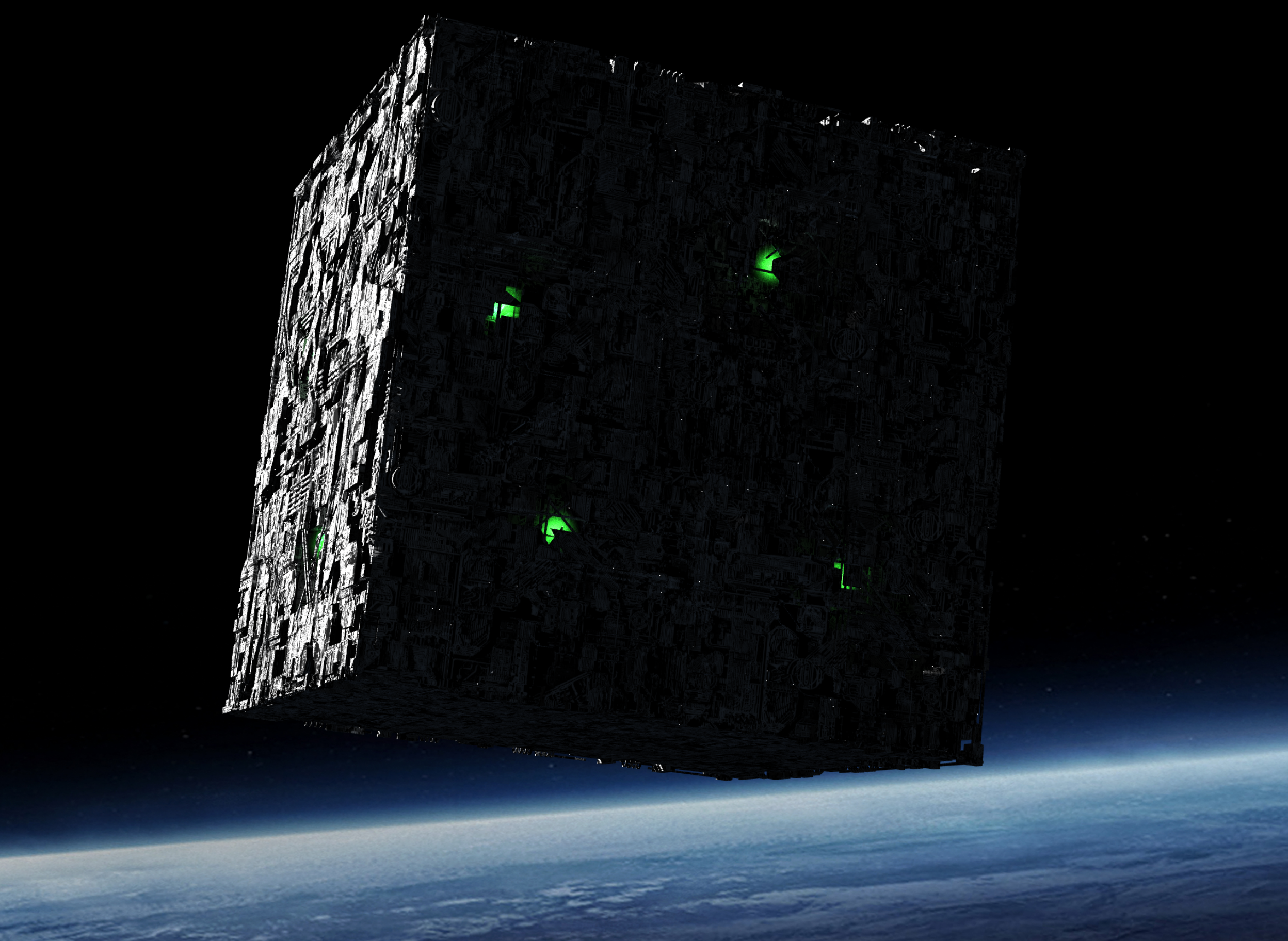


— WE HAVE —
ENGAGED
THE BORG

**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 & ONWARD

Salvage, recovery, and Incursion-related aftermath

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258 730 021 001

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159 180 143 143
• 147 987 170 010

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345

470

489



4091

4346

8845

9932

1212



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INTERLUDE

WOLF 359 MEMORIAL STATION

Stardate 73375.2 – 2396



The crew of the *Hood* file out of the ship and on to the station. Among the dignitaries in attendance I see many familiar faces that I have met and interviewed over the years; I can see Jake Sisko, L'Garrey, Captain Riker, and Chancellor Martok. In fact, there are representatives from almost every member world of the Federation as well as delegates from many other powers. There is even a small delegation from the Dominion in attendance – a testament to the improving relations following the formal establishment of diplomatic ties in recent years. Perhaps most surprising, I see the unmistakable face of Hugh, sitting near the front in a fashionable black cloak. Around him sit a few other former Borg bearing similar faces also streaked with scars and slivers of metal.

The last to leave the ship is her final captain and Admiral DeSoto. They take seats besides the lectern set up by the airlock where large panoramic windows show the ship in all her glory – looking resplendent in the light from Wolf 359. Beyond her, I can just make out the ships of the honor guard that escorted us into the system forming back up in columns: including the *Titan*, the *Sagan*, the *Obena*, and, of course, the *Enterprise*.

The decommissioning ceremony is scheduled to last about an hour and then there will be the formal opening of *Hood* as part of the memorial station and a tour of the ship for some of the dignitaries. The whole scene strikes me as somewhat anticlimactic after our journey here; the sea of people sat listening intently to the speeches being given seem at odds with the surroundings. This part of the memorial station is dedicated to the history leading up to the battle itself. Large holographic displays show people associated with the events and scenes representing key moments; there are large panels listing starship classes and even pieces of the Borg cube itself – behind a heavily reinforced force field, of course.

I find myself feeling slightly claustrophobic surrounded by all these people, so I try as discreetly as possible to make my way along to the end of row and to

pass towards the back of the room. I step through the throng of reporters and into the central corridor of the memorial station that curves around the central dock housing the remains of *Columbia*. With all of the station staff attending the ceremony, it's deserted. But I can hear a metallic clanging sound in the distance, coming from somewhere further away from the ceremony. The air here is cool and already I feel better to be away from all the people. I follow the sound further along the hall.

The station was designed by famed architect Vax Arass, who managed to balance many competing requirements to conceive of a facility both functional as a station, educational facility, and as a fitting memorial to the dead. The station is built off of the Ossuary and sweeps out in a large curve: at one end are the dock facilities and it is here that people arrive and learn the story of the battle. This is where the *Hood* is now berthed.

The hallway leads from this part of the station and curves around to the heart of the facility: the Silent Cenotaph.

The Cenotaph is a large open chamber, lined with 40 large windows that look out over the remains of the starships left at Wolf 359. The floor is covered in a reflective obsidian stone gifted by Andoria and the lights are kept low. It is a space that seems to absorb sound, making the clanging sound all the more jarring as I approach.

In the antechamber before entering the cenotaph proper is the *'IpyaH*. A column of fire roars along its surface and before it a pair of Klingon warriors stand proudly at attention, hammering their *bat'leths* into the stone floor in unison. The small indents in the floor show this is a common occurrence.

"I see you also heard the call," says a voice. I whip around, shocked at how close the voice was – I had not heard anyone walk up behind me. I find myself looking at a mighty bear of a Klingon in the full regalia of a member of the High Council and wearing a large fur across his shoulders. I almost have to squint before I realize who it is.

"Ambassador MeDKav?"

He places a hand on my shoulder and nods. "Sometimes it is good to remember who we are, and to dress accordingly, especially when in such hallowed grounds," he nods towards the Klingon guards. "They are preparing to

end their watch and they call for others to come take their place. Have you seen the ceremony before?"

"No, I was not aware there was one."

MeDKav nods with the faintest hint of a smile. "It is a great honor to be selected to stand watch over the *'IpyaH*. To even be considered they must prove themselves as honorable warriors and serve the empire with distinction."

A door I hadn't noticed adjacent to the main corridor opens and two more Klingon warriors enter, followed by another Klingon wearing robes and carrying a large box. The warriors hold their *bat'leths* in the crook of their arms, their uniforms look pristine with various crests and honors affixed to the front. They stop and stand before the other warriors, who stop the hammering on the stone. The silence that now fills the room feels almost oppressive. MeDKav leans close to whisper so as not to disturb the ceremony.

"The cleric will prepare the tea ceremony. The tea is made using the leaves of the fire hibiscus plant which is poisonous to most species. The warriors will drink the tea and then stand a watch for three days. It is a test of courage and honor and reminds us that death is an experience best shared – like the tea."

The newly-arrived warriors salute the ones standing guard and take the tea from the cleric, downing it in a single motion. The warriors guarding the flame dip their heads and *bat'leths* in unison, then turn and march away. The new warriors step forward, take the crests from their sleeves and throw them into the base of the fire.

"The warriors throw their family crests into the flame as well as any honors they have received in their careers. It is to remind us that we failed on that day: our friends called for aid and we did not come in time. It is a stain on our honor, on all Klingons, so we purify our houses in the fire and stand watch to help guide these noble souls to *Sto-Vo-Kor*."

The new warriors take up their positions. Already I can see sweat beginning to build on the ridges of the new recruits. I can see admiration in MeDKav's eyes as he nods respectfully at the warriors who have completed their duty as they march with the cleric out of the chamber.

"Come, let us go and pay our own respects to the fallen." He leads me past the Klingons and into the Cenotaph.

OWEN PARIS

"PROJECT PATHFINDER," EARTH

Stardate: 53425.9 – 2376



We were living in the G&G by then: we'd rack down in the bunks on the lower levels. The mess area was utilitarian to put it politely, but someone had brought some portable replicators and we were at least able to get coffee going. You know Captain Janeway was my science officer on the *Al-Batani*? Warmest, most compassionate officer I've known – so long as she had a supply of strong coffee to hand *at all times*. [chuckles]

Frankly, we didn't know what we were doing. This was so far outside of the scope of any of our training or planning that we were making it up as we went along. First, we were going to scatter the fleet – that changed and then we were going to reinforce J.P. at 359. Then *that* changed to mounting a staggered line defense up to Sol; then we were going to just muster whatever we could and hit them here.

Ross's "stellar bomb" seemed like the only option on the table with any hope of success so we pinned all our hopes on that. Once Hanson and Ross departed, we started to talk ourselves around from it being a long shot to the chance it might work – to it would definitely work. There was even talk that we should just go home to clean up and resume working in the Harriman Building. There was a definite sense of relief knowing at the very least we had a plan... you know what they say about plans in times of war? They never survive contact with the enemy.

We were patched into the command feeds from the *Columbia* as we gathered in the viewing gallery over the operations board. We had live feeds from every ship out there. When we saw that cube projected on the holographic display it sent a shiver right down my spine. I know it sounds archaic but the only word I could think to describe it was "*unholy*."

The second the *Bonestall* detonated the graviton burst we lost all live data within the system; we were reduced to audio only and a data stream on a time delay through the subspace relay network. It meant that our boards were updated every 60 seconds: the image would freeze and then 60 seconds later the board would refresh and we could see how the ships had been deployed.

Once it became clear that the probe had failed, I felt the bottom fall out of my world. We tried to transmit an abort order to Hanson to get him to withdraw, but there was no way to get a signal to him with all the interference now in the system. We just had to sit there and watch as every 60 seconds the tactical plot would update, and each time there would be fewer and fewer starships operational. Then *Columbia* was gone and that was pretty much it.

I won't lie to you – and I know it sounds callous – but losing J.P. hit me harder than the rest. I knew a lot of the people there, friends even, but J.P. and me went back a long way. We'd come up through the service together and had worked side by side for half a decade on the Admiralty Board. Sitting there, watching that light blink out all those light-years away, knowing there was nothing I could do...was almost too much to bear. It was a sense of helplessness that we just aren't used to dealing with in the modern Starfleet.

I felt numb. It's nigh on impossible to really comprehend the scope of the loss we suffered at 359: the single greatest loss of life in Starfleet's history, but we couldn't even take a moment to process what had happened. Immediately the question became "what now?". The Borg were still coming here and there wasn't a damn thing we could do about it.

ELIZABETH SHELBY

USS ILLINOIS, EN ROUTE TO ZAKDORN

Stardate 47626.9 – 2370



It was the longest 12 hours of my life. We'd lost contact with the admiral on *Columbia* and around the same time all communication out of the system just stopped. It was so sudden and all-encompassing that clearly it had to be some sort of interference from the Borg. I grabbed onto that spark of hope and hung onto it like a lifebelt – that hope and working to get *Enterprise* into a fit state to take on the Borg were the only things keeping me sane.

I spent just about all my time in engineering or crawling through Jefferies tubes. I think everyone was still in shock: first from the appearance of Locutus, and then the frustration at the lack of communication from the fleet. Captain Riker tried contacting Starfleet Command but the relay network was a mess, and – from what little we could glean – they had less information than we did. With the Borg presumably now on a direct course for Earth, the reinforcements Hanson had been promised were redeployed to the Sol System. *No one* was heading to Wolf 359.

I found it very hard to process what I was feeling. It was especially difficult because everyone on the ship was still coming to terms with what had happened to Captain Picard and our failure to stop the Borg. For my part, I greatly respected and admired the captain. Admiral Hanson often spoke fondly of his friendship with Picard and had told me I would be an excellent fit as his XO and that under his tutelage would very quickly find myself in command of my own ship. But I didn't know him like the crew here did. They had lost the head of their family and the strong arm on the tiller – the person to guide them through times just like these. Captain Riker became somewhat withdrawn during this time; he spent a lot of his time in his quarters and in the observation lounge, very rarely stepping into the ready room.

I was trying my utmost not to think about Admiral Hanson and the rest of his staff: Chet, Rip'lah, Stanz, and the rest. We had worked closely building up tactical back into a legitimate division within Starfleet and we were making real progress. More than that, they were my *friends*. Chet had the most amazing voice – have you ever heard a Lurian do karaoke? It's not something you forget, especially when his go-to was Mongolian throat singing!

[She chuckles.]

I spent most of my time working with Commander Data, who among his many other fantastic qualities is not prone to small talk. Despite his insistence that he does not understand Humans, he *does* know when something is bothering them. He suggested I go speak to Counselor Troi, but it seemed she had more than enough on her plate with the captain and the rest of the crew. Then he suggested I go to Ten-Forward and order a drink! It caught me completely off guard, but he simply returned to the calibrations he was conducting. When I asked why I should go there, he just said that Guinan would have what I needed.

So I did. While waiting for the aft shields to finish running a test I went to Ten-Forward to find this "Guinan." The lounge was pretty empty, but it reminded me a little of the 1602 back in San Francisco. I found Guinan sitting at a table with a glass of Saurian brandy and a tumbler with an orange-colored drink across from her. She gestured for me to sit and gave me the warmest smile I'd ever seen. I peered into the glass, took a drink, and instantly was taken back to my academy days. We used to call it the "Shelby Sour" – how she knew what it was or that it was exactly what I needed at that moment I still don't know.

We spoke for what felt like an hour – maybe two – about my career, Admiral Hanson, the Borg, Captain Picard...everything. The strangest thing was that at the end, she thanked me! Said I had helped her work through some things and she knew what she needed to do. We got up to leave and she followed me out to the turbolift. I called for the bridge and gestured for her to tell the computer her destination, but she just smiled that enigmatic smile and said that's where she needed to be, too.

She headed for the ready room while I took over the conn from Data. I admit, even with everything we were going through, I still felt a thrill being in command of the *Enterprise*. Three days ago this had been *everything* I'd ever wanted. Now

it seemed almost inconsequential against the looming threat of the Borg.

We were getting ever closer to the Wolf 359 System and I started to feel my insides knot up again as I let my mind wander. Then Guinan exited the ready room. She smiled at me, gave a nod, then left the bridge. I knew whatever we were going to find, it was going to be *bad*. Clearly whatever had happened something had gone terribly wrong and a lot of ships were likely to be damaged, but with luck the Borg would be, too. I gave the order to drop out of warp and Ensign Crusher called Captain Riker to the bridge. He seemed different, too. More comfortable, I would have said.

As we entered the system, sensors picked up several vessels and all the tension released at that moment. At least some of them had survived, but a wave of nausea hit me when Data reported no active subspace fields or power readings...and no lifesigns.

Once we moved into visual range and could see the fleet...I still have nightmares about that moment: scorched and blackened hulks, some still on fire, venting what little atmosphere they still had into space, still drifting on whatever course they had been on when the Borg had crippled them. The entire bridge was silent. I guess everyone was trying to process it in their own way. There was no sign of the Borg anywhere – not even any significant debris. It just looked like someone had flung a surplus yard into orbit.

I couldn't stand the silence and I remembered what Guinan had said to me about giving voice to our fears: it can rob them of their power. So I started to identify the ships I could see – the *Tolstoy*, the *Kyushu*, the *Melbourne*. I saw Riker's head fall at the mention of that ship he had been destined to captain. I continued the litany to myself, but I could only identify a dozen or so of the fleet.

Our sensors were almost nonexistent as a result of the graviton burst and the Borg were still heading for Earth. We couldn't stop to look for survivors – there was no time. Looking at the slaughter, the complete and utter destruction the Borg had wrought, it was difficult to imagine that anyone could have survived. We passed through the battlefield at half-impulse, navigating around the larger wrecks, and then continued our pursuit. I thought I caught sight of the remains of *Columbia* and said goodbye to Admiral Hanson from the observation lounge.

I remember thinking "how strange." This was what I had been dreading all

day. I had expected to fall to pieces, but after speaking to Guinan and after seeing how Riker and the rest of the crew were still functioning after the loss of Picard gave me the strength I needed to keep it together. I knew there would be time to grieve and to despair, but first we had a job to do. The Borg were still coming and *Enterprise* might really be all that stood between Earth and assimilation.

TRANSCRIPT OF ADMIRALTY MEETING

ACCESS INCLUDED AUDIO FILE "6.04"

The following is an edited transcript of a holorecorded meeting of the Starfleet senior staff on stardate 44002.9 (approximately four hours after the Battle of Wolf 359). The meeting took place in the secure conference room in the Starfleet Command Central Crisis Planning Center (colloquially known as the George & Gracie Memorial Theatre or "GGG") beneath Starfleet Headquarters in San Francisco.

Starfleet Intelligence partially declassified and approved the redacted recording for public release on stardate 63047.7.

FLAG OFFICERS PRESENT

Fleet Admiral Taela Shanthi
CHIEF OF STARFLEET OPERATIONS

Admiral Owen Paris
VICE CHIEF OF STARFLEET OPERATIONS

Vice Admiral Ellen Hayes
CHIEF OF STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE

Vice Admiral Thomas Henry
CHIEF OF STARFLEET SECURITY

Vice Admiral Jennifer Chapman
**CHIEF OF STARFLEET
SUSTAINMENT & LOGISTICS**

Rear Admiral (Lower Half)
James Leyton
CHIEF OF STARFLEET PERSONNEL

Admiral Eliza Brooks
**CHIEF OF STARFLEET MEDICAL /
STARFLEET SURGEON GENERAL**

Rear Admiral (Upper Half)
Norah Satie
**STARFLEET JUDGE
ADVOCATE GENERAL**

The Starfleet senior staff sit in a claustrophobic room around a metal conference table with a holographic interface in its center. It displays the aftermath of Wolf 359. The casualty numbers hang in midair half a meter above the table. Every few seconds, the data updates with new figures highlighting the absolute carnage less than a dozen light-years away. Long-range sensor drones clearly indicate the Borg have already resumed course for Earth at warp 7 with seemingly no damage at all.

The dim lights highlight the admiralty's haggard, sleep-deprived visages. The men are unshaven. Everyone's face seems to have aged 10 years in the past week. This recording is in stark contrast to the meetings recorded in the relative opulence of the Nogura Room less than two weeks earlier.

SHANTHI: So, it's confirmed?

HAYES: **[nodding slowly]** Yes, 32 starships confirmed destroyed. Six unaccounted for, but it's a mess out there. At least 8,000 dead and likely a lot more than that.

CHAPMAN: What about J.P. and Bill?

HAYES: *Columbia* is a catastrophic loss. No sign of survivors. Ross was in a *Danube*-class runabout less than three AU from ground zero when the Borg counterattacked. He's only listed as "missing," but he would have a better chance kayaking in a hurricane.

CHAPMAN: So, they're both dead?

HAYES: Most likely...

SHANTHI: We'll have to mourn our fallen later. What about the living?

HAYES: We've detected at least a hundred emergency subspace beacons from escape pods, but with that cube between us and the remains of the fleet, there's no way to know how many actually have survivors aboard.

PARIS: **[turning to Brooks]** Eliza, how long do they have?

BROOKS: **[she becomes flustered and pauses to consider the factors]** If the tri-ox hypos and artificial blood packs in the escape pods survived, maybe three or four days. If the life support systems were damaged or the pods were over their maximum capacity, maybe 26-52 hours...and that's for the non-critical cases. If they have severely wounded aboard, you have about two hours on emergency med kits.

Then, if you don't get them to a Level III Trauma equipped sickbay, it's game over.

SHANTHI: Is there any other ship out there that could stop to assist with recovery efforts? Have we had any contact with Riker or the *Enterprise*?

[HENRY wordlessly shakes his head in the negative.]

LEYTON: **[forcefully interjecting]** Ma'am, I think we should consider the possibility that the *Enterprise* was crippled when they attempted to engage the Borg with their modified deflector array and consider them out of the fight. The Klingons never showed. The president and her staff are running away at warp 9.9 in the wrong direction. *No one else is coming.* The fleet we have in the Sol System is now our last and only line of defense. It's time to be the warriors our planet needs us to be.

SATIE: Rear Admiral Leyton, please!

PARIS: I agree with James, Taela. Earth just became the Alamo and we have to prepare to make our final stand.

[SHANTHI grits her teeth, closes her eyes, and steeples her fingers. Finally, she lets out a labored breath, picks up a PADD, and inputs a series of orders before signing with her thumbprint.]

SHANTHI: Effective at 23:00 hours tonight, Vice Admiral Thomas Henry of Starfleet Security is brevetted to full admiral and placed in command of Task Force Sentinel, the Sol Defense Fleet. Rear Admiral James Leyton is brevetted to vice admiral and will be your second-in-command.

HENRY: Understood. I'll place my flag aboard the *Musashi*. Captain Surovang and I have worked together before. She'll know how to help me maneuver a fleet. **[he turns to LEYTON]** Pick another ship. We'll fight until we can't fight anymore...

LEYTON: And then I'll keep fighting. I'll go aboard the *Swiftsure*. She's small, but *fast*. We can mass the fleet in the Oort cloud. That will give us time to get into combat formation for a counterattack once the Borg reach the Jupiter Perimeter.

[HENRY nods his approval.]

HAYES: At the rate they move?! If you wait that long, the Borg will be in New Jersey before the fleet crosses the Neptune Outer Marker!

PARIS: We can activate the Sol Defense League. They can slow the Borg down as they approach the inner solar system.

CHAPMAN: You really think those *weekend warriors* have a chance against that cube? They're still drilling with phase pistols and shuttlepods.

PARIS: Do we have a choice?

[CHAPMAN deflates a bit as she realizes he is right.]

SHANTHI: As the two senior officers in Starfleet, Owen and I will remain behind in G&G and take command of planetary defense operations. If the Borg are able to land forces on Earth's surface, we will trigger [REDACTED]

BROOKS: [aghast] You can't be serious!?

PARIS: I concur, Taela. **[turning to BROOKS]** Eliza, you saw what happened at 359. If the Borg land ground forces on the planet, it's already over. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It will be quick and painless.

HAYES: I'll stay, too. It was intelligence failures that led to all of this. I want to help make things right.

SHANTHI: The hell you are, Ellen. I will not let the Borg compromise all of Starfleet's operations just by seizing this one planet. We have to survive! We have to help what's left of the Federation rebuild. Ellen, that's where you, Jennifer, and Eliza, come in...

[The heads of Starfleet Intelligence, Logistics, and Medical look confused.]

SHANTHI: I've handpicked one of the finest captains in Starfleet to be our lifeboat. Right now, Edward Jellico is assisting with organizing planetary evacuation and defense operations from Starbase One, but he's on standby for a very special mission on my direct order.

[The table all lean forward.]

SHANTHI: He will safeguard the rest of Starfleet's staff aboard the *Cairo* along with a hard copy backup of the complete headquarters database that I had our comm techs start encoding as soon as Wolf 359 failed.

CHAPMAN: That many isolinear chips will take up an entire shuttlebay!

SHANTHI: Yes, they will. Once you three are aboard with your personal staff and the computer data, Jellico will proceed at maximum warp to rendezvous with *Paris One* and Admiral Nechayev. Then, his sole purpose in life will be to keep you all safe. He's the only commander I trust with that level of responsibility.

BROOKS: And then exactly what the hell are we supposed to do, Taela?

SHANTHI: *Survive*, Ellen. Your job will be to keep the rest of the Federation together without Earth...whatever that looks like.

SATIE: **[interjecting nervously]** Excuse me, Ma'am. I can't help but notice you didn't reserve a seat for me on the lifeboat. Where exactly am I supposed to be in all of this?

PARIS: Right next to us in G&G, Norah.

SATIE: **[shocked]** I'm a lawyer! What possible use could I be here?

SHANTHI: You are needed on Earth precisely because you oversee the interpretation and execution of Starfleet's policies and legal procedures. Before the president departed, she signed a secret order authorizing certain escalations in the event they became necessary to prevent mass panic. I will need your help properly interpreting what is permitted and what it does not in emergency circumstances.

HENRY: Are we talking martial law here?

SHANTHI: That is one possibility, yes. We must do everything we can to keep order on Earth as the Borg close in. At the very least, we need to keep our facilities safe to continue operations for as long as possible. Eight billion civilians can cause a lot of damage if left unchecked.

[LEYTON nods approvingly.]

SATIE: Then you can consult a computer database! You don't need me to *die* to tell you what law and regulation say!

SHANTHI: **[angrily]** You are also a Starfleet officer, Admiral! As long as you wear that uniform, you will put yourself to the hazard as required! Am I *understood*?

[SATIE is speechless.]

[LEYTON mutters something under his breath. SATIE shoots a venomous look back at him but says nothing.]

END OF FILE

JUAN FLETCHER

SANTIAGO, EARTH

Stardate 47878.0 – 2370

While Starfleet is responsible for the defense of the Federation, most member worlds maintain their own independent system or planetary defense force which answers only to the planetary government to provide local protection and to allow Starfleet to focus on its core mission. For some members, such as Vulcan and Andoria, their existing defense forces – the High Command and Imperial Guard, respectively – continue to perform that role. With Starfleet's origins as the United Earth's defense force it was not politically viable nor desirable to have Starfleet protecting the Sol System and answering to the Earth government.

The Sol Defense League was established shortly after the founding of the Federation to take over the duties of protecting Earth and its interests. However, given Earth's status as the home of both Starfleet and the Federation government it has been largely seen as an afterthought and never seriously maintained as a fighting force. Most members join on a part-time reserve basis in exchange for benefits from Earth, including the possibility of owning land on Earth itself. I meet with Juan Fletcher, now retired from the SDL, at their ranch where they live with their wife – just outside Santiago on the South American continent.

I joined up to get into the lottery for a plot on Earth. I grew up on Titan and always remember when we would take trips down to Earth to see the Grand Canyon or the Andes. I was absolutely *enthralled* – growing up all I wanted was to be able to live on Earth. The thing is though...it's a pretty small planet, and it's been through a lot, you know, so there's strict controls on how many people can live on the planet.

So, I signed up for the Sol Defense League. It was mostly just a thing to do on weekends; a couple of weeks out of the year we'd go and fly some shuttles around the academy's testing range out around Saturn. That was about the size of it. I didn't really think about it much – it was more like a club. I'd catch up with friends, see stuff around the system, and maybe one day get a little plot on Earth to call my own.

I was out doing a survey near Eros when I got a call on the SDL communicator. It was lucky that I had it with me, but it happened to be in my kit bag when I threw it into the shuttle that morning. It was my local platoon commander –

nice kid called Diogo – telling me that we had been activated. I figured it was a joke or something so played along: “oh yeah, *suuure*, the Klingons have decided to attack Earth,” I think I said. He didn’t laugh. He sounded terrified, told me to divert immediately to Jupiter Outpost 92. I didn’t have time for jokes, so I told him to head over at warp 9 and shut down my communicator. Just went back to my survey. About five minutes later there was a signal over the EMS [**Emergency Messaging System**] and a call from some Starfleet bigwig telling us that all members of the SDL had been activated and were to report immediately for assignment.

Let me tell you, the flight from Eros to Jupiter took maybe 25 minutes, but they were the longest 25 minutes I’d ever experienced. I figured I was going to be in so much trouble – maybe kicked out, lose my chance for a plot. My stomach was tying itself in knots the entire way. On the sensors it looked like someone had disturbed an ant hill with all the shuttles hurtling back and forth between Jupiter Station and Outpost 92. Could see a couple of Starfleet ships there, too. Big ones.

I landed the shuttle and found my platoon commander. I expected him to lay into me, but he looked just as confused and terrified. We had *no idea* what was going on and neither did anyone else it seemed! Eventually, a Starfleet officer showed up, a Captain Jellico, who was in charge of liaising between the SDL and Starfleet. I’d been busy with the surveys and I hadn’t been keeping up with the news so this was the first I heard about the Borg. It all sounded so far-fetched, but it was pretty clear this guy wasn’t the joking sort. Starfleet had engaged the Borg and it had not gone well he said – which might go down as one of the greatest understatements of all time! Starfleet was now mustering a fleet out in the Oort cloud, but we were being activated to help to hold the line and to provide support until they could move the big ships into position.

That was a *joke*! Most of our equipment was ancient! Some even had MACO insignia on them – from the 22nd century! Sure we kept them flying and well serviced, but the same way the CAF keeps things like that old B-52 going, mostly for displays and stuff. It’s not meant for combat! He smiled when someone pointed this out to him and told us he had some new toys for us.

Reason we’d been sent to 92 was Starfleet had been building a new range of small, agile attack craft to be used for system defense: they called them the *Shri-Tals*. I heard later that these were planned to be sent to the Cardassian border for the colonies there, maybe Bajor, but I don’t know about that. Probably

for the best they never did, given how they performed.

Don't get me wrong, the specs on these things were unsurpassed: multi-quad impulse manifolds, phaser cannons, and micro torpedo launchers. These things could have given an ole *Hurley*-class ship a real run for its money. They had teeth and we only had three days to learn how to use them. It was pretty intense, but also a lot of fun; these things moved like you wouldn't believe. I've flown *Peregrines* since and they had nothing on these. By the time we were dispersed around the system I figured sure, I could take on the Borg, the Klingons, the Romulans, pretty much anyone who came calling. We were ready and we were going to kick ass!

My platoon was deployed to Triton. The Borg came into the system and bypassed us completely, heading directly for Saturn. We scrambled to get out there, but as we were launching we got the feeds in from the Mars Defense Perimeter. We saw one of the flights form up and move in to attack. There were three ships, the Borg fired three shots, and then there were no more ships. Poof! Just like that they were gone. We were pretty shook up by that, but we were still going to go do what we needed to do. The call came in from Jellico to stand down, saying there wasn't any point in throwing the rest of our lives away given how ineffective the *Shri-Tals* had proven to be. He thanked us and said we should head out of the system at best speed.

I wasn't having that – we were here to hold the line no matter what. *Nothing* was going to get through. The rest of the platoon felt the same. We punched it to full impulse and started after them when another Starfleet ship appeared. It absolutely dwarfed the ships we'd seen earlier, but compared to the Borg it was tiny. It was the *Enterprise*, and it left us in its proverbial dust. We kept on after them as fast as we could, but by the time we were close enough to reacquire visuals, it was too late. It was over.

DR. LEWIS ZIMMERMAN

JUPITER STATION, JUPITER ORBIT

Stardate 47913.2 – 2370

Since its commissioning in the 22nd century, Jupiter Research Station (or Jupiter Station) has been one of the foremost scientific research outposts within the Federation and houses some of the greatest scientific minds in Starfleet. Among the many innovations to come from the station in recent years are the advances in holographic technology; integration that has moved beyond simple interface and communication tools to become the single most popular form of entertainment in the Alpha Quadrant. I am here to speak to Dr. Lewis Zimmerman, the Director of Holographic Imaging and Programming on the station. I am led into the lab on the station by his assistant Hayley and find him having an animated discussion about ethics with a holographic version of himself. As I enter he deactivates the hologram, tells the computer to recalibrate the hologram's ethical subroutines, and invites me to sit on a chair. I remove the pile of PADDs and we begin my interview.

The first I knew about this “invasion” was when *someone* redirected power from my lab. When I stepped out of the lab I found the station at Red Alert and everyone in an absolute panic. I had disconnected the lab from the station's intercom and alert systems because it kept interrupting my research, which was at a very delicate phase – can you imagine how difficult it is to try and compile holographic matrix that is adaptive and able to run autonomously from the main holographic system buffer? Not to mention, integrating the machine learning and algorithmic diagnostic subroutines!? I couldn't continue to be interrupted every five minutes with “Ensign Smith report to deck nine” or “Lieutenant Burke to the shuttlebay.” This is extremely delicate work and my focus needed to be absolute! So, I isolated the lab from the rest of the station, and as it turned out inadvertently missed the whole Borg invasion...thing.

Typically, my research assistant Felix was nowhere to be seen so I tried to find someone to tell me what was going on: why the station was at Red Alert and why the lab was powered down. But it was like a ghost station. The computer told me that Commander Clarke was in operations, but my attempts to communicate were not getting through. Seems the comm system was also down, so I took it upon myself to go and find out what was happening. I

was storming down the corridor towards the turbolift when I heard something coming from the cafe. I stuck my head through the door to find a couple of research technicians weeping and holding each other. I was *quite* taken aback.

I don't do terribly well with...you know...people.

I considered if I should say something. I didn't think they were from the holoprogramming staff, so I decided they weren't my responsibility – in any case, I needed to get power back to the lab. I continued to operations, but the thought of seeing them crying like that stuck with me. Maybe the Red Alert was serious? Maybe there was something wrong with the reactors? Had there been an evacuation? No, I dismissed that quite quickly. I am the foremost holoprogrammer in the Federation – I dare say the quadrant. If the station was to be evacuated someone would have come to get me and ensure my research was secured, so it must be something else.

When I got to operations it was deserted. I wasn't worried at that point, more *frustrated* and increasingly irritated. I felt like there was a game of hide and seek going on and it was keeping me from my work at a critical time. I moved around to the observation gallery and that's where I found the commander and most of the command staff: staring out through the high windows.

I came up to the commander and asked him what was going on. He told me they wanted to see if they could catch a glimpse of it. When I asked "of what?" he looked at me blankly with a sort of resigned expression on his face. "The Borg," he said, as if that would make everything plain.

"What the hell is a Borg?" I demanded, "and what did they have to do with the lab losing power!?"

He gave a peculiar tilt of his head, similar to what I've seen that tin can android do when trying to do basic arithmetic. "The Borg...have you been living under a rock all week?"

I took a moment and asked him the stardate. As it happens, it had been closer to 10 days and I was suddenly very aware that I had not shaved in all that time nor been near a sonic shower. I became extremely uncomfortable and was about to go back to my quarters and shower before doing anything else when someone shouted out "there!"

Everyone gazed up and followed some extended fingers out to what they were looking at in space. It was the thing of nightmares. A ship more massive than the station we were on, black against black and cubic in shape, but its surface a mess of exposed pipes and structures. I found myself backing away from the window against the wall. Some of the people there broke down in tears, some held onto each other. "What is that?" I managed to stammer. "Where is Starfleet!?"

Someone – I think from the terraforming sciences team – shouted, "They left us, Starfleet just turned tail and ran away!"

I found that hard to believe, they'd *always* protected the Federation, or at the very least Earth. And what about *me*! They wouldn't just leave the system without taking their best and brightest! I just stared at the cube as it grew bigger and bigger, *impossibly big*. It seemed to be coming for me personally and I felt my knees turn to jelly but it didn't stop.

It just hurtled past us as if we weren't even there.

The people stared out of the windows for a little longer but then started to disperse. I grabbed Commander Clarke's arm and asked him what was going on, where was Starfleet. He told me that the Borg had destroyed a massive fleet at Wolf 359 and Starfleet were regrouping, but he did not know the specifics. All he could tell me was right now there were no ships available to evacuate the station and if there was anyone important to me on Earth, I should call them now.

He walked away in something of a daze and I was left there in the observation gallery with Jupiter just hanging above me, now painfully aware of my own odor. I had to go and clean myself up. As I headed back to my quarters I tried to think if there was anyone I wanted to contact. For the past 15 years my work had been everything – a chance to change the Federation, to maybe even take us towards the singularity, immortality itself! But I realized that I had been so consumed that I was *alone*. There was no one for me to call on Earth, or anywhere. I found that rather depressing.

After cleaning myself up I headed back to the lab – it seemed like there was nowhere else for me to go – and found my assistant Felix there tapping away on a console. Turns out the power cut was unrelated to the Red Alert or the Borg. After running the holoemitters and generation matrices for two weeks straight

the system had simply shut down due to thermal issues; the computer's audible warnings had been disconnected along with the rest of the comms. Felix was working to find a way to upgrade the field grid to allow continuous operation.

He was a great assistant: dedicated, creative, he really saw the potential for holographic technology beyond just interfaces and linear holonovels. I think he really grasped the potential for holograms to become more than just projections of photons. He reminded me a lot of myself when I was younger – so focused on our work. The last thing I wanted right then was for him to end up like me...so I fired him. Such a waste, last I heard all he is doing now is writing holonovels, although they are in extremely high demand. I must see about getting one.

With him gone I was alone again, but I decided I didn't have to be if I didn't want to be. That was when I started working on Hayley.

♦ **Wait – she's a hologram?**

I know, *impressive* isn't she? Just wait until you see my next project. My new EMHs are going to be installed throughout the fleet. In time, I believe they will be able to replace entire crews on starships. Let's see the Borg try and assimilate a bunch of photons!

WILLIAM T. RIKER

STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS, SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH

Stardate 44012.3 – 2367



No, it wasn't sanctioned by Starfleet. There wasn't time and after passing through the remains of the fleet and with the chaos and confusion we were monitoring over subspace, I'm not even sure who could have authorized it.

We'd been on the back foot since the Borg had entered Federation space and now with the captain absorbed into their collective, they had access to all of his experience and knowledge. With that kind of an advantage they were going to be nigh unstoppable. Picard had literally written the book on how to be a Starfleet captain in the 24th century. We studied his career and logs from the *Stargazer* at the academy: it is drilled into us that if you want to be the best, to be a captain in Starfleet then you needed to be Jean-Luc Picard.

There was another problem. The cube still had a significant head start and we had no idea exactly where they were or how we could get them to stop for us to enact the plan. We picked up that the USS *Excalibur* was shadowing the cube, so we had an idea of where the Borg were. They were traveling at a relatively leisurely warp 7 so we would be able to catch them. But we needed them to *stop*.

I spoke directly to Captain kaMpande on the *Excalibur*. He relayed some of what he had heard about the battle at Wolf 359 – it was an absolute rout and Starfleet should never have allowed it to happen, they knew the fleet would have been no match for the Borg, they left them to be slaughtered!

[He pauses and takes a breath.]

Sorry, it's still very raw – especially knowing we had to leave people behind. The Borg were effectively home free so I had to ask kaMpande to do something without orders from Starfleet. I needed him to slow the cube down. To his credit, he listened to our plan and reasoning, but I guess having already seen how little effect a fleet of 40 starships had...he knew that we

weren't going to win this through conventional means. He promised to harass the Borg and to buy us our time.

I don't know exactly how he did it, but he managed it. At a horrible cost: *Excalibur* was picked up adrift several days after, and over half the crew were dead or taken by the Borg including kaMpande. It's a testament to the captain and his crew that when the Borg picked us up on sensors they immediately slowed to impulse and took on a defensive posture. They no longer were content to just ignore us – they considered us a threat. I credit that to Captain kaMpande and the crew of *Excalibur*.

We had refined our plan and felt confident we knew how to play to the Borg's weaknesses. They have an innate ability to adapt, but seem unable to anticipate that in their adversaries. Someone told me that if you are facing someone who wrote the book on how to fight – then it's time for a new book.

I saw two possibilities if we were going to defeat the Borg: we either recovered the captain and found a way to undo what the Borg had done to him, or we killed him and denied the Borg Locutus. I presented these options to Worf and Data; there was no one else I could trust with a mission such as this. Our first goal was to try and retrieve the captain, but if that was not possible, if they had to...to carry out the mission they would do so without hesitation. We had devised a plan to get to Locutus and bring him back to the ship.

WOLF, SON OF MOGH

USS *ENTERPRISE*, DETRIAN SYSTEM

Stardate: 46424.1 – 2369



My failure to protect the captain and prevent his capture weighed heavily on my mind. It was a stain on my honor – one which I feared I would never be able to expunge. Passing through the corpses of starships left in the Borg's wake at Wolf 359 only deepened my conviction that I had failed in my duty. I made a silent prayer to Kahless and swore that I would avenge the fallen.

The mood on the ship was grim. Very few of my fellow officers had ever had to stare death in the face and accept the inevitability of their mortality before that day. I think it is safe to say that it affected everyone. We were all robbed of the fiction that we were beyond a time where Starfleet and the citizens of the Federation might be called upon to sacrifice for the whole.

My prayer was answered when Captain Riker approached myself and Commander Data with a daring proposition: the Borg had taken Captain Picard from us, now we would take Locutus from the Borg. We were to devise a plan to rescue the captain or to ensure he had an honorable death.

It would not be easy. There were many variables we had to overcome, not the least of which were the formidable defenses of the Borg ship and the significant head start the Borg had on the *Enterprise* as they plunged deeper in the heart of the Federation. Fortunately, the sacrifice of the *Excalibur* brought us the time we needed to enact our plan.

The Borg are a formidable foe and are able to adapt rapidly, meaning we could no longer transport directly onto the Borg ship. In anticipation of the challenge, Commander Data and myself took a shuttle while Captain Riker and Commander Shelby diverted the Borg's attention – allowing our *d'k tahg* to slip past their guard and into their very heart.

Once we had positioned the shuttle inside the cube's dampening field, we could transport directly to the coordinates where *Enterprise* had traced Locutus's transmissions. Instantly, we were set upon by his guards. The

Borg were no longer content to allow us free access to roam their ships, but immediately recognized us as a threat – as well they should. Commander Data and I quickly dispatched the guards until only Locutus himself remained. I had to remind myself that even though this Borg wore the face of Captain Picard it was *not* him. I could not afford to show any weakness if we were to succeed in our mission.

I threw myself directly at Locutus as he raised his Borg limb and attempted to infect me with the poison that had taken Picard. I held the arm away as we grappled – the strength the Borg had managed to infuse into the captain far greater than any I have seen exhibited by any Human before. We struggled for a time and I locked eyes with the thing that was Locutus: I had to know if the captain remained within. If there was any sign of the man who had seen the worth in having the only Klingon in Starfleet to serve aboard its flagship, who had been my *Cha'Dich* before the Klingon High Council – a man for whom I would gladly have given my life. I needed to know if any of that man remained in the twisted machine before me.

I stared into cold gray eyes completely devoid of the vitality I had known in Captain Picard; none of the nobility, the wisdom, the honor remained. Captain Riker has told us his hope was that the captain could be returned to the ship, but if that was not possible we were to ensure that he would no longer be in thrall to the Borg. As head of security, I could not let this thing on the *Enterprise* if there was a chance it would cause more harm. Captain Picard would never have forgiven me. With my decision made, I readied myself to snap its neck and to send the captain to *Sto-Vo-Kor*. But then I caught a flash in its eyes and for just the briefest of moments I saw Captain Picard.

I think he was trying to thank me, to tell me that it was alright, and to free him from this bondage. But now I could not. I knew the captain still lived, trapped within his own flesh and it was our duty to free him from the Borg and bring him back to the *Enterprise*.

I fought with Locutus long enough for Commander Data to affix a subneural damper, rendering him unconscious. The three of us transported back to the shuttlecraft. The Borg, however, were still eager to deny us our prize. The Borg attacked the shuttle, but once we were clear of the cube's influence, *Enterprise* beamed us back aboard to safety. The Borg destroyed our shuttlecraft, but we were victorious. We had taken Locutus from the Borg, and now we would free the captain from Locutus.

MILES O'BRIEN

USS ENTERPRISE, EN ROUTE TO BAJOR

Stardate 46378.2 – 2369

Miles Edward O'Brien is an exemplar of the unsung heroes of Starfleet: the non-commissioned officers. With competition for the limited slots at the academy being so fierce, many elect to join as non-coms. They form the bedrock upon which the organization operates with beings from all over the Federation – and even some from outside – taking the opportunity to serve the Federation and to explore the galaxy in a way that many citizens cannot begin to imagine. O'Brien is known as a "Plank Owner" since he has served on the USS Enterprise since its launch in 2363. However, as I sit down to conduct my interview we are in transit to the Bajor System, where he will assume the role of chief of operations on the former Cardassian space station Terok Nor, now designated as Deep Space Nine.

To be frank, officers have never been particularly good at keeping the rest of the crew informed as to the goings on around the ship – especially when we're on duty. I don't even have any windows down in the transporter room, and often don't have any idea where I'll be beaming an away team until the information packet comes through. Most of the time, half the bridge crew would just walk in and give me a bunch of coordinates.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not complaining. I used to do bridge duty, so I understand they have a lot going on. But my point is that at times, especially when time is critical and stakes are high, we don't always have the big picture to really know what's going on.

That week had been very bad, possibly the darkest time we'd had on *Enterprise* since we lost Lieutenant Yar. We were told that the Borg had taken Captain Picard, but that was about all we knew for certain. As you might expect the lower deck scuttlebutt was in full swing; I'd heard just about everything from he had been killed protecting Commander Riker to he was leading a covert operation to destroy the Borg from the inside. I don't think anyone really had a handle on just how dire the situation was nor the horror of the reality.

After that, it felt like the entire ship was in a state of shock. It didn't help that the ship just felt so empty without the civilians and non-essential personnel; this is a big ship and I didn't get too many visitors to the transporter

room at the best of times. Being alone there for an entire shift...there were only so many times I could realign the heisenberg compensators and flush out the biofilters. Most folk were throwing themselves into their work, but there really wasn't anything for me to do. Which left me alone to think, and after hearing about what happened at Wolf 359, well – I was grateful for the lack of windows in the transporter room. I've seen enough death before and didn't need to see that. But still you could feel the weight of it. I started having some nasty flashbacks to my time on the *Rutledge*. I couldn't even go and talk to my fiancée since she had been evacuated.

It was shortly after we'd left the Wolf 359 System and resumed pursuit that I was called up to the observation lounge for a meeting with Captain Riker, Commander Data, and Lieutenant Worf. They laid out their plan to try and retrieve Captain Picard. This was the first time they officially told me what the situation was. I had already heard that the captain had been turned into a Borg, but I didn't really understand what they meant – had he joined them? Was he now wearing a black jumpsuit? I can understand why Captain Riker wanted to control the news as much as possible, but the only thing faster than warp 10 on a starship is gossip. Naturally, we all knew something, but now I was given my first look at what the Borg had done to Captain Picard. I watched a playback of the transmission from the Borg cube when we had fired the deflector – I nearly lost my lunch. It looked like something from those old 20th century horror vids. I think this was the first time I can remember that the scuttlebutt was *less* horrifying than the reality.

Their plan was – to put it mildly – *nuts*. To try and sneak onto the Borg ship and snatch him away from the center of the hive. I've seen Worf and Data do some pretty incredible things, but I had no idea how they would pull this off. Still, it gave me something to work on, to help focus the mind and distract me from the inevitable doom heading towards Earth. It felt damn good to be doing something rather than just wait for the inevitable.

We anticipated that the Borg would have likely adjusted their electromagnetic fields to inhibit our transporters so Worf and Data took a shuttle to pass within the field and transport onto the cube. It was a tense few minutes while they were out of communication, but we soon got the signal back that they had retrieved the captain and were heading back. Captain Riker told

me to immediately beam them aboard. I found myself face-to-face with what the Borg had done to Captain Picard. It was far worse than anything I could have possibly imagined – the image on the viewscreen was *nothing* compared to seeing it firsthand.

We now had another problem of trying to keep this from the rest of the crew; only the senior staff, the bridge crew, and Dr. Crusher's staff had been briefed about the operation. I asked Commander Data why the secrecy once the captain had been brought into sickbay. He said that Captain Riker was concerned about the morale of the crew if they knew Captain Picard was on the ship and in the event of our failure to free him from the Borg we might have to kill him. He said it so matter of factly it left me stunned, but he was right. Captain Picard really was the beating heart of the ship and we'd already lost him once – to lose him a second time would have destroyed us.

I thought that was my part done and went back to the transporter room. Frankly, I was glad to be alone this time. The last thing I needed was a load of ensigns trying to get gossip out of me, but just before the end of my shift I was called to one of the science labs. Commander Data explained that the Borg's link between the captain and the Borg was active through a subspace window similar to what we use with the transporter – only at far greater ranges than anything we could achieve. I mean, theoretically, there is no limit to the range of the transporters, but we get into the messy nature of spacetime and pattern degradation. The Borg used this to establish their collective link and Commander Data wanted me there to monitor his positronic systems as he attempted to infiltrate it. Really, this was work more suited to Commander La Forge, but the *Enterprise* at this point was mostly being held together by spit and bootlaces and he was needed in engineering. So, given I was already "in the know," I took up a station and came face-to-face once again with Locutus of Borg.

If anything, he was even more terrifying in this dormant state. Stripped of his carapace armor he seemed even less Human, the implants throughout his body exposed. I tried to focus on the console and not to look at what the Borg had done to him, but in many ways that made it worse. Knowing he was there behind me, and knowing that the Borg had entered the Sol System and we were now just minutes away from Earth – my guts were tied in absolute knots.

My Da and I used to watch vids when I was a kid, and his favorites were always those with heroic last stands: the Charge of the Light Brigade, Rorke's Drift,

the Alamo – that sorta thing. I found myself thinking back to those. The thing about all of those stories though is they often knew it was a hopeless situation, but they still stuck with it and did their duty – not for their king or country or anything like that – they did it for the guys there with them, the ones standing shoulder to shoulder with them. I remember looking around at Commander Data, Dr. Crusher, Counselor Troi, and all the others there on the *Enterprise* and I felt a real sense of peace. Like this might well be our last stand, but I was willing to do it because of those standing next to me. It didn't feel quite as hopeless.

BOOTHBY

STARFLEET ACADEMY, EARTH

Stardate 47601.3 – 2370



As I recall, it was a Tuesday. The morning fog that had settled in over the bay at dawn had burned off and the sun was shining: a beautiful winter morning. The sky was an amazing sapphire blue, it almost reminded me of home, just lacking something...maybe a little violet.

I got up the same as always and headed to the academy. By this point the penny had well and truly dropped. I think most of the brass were starting to realize just how deep in the fertilizer they were, but it was already too late. Although – to be fair to them – I don't think there was anything they could have done against the Borg.

There was no panic or unrest in the streets. Folk still didn't really understand what was going on: they knew there was a ship heading to Earth and Starfleet had suffered a loss, but there was still this unshakable belief in the power of Starfleet. They wouldn't let anything bad happen to Earth – most of the news was focused on the president's decision to leave! Calling it a major overreaction and failure of leadership – reckon that's what cost her in '68. Doesn't matter that it was the right thing to do or not, but that's how it was seen.

When I got to the academy, classes were suspended. Most of the instructors had been reactivated and sent out into the system to oversee SDL forces, and some of the older cadets were given provisional commissions to acting ensigns and deployed into the fleet, but the rest were largely left to their own devices. Those from Earth went home, but the others had nowhere to go. They came to the academy, waiting to see if they would be called up or given assignments.

When I arrived there was maybe half a dozen cadets sat over there by the willow all kinds of distraught. Like I said, the problem with a lack of real

information is the rumors run rampant and these kids were pretty convinced these aliens were coming to destroy the planet. The worst part was I knew they were right. But last thing I was going to do is let them fall down into a well of despair. Nothing helps to focus the mind like a little hard work, and *nothing* can motivate hard work from a cadet better than a cantankerous old man who caught cadets walking on his grass!

[There is the slightest hint of a smile and he places another flower into the soil.]

So, I got them working the gardens. It was time to get the Andorian ice orchids planted and the soil in winter can get like duranium, so we headed out and started to get the flower beds prepped. Soon we had a few more cadets show up, then a few more. By lunch time I think there must have been close to 50, all focused on getting the soil ready and helping to move the orchids from the stasis pods to the flower beds. Work like that helps to calm the mind and to connect you with the world around you – why even I was almost able to forget about what was about to arrive, at least until we heard the siren coming from the city. Then the Red Alert klaxon started to ring out, calling everyone to head to the shelters.

I thanked the cadets and told them to get going and to report to their shelters. As they were leaving I heard one of them suddenly call out and look up. We could see it there, faint and hazy in the afternoon sky, this small black cube just hanging there. it was like a bruise on that azure sky. The cadets started to panic, some ran off towards the shelter, a couple were crying. I could feel my hearts thundering in my ears as I stared up at it – I felt paralyzed with fear.

Then the darndest thing. A young cadet came back and got back to planting the orchids. I said, “Son, what are you doing? You need to get to the shelter.” But he said the orchids were out of the stasis pods now, and they needed to get planted or they would die. Then another cadet came back and started helping and another – damn him if I didn’t have to turn away to hide the tears that were coming now. I managed to compose myself and yelled they were doing it wrong, then got down and showed them how to do it properly.

People talk about Starfleet and they will cite great discoveries and feats of exploration or bravery in battle as being what Starfleet is all about, but if you ask me... that kid getting down to plant ice orchids in the face of our imminent extinction? That is what makes Starfleet special.

[He walks over to a nearby rose bush and cuts off a rather stunning blossom.]

Here, take this one for the road.

♦ Oh no, I couldn't possibly.

Kid, you should know by now, I'm very particular about who I give these roses to. Now get going – I've got work to do.

[He lifts his head slightly in what might have been a nod of acknowledgement, then collects his tools into the wheelbarrow and heads back off down the path and out of sight.]



DATA

Stardate 46242.2 – 2369

USS ENTERPRISE, QUALOR SYSTEM



The retrieval of Captain Picard afforded me our first opportunity to study a Borg drone and their technology. Although clearly identifiable as Captain Picard, the being we brought back from the Borg ship was different – even at the cellular level. In our previous encounters with the Borg, once a drone had been disconnected from the collective, the drone had self-destructed which had precluded any study of the Borg or their technology. I surmise this is done to limit the opportunities for a species to obtain the knowledge necessary to mount a credible defense.

With the being calling itself Locutus, this was our first opportunity to compare the extent of the Borg's assimilation progress on a being for which we had a baseline. In many ways, the Borg shared more in common with myself than with the organic beings on the ship.

Using multimodal reflection sorting, I was able to identify a complex series of subspace signals between Captain Picard and the Borg ship. The signals interacted across a subspace domain similar to that of a transporter beam. I hypothesized that these frequencies might form the basis of the Borg's collective consciousness and hold the key to accessing information on the Borg, which could lead to a tactical advantage we could use to prevent the Borg from completing their stated objective of assimilating Earth.

At Counselor Troi's suggestion, we initially attempted to communicate with the Borg directly through Locutus in his stated role as liaison between the Borg and the Federation. However, it quickly became apparent there could be no substantive dialogue with the collective. We elected to pursue other means to stop the Borg's advance and attempted to bypass the Borg's control to communicate with the captain directly.

We had Locutus brought to the science lab and I established a connection

between my positronic matrix and his neural net pathways. My hope was that with the aid of Chief O'Brien we would be able to piggyback the signal through the transporter buffers and allow me access to the Borg's core network – its collective consciousness, in effect.

♦ **What was the collective like?**

It...is very hard to describe without a common frame of reference. While my positronic neural net mimics many of the functions of your brains and nervous system, I do not perceive the world around me in the abstract as I understand many organisms do.

♦ **I'm sorry, I don't understand?**

An analogy that I have found useful is to try and describe the color red to an Aenar. I cannot accurately describe my perceptions of the Borg collective since I do not perceive the universe in the same way as you. I will, however, attempt to extrapolate my perceptions in such a way that they will make sense.

The Borg's consciousness operates over three distinct layers. The first consists mostly of lower level autonomic functions, signal identifiers, and authentication keys that allow the signals to interface with the Borg technology and which grant access to the later layers. The second contains information relating to the integrity of the collective and any adaptations which the Borg wish to implement. In effect, this layer contains the Borg's firmware cloud. After the Borg have assimilated some technology or adapted to a particular weapon, this layer will contain the information for the Borg's hardware to integrate that change, increasing the efficiency and survivability of the individual drones.

The final layer is the Borg's collective consciousness itself.

The experience was quite unlike anything I had ever encountered. I have interfaced with a myriad of computers during my existence and in these instances there are a series of handshake protocols exchanged before access to the system is granted. I am able to request access to the system and the system then provides the relevant data: it is a very ordered and logical exchange.

With the Borg collective it was quite different. It perceived my presence as that of Locutus but at the same time was distrustful. It could identify that

something was outside of its baseline expectations for how Locutus was perceived within the collective.

The level of neural activity increased exponentially as the Borg attempted to quantify my presence. Dr. Crusher reported that the captain experienced a significant increase of activity in his premotor cortex and hypothalamus. His heartbeat also accelerated rapidly. There was a large amount of information for me to process, but I failed to identify a system reset and activation query which resulted in Locutus regaining consciousness. He attempted to forcibly remove himself from the lab. I arrested this attempt by destroying the prosthesis the Borg had grafted onto the captain's right arm.

When Dr. Crusher detected increased neural activity in the prefrontal and parietal lobes, Counselor Troi used her empathic abilities to confirm the presence of the captain. He reached for my arm and locked eyes with me – not Locutus, but Captain Picard himself.

I had been unsuccessful in bypassing the Borg's control of the captain, nor had I made any significant inroads in understanding their mainframe, so this connection had entirely come from the captain himself. I cannot attest to how he was able to achieve it, although it is significant to note that at the exact moment the Borg ceased their approach to Earth.

At Captain Riker's suggestion I attempted to access the Borg's root network to disable their weapons systems. However, I was unsuccessful in this attempt. I then tried to command the Borg to disable their power systems, but these were protected by additional layers of security. It was the suggestion of sleep from Captain Picard which offered a potential alternative: accessing the Borg's regenerative subroutines and commanding the ship to enter a regenerative state. This attempt succeeded, but it did have the unfortunate side effect of causing a feedback loop with the Borg's power distribution network, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the cube. With its destruction, the Borg apparently lost their connection to Captain Picard and he reasserted control over his body. Dr. Crusher was able to remove the majority of the Borg implants through a series of surgeries.

DR. KATHERINE PULASKI

STARFLEET MEDICAL, SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH

Stardate 46695.7 – 2369



I'd been on *Enterprise* at J-25, making me pretty much the only person on Earth with direct experience with the Borg. So, I'd been whisked from one admiral to the next and had to endure more briefings in a week than in my entire career to that point. All just to tell them what they already knew: we didn't know anything. Certainly nothing that could help to understand or defeat the Borg.

It was grim in Starfleet after 359 – no one could remember anything quite like it. And it punctured that comfortable bubble we liked to wrap ourselves in. The lie that there wasn't anything that we couldn't solve with enough time and technology. Well, both seemed to be in short supply at that moment. It also felt like we were out of hope. Reading the reports about what had happened to Captain Picard, I did not fancy our chances.

The powers that be seemed to have no real idea of exactly what they should do. I heard a fleet of almost 200 ships was being assembled to intercept the Borg near Alpha Centauri, then they were being reassigned and told to scatter, then recalled to Earth to mount some sort of ambush. They had no clue what to do. They were just throwing shit at the wall to see what would stick as my grandmother would say. In medical, we were trying to develop some sort of treatment for what had happened to Picard in the hope that it might be possible to retrieve him. Once we received scans from Dr. Crusher, our mission didn't get any easier. Nanoprobes are nasty business at the best of times, which is why they are so heavily regulated – we don't need a repeat of the Drexler system disaster¹.

1 An accident at a research facility resulted in a strain of molecular nanobots replicating out of control, eventually consuming all biomass on the planet. The entire system is today subject to a level one quarantine to prevent the nanomachines escaping the system

The one thing we had going for us was how inefficient the Borg seemed to be at distributing their nanoprobes. If they were to beam a cloud of them onto a ship or planet there would be no defense whatsoever. Now, I'm not about to go giving them tips on how to be more efficient – and I suspect there must be a reason – but that was pretty much the only good news we had right then.

When the Borg entered the system that was it as far as our efforts went. Starfleet enacted its "V'ger Protocols." Ha – what a joke! I tried to see as many of my staff were transferred to ships and away from the major population centers, I made sure all Starfleet Medical facilities on Earth were equipped with stasis generators. My hope was that if anyone came into contact with some Borg tech the stasis field would at least buy us some time to develop countermeasures. I composed a message to the admiralty telling them in no uncertain terms what I thought of their leadership.

With that done, I headed out of Starfleet Medical and made my way down to the spaceport. My dislike of transporters is somewhat legendary. One of the conditions for me taking on the role of CMO was I was to always have a Type-7 shuttlecraft available. Over the past weeks it had racked up a fair few miles. My pilot Jules was still there despite the rest of the shuttles and pilots having been reassigned in preparation for the approaching disaster. Initially, the kid made me suspicious – I thought he was only there to spy on me, to report back to command what I got up to, but I'd grown rather fond of him. I could see he was eager to do something. The sitting idle was gnawing at him while all his friends were out preparing to fight the good fight. I told him I just needed a lift to Alaska to go and see a friend, and then he could take the shuttle and report to command if he wanted. Or if he had any sense could take the shuttle and head to Luna or Mars. I knew he would head straight to command, but that's the impetuosity of youth for you.

He dropped me near a small cabin in Denali Park. I could see smoke coming from the chimney so I knew he was home. Jules was on the ground just long enough for me to get out of the hatch before he gunned the engines and vanished out beyond the horizon. The snow on the ground was crisp and white, but I could see footprints leading up to the cabin so I headed towards it.

I rapped on the door and felt a sudden rush of excitement – even a little childish glee – when he opened the door with a shocked look on his face. Kyle

Riker and I had reconnected a couple of years earlier on the *Enterprise* and messaged pretty regularly, but we had pointedly avoided running into each other. He works as a civilian strategic attaché to Starfleet so I didn't think he would know as much as I did. If he suspected things were going to go the same way I did, then this was where he would be. After the initial shock, he beamed and we shared a hug and a kiss – frankly long overdue – and he invited me in.

He had a comm array set up and was monitoring the Starfleet Command channel. The Borg ship had passed Jupiter Outpost 92 and was heading towards the Mars Defense Perimeter. He started to explain that Starfleet would likely allow the Borg to settle into orbit over Earth where the gravity well would hamper the Borg's ability to maneuver or some such. You'd have to ask him, but I wasn't interested in a tactical analysis. I had brought some – shall we say – medical supplements and offered some to him. He smiled as he took it and turned off the comm array.

We stepped outside, sat on the porch, and looked up into the sky. That far north it gets dark pretty early – you only get around four hours of daylight so before too long the stars were out. Kyle went and got a couple of large fur rugs and wrapped them around us as we sat and gazed into the night sky. We just enjoyed the tranquility and the peace.

Then all of a sudden there was a flash in the sky near the horizon. We both sat up startled and he went inside to turn on the comms unit. I just sat there and stared where the explosion had been. It had been so brief and now I couldn't see anything of it at all. I wondered if maybe I had imagined it when Kyle came bounding out of the cabin shouting, "They did it! Will did it! They *stopped the Borg!*"

I was stunned. I had made my peace with the fact that we were not going to survive, but somehow against all the odds they had stopped the Borg right on our doorstep. I should have known better than to bet against the *Enterprise*, or Will Riker. We embraced and danced around in the snow for a moment before a realization dawned on me and brought my mood crashing down. I remember he looked at me with concern. "What is it, Kate, what's wrong?" he asked me.

"They are going to want me back at medical right away, especially if they have managed to disconnect Picard from the Borg. Who knows what sort of damage the Borg inflicted before they were destroyed!"

He nodded, understanding. "Yes, I imagine so, but why do you look like someone just shot your horse?"

"Because I dismissed my shuttle pilot and the only way I'll be able to get there is the damn transporter!"

He picked me up in a great big hug and roared with laughter. He was still laughing when we got to the local transporter terminal and I swear I could still hear it as we dematerialized.

MARCO AMASOV

USS ENDEAVOUR, ARCTURUS ORBITAL

Stardate 46918.3 — 2369

My work for Admiral Holland took me far and wide across the Federation and required me to meet and interview several starship captains. 40 starships were directly involved in the Battle of Wolf 359, but many more had stories to tell from the Borg's advance on Earth. Prior to the cube's destruction, a sizable fleet of 200 starships was massed in the Sol System's Oort cloud to launch an assault to attempt to prevent the Borg from landing on Earth. One of those ships was the USS Endeavour under Captain Marco Amasov.

We meet on his ship while docked at the Arcturus Orbital. Captains often have a strong sense of loyalty to the organization and to their immediate superiors, making them unwilling to be openly critical. This can be counterproductive when attempting to discover if there had been some operational failings. By this time our interview had been ongoing for some 45 minutes.

As I said, I do not feel it is my place to comment on the thoughts of the admiralty. I'm sure they had access to far more information than we were presented on the ground and I am happy to make my official logs available to you and the commission.

◇ Captain...it's important you feel free to speak candidly. The purpose of this report is to identify deficiencies in Starfleet's response. We cannot do that if you are unwilling to speak your mind. Admiral Shaanti has promised that no one will be reprimanded for speaking to the commission.

[He lets out a sigh and sits back in his chair, for the first time losing the defensive posture he has adopted throughout the interview.]

Okay, then. It was a *shitshow*; that's the only word I can use to describe it. Command fucked up. They did not have a clue what they were doing or how to deal with the threat of the Borg. We were recalled to Earth, then sat in system as half the fleet showed up, causing STC to become so utterly overwhelmed that the liner *Elysium* collided with a bulk transport ship. God knows how many lives were lost there, only to be told the fleet was to be scattered throughout the Federation. Then, once we had started out for Risa we heard that a task

force of 40 ships was massing for Wolf 359. Just *40 starships*! Do you know how many ships had been in Sol prior to that? Close to 500 but they sent just 40.

Then we were told we were to reinforce the task force. We were to rendezvous with an additional 80 starships which would head to Wolf 359. But then those orders were rescinded and we were ordered back to Earth to prepare to engage the Borg if they were able to defeat the force at 359...which they did. Handily. What were they thinking sending just 40 starships up against them – and mostly the dregs of the fleet at that!

If the situation wasn't so utterly dire I think I'd have resigned in disgust right there and then. At least now we knew the Borg were coming, we had a sense of what they were capable of and command was beginning to get its head in the game. 200 starships massed around the system, mostly in the Oort cloud. The idea was to wait until the Borg had entered Earth orbit and then to attack while the Borg's ability to maneuver would be hampered by Earth's gravity well. The hope was if we could throw enough ships at the Borg we would be able to cripple them, but we'd seen what they had done at Wolf 359. Everyone had known someone there and to the best of our knowledge there were no survivors. We spent the next 48 hours preparing our ships for battle and ourselves for death.

I don't mean to sound overly dramatic, but we didn't think we were getting out of that alive. I made sure the crew knew the facts and knew what we were facing, encouraged them to send messages home and speak with loved ones, gave couples on the ship time to be together. The reports we got from Earth were surreal though – just business as usual for the most part. Things were a little different on Mars and the colonies throughout the system. There was more of a propensity to believe bad news and to be ready to prepare for trouble, but I think that's just a holdover from when they were first established and were reliant on Earth for food, water, and air.

Finally, we started to pick up the silhouette of the Borg on long-range sensors. We knew *Enterprise* was in hot pursuit, but we were under strict orders to maintain communication silence outside of the system in case we alerted the Borg to our presence. As far as *Enterprise* knew, they were on their own.

The Borg entered the system near Jupiter and apparently no one had told the SDL to stand down and wait for the Borg to reach Earth – or maybe they

were deliberately kept in the dark to give the impression of some defense of the system. I'd like to believe that they wouldn't have thrown their lives away so brazenly, but they sent a few attack craft at the cube. The Borg destroyed them without so much as a second glance.

The atmosphere on the *Endeavour* was tense. Have you ever prepared for death? Known that you were about to walk up to the abyss and willingly step into it? I don't mean to sound fatalistic or melodramatic but, yeah, we'd all spent time coming to terms with what we were about to do. We were ready to sacrifice our lives to save the billions on Earth and throughout the system, and to avenge those we had lost at 359. There was a determination on the faces of the crew that I hadn't seen before. We weren't *looking* to die – far from it – but we were ready to spend our lives and to make the Borg pay for what they had done. We were going to draw a line in the sand right here and show the Borg just how grave an error in judgment they had made.

And then it was over, like that. [snaps fingers] The *Enterprise* pulled off a *deus ex machina* and managed to get the Borg ship to destruct right there in Earth's orbit. I was speechless – we all were. I could hear some on the internal comm cheering; people were hugging and celebrating. My conn officer broke down in tears and ops was there to comfort them.

You know the craziest thing? I felt cheated, *robbed* even.

Again, I wasn't looking to die. None of us were. But we'd worked ourselves into this mindset. We were ready to take this fight to the Borg and had come to terms with what that would cost. We were looking to avenge the task force and those we had lost, and also take out some frustrations that had been building over the past weeks. But we were denied that release. *Enterprise* saved the day and we were sat there in the Oort cloud impotently watching on as the debris from the cube settled into orbit around Earth.

Immediately command was on the horn with new orders; some ships were sent to police the Borg debris, keep any civilian ships clear, and to make sure none impacted Earth. They cleaned that all up quick sharp – you better believe it – whisked it away to who knows where. *Endeavour*, though – we were ordered to proceed at best speed to Wolf 359 and to begin rescue and salvage operations.

I would have preferred ramming the cube. It had been three days and with

all eyes on the Borg ships no one had been able to spare the ships to get to 359. Now we headed out at high warp, making the trip in around a day. What we found will haunt me to the end of my days.

The Borg *massacred* the fleet. The reports were so clean and clinical – seeing 40 starships destroyed on a PADD does not prepare you for the reality. What was done to those ships and to the people there went beyond just disabling a threat. They systematically and methodically took the ships apart piece by piece. They knew our ships could not hurt them and they still hunted down every ship and made sure they were dead before moving on to the next one. I've seen it said that the Borg are some sort of unfeeling machines that aren't driven by emotions but let me tell you that is *targshit*. I saw what they did to those ships, what they did to those people. It is my opinion that the Borg are as close to pure evil as any race we've ever encountered.

END OF CHAPTER 6

SECTOR 001 • PLANETARY ASTROMETRICS

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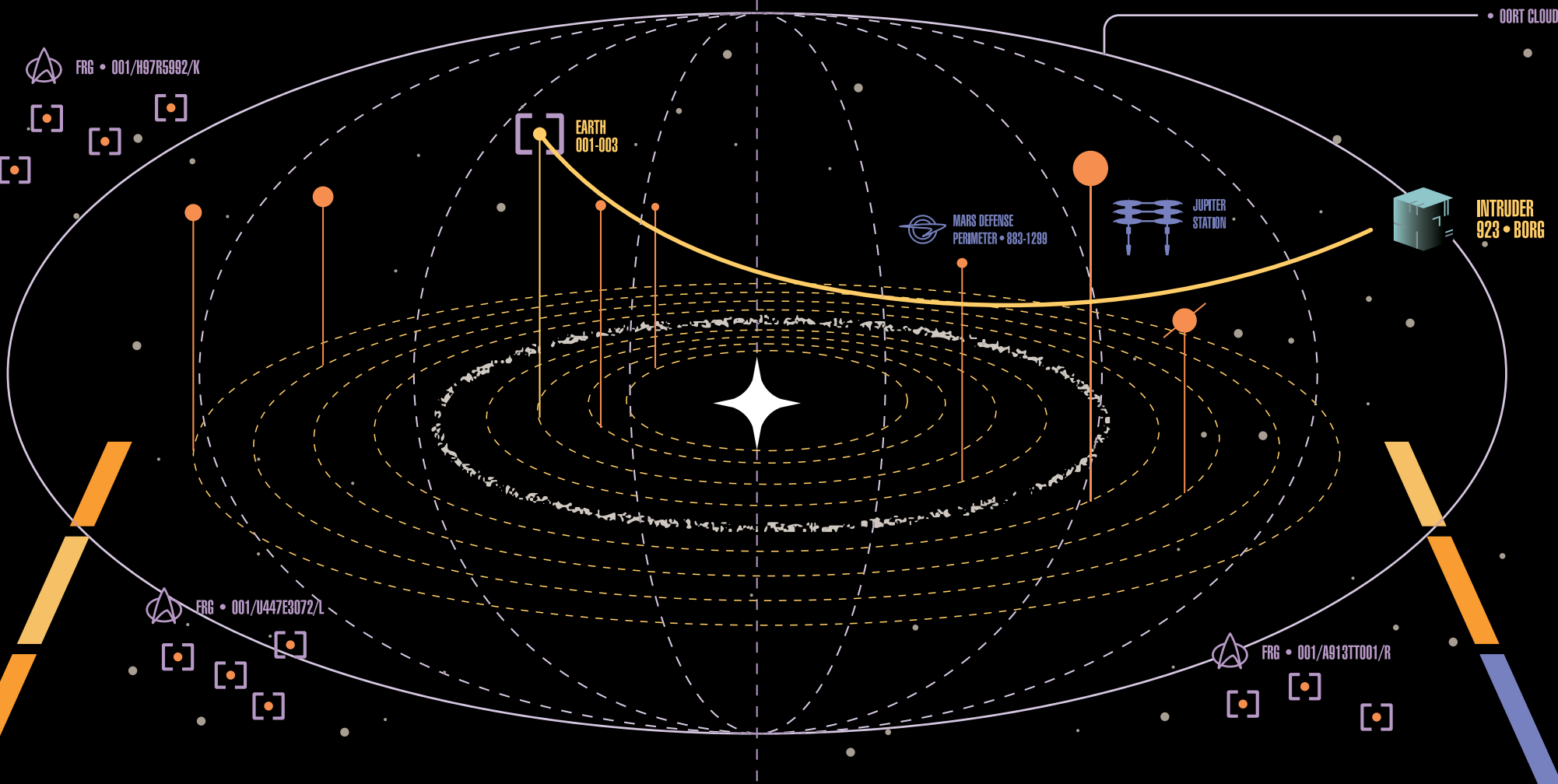
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THE OFFICE OF STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE AND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS HAVE APPROVED THE PARTIAL DECLASSIFICATION OF THE "HOLLAND REPORT ON THE BORG INCURSION OF 2366" AFTER 25 EARTH STANDARD YEARS IN ACCORDANCE WITH BOTH 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.

