The officers try to shield themselves with their hands to no avail. The navigator is blown backward three meters to the floor.]**

**CAPTAIN JENOII:** Please help us! Please—

**[A bright flash of green light fills the screen as the top bulkhead of the bridge suddenly lifts away, exposing the compartment to the vacuum of space. Without warning, the transmission terminates into static. All contact is lost at precisely time index 43997.05.]**

**END OF FILE**

# L'GARREY

CTSU SHIPYARDS, GANYMEDE

Stardate 65053.9 – 2388

*When the Pandrilite Amitra was elected to the United Federation of Planets presidency in 2364, it had seemed inevitable and for many in Starfleet it felt like an ominous portent of things to come. She had been extremely vocal in her criticism of the organization and stated that it was no longer fit for purpose in the latter half of the 24<sup>th</sup> century. L'Garrey served Amitra as chairman of the campaign for her election and then as her chief of staff for her term. He is credited with being able to navigate the "Neutral Zone" that had sprung up between the office of the president and Starfleet in the early 2360s. Now retired from politics and serving as a consultant for the Colonial Transportation and Settlement Union, I find him in his office looking out over the CTSU's Ganymede shipyards.*

It was late and I was prepping the itinerary for the president's upcoming goodwill visit to Cardassia Prime. President Amitra campaigned on a policy of ending the border dispute with Cardassia; and with the revelations about what the Cardassians had done to Bajor, public opinion was starting to swing away from our efforts to end the conflict. It was a mess, and we were getting dragged through the mud in the press.

The Secret Service notified me that Starfleet was here and that they wanted an immediate briefing with the president. Someone once told me that good news never arrives at night, so naturally I was already a bit on edge when three admirals beamed into the Palais at 23:00. I knew Owen Paris quite well having worked with him back in '48 when he was captain of the *Al-Batani* and in the aftermath of Setlik III. That he came with both Ellen Hayes and Tom Henry – the heads of Starfleet Intelligence – was ominous. Hayes seemed really uncomfortable, as if she did not want to be there and had something more important to attend to.

To be frank, relations between Starfleet and the president had been frosty at best – especially given her history and the campaign she ran for election. One of her first acts was to limit the number of the new *Galaxy*-class to just the six

under construction and to draw the fleet down to levels that hadn't been seen since the 2230s. Naturally, I headed to intercept them before they made it to the Ra-ghoratree Room – to see if the president really needed to be troubled. At this hour, I figured odds were that this was going to be some sort of ploy to get another *Galaxy* approved to replace *Yamato*; they'd been banging on that drum since the ship had been lost.

I caught up to them just as they were exiting the turbolift and heading to the Archer Room. The look on their faces brought me up short and I knew whatever it was it had to be serious.

I tried to get them to tell me what the issue was so I could gauge if I needed to bring in the president. All they would tell me was it was vitally important the president was briefed immediately, and that we should be prepared to call a session of the council right away. *That* got my attention; the admiralty usually hated having to deal with the council. So, I ushered them into the Archer Room and rang through to the residence asking the president to be awoken, and beamed directly to the briefing room.

We waited. I tried small talk, but they weren't in a talkative mood; even less so than usual. Besides accepting a glass of water, they remained tight-lipped and awkwardly formal.

The doors flew open and the president stormed in from the transporter pad. The last few days had been particularly tough dealing with the Cardassian liaisons for the visit – given her hue, she was probably nursing one hell of a headache. She railed against the admirals for interrupting the “first sleep she had seen in 82 hours,” and laid out the frustrations we were having with the Cardassians and Bajor. She told them flatly she didn't care if the *Enterprise* itself had been sucked into a black hole: under no circumstances would she authorize any more of those flying hotels for admirals to use as personal conveyance to cruise back and forth from Risa to Betazed.

I'll give the admirals their credit: they just stood there respectfully and placidly while she vented her frustrations at them. Eventually, she ran out of steam and collapsed down into her chair behind her desk.

She glared up at them and asked if they had anything to say for themselves. The admirals looked back and forth at each other. If I didn't know better I'd swear

they were communicating telepathically calling “not it.” Finally, it was Paris who took the lead. Of the admirals present, he wouldn’t have been my first choice given the history of Paris and the president when she had been on the Starfleet oversight committee. They are both professionals, but still I’m not sure that if I took them to Triskelion they wouldn’t kill each other.

Paris laid it out: the Borg, J-25, the loss of the New Providence colony, and the fact that this single ship – which so far not even a *Galaxy*-class could stop – was inside Federation space and heading towards the core worlds.

The president’s initial reaction was one of incredulity. It all just sounded so absurd: a race of cybernetic zombies hell-bent on taking over the galaxy? It’s the sort of thing you’d see in a cheap holonovel, and we had important work to do. We were supposed to be on our way at 14:00 towards Cardassia, and now we were being told of what? An invasion by a single ship? Even I found it a bit hard to swallow.

It sounded to us that Starfleet was just throwing a tantrum about the fleet reduction, and was using this as an excuse to stamp their feet and complain they didn’t have enough toys. The president said as much, too, which did not go down well. Hayes looked like she was on the verge of a warp core breach, and Paris leaned forward on the desk over the president saying that he resented the implication. The president was on her feet and it looked like we were going to revisit some of the classics from oversight circa 2360.

Hayes placed a hand on Paris and he thankfully backed down. She asked the president if she might call in a “consultant” to brief the president. That made everyone in the room sit up – even those of us standing. The president allowed Hayes to go and use the terminal in the private transporter suite, leaving this awkward silence in the room. Paris and Henry stood to one side conferring while the president sat at the desk. She had her PADD out and was looking at the latest reports coming from the Bajoran Sector. We dropped the ball there, and we knew it.

I think that might have been why she was spoiling for a fight. She couldn’t take it out on the Cardassians right now, and Starfleet had the misfortune to wander into her crosshairs. I went over to take the temperature and see how much plasma coolant I was going to need to replicate.

"What *is* this targshit?" she said. "It's *Starfleet* for crying out loud. Despite my best efforts, they have never been stronger – and it's just one ship!"

She had a point; even the Klingons recognized that any attempt to go toe-to-toe with *Starfleet* would be a very short trip to *Sto-Vo-Kor*. We were trying to do our best to rein them in before we triggered an arms race in our own backyard. In hindsight, we obviously could and *should* have handled things differently. The breakdown in trust between the presidency and the admiralty meant neither of us were listening to the admirals, and instead only heard what we imagined they said.

I could hear the hum of the transporter and the doors opened, Hayes reentered with a [REDACTED], and it was then that we realized just how serious the situation was.

**[The following section has been redacted and is classified under Starfleet Order 212019 as pertinent to Article 14, Section 31 of the Federation Charter.]**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hayes escorted [REDACTED] back to the transporter room and shut the doors behind her. We were stunned. I don't even think Paris or Henry had any idea. I'd known Owen Paris for close to 30 years by that point, and the last time I saw him look this pale was the day his wife went into labor.



The president was very quiet – like a singularity had just swallowed up the world that she knew. We were all in shock. Hayes came back in, but there was no satisfaction on her face. I imagine that bit of theater had cost her more than a little bit of political latinum, but it did the job, and we knew this was serious.

The president took a breath and then she was back. Throwing the PADD down on the table, she asked the admirals what they needed. This was new territory for all of us: here was an adversary unlike anything the Federation had ever faced – a threat unlike anything seen in over a century – and it looked like it was heading straight to the Federation's very heart. Right now, the only thing in our favor was the one ship standing in its way: the *Enterprise* and her captain, Jean-Luc Picard.



# WILLIAM T. RIKER

STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS, SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH

Stardate 44012.3 – 2367

*William T. Riker is a name that will forever be linked to the events of 2366; when he found himself thrust into command of the Federation's flagship at the height of the crisis. In the coming days, weeks, and years, questions will be raised about Starfleet's response to the Borg: if more could have been done to save lives – or even to try a diplomatic solution – but no one can question the courage and professionalism shown by Captain Riker and the crew of the Enterprise during that harrowing time. This interview was the first conducted as part of the Holland Commission in early 2367.*

Frankly, I found Commander Shelby a real pain in the ass. We have a good team on the *Enterprise*: the best in the fleet in my opinion. She came in gunning for my seat, oblivious to the way things were done on our starship.

She was, however, unsurpassed when it came to her expertise with the Borg, and that proved to be a valuable asset. I've recommended that her field promotion to commander be made permanent.

After she confirmed the New Providence attack was carried out by the Borg, our goal became to ascertain whether the Borg were still present in the sector and, if so, what their intentions were. Our analysis of the devastation at Jouret IV matched the findings from our investigation into missing outposts along the Neutral Zone on stardate 41986.0. We already had suspicions following similar patterns that we observed at J-25, but with the magnetic resonance scans and Shelby's "footprint," we had confirmation that the Borg had been operating in Federation space earlier than we had believed possible. I hate to say it, but Q might've done us a favor by flinging *Enterprise* into their path like he did. At least we had some lead time and were able to bring it to the admiralty's attention.

We took advantage of having Commander Shelby on board to evaluate the weapons systems under development with Starfleet Tactical – to see if any modifications could be made to our weapons and defensive systems in the

event of an encounter with the Borg. In truth, the news of the Borg attack hit us all hard and the crew had been pushing themselves to the very limit. The three shift pattern we maintain can be punishing. Commander Shelby, however, was *insistent* that I allow her to continue with Commander Data through the night.

It suddenly struck me that sometime in the past three years I had become “the old man.” I saw a lot of myself in Shelby. I feel I owe Captains DeSoto and Picard an apology, but at the time we had no reason to believe that the Borg remained in the sector. I was caught up trying to justify to myself why I should remain on *Enterprise* rather than accept command of the *Melbourne* – this just seemed like another day at the office.

We received a transmission from Admiral Hanson the next day. The *Lalo*, a freighter operating out of Zeta Alpha II, had sent out a distress call. The ship reported being under attack from a vessel, described as “cube-shaped.” The signal ended abruptly.

With that, we had confirmation that the Borg were here, now, in our own backyard. I felt a pit open in my stomach at the realization, but I was able to take solace from Captain Picard. Without hesitation, he ordered the ship to head to the *Lalo*’s last known location at warp 9. Hanson promised to send reinforcements, but any meaningful support was at least six days away. All we could do was keep the Borg occupied while the fleet mustered.

We stopped off at Starbase 157 to transfer the civilian and non-essential personnel off the ship. There was tangible tension in the air as we conducted our search pattern; we found no trace of the *Lalo* or the Borg and with every hour that passed the feeling of unease continued to grow throughout the crew. Counselor Troi and her staff worked around the clock to try and ease the fears. I don’t know what would have been worse at that moment: encountering the Borg, or not. As it happens, the Borg were not hiding. They were looking for us.

### ♦ For Starfleet?

No, specifically for the *Enterprise*. We were about eight hours into the search when Worf detected a vessel entering sensor range. Before we could move to intercept, they changed course and headed directly for us at high warp. When we caught sight of the cube on the main viewscreen, it was like a nightmare had returned to haunt us. I desperately wanted to wake up.

We notified Starfleet that we had engaged the Borg, but that seemed overly optimistic. The Borg had engaged *us*, and we had no idea how we were going to occupy the Borg for six days – to say nothing of surviving the encounter. Our only hope was that the Borg had sought us out, perhaps they were in a talkative mood, and maybe we would be able to establish some form of diplomatic relations.

I suppose, in a way, that's exactly what they wanted.

The Borg hailed Captain Picard directly, by name, and issued orders for him to surrender himself to the Borg. This went against everything we'd been led to believe about the Borg from our encounter at J-25, and what subsequently learned from Guinan and other El-Aurians. Hell, even Q told us that they didn't care about us – only our *technology*. It was all too much to process. Despite now being the subject of the Borg's personal attention, Captain Picard remained the leader and innovative thinker I've come to know.

The Borg employed the same tactics they'd used at J-25: first draining the shields with a type of tractor beam, and then holding the ship in position. We employed the shield modulations that Shelby and La Forge had devised which bought us some time, but they were quickly overwhelmed. The Borg employed their particle beam and sliced into the secondary hull – going straight for main engineering. Fortunately, the multiple redundancies and swift work from La Forge and his department ensured the core remained operational despite the loss of atmosphere. But still, we lost 18 people.

Phasers and photon torpedoes were ineffective, but once again Shelby was able to devise a solution by having Commander Data shift the phaser frequencies randomly. That freed us from the tractor beam and allowed us the freedom to navigate.

Captain Picard ordered the ship on a course taking us into the nearby Paulson Nebula. The composition of dilithium hydroxyls, magnesium, and chromium proved effective at hiding the ship from the Borg's sensors. We knew the ship was after us, but for the moment at least we could breathe and find our bearings. We bought time for Starfleet, although I couldn't imagine just what any reinforcements could do against the Borg. *Enterprise* was the most advanced starship in the quadrant and we might as well have been throwing bad language for all the good we did.

## GUINAN

USS *ENTERPRISE*, QUALOR SYSTEM

Stardate 46231.8 – 2369



It was so quiet, that was my overriding memory of the nebula. The captain had evacuated most of the non-essential personnel and families off the ship at Starbase 157 and the ship just felt wrong. Empty.

♦ *Why didn't you leave the *Enterprise* at the starbase?*

Well as I said, it was the non-essential personnel who were removed. I think in a time of crisis someone who can run a bar is pretty damn essential. *[she chuckles]* Besides, El-Aurians have this knack of knowing where they need to be, and I needed to be on *Enterprise*.

I could sense the Borg just beyond the veil of the nebula. There was something different about them, something that I hadn't sensed at J-25. A... desire, I guess. That's the only word I could use to describe it, but they wanted something. They wanted Picard, and the longer we were out of reach in the nebula, the greater that desire grew.

They were moving around the edges, probing and scanning, but they wouldn't follow us in. I guess they were worried that if they did and we snuck out, they might lose us. It felt like a game of hide and seek, and they were "it."

The crew went about their duties and the rhythm of the ship continued, but it was there at the back of their minds – like this itch that you couldn't quite scratch. They went about their duties and were preparing the ship to face the Borg. I wasn't on El-Auria when the Borg came, but I wonder if my people did the same: stoically waiting for the inevitability of facing the Borg.

Tensions were starting to run high, though. Riker and Shelby were butting heads; under different circumstances I think I would have told them to go get a room and get it over with. But I was just as terrified as everyone else, and

just like everyone else I was doing my damndest not to let it show. That was easy for the first day; people were still coming to Ten-Forward, treating this like any other assignment or crisis, but the longer we sat in that nebula the fewer people came to seek the comfort of crowds. I can understand that; you want to bury yourself in your work, do everything you can to keep your mind occupied and hands busy. When you stopped to stare out into that beautiful cacophony of color, your mind inevitably started to venture out to what was waiting just beyond the edge of it.

It was the third day and all this was silent as the grave. **[she gestures around at the lounge we are sitting in]** But this was where I needed to be, so this was where I was when he came in.

♦ **Captain Picard?**

Of course. Have you met him?

♦ **No, not yet. He has repeatedly declined my request for an interview. Starfleet is making his logs available for the report, but eventually we'll need to conduct an interview for the record.**

Humans have a way of being stuck in the past. **[she smiles at a private joke]** Give him time, and I'm sure he will come around – but on that particular night he was touring the ship from stem to stern, an old naval tradition. He knew that we couldn't hide in the nebula indefinitely; we knew that as long as the cube was hunting the *Enterprise*, it wasn't heading deeper into Federation space, and for whatever reason Starfleet had not sent any additional ships to help. It was easy to surmise that Starfleet was looking to beef up its defenses at home, but in reality I doubt it would have mattered how many ships were thrown at the Borg. It wouldn't have stopped them. The Borg had taken on far larger and more powerful empires than the Federation. I don't think the Federation had it in them to do what was needed to defeat the Borg. I think if they did, then they wouldn't have been the Federation, and perhaps wouldn't have been worth saving.

He came and stared out those windows that so many others had shied away from – defying it, defying the Borg who had singled him out. After three days, even he was feeling a little maudlin. We spoke of Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar, and Honorius and the fall of the Roman Empire. He knew the Borg were unlike anything that the Federation had faced before, and there was a very real chance that the only thing standing between them and the fall of the Federation – of life

and civilizations as we knew it – was a little ship called *Enterprise*. He felt the weight of that; he would never show it to anyone, but I could see it. We shared a moment. I have known Jean-Luc for a long time; I think it's safe to say I've known him longer than anyone, and he could still surprise me with his resolve and his calm compassion.

I reminded him that the Federation was more than its members, it was more than its worlds. It's not a place, it's a people, and as long as even a handful of those people survive – as long as they can keep the dream of the Federation alive – then the Borg could never defeat them. They would never win.

Of course, the universe is not without a sense of drama, so the Borg took that moment to start firing into the nebula, and Jean-Luc headed for the bridge.

That was the last time I saw him like that. After everything that came later, he was changed. We *all* were, but I'll always remember just us existing together in that quiet moment.

# WORF, SON OF MOGH

USS *ENTERPRISE*, DETRIAN SYSTEM

Stardate: 46424.1 – 2369

*Lieutenant Worf holds the distinction of being the only Klingon currently in Starfleet, and has served as the chief of security on board the USS Enterprise since 2364. He is a physically imposing individual – as is often the case with members of his species – and his voice has a deep resonance that is almost poetic. He invites me to join him in a Mok'bara session which I politely decline, but he is content to allow me to observe as he moves through the various forms.*

I disliked hiding in the nebula like some *Romulan*, but I understood the captain's reasons. The Borg are a formidable adversary, and our previous encounters had been less than satisfactory. Now, they were here on our very doorstep, trying to force their way into the heart of the Federation. So the captain used the *Enterprise* as bait to lure the Borg away from the core worlds while Starfleet could amass an armada to defeat them. At least, that is what I believed to be the case.

We sat in the nebula for three days to ready the ship and crew. I worked closely with Lieutenant La Forge and Commander Shelby to ensure our weapons would prove more effective than in our first encounter at J-25. We knew the Borg possessed an ability to adapt to our technology at a frightening pace, so we would have to ensure that every shot would count. We spent many hours running drills and simulations to prepare, and I ordered all phasers to be tuned to the frequencies that had been shown to be most effective.

I had observed firsthand how quickly the Borg adapted to our energy weapons. However, despite their considerable strength, they were neither fast nor agile. I believed that they would be vulnerable to blades and requested from the captain permission to train security in the use of the *mek'leth* and *bat'leth*, but this was deemed unfeasible given the possibility of discovery at any moment. In hindsight, I should have been persistent in my request.



Once it became apparent that Starfleet would not be sending ships to aid us directly, we were left waiting for the Borg to make the first move. Our sensors were largely ineffective inside the nebula, and we had no indication of the status or location of the cube outside of residual traces from passive sensors. We knew it was there waiting just beyond the edge of the nebula like a bear waiting for its prey, but eventually their patience dwindled and they began to fire magnetometric charges. They were drawn to the *Enterprise's* magnetic containment system and it became apparent that we could no longer hide. Good, I thought: now we would show these *toruk-DOH* the grave error they had made in attacking the Federation so brazenly.

On the captain's order we headed out of the nebula. We chose a course towards the galactic south – to lead the Borg away from the core worlds. There was some discussion about attempting to lead the Borg to the *Klach D'kel Brakt*.

#### ♦ I'm sorry, the what?

You might know it as the “Briar Patch.” It is a region of space filled with false vacuum fluctuations, flooded with radiation from supernova remnants. It was hoped that if we could lead the cube there, it would potentially cripple or even destroy the ship – at least slow it down long enough to buy Starfleet the time it needed to prepare to take on the Borg. But even at maximum warp, the Briar Patch was almost a day away. We were able to evade the Borg for two minutes.

Immediately after leaving the Paulson Nebula and jumping to maximum warp, the Borg overtook us, disabled our shields, and collapsed our warp field – despite all the modifications and preparations we had made. I had positioned security teams in engineering, the computer cores, and at key points throughout the ship we felt would be susceptible to Borg attack. I was confident that I would be able to deal with any intruders we might face on the bridge.

I was mistaken.

As soon as the shields collapsed, the Borg established a tractor beam and transported onto the bridge. The first drone appeared to be of a similar design to the one I had killed at J-25, and the new phaser settings quickly dispatched it. But already a second arrived and this one had adapted to the new frequencies.

Commander Riker moved to tackle the intruder, but was tossed aside. I threw myself into the fray to take on the Borg. My phaser was ineffective, and

without a blade I would meet this foe hand to hand.

I savored the thought of facing the Borg in this way. We had conducted several simulations on the holodeck, and in every scenario I had been victorious. The Borg are without honor, but their strength would make them a formidable opponent. I felt the call of Kahless!

**[He appears caught up in the moment and holds his hands before him.]**

I lunged towards the Borg, already imagining how it would feel to slay this intruder, when it tossed me aside as if I were a pitiful Ferengi. In my haste, I failed in my duty to protect the ship and the captain.

A third Borg beamed onto the bridge and grabbed the captain, immediately transporting away with him. The Borg I had faced then left, and the one I had slain vanished as if it had been a hologram – some form of cellular destruction to prevent us learning better how to defeat them.

With the captain now their prisoner, the Borg ship disengaged and left at high warp.

Commander Riker had sustained a concussion from the attack, but issued orders to pursue the Borg. The cube continued to accelerate at an alarming rate, pushing the *Enterprise* to its very limits. What's more, we now knew for certain where the Borg were going with their prize.

They were going to Sector 001. They were going to Earth.

## END OF CHAPTER 2





THE OFFICE OF STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE AND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS HAVE APPROVED THE PARTIAL DECLASSIFICATION OF THE "HOLLAND REPORT ON THE BORG INCURSION OF 2366" AFTER 25 EARTH STANDARD YEARS IN ACCORDANCE WITH BOTH THE JONES-XERATHI ACT CONCERNING THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OF 2359 AND UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS EXECUTIVE ORDER 329784. CERTAIN SEGMENTS HAVE BEEN DEEMED STILL SENSITIVE TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND HAVE BEEN REDACTED AND CLASSIFIED UNDER STARFLEET ORDER 212019 AS PERTINENT TO ARTICLE 14, SECTION 31 OF THE FEDERATION CHARTER.

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL INQUIRIES IN WRITING TO EITHER THE DEPARTMENT OF THE STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH, OR THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS, LONDON, EARTH.

