

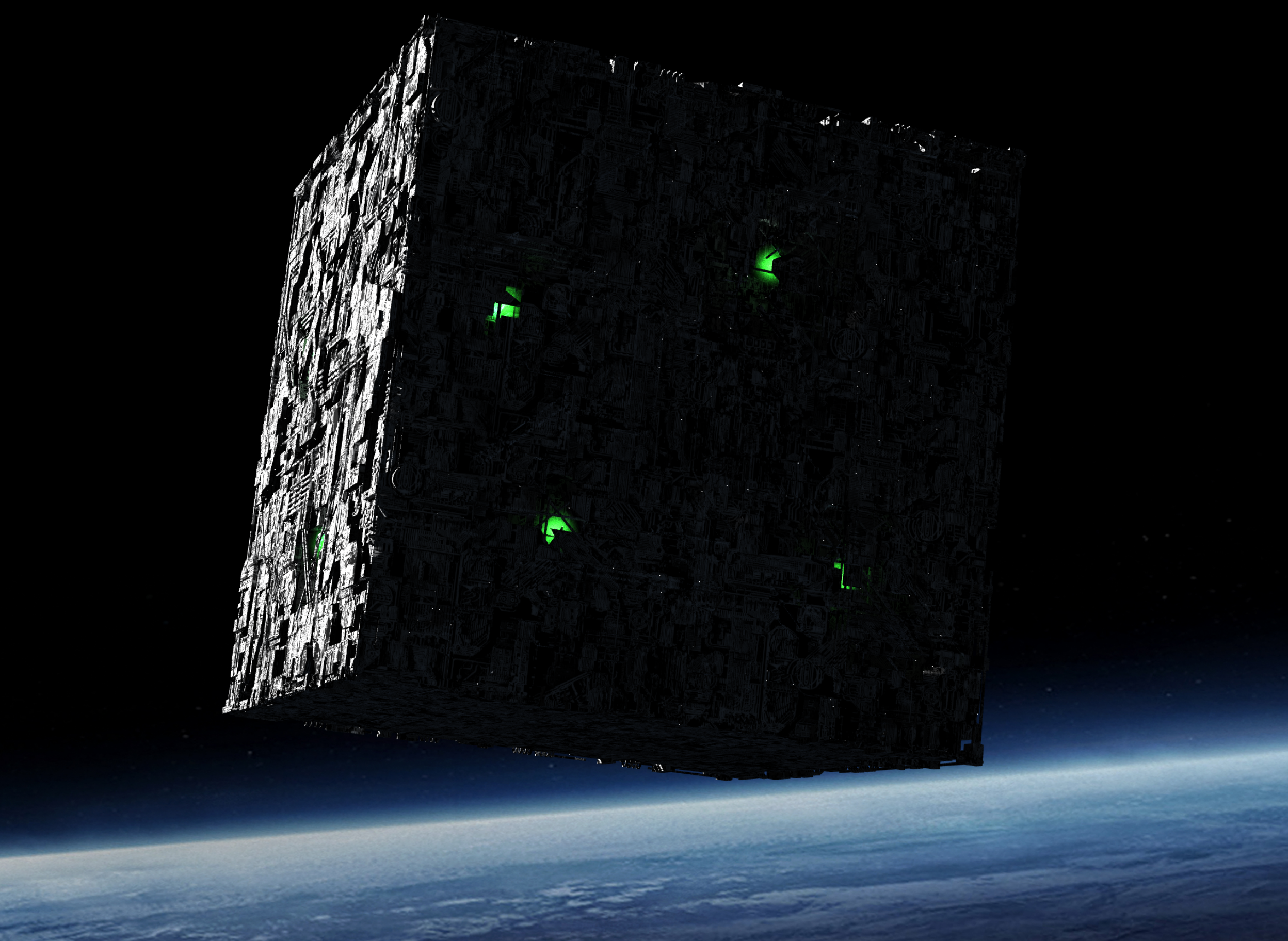
— WE HAVE —  
**ENGAGED**  
THE BORG

THE ORAL HISTORY OF  
THE BATTLE OF WOLF 359



ANDY POULASTIDES & ERIC V. MUIRHEAD





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**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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# ALERT: CONDITION RED

THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER MAY CONTAIN SENSITIVE MATERIAL



PUBLISHER'S NOTE ENCLOSED ON PAGE 215  
REGARDING INCLUDED HOLOPROGRAM RECORDINGS





# CHAPTER 5

## WOLF 359

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# INTERLUDE

USS *HOOD*, JUST OUTSIDE WOLF 359 SYSTEM

Stardate 73364.6 – 2396



Wolf 359: a wholly unremarkable red dwarf star located about eight light-years from Earth. Before the events of 2366, I doubt more than a dozen people in the entire Federation had even heard of it – much less traveled to the system. Today, it has an almost mythical quality and is spoken of in reverent tones, a place of pilgrimage.

There is a change that has taken place on the ship, a solemnity as people go about their business. The ship is noticeably quieter as people find themselves alone with their thoughts and reflect on what took place here nearly 30 years ago. Even those of us who were not present at the battle can sense this shift.

I don't see much of Admiral DeSoto the next day. He spends a lot of time up in the observation lounge in meetings and rehearsals as the crew ready the ship for the final leg of its journey to its final home. Officially it is the "Wolf 359 Memorial Station," but to most in Starfleet it is still known as the "Ossuary." An apt name, borrowed from an ancient Earth tradition: an ossuary held the bones of the dead.

Starfleet originally constructed the station following the battle. They needed a platform to allow the examination of the wrecks of those starships that had proved so ineffective against the cube. The station also provided facilities for the collection and transportation of remains back to their home systems and families. The memorial station was built off of that original structure and houses the memorial wall recording the names of everyone present at the battle. Displays and education spaces give information about the events leading up to the battle, its aftermath, and about the ships present. Several holosuites allow survivors to share their accounts of the battle with visitors.



In 2387, Chancellor Martok presented the Federation with the *'IpyaH*, a sculpture by noted Klingon artist nY'rHi. It centers on a column of fire taken from the caves of *No'Mat* on the Klingon home world. It burns continuously. At all times, an honor guard of two warriors accompanies it to help light the way to *Sto-Vo-Kor*.

The memorial station receives a large number of Klingons who view Wolf 359 as one of the great battles of the ages. The sculpture's chamber connects to the Silent Cenotaph, where 40 large windows look out on the remains of the ships that still orbit Wolf 359. The station is arranged so that the wrecks are not visible except from this viewing area. I have been to the station many times in the past, but now traveling there aboard *Hood* with so many veterans and families of those lost on board...I feel the weight of this place in a way perhaps I never had before.

The final preparations for *Hood's* entrance to the system are in full swing. Years of planning have led to this ceremony. Ever since the memorial station's construction it has been intended as *Hood's* final resting place after she decommissioned. 40 starships will enter the system and then one by one the other ships will pull away until *Hood* arrives alone at the station and docks. Representatives from every major power in the quadrant are expected to attend. *Hood* will then be turned over to the Federation Parks Service and will stand watch over the site.

I try to stay out of the way of the crew and the guests on board. I feel so utterly out of place – as though I have no right to be here. I try to hide away in my cabin and work through revisions on my book when the door chimes, startling me. I open the door and I'm met with an older gentleman; his hair a bright silver, but there is still a youthful twinkle in his eye. He smiles warmly and grabs my hand before I know what's happening.

"I'm Rayden Obena," he says with a thick Australian accent. Instantly I know who this is – his wife Alison Obena was the chief engineer of the *Hood* in 2366 and single handedly saved the ship at the cost of her own life. One of the escorts for *Hood* is the USS *Obena*, the first of a new class of starships named in her honor. I gesture for him to come in. I grab some tea from the replicator and we take a seat on the couch.

"I'm sorry to drop in on you like this, but when I heard you were on board I had

to come and find you. Robert told me you were here and that you've been writing a book with the personal accounts of those who were in the battle."

I feel my stomach drop, but this man has a warm and friendly smile on his face. "Of course, what can I do for you?" I ask at a loss.

"Robert suspected you might be feeling a little out of place, and truth be told so am I. I hate space travel. I spent my career down in the oceans, and Aly got seasick in a bath. We used to joke that it was the secret to our marriage – that neither of us could venture into the other's world."

He chuckles softly to himself, then stands and gestures for me to join him. "I don't have too many years left. When I was invited to the *Hood's* ceremony I thought it was only right to come and spend some time in her world – to say goodbye properly. I gather you know her story pretty well. Would you mind sharing it with me?"

Speechless, I take the proffered hand and smile as I stand up. "Okay, let's head to engineering. That was her home on the ship."

# HIST 147: MORAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES OF COMMAND

History 147: Moral and Ethical Issues of Command is one of the required courses for all freshmen at Starfleet Academy. Somewhat cynically nicknamed “What ‘Not To Do’ for Slimies,” (referencing the term “Slimeworms” used for first-year cadets), it is a semester-long examination of Starfleet’s most significant failures over the course of its history and the ethical leadership discussions that can be gleaned from their study. The course is constantly updated with new material as time passes. Significant blocks over the decades have included *Enterprise NX-01*’s encounter with the Vissians, Captain Pike’s experiences with the Majalans, Captain Georgiou’s actions at the Battle of the Binary Stars, and Captain Kirk’s decision to provide inhabitants of Planet Neural with firearms.

As of the publication of this report, the Battle of Wolf 359 is lesson 21 in the syllabus. The current course director, Academy Professor and Starfleet Vice Admiral (Retired) Lakshmi Somak, PhD, provided the author with the supplementary holographic recordings from the main course textbook to be included with this report.

## ■ INITIATE HOLOPROGRAM “5.02”

Welcome to lesson 21 of *Moral and Ethical Issues of Command*. During this block of instruction, we will continue our examination of the course’s core theme: the importance of maintaining emotional distance between yourself and those under your command, with a discussion of the Battle of Wolf 359. Please refer to Chapter 83, Section 168 of the *Official Starfleet Academy Historical Reader* for a broader historical background of the events leading up to the battle.

The Borg Incursion of 2366 revealed a significant loss of tactical acumen and that an ossified military mindset had taken root in Starfleet over nearly 80 years of extended peace in the early and mid-24<sup>th</sup> century. Technological overmatch and economic superiority meant that few extant Starfleet leaders had ever seen actual combat. Those that had experienced action during the border conflicts with the Cardassian Empire, the Tzenkethi, and with Ferengi raiders had not experienced anything larger than small-scale, short duration battles with two to three



## HOLODECK ACTIVATED ■

enemy ships at a time. Victory in these skirmishes often resulted from Starfleet's logistical skills and the superior damage control training of the Starfleet Corps of Engineers. To put it simply, Starfleet could provide reinforcements and supplies faster than enemies could destroy them. This created a false sense of security among the admiralty, all of whom had come of age during this era of "buying victory." In their experience, a sufficient number of Starfleet ships concentrated in a single star system was unbeatable by any adversary. Wolf 359 destroyed that misconception in under one hour – at the cost of 39 starships lost, and nearly 11,000 dead.

While many historians point to the technological superiority of the Borg as a primary reason for their rapid victory, this is only partially correct. In this lesson, we will examine how leadership failings of the sapient commanders involved in the battle along with their emotional decisions based on fear, anger, and overconfidence contributed to the worst loss in Starfleet history since the Battle of the Binary Stars 109 years prior.

[As Professor Somak continues her lecture, holographic recreations of the events she describes appear hovering in mid-air behind her, along with portraits of the people she discusses.]

The hostile atmosphere between Starfleet Command and the administration of Federation President Amitra significantly reduced the proactivity of Starfleet's emergency planning in the mid-2360s. The destruction of the New Providence colony on Jouret IV and the subsequent assimilation of Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the *Enterprise-D* resulted in a purely reactive, two-pronged strategy by the admiralty. First, most Starfleet resources would be dedicated to evacuating critical personnel and equipment from the Sol System while also providing a large rearguard to delay Borg penetration towards Sector 001. The second half of the strategy could only be described as pure desperation. For the

## ■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

first time since the Earth-Romulan Wars of the 2150s, Starfleet would attempt to use a weapon of mass destruction within the boundaries of Federation space.

A young rear admiral on the Starfleet staff named William Ross (who would later distinguish himself during the Dominion War as commander of the 10th Fleet) proposed using a modified stellar probe to collapse a star in the Borg's flight path. In theory, this would create a subspace shockwave large enough to wipe out their cube. Though the environmental damage would be catastrophic, it was hoped that the effects would be limited to one uninhabited or sparsely inhabited system allowing the rest of the Federation to survive relatively unscathed. Though initially horrified by the plan, President Amitra acquiesced at the behest of her staff as she herself was forced to evacuate Earth after the Borg penetrated every outer defense along the Federation frontier en route to Earth.

Little was known about the Borg prior to 2366, but what was already well documented was their desire to examine and assimilate new and unique scientific knowledge and technology. As a result, the star system chosen was Wolf 359: an uninhabited system consisting of a red dwarf star orbited by two Class-L planets, four Class-D planetoids, three gas giants, and an Oort cloud of gasses and asteroids large enough to hide a significantly sized fleet from sensors. However, most significant to its selection was a secret research facility controlled by Starfleet Intelligence in orbit of the third planet of the Wolf System. It was believed that if a suitable amount of sensor data could be projected from the vicinity of the facility, the Borg would stop their advance long enough to investigate. A gravimetric device of sufficient power could then be detonated, disrupting subspace long enough for the stellar implosion device to launch, collapse the star, and destroy the Borg.

The actual weapon was placed under direct control of Admiral Ross, who would deploy it from a runabout hidden among the system's debris fields. Meanwhile, an ad hoc 40 starship task force under Vice Admiral

J.P. Hanson would form a perimeter in the Oort cloud, hidden from the Borg and well out of range of the stellar shockwave. Their purpose would only be to observe and prevent the Borg from escaping. As such, only the *Columbia*, Admiral Hanson's flagship, was considered a first-tier ship of the line. The other 39 vessels were mostly obsolete science and patrol vessels, or ships taken straight out of the yards prior to their fitting out. All of Starfleet's most advanced vessels would be kept dedicated to the defense of Sol less than three parsecs away.

The USS *Bonestell*, an obsolete *Oberth*-class science vessel, was chosen as the task force's "Trojan Horse." Her systems were modified to emit false sensor readings similar to the classified projects at 359's research site. Also, her warp core was removed and replaced with the largest gravimetric device ever deployed by Starfleet: a whopping 250 cochranes. It was believed that when detonated in close proximity of the Borg, the invaders would be trapped within the blast radius of the star for at least 10 minutes: long enough for Ross to deploy the probe, detonate Wolf 359, and destroy the cube. The Klingon Empire did dispatch a strike fleet to assist at the Wolf System, but diplomatic bungling by the Amitra administration delayed its departure to the Federation by three Earth days. It was unknown if they would be able to rendezvous with the task force before the Borg arrived at Wolf 359. Still, Starfleet was committed to executing the plan to save Earth – with or without Klingon help.

On stardate 44002.3, the Borg arrived in the system. All seemed to go according to plan. Less than five seconds after the cube dropped out of warp to examine the readings from the *Bonestell*, the graviton burst aboard the *Bonestell* initiated and Ross launched the probe towards the star. Less than four minutes later, the probe detonated. However, it was almost immediately apparent that the plan to trigger an artificial supernova failed. Though the device did marginally reduce stellar fusion for less than 20 seconds, Wolf 359 quickly returned to normal, and the Borg cube began to exit the system at impulse to clear the compromised ambush.

It was then that J.P. Hanson made an emotional decision that would end his life. Many of his subordinate commanders urged him to fall back, regroup with the rest of Federation forces at the Sol System, and wait for Klingon reinforcements to arrive. However, Hanson believed that the 40 ships under his command had enough combat power to engage and destroy the cube. His logs indicate that he was overwhelmed with anger at the recent loss of his close friend Jean-Luc Picard and his frustration at the Federation's inability to stop the Borg to this point. His love for his friend doomed his task force.

The resulting attack was both improvised and piecemeal. Most Federation captains had no experience outside of battle simulations or any knowledge of how to maneuver large fleets together to achieve combined effects. Most ships simply rushed in alone, allowing the Borg to engage and destroy ships one at a time. No ships provided fixing fires or attempted to limit the cube's ability to maneuver within the system. To make matters worse, the lingering subspace effects of the graviton burst severely degraded subspace communication between Starfleet vessels, making it more difficult for Hanson aboard the *Columbia* to issue orders or form coherent lines of battle.

Over the course of three brave, but ultimately futile waves of attack, 39 ships of the task force were destroyed or assimilated by the Borg. Admiral Hanson fell when the *Columbia* was destroyed as it attempted to rally the last wave itself. Only a single Federation vessel survived, whose crew managed to regain control of the ship from the Borg boarding parties – albeit with extreme loss of life among its personnel.

## HOLOPROGRAM ENDING — PLEASE WAIT...

As we begin our classroom discussions on the Battle of Wolf 359, I ask you to consider the following discussion questions:

1. How did poor strategic planning at the admiralty, executive, and legislative branches of the Federation government set the stage for the disaster at Wolf 359?
2. How could leveraging other elements of Federation power (diplomatic, informational, or economic) assist Starfleet in stopping the Borg Incursion of 2366?
3. Based on the historical decisions we discussed earlier in this course, why do you think Starfleet believed that destroying an entire star system in Federation space to save Earth was justified?
4. Why did Starfleet of the mid-2360s believe they could militarily defeat the Borg and how did poor self-assessments lead to this conclusion?
5. How could individual decisions at the tactical level been improved at Wolf 359?

## HOLOPROGRAM "5.02" COMPLETE



HOLOPROGRAM SEQUENCE INITIALIZING...



**REGARDING THE HOLOGRAPHIC RECREATION OF  
SENSITIVE CONTENT FROM THE BORG INCURSION  
OF 2366 AT THE BATTLE OF WOLF 359**

**IT IS ILLEGAL WITHIN FEDERATION SPACE TO  
MODIFY THESE RECORDINGS IN ANY WAY**

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE FOLLOWING SECTION INCLUDES PERSONAL TESTIMONIALS AND HOLOGRAPHIC RECREATIONS FROM FLIGHT DATA RECORDERS OF STARSHIPS DESTROYED DURING THE BATTLE OF WOLF 359, PROVIDED BY STARFLEET COMMAND TO THE HOLLAND COMMISSION. THE INCLUDED INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITHIN SIX MONTHS AFTER THE BATTLE AS PART OF THE OFFICIAL DEBRIEFINGS. AS PART OF THE AGREEMENT TO PUBLISH THIS ORAL HISTORY, STARFLEET HAS GRACIOUSLY ALLOWED FOR A SELECTION OF FLIGHT DATA RECORDERS TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS PRESENTATION.

SOME DATA HAS BEEN MODIFIED FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY AND PRIVACY REASONS. IN SOME INSTANCES, PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN REMOVED OR OMITTED FROM THE HOLOPROGRAMS AT THE REQUEST OF FAMILY. IF YOU ARE VIEWING ON A HOLODECK OR HOLOSUITE WE ADVISE YOU TO ENSURE THE SAFETY PROTOCOLS ARE FULLY ENABLED AND CONNECTED TO A LCARS INTERFACE.

**YOUR DISCRETION IS ADVISED.**

## J.P. HANSON

USS COLUMBIA

Admiral

Personal Log, supplemental. Well, we have baited the trap and long-range sensors suggest that the Borg have changed course for Wolf 359. They are coming. We have finished prepping the *Bonestell* and have moved it into the system. Bill Ross took the runabout *Rhine*, departed *Columbia* about four hours ago, and has taken up position on the far side of the Wolf 359 star. He left me a message to be delivered to his wife; I promised I would see to it personally. Since we still do not have a clear idea exactly what sort of effect the solar probe might have on the star, I am keeping the fleet deployed at the edge of the system. Should it trigger an actual supernova we will be out of range of the graviton burst and will be able to warp away. If the Borg ship is merely damaged, we will be able to warp in. Although...the graviton burst will collapse the warp bubbles and we would be trapped in the system with the Borg. It would be like diving into the ocean with the shark after chumming the water. I hope it won't come to that...

## RYO SUZUKI

Helmsman

USS YAMAGUCHI

The waiting was the worst part. I know that sounds cliché, but after the rush back to Earth, the massing of the fleet, and then being sent out to that backwater of Wolf 359 only to hold position at the edge of the system – it was torturous. Captain Adélwalé tried to keep the crew as informed as possible, but it was pretty clear that they didn't have much more information than we did, so we just sat out in the Oort cloud staring at long-range sensors.

# ROBERT DESOTO

USS HOOD

Captain

It was tense – you could have cut the air with a phaser. *Hood* and *William Decker* had dropped sensor buoys a few light-years out from the system to give us some early warning when the Borg were on approach, but they had been mercifully silent. I found myself just sitting on the bridge, staring at the viewscreen as if the ole mark one eyeball might pick up something before the sensors. Ally Obena tried to keep the engineering crew busy going through the ship's systems and took advantage of one of the few times we were not warping back and forth to flush the nacelle plasma manifolds. I can't imagine that was fun. But I guess when you are elbow deep in the carbon runoff from the inverters it will keep your mind off whatever is happening outside.

We had a damn digital clock over the viewscreen, a holdover from when the ship was built which had somehow managed to survive 50+ years of refits and my eyes kept drifting up to it. It was silent, but as the hours wore on I swear it got louder with every second. I was right at the point of calling Ally and asking how feasible it would be to get a team up to remove it when there was a chirp from tactical: a sensor return.

Everyone on the bridge jumped and sat up a little straighter. Lieutenant Moody, the tactical officer, quickly assessed the console but shook his head. It was just a civilian transport passing. The presence of civilians was worrying enough and I was about to hail *Columbia* to ask if we should move to escort them out of the system when there was another alert. I moved over to tactical, but Moody's hands were already moving across the console. He reported the buoy furthest out from the system had stopped transmitting. I asked if it had detected any trace of the Borg prior to it ceasing transmitting but he shook his head again – there had been no sign of any ship. Then another alert, the next buoy had gone dark. That was enough for me. I called for Yellow Alert and hailed *Columbia*. They had already gone to Yellow Alert and confirmed the report that the buoys were not responding to commands and no longer transmitting. We had not been told the Borg had any sort of stealth capabilities – there had been no suggestion that they would even need them – but it was clear that something large was approaching the system and it would be here in a matter of minutes.

# B'RON LEE GAET

USS *BASTION*

Engineer

It was a waste, frankly. A waste of materials and personnel. We just sat out there jumping at every return on the long-range, all the time the ship was literally falling apart around my ears! *Bastion* had been scheduled to be *decommissioned*. The only reason it was in the system was for the passing out ceremony, and then we were due to head to the boneyard. I found myself spending what little free time I had staring out at the other ships in our little fleet, especially the *Ambassador*-class. I'd always wanted to be assigned to one of those.

We received orders to assist with the conversions they were looking to make on the USS *Bonestell* – it was almost as old as the *Bastion*! So now, in addition to struggling to keep that bucket together, I was having to pull EPS conduits and duotronic inputs so we could rig *Bonestell* for remote flight operations. My team was on the bridge pulling apart the nav console and tying it into the communications grid. It wasn't our best work, but it would do the job, and – let's be honest – blowing up that hulk would have been the best thing we could have done to it! A crew from *Melbourne*, the new one, was busy down in the engine room setting up the graviton burst generator. They were led by some Andorian tight-ass. Naturally, we butted heads over who was in charge. I called him a frigid blue assed insect, he called me a Tellarite. [chuckles] I instantly took a liking to him...I don't think he survived.

# USS BONESTELL NCC-31600

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual Stardate: 44002.3

*The USS Bonestell, an Oberth-class starship, sits alone in the middle of the Wolf 359 System. No one is on board the ship and its interior is filled with open consoles, their guts exposed as wires and conduits connect systems that were never meant to talk directly to one another. On the bridge, the viewscreen shows the stars and the soft hum of the warp reactor fills the air.*

The ship emits a false sensor image suggesting that it is carrying an exotic cargo of advanced technologies and weapons in the hopes that this might lure the Borg in close – giving the graviton burst generator the best chance of affecting the Borg and disabling its subspace fields trapping it, albeit briefly, in the Wolf 359 system.

The long-range sensors detect something and give a small double-toned beep to alert the tactical officer of the approaching ship, but there is no one on board to react to the warning. As the ship gets closer, the tone increases in urgency and volume.

Suddenly a wall of black appears – completely obscuring the viewscreen.

The Borg have arrived.

The cube utterly dominates the tiny *Oberth*-class ship which sits less than 500 meters away from it. The Borg vessel immediately begins scanning the ship; a powerful tractor beam erupts from the Borg and locks onto it. At the same moment, the Borg open a channel and hail the ship.

On the *Bonestell's* viewscreen the image of Locutus of Borg appears, his red targeting laser flashing across the empty bridge.



"I am Locutus of Borg, lower your shields and surrender your ship. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile."

There is no one on board the *Bonestell* to respond. However, at that same moment the ship's computers receive the awaited signal and the hastily built graviton burst generator in front of the warp core begins to activate. The charging lights on the device build as the resonators begin to spin, power flows directly from the ship's warp core into the device as the thrum grows ever louder and louder, reaching levels that would have been harmful should anyone have been there.

As the noise reaches a crescendo, the final light on the jerry-rigged device illuminates, and the magnetic shackles decouple, launching the axiom shunt into the firing matrix. The *Oberth*-class ship unleashes the graviton burst at the speed of light, enveloping the Borg cube and everything within a range of nine AU. The systems on board the *Bonestell* go dark as the EMP from the graviton burst wreaks havoc on the recklessly modified systems and the entire ship is plunged into darkness save the soft illumination of the emergency lights.

The ship comes back to life with a click and a soft hum as the backup systems kick in. The Borg ship still sits just off the bow, but the tractor beam has been disabled. With comms restored, the connection to the rest of the fleet reinitializes and Admiral Hanson's voice resonates throughout the *Bonestell*:

"Now, Bill – do it now!"

# WILLIAM ROSS

## RUNABOUT RHINE

Admiral

I sat there about .25 AU from the star. The *Rhine* was one of the new *Danube*-class of runabouts, a new concept intended to replace the old *Excelsior* and *Miranda*-class ships still being used as shuttles between outposts. I remember thinking as I sat there waiting that it was such a shame that this little ship would never be used on any other missions. Such a shame that the time and effort that had gone into its construction just for it to be snuffed out. It's funny the way your mind wanders.

I had quite the spirited discussion about the plan while we were en route on board *Columbia*. Hanson didn't understand why I insisted that I man this part of the mission. The runabout was more than capable of remote or even autonomous operation, and we were already rigging the *Bonestell* to operate unmanned. To his mind, this just seemed like unnecessary theatrics. Maybe he was right. I insisted that this aspect of the mission was too important to be left to chance; if something went wrong, if the Borg were able to intercept the signal and prevent us from firing remotely, if there was a last minute change of plan. Whatever the case, I insisted I needed to be there. He countered that if it was so mission critical then we should have a team of engineers on the shuttle and not an out old admiral whose specialization was planning and logistics.

The truth was, I needed to be there to do what we were proposing. It was a responsibility that I could not ask of any other and – to be perfectly frank – whatever happened it would have been the end of my career. Even if we had defeated the Borg by deploying a stellar bomb, no one would walk away from that untouched. No, far better to take personal responsibility and see it done.

I was out there for a good 18 hours. We knew the Borg were en route and long-range sensors suggested they were coming to 359. I didn't know what to make of this news about Picard. I didn't know him as well as J.P. – they were old friends. I could see it really hurt him, the thought of Picard being subsumed into this collective. It further highlighted why we had to stop the Borg by any means

necessary. I established an uplink to transmit the data from the runabout to Soran's technical group in realtime. If this didn't work, I felt it important they have all the information to try again. After all, we knew the system the Borg were heading to next.

We started to get some strange returns from the sensor nets that had been placed out of the system to give us some advanced warning. They were going dark one after the other. I still don't know why they didn't give any indication that the cube was approaching – they just went dead one after another. Like a shadow passing before them as they approached the system. I had the *Bonestell* on the viewer when all of a sudden they were there: the Borg.

It was massive. The only way I could describe it is Lovecraftian. It was huge, far bigger than I imagined from the reports, perhaps because it was sitting atop an *Oberth* ship rather than a *Galaxy* like the footage from J-25. It dwarfed the *Bonestell*. From my vantage it appeared a black void in space, perfectly geometric in its dimensions, but enhancing the magnification I could see the surface was covered in conduits and pipes and shapes that made it difficult to gauge scale and made my eyes want to slide off of it. It fired its tractor beam at the *Bonestell* and then we received the first hail. I saw him for the first time: Locutus of Borg.

It was the usual Borg diatribe, but I didn't hear it – I was transfixed by this sight. A man that embodied the very ideals of the Federation, that was the very best that Starfleet had to offer, stood there as a grotesque twisted mirror of himself. I dreaded to think what would happen with the other ships of the fleet, other officers who knew him personally like J.P.

The console gave me an alert, which snapped me back. It notified me that a graviton anomaly had been detected and warp drive was offline. The *Bonestell* had fired its pulse – the Borg were now trapped. I heard Hanson's voice come through the comm system.

"Now, Bill – *do it now!*"

I hit the button and the probe left from the *Rhine's* torpedo launcher and sped towards the star. It took me a moment to realize that I had just launched a torpedo that would end my life. I hadn't paused or hesitated for the moment. I was stunned, I had thought I might pause or say something profound, but I had

been so caught up in the moment and so horrified by what I was seeing I hadn't. I remember going "huh" and feeling a little disappointed. Then telling myself how foolish that thought was. Instead, I went to the aft quarters and found the bottle of real Lagavulin that Owen Paris had given me. I grabbed a glass and sat back at the helm to wait.

It took about four minutes for the probe to impact the star. I was torn between staring at the readouts of the star and the display of what the Borg were doing. They had released the *Bonestell* from the tractor beam, but otherwise were untouched. It looked like the *Bonestell* had survived the burst – they really don't build them like that anymore. I took another sip as the computer told me that the probe had impacted the star. I took a sip. I closed my eyes...and exhaled.

Nothing happened.

I checked the sensors – the probe had impacted. I was going through the sensor logs and about to run a diagnostic when suddenly it felt like the brightness outside dimmed. The star seemed to burst; that's the only word I can really use to describe it. It contracted, then returned to normal, sending a small shockwave out ahead of it. Before I could respond or send a warning it impacted the runabout and sent it tumbling away. The console sparked and there were warnings of EPS overloads and inertial dampers going offline. I was thrown from the console and smacked my head against the rear bulkhead.

Mercifully, I lost consciousness. I can think of no greater torment than being forced to bear witness to the massacre that was to come and being unable to do anything but watch.

## USS COLUMBIA NCC-71102

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.3

*The battle bridge of the USS Columbia is smaller than you would expect for a ship of this tonnage, more reminiscent of those found on the old Constitution-class ships. While Columbia herself is being controlled from the main bridge, Admiral Hanson uses this space to coordinate the fleet as a whole.*

The bridge is deathly silent, all eyes fixed upon the viewscreen and the distant image of the Wolf 359 star. Hanson sits in the command chair, his leg bouncing up and down nervously the only outward sign of any tension.

"Any aspect change to the star?" he asks.

The lieutenant sitting at the science station runs her hands across the LCARS interface as data scrolls across the display in front of her. "There was a 0.5 reduction in the star's luminosity which lasted for 0.25 seconds and released a small shockwave, but it will dissipate long before it reaches the Borg." Heads droop across the bridge as the small crew releases a chorus of disappointed sighs. The plan has failed.

Hanson's leg stops its movement as he finds stillness. "What's the status of the runabout? Can we hail Admiral Ross?" he asks. Chet, a Lurian officer, inputs a few commands into a large plotting board, but shakes his head. "No response to hails, Sir, and we cannot locate the runabout on sensors. I do not know if that is the result of disruption or if the runabout has been destroyed."

Hanson nods, but his eyes remain fixed on the viewscreen. The Borg cube sits immobile as the *Bonestell* drifts slowly away from the enormous vessel.

There is a beep from tactical and Chet is there to interpret the new

information. "Sir, we are receiving hails from the *Konom*, *Saratoga*, *Gage*, and *Ibn Sina*. They are requesting instructions. Do we still proceed with the mission?" Hanson looks over to the plotting board behind Chet. A red icon in the center represents the Borg with the 39 ships of the fleet arrayed around the perimeter, each marked with a Starfleet delta. The console beeps again, dragging Chet's attention back to tactical. The deltas on the plotting board flash to indicate which ships are hailing *Columbia*. More than half of them blink now. "Sir, we are also being hailed by both *Melbournes*, the *Gora bim Gral*, the *Hood*, the *Seleya*—"

Hanson cuts off the list with a raised hand. "Status of the Borg ship?"

At the science station a Nostraman officer – Rip'Lah – moves her pale white hands over the console as data scrolls across its surface. "The Borg ship seems unaffected. They appear to have entered a diagnostic and regeneration cycle, but I am already reading power build-ups in several systems. I estimate the Borg ship remains 98 percent effective."

Hanson leaps out of his seat and strides over to the station. He looms over the small officer. "What about warp drive? Are they able to resume course to Earth?"

She looks up at him with pitch-black eyes. "Conventional warp travel is not possible. If they attempt to form a bubble it will collapse. The same for any ship attempting to pass through this area. The effects of the graviton burst will remain for approximately one standard hour. In addition, our transporters and sensors will be unreliable for considerably longer. However, I cannot say if the Borg have other means at their disposal."

Hanson wheels around and moves back to the command chair. He picks up a PADD and nods to himself as he runs through some calculations. He turns to Chet, "Give me the fleet." The Lurian had been expecting the order and connects Admiral Hanson with a single button.

"All ships, this is Hanson. It seems that our plan has failed. The Borg

ship remains undamaged, but the graviton burst has rendered all warp travel in the system impossible for the next standard hour. We have them trapped for at least the moment.

"I don't have to tell you what is at stake here. We are all that currently stands between the Borg and Earth, the seat of our government and home for many of us. All indications are the Borg ship remains at full lethality and any attempt to engage the ship will likely result in our destruction. I have signaled for reinforcements from Starfleet but they are at best several hours away. There is no sign of the Klingon force K'mpec promised.

"We represent the last best chance to hurt the Borg. Once they leave this system it is unlikely we will be able to maintain pace with them; once they reach Earth it is unlikely anything we throw at them will be able to stop them. I know this is not what you were sold when you were told about this mission. I know it's not what any of us signed up for, and I know that some of you still have families on board. But if we cannot stop the Borg here and now, then nowhere in the Federation will be safe. I intend to make my stand here and try to occupy the Borg long enough for our reinforcements or the Klingons to arrive. I ask you to stand with me. Hanson out."

The admiral sits back down in his chair. Around the bridge, officers exchange glances and nods of affirmation. On the plotting wall deltas start to flash as the tactical console signals incoming hails. One by one every Starfleet delta turns green. Chet looks over to Hanson and nods. "Sir, the fleet stands ready."

Hanson offers a small smile in return and settles back into his chair. "Signal the first wave to move to engage. We'll stagger our approach to try and keep the Borg off-balance and buy as much time as we can. If we can find any chink we can exploit be ready to exploit it." Chet turns to his plotting board and inputs commands, tapping on various icons to send orders to the ships.

A few seconds later, the *Excelsior*-class USS *Melbourne* and *Miranda*-



## ■ HOLOPROGRAM ENDING — PLEASE WAIT...

class *USS Saratoga* move out of formation and jump to warp. The massive bulk of the Borg cube awaits them inside the graviton field. The *Ambassador*-class *Yamaguchi* and *Nebula*-class *Bellerophon* jump to warp a few moments later.

"Signal Starfleet," says Hanson. He watches the ships drop out of warp as they enter the field of the graviton burst and the Borg ship finally moves in response to the new approaching threat. "Tell them we have engaged the Borg at Wolf 359."

## USS SARATOGA NCC-31911

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.4

"Sir, we are being hailed by the Borg," reports Hranok Zar, almost in disbelief. Captain Storil moves over to the science station to see what effects the graviton burst might have had, and to see if the scans reveal anything about the Borg which might be of use.

"On screen," Storil orders. The crew collectively draw breath at the sight of Locutus of Borg, Starfleet's finest captain turned against them.

"Resistance is futile. You will disarm your weapons and escort us to Sector 001. If you attempt to intervene, we will destroy you."

Storil presses the close channel button on the ops console in defiance and returns to his chair, projecting an air of confidence and professionalism.

"Red Alert! Load all torpedo bays, ready phasers." Next to him, Commander Sisko orders the conn officer. "Take us to position alpha, Ensign."

The *Saratoga* and *Melbourne* begin their run on the cube. They fly in a parallel column, firing phasers in a high EM spectrum to gauge the effectiveness of the modified settings received from Starfleet Tactical. Just before the ships go to break to either side of the cube, a powerful beam erupts from the Borg ship, striking the *Melbourne* and obliterating its shields. The beam tears through the structure of the primary hull and in a few seconds the venerable *Excelsior*-class ship is disabled. Most of its saucer is gone. The remains of the engineering hull tumbles along its original course and collides with the Borg. The cube easily absorbs the impact and resultant warp core breach without any outward signs of damage. The Borg have already shifted their attention to the *Saratoga* as they attempt to lock on with a tractor beam. Despite the ship's best efforts, the Borg tractor beam forces *Saratoga* to a complete stop. The massive deceleration pushes the inertial dampers to their very limit.

"They've locked on," reports Ensign Tamamota as she tries to reconfigure the shield harmonics to break the tractor beam's hold.

"Reroute auxiliary power," orders Sisko.

The *Yamaguchi* and *Bellerophon* move in to try and distract the Borg with phaser fire, hoping to help *Saratoga* escape the tractor beam's hold.

The structural integrity alarm sounds on the bridge as the ship succumbs to forces the spaceframe was never meant to handle. Ensign Tamamota frantically tries to counter the Borg's latest assault on their shields. "Our shields are being drained! Power at 64 percent! 42 percent!"

Captain Storil remains a rock amidst a tumultuous ocean. His calm Vulcan stoicism helps to remind everyone: they are Starfleet. "Recalibrate shield modulation," he orders.

Zar at tactical tries inputting the sequence to activate the upgrade. "Modulation is having no effect." He moves from tactical to ops, leaning down over Tamamota to access the console directly. "Shields have failed," she shouts over the din of alarms.

"Full reverse," orders Sisko, attempting to match his captain's calm demeanor, but the cube emits a second beam to strike the *Saratoga*.

As it strikes the ship, a massive power surge runs through the ship destroying the EPS network and causing massive overloads in all systems. On the bridge, Captain Storil tries to issue one last order. It dies on his lips as the console behind him erupts in a cascade of sparks and debris. Other consoles burst as the surge of power tears through the *Saratoga*'s EPS grid, throwing officers across the bridge, lancing them with plasma and fragments of duratanium.

It has taken only moments to transform a functioning starship bridge into an abattoir. The alarms still blare in time with the pulsing of the red emergency lights, but it's obvious to anyone who has spent time on a

HOLOPROGRAM ENDING — PLEASE WAIT... ■

starship that the *Saratoga* is fatally wounded.

Fires break out as Sisko frees himself from the debris that was once the tactical console. "Damage report," he calls out, but no one responds. He crawls to the still form of helmsman Ensign Delaney and checks for a pulse. The unnatural angle of her neck tells him it is hopeless. The air grows thick with smoke from the plasma fires. Sisko coughs and again shouts "Damage report!" The computer responds from the overhead speakers, "Warning: damage to warp core. Containment failure in five minutes."

Sisko moves from body to body, hoping to find anyone still alive. From the back of the bridge there is movement as Hranok Zar staggers to an operational console and coaxes it back to life. "Direct hit, decks one through four."

Sisko looks around, but it is clear there are no other survivors on the bridge. "Let's get the civilians to the escape pods, Lieutenant!"

## RYO SUZUKI

USS YAMAGUCHI

Helmsman



As we entered the graviton burst's area of effect, our warp fields collapsed bringing the entire fleet to sublight speed. The *Saratoga* and *Melbourne* went in first. The idea was we would probe the cube to get a sense of its fire arcs and level of maneuverability. They would head in on a parallel track and then split to either side of the cube, then the *Bellerophon* and *Yamaguchi* would repeat the pattern above and below the Borg ship. It was just a cube; the surface looked like the backside of a Jefferies tube. You couldn't make out phaser arrays or tractor emitters – all we could do was make the cube shoot at us and record where the shots came from.

It took just one shot from the cube and *Melbourne* was gone, her saucer completely torn apart. She disintegrated like someone had taken a flame to paper. The remains carried on and collided with the cube without even making a dent. *Saratoga* tried to turn away but was too late, the borg caught them in a tractor beam. Captain Gould ordered us to move in and provide support. We formed up with *Bellerophon* and made a pass. We focused our fire on the Borg's tractor emitters, but some sort of dampening field kept throwing off our targeting lock. The shots impacted around the emitter, but we couldn't score a direct hit. They held the *Saratoga* like those old scientists might pin a bug to examine it more closely. All the while the Borg continued to fire at us. We might as well have been throwing harsh language for all the good our weapons did. We needed more support, so the captain put out the call for more ships.

# USS MELBOURNE NCC-78256

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.5

*The USS Melbourne was still under construction at the Utopia Planitia yards on Mars when the call went out for ships to rendezvous with the Columbia and Admiral Hanson's task force. A variant of the Nebula design, the Melbourne was an attempt to provide an alternative to the costly Galaxy-class by incorporating some of the more advanced systems into the smaller Nebula spaceframe. Captain Thomas Halloway and a team of volunteers at Utopia Planitia worked around the clock to get the ship – still unfinished and untested – ready for space and for battle.*

Captain Halloway was never meant to command the ship. He was head of yard construction and had personally overseen the construction and launch of the first four *Galaxy*-class ships. Now, he sat in the center of the bridge of the *Melbourne*. Several of the stations around him are unfinished and even missing screens, but her engines are fully operational and so are the weapon systems. The *Melbourne* drops out of warp and immediately takes evasive action to avoid the debris from the remains of her forebear, the *Excelsior*-class *Melbourne*. With alarms blaring the conn officer puts the ship into a sharp dive to drop down under the debris. The *Melbourne's* inertial dampers are not properly calibrated; everyone feels a moment of weightlessness as the ship dives under her unfortunate predecessor.

"Move us in – attack pattern Mayweather Gamma Four," commands Halloway as the ship advances on the cube. A volley of torpedoes streak away from the ship and impact harmlessly on the cube. *Melbourne* tears past and is raked by fire from the Borg weapons systems. Sparks fly on the bridge and the Sur'Tai, the Kelpian tactical officer, moves her hands across the console. Her fear ganglia are on full display yet her voice remains calm and steady as she braces herself against the lurching movements of the ship. "Shields holding, Sir. Engineering reports a plasma leak from secondary nacelles."

■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Halloway nods acknowledgement. "Well it's a good thing we won't be needing to go to warp anytime soon. Tell them to jettison the nacelles if it gets too bad. Focus on keeping weapons and shields up."

"Aye, Sir," she replies. "The *Saratoga* has taken a direct hit – their shields are down. Sensors detect instability in their warp core."

At the conn and ops stations the two officers, both wearing engineering gold, look at each other as they realize the predicament the *Saratoga* now faces.

"Damn. Lifesigns?" asks Halloway. Sur'tai performs a scan of the *Saratoga* as the ship is rocked by another impact from the Borg.

"Difficult to say, Sir. The graviton burst is disrupting sensors, but I see escape pods launching."

Halloway nods. "Okay, hail the *Yamaguchi*. Let's try to position ourselves between the *Saratoga* and the cube and see if w–"

The deck seems to rise up rapidly, throwing everyone violently upwards as a bright light and high-pitched screech fills the bridge.

■ END OF FILE



# HERVÉ JAFFRÉ

USS MELBOURNE

Engineer

I had been sent up to deflector control. The first pass on the Borg had shaken the ship pretty hard – there was a plasma leak coming from one of the nacelles and the shielding around the deflector had degraded. The MSD suggested a radiation leak and the chief wanted to make sure the deflector wasn't damaged. If that thing went it would take half the ship with it.

It was a strange thing moving through the ship. We'd been building her for the best part of the last three years. She was still unfinished; most of the turbolifts weren't operational – we had to slide down ladders and Jefferies tubes like those old sailors in the vids. We hadn't even had our shakedown, so the ship's inertial dampers weren't calibrated. Every time we made a maneuver we'd go weightless for a moment and then weigh twice as much on the way back down. It really was like being on one of those old tin cans rolling in heavy seas.

When we got to the control room, the indicator told us the room was hot and the automatic safeties hadn't engaged. We needed to put on radiation suits, but they hadn't arrived by time we left Spacedock. You know how the joke goes: they'll be installed on Tuesday. [chuckles] We did have EV suits, however, so we grabbed the nearest ones and put them on. We hoped they would give us enough protection to get in there and shut down the leak, or jettison the deflector, if need be.

There was an almighty crash and it felt like we'd taken a walk on a high gravity planet. Then we were weightless and everything was dark and silent. Even the emergency lighting was out – I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I thought the deflector must have exploded, but that couldn't be the case. We were so close it would have taken us out, too. There was no response when I tried to call engineering or the bridge. That's when Malik tapped me on the shoulder and pointed at the display on his arm: we were in vacuum. We lit the helmet beacons and moved back down the corridor we had just run down. As

we rounded the corner, the corridor just stopped. There was no force field or anything, just space.

As we slowly tumbled, I caught sight of the cube. Three or four ships swarmed around it. They just seemed so small – like flies attacking a rock.

We watched for a moment as another ship exploded. I think I was in shock. We watched for a bit until the ship tumbled and we were facing away from the battle. Then, we numbly turned around and went to see if we could find any other survivors.



## USS COLUMBIA NCC-71102

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual – Stardate 44002.3

Chet plots the position of starships on a large display screen and relays orders to the other ships in the fleet. The delta that represents the USS *Melbourne* blinks out.

"Sir, *Melbourne* and *Saratoga* have engaged the Borg. *Bellerophon* and *Yamaguchi* – wait...Sir, *Melbourne* has been destroyed," the Lurian reports.

Hanson rises up from his seat and moves to the plotting board. "My god, Chet. Already? Did their weapons have *any* effect on the cube?"

The Lurian taps the Borg icon and data begins to scroll next to it. "No, Sir, no effect, and *Saratoga* is now trapped by a tractor beam. Captain Gould of the *Yamaguchi* is requesting more ships while they attempt to free *Saratoga*."

"Contact Amirian on the *Constance* and order his group to assist the *Saratoga*. Order *Bastion* and *Galatea* move to position Lambda and wait to begin an attack run."

"Yes, Sir." Chet begins to move the respective icons on the plot and Admiral Hanson moves over to the station usually operated as ops. Kendra Stanz, a joined Trill, focuses very intently at her console – avoiding looking at the main display.

Hanson comes and stands by her station. "Kendra, what's the status of the *Bonestell*? Do we still have the uplink?"

She moves her hands across the LCARS interface and the panel changes to reflect the remote operations interface. "Yes, Sir, the ship is still operational. The graviton burst generator fired." She taps a few commands. "It's not pretty there. The secondary hull is absolutely flooded with radiation – looks like a baffle plate ruptured, but she is still responding to commands."

"Any weapons systems operational?" Hanson asks hopefully.

"No, Sir – didn't have much to begin with. Looks like the relays have fused for the phaser arrays," she reports.

"What about engines? Do you have impulse control?"

A few more commands and she nods. "Yes Sir, impulse engines online."

"Right," says Hanson as he rises once more, "set a collision course. Slam that ship right down the Borg's throat. Target the tractor emitter holding the *Saratoga* and ram at full impulse."

Kendra smoothly enters the commands and presses the execute command. On Chet's tactical plot the icon for the *Bonestell* begins to move towards the Borg. Hanson returns to his chair and taps a command on the arm controls. The main viewer switches to a view from the *Bonestell* and the Borg cube starts to fill the screen.

Suddenly a beam of energy lances out from the cube and strikes the *Bonestell*. The screen goes black, then returns to the wider view of the battle. Hanson looks over to Kendra. She taps the console but "Signal Lost" displays across the interface. "Sorry, Sir, we have lost the connection."

Chet shakes his large head. "*Bonestell* destroyed, Sir."

On the screen a flare erupts as a ship is consumed by a massive fireball. "What was that?" asks Hanson as he rises to approach the screen.

Chet looks at the plot. "The second *Melbourne* has been destroyed, Sir, and I think the—" A flash interrupts his report as the *Saratoga* explodes.

"Dammit," says Hanson. He returns to the command chair and slumps into it. "We need to get in there."

"Second wave moving in now," intones Chet. "*Bellerophon* is not responding to hails, but seems able to maneuver. *Yamaguchi* is attempting to provide cover."

## HOLOPROGRAM ENDING – PLEASE WAIT...

Hanson taps a few commands on the chair's arm and the image of *Columbia's* main bridge appears with Captain Zirvuk seated in the center chair. "Admiral," the captain says by way of greeting.

"Zirvuk, we need to get in there and get on top of this situation," Hanson declares flatly.

Zirvuk's face looks grim, though some might say it is difficult for an Arcurian to look any other way. He seems to consider his words before speaking. "Sir, they have Picard. No one knows the capabilities of a *Galaxy*-class ship better than him and we will be at a distinct—"

Hanson cuts him off. He rises and walks towards the screen. "I will tell you what I told Riker. Whatever that *thing* on that ship is – it is not Picard! The Borg may well know the technical specifications of this ship, they may well know what we are capable of, it may well be a fool's errand but we will do it anyway. Because if we do *not*, there will be nothing to stand between the Borg and Earth, and if Earth falls then the rest of the Federation will likely follow. We do this because we must, we do this because we are Starfleet, we do this because *no one else* can."

Zirvuk's demeanor remains grim, but he nods curtly. "*Columbia* stands ready for your orders, Sir." Hanson sits back down in the command chair with determination on his face.

"Take us in."



## KES VAN STARIN

USS *BELLEROPHON*

Medic

Suddenly there was a terrific jolt. The deck rocked and the glass between the isolation ward and the main sickbay shattered into a storm of shards as sparks flew around us. There were eight more jolts – presumably from more impacts from the Borg – and then everything went dark. There was no panic, no hysteria. No one knew what had happened and we were too stunned to puzzle it out. The CMO was dead; a biobed had been ripped from the deck and crushed him. There wasn't anything we could do, but there were two other doctors in the sickbay. One was unconscious and one was pinned under some debris. He said we needed to get to the bridge and let them know sickbay was gone, and to set up triage in a shuttlebay. We tried to free him, but he died from blood loss, still telling us to get to the bridge.

I tried to get the doors of sickbay open. It took some effort, but we managed to force the doors apart and tumbled out in the corridor. The ship was in chaos. We tended to any wounded we came across as we tried to make our way through the ship. Main power was out and the alarm klaxon had a strange distorted edge to it. It felt almost like the ship itself was slipping away as it bled out into space. Cables and conduits hung down, pipes and sections of bulkhead littered the passageways as we tried to move. Mangled in all of it were the remains of crew members. It was a horrific scene. All we could do was try and be professional: help those we could, log those we couldn't. I kept telling myself there would be time to go to pieces later – I had to get to the captain first.

We made it to the turbolift – which should have led up to the bridge – but the doors refused to open. They felt cold to the touch. An Edosian engineer close by had lost one of his arms, but instructed me how to take an emergency powercell and connect it to the terminal. It came to life and told me that the other side of the shaft was in vacuum. The entire upper half of the ship's saucer, including the bridge, was just gone. There was nothing left.

## LIAM SHAW

USS CONSTANCE

Machinist's Mate

Dad left when I was four. Never really knew the bastard. Mom did her best, but the Southside raised me more than anyone else. Still, I didn't want to be a dipshit from Chicago for the rest of my life, so I enlisted right out of high school. My aptitude scores weren't anywhere near high enough to rate a *Galaxy* or even *Ambassador*, but the *USS Constance* – an old *Constellation* with worn out plasma manifolds and warped decks from seven decades of subspace distortion – was plenty good enough for me.

We grease monkeys down in engineering would cruise around the Federation for six months at a time, spending our days scraping burned polycarbonate residue out of plasma manifolds just laughing and joking with each other and waiting for shore leave. You know, stuff that would never make a holonovel script but actually make a starship run. Then, in port, we'd put on our dress uniforms and saunter into cheap bars on starbases with stories – claiming to be heroes so we could get laid. It was exactly the life I thought I wanted.

One day out of the blue, we got orders to head this star system called Wolf 359. We didn't know why or even care in the engine room. It was just another short trip. No one above the rank of ensign actually gave a shit about us snipes working the manifolds. Our petty officers just said "keep your heads down and do your fucking jobs." So we did.

Then, without warning, every single monitor on the ship cuts to this random transmission, and I see the face of this old Human guy calling himself "Locutus of Borg" with a robot arm and a bunch of metal shit glued to his face. Every single one of us went "who the hell is that?" No one knew what a "Borg" was back then. We just saw this asshole telling us to surrender and that "resistance is futile." Turns out he was a Starfleet captain wearing a Halloween costume.

About 10 seconds later, we felt the impulse engines kick into emergency flank. We shot forward like a damn rocket – so fast the inertial dampeners could barely compensate. That moron sitting in the captain's chair 10 decks up had just charged straight at them! No strategy! No tactics! Just some dumbass



cowboy shit without an ounce of fucking thought! A blast from the cube nailed us straight in the dorsal hull in less than a minute. It cut through us like wet tissue paper...

**[He pauses, shuts his eyes, and briefly puts a hand over his face before continuing.]**

You ever live through an explosive decompression? There's this rush of air all around you, then it's dead quiet. You can't see, you can't think, but it's like a heavyweight boxer punching you from the inside out. The manifolds blew. 4,000 degree plasma just rocketed through the engineering compartment and got sucked out into the void. It was like space was on fire. Then, the emergency force fields kicked in, the bulkheads sealed, and the atmosphere roared back. Whole thing probably took about three seconds. It felt like three hours.

When I got my senses back, I was lying on the deck gasping for air. I had no idea what was going on. I looked over and saw Deke Manotti, a kid from Jersey City with a background a lot like mine. He had a rack about two bunks down from me in the lower enlisted berths. He was staring at me with these giant open eyes. I shouted at him asking if he was alright, but he just kept staring back at me. Took me a full five seconds to figure out he was dead. He wasn't the only one. Chief Blass, our petty officer-in-charge, got sucked out the hull. Every person with stripes or pips was gone. We didn't have comms with anybody else on the ship. Power was failing. Fires were getting worse and burning what O2 we had left.

Somebody started screaming, "We got to get the life deck!" Somebody else was shouting, "We haven't been given the order to abandon yet!" Voices were just screaming and *screaming* on top of each other. Finally, I heard myself shouting "Nobody up there gives a fuck about us! We're all getting off this ship!" And everyone started running through the burning corridors.

By the time we got to the life deck we realized everyone else on *Constance* had beat us to it. There was only one pod left for 50 people. 10 seats for 50 lives. That's when I experienced the most surreal moment of my existence. Nobody moved.

We were all friends. We all knew each other's backgrounds and stories. We knew what each other wanted to do when our contracts were up.

**[He starts gesturing to people not there and begins tearing up.]**

Dave wanted to open a hovercycle shop in Seattle. Shrimanti wanted to take over her mom's restaurant on Aurelis Prime. Soriban wanted to be the first person in his family to go to college. How could any one of us say our life was more important than theirs?

That's when this lieutenant JG suddenly bursts in with a wounded petty officer and another crewman leaning on her. I didn't know her name. I think she worked in one of the science labs. She gazed out at all of us and saw the single pod...and I saw a look in her eyes that crushed me. She knew she was going to die. She couldn't have been more than 23 or 24-years-old, but she knew – without a shadow of a doubt – that in less than an hour she would be a floating corpse in space. We expected her to be exactly like the other assholes up on the bridge and try to push past us to get on the pod...but she didn't.

She just started pointing: "you...you...you..."

Six, seven, eight, nine lower enlisted at random. Then, she reached number 10 and was pointing at me.

I couldn't go! I was just like everybody else in that room! Just some working class kid like all these other working class kids just trying to make something better out of themselves. I tried to refuse, but they pushed me onto that pod with the other nine. The last thing I saw as we launched were the faces of the 40 enlisted and one officer left behind just staring...staring back at us with that same look that Deke had. I knew they were just as dead as he was.

The *Constance* had 34 officers aboard when we left Earth for Wolf 359: 33 shitbags and one good one. I never thought about crossing over myself until I realized how much Starfleet needed better officers. Ones that would think, ones that actually gave a shit about the people trapped below decks, and didn't just want to win medals.

I dropped my application to the academy a month later. They couldn't say no to one of the "heroes" of Wolf 359.

## HIROSHI MURAKAMI

USS HOOD

Executive Officer

We were all tense – I had butterflies in my stomach. Did you ever go to Bozeman when you were a kid and ride on the *Phoenix*? It felt like that: nervous anticipation for our turn.

We got the signal from *Columbia* and that was it. We broke formation, the engines spooled up, and we jumped to warp for what felt like only a moment. The stars on the viewscreen stretched out before us and then collapsed back to points of light. There in the middle of it all was the Borg ship. Time seemed to slow down to a standstill as I gazed at the scene out there. I had rarely seen this many starships at once even after a decade in Starfleet and I had never seen *anything* like this.

A dark shape vaguely reminiscent of a *Rigel*-class ship passed in front of us, silently tumbling as small explosions erupted along the hull. It looked like the poplar fires when they would clear the pollen from the forests back home in Kyoto. I was captivated as the fire spread to the ship's registry number. It had been the *Tolstoy*.

I looked around the bridge and it was like an out of body experience. The captain was shouting something to the conn and I remember thinking it was bad that I wasn't paying attention. The clock over the bridge seemed to have stopped, then the seconds changed slowly, so slowly. The red light from the alert signal shone solid red for what seemed like an age before it slowly faded to black, and then red once more.

That's when I started to suspect something might be wrong. Could I be in shock? It seemed a ludicrous thought – we hadn't been hit as far as I knew. All that had happened was we had dropped out of warp into the middle of the battle. Ships all around us were blowing up.

It reminded me of something I had read as a child: "The sky was full of stars and every star was an exploding ship." It was mesmerizing.

I saw the *Republic*, the old academy training ship drop out of warp and fire a full spread of torpedoes. I remembered my first year at the academy and the first voyage on the *Republic* – it was an old ship even then. I had no idea the ship even had weapons systems still installed! It was so surreal to see a *Constitution*-class ship there, like a holorecording. The *Columbia* had dropped in – utterly dwarfing the *Republic* – and fired a full spread of torpedoes, then fired phasers from seemingly every array on the ship.

It was about then I became distantly aware of a noise, someone was shouting a name. I tried to listen, but couldn't make it out. I turned to see if the captain could hear it too and he was looking right at me, his mouth open in a shout as he slowly formed the word "Hiroshi." I remember thinking that it was strange that he was calling my name when I was sitting right next to him. Why couldn't I hear him? Out of nowhere I felt a sudden sharp pain and snapped out of my daze. Back on the bridge, the ship rocked as the alarm continued to blare.

"Are you okay Hiroshi? Are you back with us?" The captain asked. I held a hand up to my cheek and could feel warmth, but no pain. I looked around and no one was paying any attention to me – everyone was focused on their stations as the ship lurched to avoid another salvo from the Borg, ducking behind the ever increasing field of debris.

"Sorry, Sir...I–"

He waved me off. I think he understood, and besides – there were bigger issues. I finally noticed the second sound mixed in with the Red Alert klaxon: "Intruder. Alert. Intruder. Alert. Intruder. Alert."

The captain didn't have to say anything – I got to my feet and made for the turbolift, tapping my combadge as I went. "All hands, intruder alert. Prepare to repel boarders."

As the doors shut on the turbolift I took a final look at the viewscreen and that damn clock. We had warped in only moments before. There was another flash and another star appeared where the *Republic* had just been.

## USS HOOD NCC-42296

■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Engine Room Flight Recorder Visual - Stardate 44002.5

*The engine room of the Hood, like most ships of the era, is a mishmash of vintage early 24<sup>th</sup> century design with more modern consoles and systems retrofitted into the space. The ship's warp core cuts through the space horizontally with large plasma conduits running abeam off into the nacelle spaces aft. Chief engineer Alison Obena works frantically with her team to stabilize the power distribution network and to remodulate the shields. Overhead the shouts from Captain Robert DeSoto on the bridge can barely be heard over the blare of alarm klaxons and rumbles as the giant ship rocks. Sparks erupt as the EPS grid struggles to cope with the pounding the ship is taking.*

One of the engineers tightens a bandage from the aid station over their hand; blueish blood already soaking through the white fabric before returning to their station. By the large Master System Display a pair of engineers are at work under the console. One pulls a length of cabling from a hidden ODN relay and hands it up to his Denobulan colleague. "Connect the other side right away!" shouts the Antaran engineer from the deck. The Denobulan takes the cable, runs to the base of the warp core, and passes it to another engineer hidden on the lower level. Obena runs up to the MSD, which suddenly springs back to life – red lights and warning glyphs litter the diagram of the ship's systems.

"Dammit, we've lost maneuvering thrusters! Shield modulations are having no effect. Any more hits to port are going to carve right through us!" she shouts over the din. "Prioritize engines and weapon systems. The shields aren't slowing them down and if we lose maneuvering we'll be a sitting duck!"

Engineers move to try and coax more life out of systems long past their prime, the captain's voice breaks through the cacophony of battle in the engine room. "Engineering! Can you give us any more?"

Obena looks at the MSD and then back at the engine room. "Working on it, Sir!" She closes the channel and runs back along to a ladder located just aft of the warp core. She climbs up to access a console on the upper walkway, maneuvering around an ensign who is monitoring the plasma manifold pressures.

As she reaches the console and starts inputting a sequence of commands in, a new alarm tone blares and the computer declares in a very calm and matter of fact manner: "Warning, intruder alert."

Five Borg drones materialize on the level below and immediately set to work. One moves towards the MSD, a pair heads for the warp core, and the others advance on the crew. Some have not noticed – too caught up in their work as they try to buy the ship more time. A drone abruptly grabs the head of the Denobulan engineer, caught unaware while frantically entering commands into a station along the side of the engine room. The drone raises its arm and a pair of tubules erupt from its wrist and plunge into the flesh of the Denobulan's throat. He reaches up to his neck, but collapses as the Borg drops him to ground where he writhes in pain. The first drone reaches the MSD and raises its interface arm, plunging it into the computer. Immediately, the display starts to flicker as the Borg access the ship's systems.

The crew – now aware of the threat amongst them – are torn between a need to keep the ship running, the urge to run away from the horror before them, and desire to fight for their ship and crewmates. Some fire phasers but the Borg's personal shields easily deflect the attack. They adjust phaser settings as they retreat and try again, but still to no effect.

From the upper level, Obena moves to run back down but is stopped by the ensign. "You can't go down there, Chief! There's nothing you can do!"

Obena wrestles her way free of the young ensign and moves towards

the ladder again. Looking down, she sees the Borg has incapacitated all the crew who were on the lower level and are now moving to interface with computers on the wall. The Denobulan engineer has returned to standing, his complexion now an ashen gray with dark veins. He moves in a mechanical manner and starts to aid the Borg accessing a ODN relay.

She pushes the ensign aside and starts inputting commands to the console. "Computer, isolate the warp core and transfer engineering control to the bridge!"

"Unable to comply" comes the calm response from the traditionally feminine voice that all Starfleet ships employed in this era.

Obena taps in a few more commands, losing the race as the Borg override the computer systems and attempt to take control of the ship. Finally, in frustration she turns around, draws her phaser, and fires at the MSD console, destroying it in an eruption of sparks. The Borg and the newly assimilated crew look up towards her as one. A pair of drones start to walk towards the access ladder.

"Time to go," she says briskly, grabbing the ensign by the upper arm and moving back towards the rear of the walkway. She crouches down and pulls a panel away to reveal what was once a service tunnel entrance. She calmly stands back and adjusts the phaser to maximum power and cuts a hole just large enough for them to fit through. The bulkhead falls inward to an old Jefferies tube.

"In you go," Obena gestures as she steps back, allowing the ensign to lean down and gaze into the newly opened passage.

"How did you know that was there?" he asks, but she places her boot on his backside and pushes him through.

"I'll tell you later," she replies, scrambling in after him. She fits the panel that was removed back into place as best she can and welds it in place with her phaser. She taps her combadge, "Bridge, we've lost the engine room,"

**HOLOPROGRAM ENDING — PLEASE WAIT...**

but there is no response. Suddenly, the power systems start to fluctuate then fail, plunging them into blackness. Then a loud metallic clunk as power seems to return, but with an ominous hum and increasing pitch. “I really don’t like the sound of that,” Obena says to no one in particular, then turns around and hands the phaser to the ensign. “Follow me, Kid. Let’s see if we can get our ship back.”



## ZORIA GELT

USS IBN SINA

Operations Officer

It was pretty clear the second we dropped out of warp that everything had gone straight to hell. The Borg ship was just idly moving at maybe one quarter impulse, leaving this trail of debris in its wake. Chunks of starships, nacelles, parts of primary hulls – sometimes you could make out what class or even what ship it had been. You could even see bodies tumbling out there. It was grim.

The ships that were still operational swarmed and darted around the cube firing phasers, unleashing volleys of torpedoes, then trying to duck away back through the debris field to find some cover from the Borg. The Borg were methodical. They would focus down on a single ship and start to follow it. They would fire the occasional shot at other ships as they came into range or strayed too close, but they fixated on a single ship at a time. They seemed to stalk it and wear it down before the shields would finally fail. Then it was just a matter of time before it joined the other wrecks in the ever-expanding debris field.

We noticed there were a couple of ships that the Borg seemed to be ignoring: *Hood*, *Roosevelt*, *Seleya* – I think there might have been another. *Hood* was stationary, seemingly adrift, and *Roosevelt* was still firing phasers, but it was increasingly erratic. I don't know what course they were trying to fly, but it didn't make any sense. I saw a fair bit of debris impact their hull before they seemed to lose all power.

The captain told us to try and hail the ships to see if they needed support, but there was no response from any of them. It was really unsettling. We received an order from *Columbia* to coordinate an attack run with the *Gora bim Gral* so I set about plotting in the parameters and setting up the computer to sync with the *Gora*. Captain Sokhi hailed us and told us he wanted to focus fire on a single point on the Borg cube to see if sustained fire would work. So far that had proven extremely difficult as the Borg subspace fields seemed to have a dampening effect on weapon targeting – meaning that no two shots seemed to land in the same spot. He had a plan to launch a class four probe with a homing beacon into the ship and have weapons set up to track on the beacon. We set

our weapons to do the same and were set to make our run when there was a sudden blur and the proximity alarm went haywire. The computer tried to throw the ship into evasive maneuvers, but I had to work with sT'ran at the conn as she fought with the flight controls.

It had been *Roosevelt*. It suddenly started moving again and was now heading out of the system, pushing its impulse engines really hard. If they weren't careful they were likely to hit relativistic speeds, but before we could even think about what was happening there we got a message from the *Hood*. It was Captain DeSoto warning that the Borg had boarded the ship and had taken engineering.

That stopped us cold. We hadn't considered the possibility that the Borg might want our ships. I mean – why would they? The ship they had was making short work of ours! The captain was asking him how many Borg had boarded *Hood* and if he wanted a security team to beam over when the signal was lost. I scanned for Borg, but the readings returned were fluctuating. I was getting a solid half dozen returns, but if I didn't know better it seemed like there was more Borg slowly materializing on the ship. The captain asked if I could beam the crew to *Ibn Sina*, but before I could *Hood's* impulse drive came online and she started moving out of the system just like the *Roosevelt*!

We tried hailing *Columbia*, but they just reiterated the orders to coordinate with Captain Sokhi. *Columbia* was taking a lot of fire and no matter what they threw at the cube it seemed to make no difference.

## NEZ'TOR

USS GORA BIM GRAL

Security Officer

There were half a dozen of us holed up in secondary weapons control. We didn't really have much information about what we might face with the Borg. Command had been infuriatingly vague about the whole operation and Captain Sokhi was really not the most detail-oriented commander. The waiting had been interminable, but finally we heard over the intercom that the ship would be moving in to attack along with the *Hood* and *Roosevelt*. We felt that now we would show them what happens when you mess with the big boys!

The weapons station was deep inside the ship, near to the photon torpedo magazines. It's mostly automated so really all we needed to do was monitor the autoloaders. We could hear the thrum-thrum-thrum as the ship launched a torpedo spread, then the whirring as the next volley was loaded. But with no windows or exterior displays, we had no idea what was going on. The ship would occasionally rock but I'd felt worse buffeting on re-entry in a shuttle. The *Gora* was a big ship – not as fancy as them newer *Nebulas* and *Galaxy* wagons – but solid and dependable, like the ole Tellarite himself!

We got a sudden alert from the bridge to form security teams and be prepared to secure key points on the ship. We paired off with two of us staying at weapons control and the rest moved to meet up with the other security teams. We were issued with type-3s and jogged down the corridors towards our security stations. The ship seemed mostly deserted, everyone at battle stations or in shelters and only the flashing red lights to tell us something was very wrong.

I was unsure why we were taking this step. We had been briefed by the chief with what we knew of the Borg and had reviewed the footage from the encounter on *Enterprise*. While they were extremely powerful, their drones didn't look all that dangerous and even the *Enterprise's* security chief had been able to dispatch them easily enough. We seemed to be holding our own.

I was assigned to guard the main shuttlebay with two other officers. They

both took up position behind the entrance to the bay and I headed up to the control room to see what was going on. The control room had a sensor feed so we were able to watch the battle unfold. The two engineers stationed there watched with what I could only describe as abject horror. It seemed totally at odds with the situation as I understood it, but I moved in closer to see the feed.

It was a slaughterhouse. There were hulks and scattered remnants of starships everywhere. There was so much debris that interfered with the resolution of the feed as the computer tried to identify and catalog everything it saw. The ship bucked and weaved as I caught sight of the cube for the first time. It was big and imposing but, again, I didn't really understand.

Then it fired.

A beam of some sort lept from the cube and struck a ship that was attempting to maneuver behind the still burning remains of a ship – I'm not sure what, maybe a *Nebula*-class. I felt the *Gora* suddenly buck and it tried to come about to provide support. I heard Captain Sokhi's voice as he told the ship to stand by – help was coming – but the beam didn't hit the shields. It seemed to burrow through the ship and sliced it open along the secondary hull, then lanced out again striking down across the saucer. I could hear screams on the feed as its crew died.

I leaned forward and turned off the audio feed, the engineers both motionless with shock. I wondered how many ships they had seen destroyed.

I was about to try and snap them out of it when the XO's voice came over the comms: "ALL HANDS BRACE." My world suddenly erupted into fire and then pain – all the air seemed to be sucked from my lungs.

Training took over and I grabbed an emergency EV hood from the escape pack by the door and two more for the engineers. But I could see that one of them was already dead...the console had exploded into her chest. The other engineer was bleeding heavily, but kept trying to tap at the console. I slapped a dressing on the wound and picked him up – making sure he wasn't impaled on my spurs – and headed down to the main bay. The other two members of my team were nowhere to be seen. All around there was fire and destruction. I needed to get out of the bay to seal it off the breach, but the outer door wouldn't

open. I couldn't see where the breach was so I put the engineer down carefully and tried for the manual release. The door opened a crack and the rushing of air increased, but something was wrong: the air wasn't trying to get into the bay – it was trying to get out!

It was too late now; I couldn't reseal the doors and I had no idea what was happening. There was a shuttlepod on its side by the hanger wall. I went to pick up the engineer, but he had gone...bled out. So I ran to the shuttlepod before the air supply ran out, sealed the hatch, and pressurized it.

The pod was in rough shape and wouldn't fly, but I was able to get the sensors working. Something had sliced clean through the aft section of the *Gora bim Gral* and the entire shuttlebay had been sent tumbling off into space.

A moment later, I saw a beam strike the rest of the ship which was still fighting and trying to evade in an ever-increasing debris field. It seemed to just hang there in space for a moment, connected to the Borg cube by the beam. Then the warp core went critical and the ship was destroyed; the nacelles erupting outward from the ship, spewing plasma. One of the nacelles collided with *Columbia* and the plasma caused the shields to ripple as they absorbed the energy, before the ship moved on and continued firing phasers at the Borg.

I watched the feed for a bit, but after seeing the fifth or sixth ship destroyed I just powered down the sensors and waited, trapped in the shuttlebay, unsure if anyone would survive, and if they did, if anyone would find me.

# HIROSHI MURAKAMI

Executive Officer

USS *HOOD*

They went straight for engineering. Before we knew what was happening, they had killed or assimilated everyone there and taken control of the ship. We were woefully unprepared for the Borg. We knew from Picard's reports that the Borg had boarded *Enterprise* to assess the ship, but when the Borg boarded *Hood* we were caught completely off guard. That's just not something we have ever trained for – we haven't had Marines or MACOs on board for over 100 years!

I had left the bridge to head up a security team to assess the situation and find out how much trouble we were in. We were out of the fight and the ship was drifting in an increasingly crowded sector of space in an active war zone. We needed to regain control of the engine room and get back in the fight. I was in constant contact with Captain DeSoto and he told me we could transmit but couldn't receive any hails. We broadcast a general warning, but from what we could hear at least three other ships had been boarded and taken out of the fight. Thankfully, the Borg seemed to ignore us once we were disabled – small mercies and all that.

I didn't think anything of that at the time. We knew that the Borg tended to ignore individuals they no longer perceived as threats. My focus was finding out what had happened and getting back control of the ship. Systems were fluctuating and internal sensors went offline in short order, which really hampered any response to the intruders. I had made it as far as deck 15 when I encountered my first Borg.

It was one of ours: Ensign Hibbs. He had only joined the ship two months before and was excited to get into space for the first time. I ordered the team to hold fast while I tried to speak to Hibbs, but he ignored me and continued staring intently at the deflector control mainframe. As I moved closer I could see his arm had been severed at the elbow and some kind of prosthesis grafted on which was now interfacing directly with the console. I told him to step away from the console but he ignored me. I moved up to try and pull him back, but he just tossed me across the deck without even looking at me. One of the security

team fired but a personal shield absorbed the phaser beam. I didn't know what to do but sensed that above all else we couldn't allow the Borg to finish whatever they were trying to do. I took my phaser and fired at the mainframe.

It exploded in a shower of sparks, but the Borg who had been Hibbs just calmly detached its arm from the console and moved towards the deflector control room – completely ignoring us. As I got to my feet, Zmuda called out in alarm. Coming towards us were half a dozen Borg. A couple were clearly crew, but the rest were encased in the black carapace and assortment of wires and implants we had seen from the briefings. I ordered the team to fall back, but Zmuda had recognized one of the newly assimilated Borg and ran towards them. I called out to stop her but as she got close one of the Borg grabbed her hair. It pulled back her head and injected her with whatever poison they used to rob people of their identity. She fell to the deck screaming and writhing in pain. I meant to go to her, but Vavasour grabbed me and hauled me back into the turbolift.

"You must warn the captain," he said in a flat voice as he pushed me in and ordered it to go to the bridge. He exited before the doors closed and I heard the faint sound of phaser fire as it sped me away. I felt something run down my forehead and tried to wipe it away – my hands came back red.

That's when the pain came.

# USS ENDURANCE NCC-5265

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.6

*The Endurance shakes under another barrage of fire from the Borg; plasma streaming from its port nacelle and one of the impulse engines a ruin of scorched blackened duranium. It unleashes a fusillade of phaser fire which disperses harmlessly on the surface of the Borg cube. The large starship heaves its bulk around the remains of a Nebula-class starship and moves away as the USS Galatea makes a run on the cube.*

"Sir, the *Gora bim Gral* is gone and *Ibn Sina* is taking heavy fire," the communications officer, a Betelgeusian named Prard'ras'kleoni, calls over the din of alarm klaxons and the ever-present sounds of the battle around them.

"How many is that?" asks Captain Delahoy. He shrugs off the medic trying to tend a wound on his scalp; the amber blood runs down his uniform.

From the tactical station, Commander Ghafari assesses the state of the slaughter surrounding them. "Nine ships confirmed destroyed, 12 report heavy damage, and three are nonresponsive. The *Seleya* and *Hood* report they have been boarded and the Borg are attempting to take control. Captain Frye reports a firefight in the engine room and Captain DeSoto reports they are attempting to secure the bridge," they pause as the console beeps and look up dejectedly. "That was the *Galatea*. It's been destroyed."

The captain is silent for a moment as the medic finishes sealing the wound with a dermal regenerator before closing up the med kit and dashing towards the turbolift. She is needed on other decks to attend to other casualties.

"Captain, what are your orders?" asks Ghafari. "*Endurance* is a tough old gal but we're slow and lumbering. We don't have the firepower or maneuverability to last long against that thing."



Delahoy nods his head in assent. "I know, but it doesn't look like *any* of us are making much of an impact. Damage assessment on the cube?"

Ghafari inputs commands into the console as another impact rocks the ship. Sparks fly from the overhead and a small fire erupts behind the aft science stations – a nearby crewman rushes towards it with a fire suppressor. "It isn't even dented," comes the dejected response.

There is a series of urgent beeps and Prard'ras'kleoni scrolls through the incoming data. "Distress beacon from the *Galatea*. I'm picking up multiple calls for help throughout the debris field." Delehoy runs his hand up over his head through the blood-soaked hair. He considers their options, then nods to himself as he comes to a decision.

"Okay, let's try and pick up as many survivors as we can. Helm, plot a course through the debris field. Try to keep the cube as far away from us and behind debris where you can – we'll do a sweep through and grab who we can, then try to disengage."

"But what about the cube?" asks Ghafari. "We have to stop it!"

"Marika, I know. But *look* out there. A dozen ships already destroyed and even *Columbia* is taking a pasting. I will gladly put this ship into harm's way to save lives and defend the Federation, but I will not throw away our lives out of spite. Whatever Hanson was hoping to do here has *failed!*"

There is a tense moment as all eyes on the bridge focus on the tension between the captain and his first officer, but the XO nods their agreement.

Delehoy gives a smile and places a reassuring hand on Ghafari's shoulder, then moves back to the command chair. "Okay, let's prep the shuttlebay. Send a message to *Columbia*. Tell them we are going to try and round up our wayward flock and move them out of harm's way. See if they can spare a couple of ships to give us some cover. Transporter room?"

"Urm...transporter room here. Chief Cole is dead – this is Ensign Ward."

## HOLOPROGRAM IN USE ■

"It's okay, Ensign. Is the transporter operational? We're going to try and rescue survivors."

"No...sorry, Sir. The main pattern buffer exploded and the resequencer was destroyed. The chief got hit by the full force. It was...urm, I don't know what to do with what's left of him, Sir."

"Okay, get to the cargo bay and see if the transporters there are operational. Someone from sickbay will tend to the chief."

"Yes, Sir." The channel closes and everyone on the bridge looks uneasy.

"Okay, we're going to have to do this the old-fashioned way. Get shuttles to standby and prepare for EVAs. We'll try to bring in as many pods as we can and direct any shuttles that can maneuver to head for us."

There is a new warning beep from the tactical console and Ghafari assesses the information, but before they can speak a new alarm sounds.

"*Roosevelt* and *Hood* have accelerated out of the system at high impulse. The *Seleya* is moving on our vector...possible collision course!"

"Helm, get us out of the way!" shouts Delahoy.

"Sir, she's fighting me," calls Lieutenant Je Ni-Gonres, the Efrosian officer at the conn. She frantically inputs commands to try and bring the ship about, but *Endurance* was already a large lumbering beast before taking damage. The ship cannot get clear of the rapidly approaching *Kilimanjaro*-class starship, which is oblivious as it accelerates through the debris field and away from the battle

"HOLD ON!" shouts Delahoy as the bridge collapses down around him.

**END OF FILE ■**

## ROBERT DESOTO

USS *HOOD*

Captain

It was shaping out to be a really bad day – given how poorly I thought it was going to go, that is *really* saying something. Hiroshi staggered out of the turbolift. There was blood pouring from his head, but he seemed oblivious as he tried to talk. He was in shock; I'm not sure if it was from the impact he had taken or from what he had seen, but he near enough collapsed on the deck. Tricorder told us he had a fractured skull. I tried calling sickbay, but no response. My worst fears were they were overwhelmed...turns out it was far worse.

We were monitoring the battle and knew that the *Roosevelt* and *Seleya* had also been boarded, the rest of the fleet was taking a pounding. No one was coming to help us; we had to deal with this by ourselves, but without sensors and limited comms that was going to be extremely difficult. I needed information on how many Borg were on the ship, where they were, and also, what they were going to do. The Borg clearly did not need any help from a 40-year-old *Excelsior*-class, so why they singled us out for special attention to this day I have no idea.

I started to get reports in from various decks and they made for grim reading: the Borg had taken engineering and worked their way forward to deflector control where they were doing something to the main deflector. The rest were making their way up through the ship. The worst part was their numbers were increasing. I was still reeling from the image of Jean-Luc standing there on the Borg ship, but now I was getting reports of our own family being turned into those...things. We got a patched-in audio report from a couple of ensigns in the cargo bay. They had run there to hide, but they said there was a Borg in there and they couldn't get out. I wanted to send a security team or beam them out, but the graviton burst made transporters inoperable. All we could do was listen as they cowered behind some cargo...and then to their screams as the Borg found them. The worst was the silence that followed and the sound of footsteps as they left the cargo bay.

[He grips the tumbler tightly, his hands slightly shaking as he stares into the empty glass.]

I was contemplating ordering everyone to abandon ship when suddenly the ship lurched and we were underway again. All of our attempts to get the helm back failed; she wouldn't respond. I tried to engage the autodestruct, but the computer told me it was offline. The ship was heading away from the battle and out of the Wolf 359 System. We could see that *Roosevelt* and *Seleya* were also moving. It seemed the Borg did not have complete control of the *Seleya* – or perhaps they just did not care – but they flew right into the *Endurance*.

I'd known Captain Delahoy since the academy; even with all that was going on seeing the *Endurance* disappear was a gut punch.

Once we were clear of the battle the ship lurched again, but did not go to warp. The Borg had done something to the engines and the deflector; we had slipped into some other kind of FTL. All of our sensors were useless, we had no celestial reference to fix our position, but what I did know for certain is wherever the Borg were trying to take us, I really did not want to make the trip.

As near as I could tell we were out of options; reports now had the Borg on deck six. They were clearly heading to the bridge and without the autodestruct – unless we could get to engineering – I couldn't think of any way to stop the ship. It's times like that when you can feel the eyes of the entire crew on you. They look to you as the captain to keep them safe, to let them know that whatever the situation, no matter how bleak it might seem, you have an ace up your sleeve or you have a plan. I tried as hard as I could to keep my poker face on and let them know that I was still in control. I could see from their faces that they knew I didn't have a strong hand.

It was right then that the universe took pity on us and we got a signal coming in, routed through a shuttle in the hangar of all places. It was Alison Obena: she had escaped engineering and was holed up on deck nine. The flood of emotion I felt hearing her voice was indescribable. She had an ensign with her – they had escaped and she wanted to know how she could help. I laid out our predicament as succinctly as I could: we needed to either stop the ship or destroy it, because I was not about to let any more of our crew be turned into those things. She listened and then went quiet.

The thing about Alison, you see, is she entered Starfleet in 2290, served on USS *Excelsior* under Hikaru Sulu, and had spent her entire career working on

the class. She knows these ships better than the back of her hand. She headed up the Flight II extension program, she is – sorry, she was – Starfleet’s premier expert on the *Excelsior*-class starship. It was one of the reasons we had so many cadets come to *Hood* to work with her. So, if anyone knew how to get us out of this situation, it was her.

After a while she simply said “Okay, I have an idea,” and well, that was that. She was off the comm and I was none the wiser. Now I knew we would be alright, or at least I knew the Borg would never get this ship.

That’s when they started banging on the door. We took cover wherever we could and got ready: the Borg were coming and we needed to buy Obena time.

## USS KONOM NCC-32285

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.5

"Borg tractor beam attempting to lock on," cries the Edosian operations officer, their three arms rapidly moving over the console as they rotate through various shield harmonic frequencies. "I don't think shields are having any effect."

The bridge is carnage: fires rage from the bank of consoles at the rear, cables and conduits hang down from above, and the command chairs have been replaced by a large duranium beam. The surviving crew tries very hard not to look at the place their captain and first officer had been moments before.

From what remains of the rear of the bridge, an ensign tries to hold on as the ship bucks wildly. The helm console explodes, propelling the lieutenant who had been sitting there back onto the deck; their face and torso a ruin of burned flesh embedded with ceramic shards. The ensign tries to make their way down to tend to the lieutenant, but another jolt rocks the ship. She dives for the deck and grabs hold of the sole remaining pillar.

The Edosian has split his console between operations and helm and now attempts to pilot the ship through the debris while performing evasive maneuvers. "I'm going to try and steer us into some clear space and then will signal to abandon ship," he shouts over the din. The ensign looks up to see a hole across the forward bulkhead where the viewscreen should be. Now it is open to the void, the force field rippling as tiny bits of debris impact it.

The Edosian looks around the ruin of the bridge and tuts as though disappointed at the state of a cadet's room during an inspection. "All hands, this is the bridge. Prepare to abandon ship. Get to escape pods, but don't launch until I give the signal. I repeat: all hands get to the escape pods, but do not launch! Ensign, I need you to take a station and scan for a suitable spot. If we try to launch escape pods here they will be lost in the debris and with the sensor disruption no one will find them."

The ensign looks around wondering who he was talking to, and is horrified to find that she and the Edosian are the last remaining souls on the bridge. "Me, Sir? But I-I-I..." she stammers.

Another jolt rocks the ship and the Edosian grunts with effort as he tries to coax the mortally wounded ship through the carcasses of Starsheet ships the Borg have already gutted.

"Yes, you, Ensign. What's your name?" His voice is calm and level as if he were making idle small talk.

"T-T-Tripper, Sir. Cara T-T-Tripper," she manages.

"Okay, Cara. I'm Ardax. I'm usually head of security, but today I fancied a change so now I'm running operations, helm, and I think *technically* I'm in command, too. I know you're frightened. I know I'm terrified right now, but I can only do so much so unless you would rather take over the helm, ops, or tactical, right now I need you on the sensors. Can you do that for me?"

Tripper hesitantly lets go of the pillar and moves towards the burned-out stations at the rear of the deck. "These are all dead, Sir."

"Try the auxiliary stations over on the port side."

She starts moving towards the darkened monitors when a jolt knocks the ship and sends it tumbling, knocking Tripper off her feet. Ardax grunts with exertion and fights the controls. The ship starts to right itself though more tones have joined the chorus of alarms and warning alerts. "So, Cara," asks Ardax almost conversationally "what brings you out here?"

She staggers and makes it to the console, taps at the display and it comes to life. "It's working! What do I need to do?"

"That's great. I need you to access the sensors and scan for an area of space that's not filled with debris. Calibrate the sensors to look for material density and anything under the threshold I'm sending to you now,

then give me a heading I can steer towards.”

Deep within the ship there is a long, almost mournful groan as the spaceframe is stressed beyond its limits. Ardax’s hands are a blur as they dance across the console, reinforcing structural integrity fields and rerouting power to force fields. Tripper yelps and cowers back down on the deck.

“Ensign – Cara, look at me. You never told me what you do.” Ardax appears calm and composed while struggling with the dying ship.

“I–I’m in life sciences. I help with crew environmental needs, making sure the ship is safe for whatever species we have on board,” she manages.

“Okay, well this is *exactly* the same. We need to make sure the environment where we’re going to send the crew is safe, and ensure they will be rescued. Once you give me the heading and I have locked it in, we’ll head straight to an escape pod ourselves. But we have to make sure the crew will be rescued. Can you do that for me, Cara?”

She sniffs and nods meekly, rubbing her nose against her uniform sleeve as she stands up and inputs the data to the station. It cycles for a moment before giving a beep to indicate it has completed its scan.

“I have something! It works!” She exclaims excitedly. “There’s an area on a heading of 117.2!” She turns around beaming with pride, but a strange hum fills the bridge and a greenish energy field has fallen around Ardax. He looks momentarily perplexed and then in an instant he is gone, transported away by the Borg.

Tripper stands there puzzled and alone on the bridge. “Ardax?” she asks hesitantly. She steps towards the ops console and even looks underneath, seemingly unable to comprehend that Ardax has gone.

Suddenly a new alarm starts to sound coupled with the computer’s dispassionate warning: “Alert. Collision. Alert. Collision. Alert.”



## ■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Cara stares out of the hole in the forward bulkhead as the remains of a starship's saucer section rears up to meet the *Konom*. She calmly moves to the ops console and takes a moment to locate the button then presses it. "All hands, this is the bridge. Launch escape pods now, launch now."

There is the distant thump as escape pods launch from the ship, but Cara Tripper calmly sits down in the chair that had previously been occupied by Ardax as the debris impacts with the *Konom*.

## ■ END OF FILE

## USS COLUMBIA NCC-71102

HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.5

Sparks erupt from overhead and *Columbia* is rocked again by impacts from the Borg. The large tactical plot shatters and icons blink in and out on the static filled display. Chet lies dead, slumped over the tactical console with part of the holographic plot bisecting his head.

"Sir, the main bridge is not responding! I think they're gone!" shouts Kendra over the din. "Transferring control of *Columbia* to the battle bridge!" The ship shakes and Hanson struggles to remain seated as another series of impacts rocks *Columbia*. He glances over to the tactical station and Chet's lifeless body, then looks across to Rip'lah, her hair matted by the dark – almost black – blood running down her head from a nasty wound.

"Rip'lah, what's the status of the Borg ship?"

She tries to access the sensors but the display shakes and breaks up. She thumps the top of the LCARS panel and the system seems to restore briefly but then dies. With an exacerbated sigh she moves to a second station and inputs the request for information. "The cube has received minimal damage to its outer surface. Its fighting ability has not been diminished and remains 98 percent effective." She grips the side of the station as *Columbia* rocks under fire.

Once the shaking stops, Rip'lah resumes her report: "The fleet has been decimated, 23 ships confirmed destroyed or disabled, five ships appear to have been taken by the Borg, other ships have reported crew members have been transported away from their posts by the Borg. The remaining fleet has an efficiency of 17.5 percent."

Hanson seems to deflate in his chair. "Any sign of backup? Or the Klingons?"

"Long-range sensors are not operational. No response from the buoys. Sir, we've done all we can. We need to disengage and regroup." *Columbia* is rocked again and a shower of sparks erupts from above. Smoke fills the bridge as the ventilation system struggles under the barrage.

A beep comes from the tactical console under Chet's body. A lieutenant gingerly lowers the Lurian to the deck. He takes over the station, wiping Chet's blood off the panel with his sleeve. "Sir, the *Georgiou* attempted to ram the cube, it has been destroyed, no damage to the Borg. The *Kyushu* is requesting support, the *Kaneda* is moving to assist, the *Ahwahnee*... Sir, the *Ahwahnee* is sending an automated distress call – it's reporting all crew are dead and requesting recovery."

Hanson looks out across the battle bridge, nodding to himself. "Okay, Rip'lah, signal the fleet to withdraw. We'll try and hold off the Borg to give them time to get out of the gravitational pulse's effect. Any ship unable to go to warp, have them go dark and try to play possum. Send a message—"

A new warning tone sounds from the engineering station. Rip'lah moves and inspects the alert. "Sir, it's Commander Quinteros."

"On screen." On the viewscreen the ship's chief engineer appears, his neatly-trimmed beard at odds with the grime covering his face.

"Admiral, we've taken damage to the magnetic containment system. We might have to eject the core."

"We can't do that," replies Hanson. "We can't survive without the core."

"Yes, I figured that would be the case. I'm going to have to disable the automatic safety systems, then. I need command authority to proceed."

"You have it," says Hanson and with that the image of Quinteros vanishes. On the viewscreen they see the Borg lock onto the *Kyushu* with a tractor beam; the cutting laser starts to slice into the ship's hull. He sinks back into his chair, forcing himself to watch this grim scene of devastation.

"Sir, we're being hailed by the *Enterprise*!" exclaims Kendra.

Hanson sits forward. "Thank god. Have them move in to support the *Kyushu* and *Kaneda*. With *Columbia* and *Enterprise* we can cover the rest of the fleet while it withdraws."

Rip'lah is quiet for a moment, her black eyes betray almost no emotion, but from the way her shoulders sag and head drops it's clear it is bad news. "Sir, *Enterprise* is not in the system. They indicate they are 12 hours away."

Hanson slowly sinks back into his chair, nodding slowly in understanding, perhaps. "Put them on screen."

On the main viewscreen the bridge of the *Enterprise* – it looks the mirror of the main bridge of *Columbia*, at least what it had been before. Captain Riker is flanked by Commander Shelby. Another impact rocks the *Columbia*.

"Admiral," says Riker by way of greeting and question – the image is heavily distorted and difficult to make out.

"The fight does not go well, *Enterprise*," says Hanson. From the rear engineering station, comes a new alert and Rip'lah moves to assess it. "We're attempting to withdraw and regroup, rendezvous with fleet at–"

END OF FILE ■

## USS HOOD NCC-42296

■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Flight Recorder Visual — Stardate 44002.7

A hatch is kicked out onto the deck and Alison Obena sticks her head out, looking both ways down the corridor before she crawls out onto the deck and helps Ensign Cordero out of the Jefferies tube.

"Okay it looks clear," she says as she ties her silver hair up into a ponytail. "Keep that phaser handy and if you see any more of those Borg, try and take out a console or conduit rather than hitting the Borg itself."

The ensign holds the phaser tightly with both hands keeping it up in front of him and sweeping left and right. "What are we doing? Where are we going? You told the captain you had an idea!"

"I do, Kid. We need to get to the computer core. If we can get there I think I can bypass the Borg's control and enable anti-intrusion countermeasures."

They move down the corridor keeping low, carefully looking around corners before moving forward. Obena keeps the ensign behind as she moves, occasionally gesturing for him to wait then waving him on.

"Anti-intrusion countermeasures? What are those?" he asks nervously. There is a clanging sound from somewhere behind them. He spins around, pointing the phaser down the dimly lit corridor. The red lights pulse and briefly illuminate the empty corridor. He relaxes slightly, and Obena continues to move forward.

"What's your name, Kid?" Obena asks.

"Ensign Cordero, Ma'am," he replies automatically.

"No, what's your first name? What do your friends call you?"

He pauses for a moment in confusion then shrugs, "Ernesto, Ernesto Manuel Cordero – but my friends call me Manny."

"I'm Alison, my friends call me Aly. Do you mind if I call you Manny?"

"Urm...sure I guess, Ma'am," he responds hesitantly.

There is another clang down the corridor and this time the sound of servos. They both stop and peer back into the darkness. In the brief pulse of red light the corridor seems empty. Cordero relaxes his grip as the red light fades, plunging the corridor back into darkness, but as the light returns the silhouette of a Borg can be seen rounding the corner, followed by another, and another. He raises the phaser but Obena grabs his arm and pulls him away. "Shit! No time, run!"

Throwing all caution to the wind, they sprint down the corridor until they arrive at a door. The identifier plate reads "Main Computer Core" and Obena taps the door to gain entry. It does not respond. She taps again more urgently but to no avail.

"Shit, shit, shit, shit," she mutters as she drops to the access hatch next to the door and pries it off. She reaches in while Cordero looks frantically between the chief engineer trying to open the door to their salvation and back down the corridor; he cannot see the Borg approaching, but he knows they are coming.

There is a loud clunk sound and the doors open. Obena rushes to her feet and pulls the doors apart. "Get in!"

The ensign rushes in and Obena follows. "Help me with the door!" she orders and they both push on the doors until they are closed. She takes the phaser from him and sets it to maximum power, minimum beam. Using her outstretched hand to shield her eyes, she proceeds to weld the doors shut. Once there is a thick bead the entire length of the door she resets the phaser and hands it back to Cordero

"Manny, I need you to keep that aimed at the door, and whatever happens keep them from getting to the core. I can save the ship, but I'm going to need a few minutes. Can you do that?"

## ■ HOLOPROGRAM IN USE

Cordero stammers, wide-eyed. Obena takes his hand and looks him in the eye. "Manny, *can you do this?* The ship is counting on you."

He swallows and nods. "Yes, Ma'am."

Obena smiles and squeezes his hand. "I told you, you can call me Aly."

He smiles, turns around, and points the phaser at the door. Obena goes around to the computer core and opens an access hatch near the base. She crawls in, starts pulling out isolinear chips and rearranging them.

"What are you going to do, Aly?" asks Cordero. "I've never heard of these anti-intrusion countermeasures."

"Ah, well, you wouldn't have. You see *Hood* is an old gal – she's a Flight I *Excelsior*-class and the *Excelsior*-class ships were designed and built in a very different Federation than the one you grew up in."

There is a loud bang on the door, and another. Cordero tenses up and grips the phaser, Obena continues rearranging the isolinear chips in the core. "When the *Excelsior* was first conceived it was the most advanced starship in the quadrant. Sort of like the *Galaxy*-class of the 23<sup>rd</sup> century and Starfleet was at war with the Klingons, they were worried about the Romulans. It felt like a much more hostile galaxy, the frontier was a lot closer to home, and Starfleet was worried about its ships being boarded by a hostile force."

The banging grows louder and dents appear in the door, on the computer core the LCARS access interface starts to flicker and seems to be malfunctioning.

"Aly! They are coming through!" cries Cordero.

"I'm almost done, just a few more moments," she responds calmly. "So, as I was saying, back then Starfleet didn't want to risk its ships being taken

over by a hostile force – and that threat seemed a lot more real – so hard-wired into the firmware of ships of that era were countermeasures in case the crew lost command of the ship. We don't use them anymore because they were a bit...uh...extreme. We've upgraded and refitted the ships with LCARS and new systems, but if you know where to look, deep *deep* down is still the kernel of those systems."

She places the last isolinear chip back into place and the LCARS interface goes black. Obena crawls out from under the core, the lights in the room go out as the banging continues and then the computer reboots.

"What do you mean by 'extreme'?" asks Cordero.

The LCARS interface reboots, gone are the familiar purples and yellows, replaced instead by blues and teals.

"Systems online. Error: unauthorized hardware detected. Error: unauthorized software detected." The familiar comforting feminine voice of Starfleet computers has been replaced by a male voice Cordero does not recognize and Obena has not heard in over 50 years.

"By extreme I mean...I'm sorry, Manny. We can save the ship, but it won't help us. Computer, intruder alert. Initiate West Protocol authorization Obena 27479 Gamma."

"Acknowledged" is the computer's cold response. Manny looks back at Obena in confusion as the door suddenly breaks down and three Borg enter the room, their laser target designators landing on Obena and Cordero as they move towards them with cybernetic arms extended. Obena takes Cordero into a protective hug as they turn away from the Borg.

In main engineering, the computer consoles untouched by the Borg go dark and then return with the blue and teal interface. A warning tone trills throughout the space. The Borg present pay it no heed as the interlocks for the plasma coolant unlock and the computer floods the engine room



## ■ HOLOPROGRAM ENDING — PLEASE WAIT...

with liquid plasma, vaporizing all organic matter in the room. It causes the warp core to go offline and sends the ship crashing back into real space. The violent transition sends the ship tumbling end over end. Inertial dampers fail, throwing crew against decks and ceilings, causing chaos throughout the ship. On the bridge, Captain DeSoto is thrown back into the helm console, crashing down at an awkward angle and into the viewscreen.

The Borg who remain operational climb back to their feet. Outside, the USS *Roosevelt* transitions back into real space and moves alongside *Hood*, her deflector and nacelles giving off an eerie green glow. The ship beams all the functioning Borg from the *Hood* on board and then, without pause, accelerates away and vanishes from real space.

The *Hood* is adrift: light-years away from Wolf 359 with no power and no warp drive. Many of her crew are dead, injured, or assimilated by the Borg.



## TEBOK

PARADISE CITY, NIMBUS III

Stardate 69181.9 - 2392



I am...I was a loyal soldier of the empire. I swore to never divulge what I saw, but Romulus is no more and the empire a mere memory that fades a little more every day. In 25 years I have never spoken of this.

[He takes a sip from the glass of *kali-fal*, pauses and then downs the entire glass and pours another. He gestures with the bottle to me but I decline. He downs the second glass and is silent for a moment.]

All of my life, I was taught to hate the Federation and all it claimed to represent. We were taught that you were weak, undisciplined, and barely worthy of our attention. And we were taught that Starfleet was a *joke*, that it lacked the will to fight and would surrender if ever faced with a threat that might cause its officers to spill their tea.

When I first heard of this mission to shepherd the Borg into Federation space, I thought it was delightfully wicked and took no small amount of pride at the thought of Starfleet fleeing for their pitiful lives as their own arrogance destroyed them. The Borg were the ultimate incarnation of the Federation's values: "infinite diversity in infinite combinations" – ha!

[He takes another drink from his glass.]

As we approached the system you call "Wolf 359" we detected the presence of sensor buoys in the area. I ordered the *Keras* to move ahead and to destroy them. I was confident in the integrity of our cloaks, but it made no sense to risk any inadvertent detection. Then we picked up the fleet of ships sitting around the edge of the system...waiting.

A paltry *40 starships*! Ha! They would be no match for the Borg. I thought the tiny fleet would be beneath their notice, but they dropped out of warp in the middle of the system right in front of a single unmanned science vessel. It had

all the hallmarks of a ritualistic sacrifice where the villagers offer up a maiden to appease some giant monster of myth, then scurry around the perimeter to gauge the monster's reaction.

Then the ship detonated a massive graviton burst! We were caught completely off-guard and had to hide behind the Borg to prevent anyone detecting us. The risk of it degrading our cloaks was remote, but we had orders to ensure that Starfleet did not report our presence and then remove all evidence – including ourselves.

But the cloak remained intact and there seemed to be no other damage. The Borg ship was also undamaged, but it would be some time before we would be able to use the warp drive. I corrected my assessment of Starfleet's intentions; what had looked like a sacrifice at first glance was a trap – and that science vessel had been the bait.

It was very strange and not at all what we had expected from Starfleet. And then, *you did it* – or at least tried to do it.

#### ♦ To do what?

You tried to *destroy the star*, you tried to unleash a stellar weapon to stop the Borg. By the time we realized what had happened – if the weapon had been successful we would have been destroyed along with the Borg. In that moment I felt a curious mixture of fear, admiration, awe, and anger.

The Federation is always the first to crow on about *morality* and to sit in judgment over others for how they can defend their borders and their citizens – yet here you were: attempting to unleash a stellar weapon. The anger I felt was not that you had tried this – it's that we never did! It never even *occurred* to us to develop such a weapon to fight the *Llaetus'le*. If we had, countless worlds could have been spared and perhaps we would have been able to secure all of our borders. It was Genesis all over again.

Clearly whatever was supposed to have happened did not. I anticipated the fleet would head to Earth to rendezvous with a larger force to try and hold the Borg back. Instead wave after wave attacked.

I think they knew they were doomed.

The Borg took several ships, as is their way, which then warped out of the

system. Their noble crews were already being infected by the *Llaetus'le*. We detected them harvesting crew from other ships, presumably species they had not encountered or genetic hybrids they wished to examine closer.

It was a slaughter. It went on for 30 of your minutes. There was but one, last ship hunted like a Klingon hunts a *targ*. Then it was done...and there was silence.

The mood on the bridge of the *Susse-thrai* had grown somber. The effects of the graviton burst disrupted our sensors, but we could see escape pods among the debris. A few shuttles tried to move, but when they strayed too close to the Borg they were destroyed or pulled aboard. The Borg was now performing a systematic search of the system, although to this day I do not know what they were seeking.

The *Keras* reported they had identified the ship which had launched the stellar weapon – that was something I was very interested to learn so I ordered the *Keras* to remain with the Borg and took the *Susse-thrai* to investigate.

We found the ship – a “runabout” I think you call them – adrift with an unconscious Starfleet officer aboard.

We did not wish to risk using transporters because of the graviton distortions – they do also have a pesky habit of leaving energy signals for your security officers to detect – so we sent a shuttle to dock and copy the computer core along with every scrap of information about the probe.

I had no idea at the time it would start my people down a road that ultimately would lead to our destruction. It is ironic, no? We tried to bring about the end of the Federation and instead you sowed the seed that ultimately brought about the empire's own.

As our shuttle was making its way back, the Borg went to warp having completed their scans. I ordered the *Keras* to remain with the cube as we recovered our team. We never heard from the *Keras* again. I do not know what happened, but I presume that they strayed too close to the Borg. All I know for sure is Starfleet never discovered our presence. That – and the data on the stellar probe – spared me once I returned to the empire.

I should have continued on after the *Keras* and the Borg, but I was hesitant to leave. On Romulus there was a tradition that when one who had done service

to the empire had died someone would watch over them until the family arrived to prepare the body for the rites and the journey to come. So, we waited and we watched for several hours. It was my intention that when Starfleet came we would resume our course for Earth, but when *Enterprise* arrived it merely slowed to pay tribute in passing before leaving the system in its pursuit. It was another 72 hours before relief began to arrive.

**[He downs the rest of his glass and pours another to the brim, finishing the bottle.]**

I still have nightmares.

Not about the battle, no – that was noble and right. I have nightmares thinking about those alone and adrift in the ruins of the fleet as it slowly drifted through the void. I sometimes imagine I am trapped in one of those derelict hulks and know that I am out there watching, waiting, cloaked and I wonder why won't I come and help – why won't I answer the distress beacon. I scream into a comm unit begging for me to come and save myself.

**[He downs the drink and slams down the glass.]**

But all that answers me is silence.

**[Without another word he leaves the cafe.]**



## ACTION REPORT

THE FOLLOWING IS THE INITIAL AFTER ACTION REPORT AS FILED BY ADMIRAL JERIMIAH HAYES ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS THE HEAD OF STARFLEET TACTICAL FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF ADMIRAL HANSON. IN THIS REPORT, HE OUTLINES THE SITUATION AS WAS BEST UNDERSTOOD IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE OF WOLF 359 BASED ON WITNESS TESTIMONY AND DATA RECOVERED FROM AUTOMATED LOG BUOYS, WHICH WERE AUTOMATICALLY DEPLOYED BY STARSHIPS FOLLOWING THEIR DESTRUCTION.

**FROM: ADMIRAL J. HAYES, COMMANDER STARFLEET TACTICAL**

**TO: FLEET ADMIRAL T. SHANTHI, COMMANDER IN CHIEF**

**SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE LOSS OF TASK FORCE 359 ON STARDATE 44002**

## PART I

### 1. BASED UPON BEST AVAILABLE DATA AT TIME OF REPORTING

#### A. ENEMY FORCES

##### 2. AT 0800 ON STARDATE 44002, THE ENEMY SITUATION AS KNOWN TO COMSTARTAC (ADM J.P. HANSON) WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Enemy force consisting of a single BORG cube class ship entered Federation space on or around Stardate 43975.2 near spatial grid 37291/B
2. The cube abducted J.L. Picard, Commander of *Enterprise* on 43996.2
3. *Enterprise* engaged the BORG on 43998.5 using modified deflector pulse, the BORG ship suffered no apparent damage and left unhindered. J.L. Picard was now in possession of the enemy
4. BORG ship departed on direct course for Sector 001, *Enterprise* was unable to pursue due to damage

#### B. STARFLEET FORCES

##### 3. ON STARDATE 43992.4, CINC AUTHORIZED THE FORMATION OF TASK FORCE 359 AND DEPLOYMENT TO THE WOLF 359 SYSTEM IN ANTICIPATION OF BORG ADVANCE

PART I, CONT.

4. TASK FORCE 359 ARRIVED INTO WOLF 359 SYSTEM ON 43997.2. THE DISPOSITION OF THE SHIPS OF THE TASK FORCE WERE AS FOLLOWS:

a. Task Group 359/A

i) Position: Local Grid 11729/C

Melbourne (NCC-62043)  
Saratoga (NCC-31911)  
Yamaguchi (NCC-26510)  
Bellerophon (NCC-62048)  
Kumari (NCC-53726)  
Princeton (NCC-59804)  
Tolstoy (NCC-62095)  
Galatea (NCC-2692)  
Bastion (NCC-2527)  
Endurance (NCC-5265)  
Seleya (NCC-65213)  
Liberator (NCC 67016)

b. Task Group 359/B

i) Position: Local Grid 38295/G

Melbourne (NCC-78256)  
Chekov (NCC-57302)  
Anderson (NCC-12248)  
Garrett (NCC-12256)  
Kaneda (NX-62498)  
Buran (NCC-57580)  
Hood (NCC-42296)  
Righteous (NCC-42451)  
Roosevelt (NCC-65983)  
Ibn Sina (NCC-70532)  
Gora Bim Gral (NCC-62154)  
Republic (NAR-1371)

c. Task Group 359/C

i) Position: Local Grid 57992/K

Columbia (NCC-71102)  
ComStarTac (TF359)  
Mjoliner (NCC-3117)  
Sha Ka Ree (NCC-6989)  
Firebrand (NCC-68723)  
Konom (NCC-32285)  
Constance (NCC-10367)  
Sonak (NCC-29873)  
Dunkerque (NCC-44532)  
T'shen Kovil (NCC-68208)  
Soval (NCC-62166)  
TPau (NCC-29783)  
Ahwahnee (NCC-71620)  
Gage (NCC-11672)  
Kyushu (NCC-65491)  
Thy'lek Shran (NCC-62151)

d. Additional Notes

i) *Bonestell* (NCC-31600) was positioned at Grid 03024/A retrofitted with a 250///Cochrane graviton burst generator rigged for remote detonation.

ii) *Runabout Rhine* was positioned at Grid 00029/A

5. COMSTARTAC ORDERS SENSOR BUOY DEPLOYMENT ALONG LIKELY APPROACH VECTORS



# WOLF 359 TASK FORCE

## FLEET LIST

• USS AHWAHNEE	NCC-71820	CHEYENNE-CLASS
• USS ANDERSON	NCC 12248	SPRINGFIELD-CLASS
• USS BASTION	NCC-2527	CONSTELLATION-CLASS
• USS BELLEROPHON	NCC-62048	NEBULA-CLASS
• USS BONESTELL	NCC-31800	OBERTH-CLASS
• USS BURAN	NCC-57580	CHALLENGER-CLASS
• USS CONSTANCE	NCC-10367	CONSTELLATION-CLASS
• USS CHEKOV	NCC-57302	SPRINGFIELD-CLASS
• <b>USS COLUMBIA [ F ]</b>	<b>NCC-71102</b>	<b>GALAXY-CLASS</b>
• USS DUNKERQUE	NCC-44532	CHEYENNE-CLASS
• USS ENDURANCE	NCC-5265	ESSEX-CLASS
• USS FIREBRAND	NCC-68723	FREEDOM-CLASS
• USS GAGE	NCC-11672	APOLLO-CLASS
• USS GALATEA	NCC-2692	CONSTELLATION-CLASS
• USS GARRETT	NCC-12256	GEORGIU-CLASS
• USS GORA BIM GRAL	NCC-62154	AMBASSADOR-CLASS
• USS HOOD	NCC-42296	EXCELSIOR-CLASS
• USS IBN SINA	NCC-70532	PARLIAMENT-CLASS
• USS KANEDA	NX-62498	AKIRA-CLASS
• USS KONOM	NCC-32285	NEW ORLEANS-CLASS

• USS KUMARI	NCC-53726	CHEYENNE-CLASS
• USS KYUSHU	NCC-65491	NEW ORLEANS-CLASS
• USS LIBERATOR	NCC 67016	BLAKE-CLASS
• USS MELBOURNE [ I ]	NCC-62043	EXCELSIOR-CLASS
• PCU MELBOURNE [ II ]	NCC-78256	NEBULA-CLASS
• USS MJOLINER	NCC-3117	MIRANDA-CLASS
• USS PRINCETON	NCC-59804	NIAGARA-CLASS
• TS REPUBLIC	NAR-1371	CONSTITUTION-CLASS
• USS RIGHTEOUS	NCC-42451	EXCELSIOR-CLASS
• USS ROOSEVELT	NCC-65983	AMBASSADOR-CLASS
• USS SARATOGA	NCC-31911	MIRANDA-CLASS
• USS SELEYA	NCC-65213	KILIMANJARO-CLASS
• USS SHA KA REE	NCC-6989	SHANGRI-LA-CLASS
• USS SONAK	NCC-29873	MIRANDA-CLASS
• USS SOVAL	NCC-62166	AMBASSADOR-CLASS
• USS T'SHEN KOVIL	NCC-68208	APOLLO-CLASS
• USS THY'LEK SHRAN	NCC-62151	CENTAUR-CLASS
• USS TOLSTOY	NCC-62095	RIGEL-CLASS
• USS T'PAU	NCC-29783	SHI'KAHR-CLASS
• USS YAMAGUCHI	NCC-26510	AMBASSADOR-CLASS

• USS COLUMBIA [ F ]



• USS GORA BUN GRAL



• USS SOVAL



• USS YAMAGUCHI



• USS HOOD



• USS RIGHTEOUS



• USS KONOM



• USS T'PAU



• TS REPUBLIC



• USS IBN SHUA



CONT. FOR TASK FORCE SIZE COMPARISON DISPLAY

# TASK FORCE SIZE COMPARISON

• USS COLUMBIA [ F ]



• USS ROOSEVELT



• PCU MELBOURNE [ II ]



• USS KANEDA



• USS GORA BIM GRAL



• USS BONESTELL



• USS CONSTANCE



• USS SELEYA



• USS SOVAL



• USS SHA KA REE



• USS GALATEA



• USS KUMARI



• USS YAMAGUCHI



• USS GAGE



• USS TOLSTOY



• USS FIREBRAND



• USS HOOD



• USS PRINCETON



• USS CHEKOV



• USS LIBERATOR



• USS RIGHTEOUS



• USS KYUSHU



• USS THY'LEK SHRAN



• USS BURAN



• USS KONOM



• USS DUNKERQUE



• USS ENDURANCE



• USS SONAK



• USS T'PAU



• USS AHWAHNEE



• USS M'JOLINER



• USS T'SHEN KOVIL



• TS REPUBLIC



• USS BASTION



• USS SARATOGA



• USS ANDERSON



• USS IBN SINA



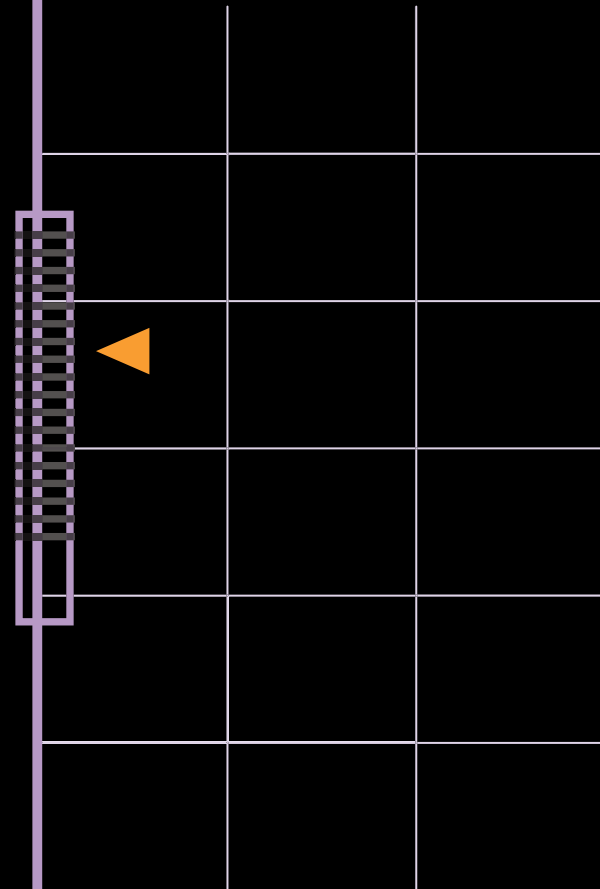
• USS GARRETT



• USS BELLEROPHON

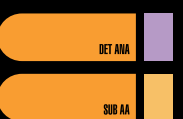


• USS MELBOURNE [ I ]



287 001 001  
730 021 001  
554 663 663  
0E0 5A2 A32  
180 143 143  
987 170 01D  
91910 001 740  
2847 001 258  
78245 663 963  
0192 5T2 7X3  
12356 143 159  
4511 170 147

001 001 740 287 001 001 663 001 814  
021 001 258 730 021 001 379 001 233  
663 663 963 554 663 663 458 563 665  
5A2 5T2 7X3 0E0 5A2 A32 5C2 5B2 5N2



BORG CUBE • 3040M



## PART II

1. STARDATE 44002.1: *HOOD* REPORTS LOSS OF CONTACT WITH SENSOR BUOYS, SUGGESTING UNKNOWN VESSEL APPROACHING SYSTEM, COMSTARTAC ORDERS FLEET TO YELLOW ALERT.
2. BORG CUBE ARRIVES IN SYSTEM AT GRID 03024/A IN PROXIMITY OF *BONESTELL*, GRAVITON BURST DEVICE IS DETONATED DISABLING WARP TRAVEL FOR A 17AU RADIUS.
3. *RHINE* LAUNCHES SOLAR PROBE INTO THE WOLF 359 STAR IN THE HOPES OF CAUSING A COLLAPSE AND SUPERNOVA. THE PROBE IMPACTED AS PLANNED HOWEVER THE RESULTING EFFECTS ARE A LEVEL TWO SHOCKWAVE AND 0.5 REDUCTION IN LUMINOSITY HAVE NO IMPACT ON THE BORG. THE SHOCKWAVE DISABLED THE *RHINE*.
4. THE BORG SHIP ATTEMPTED TO MOVE OUT OF THE SYSTEM UNDER IMPULSE TO RESUME ITS COURSE TOWARDS SECTOR 001. COMSTARTAC ORDERS TASK GROUP 359/A TO MOVE TO ENGAGE. THEY PERFORM WARP HOP INTO THE SYSTEM AND MOVE TO ENGAGE THE CUBE IN A STAGGERED APPROACH. *MELBOURNE* AND *SARATOGA* WERE QUICKLY DISABLED AND DESTROYED. REMAINING SHIPS OF 359/A ATTEMPTED TO SWAM THE CUBE BUT LACKING TARGETS TO FOCUS FIRE IT PROVED INEFFECTIVE. ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO REMOTELY RAM THE BORG WITH *BONESTELL*.
5. SHIPS REPORTED DEGRADED SENSOR RESOLUTION INSIDE FIELD OF EFFECT OF GRAVITON BURST IMPACTING TARGETING SYSTEMS AND PHASER ACCURACY AND INTERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS.
6. 359/B PERFORMS WARP HOP AND ENGAGES THE BORG WITH THE REMNANTS OF 359/A APPROXIMATELY T+00:07:00 AFTER INITIAL CONTACT. DURING THE ENGAGEMENT SEVERAL SHIPS, NOTABLY *HOOD*, *ROOSEVELT*, AND *SELAYA*, REPORTED INTRUDERS BOARDING THE SHIP AND ATTEMPTING TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE SHIPS FROM KEY LOCATIONS. IN ADDITION, OTHER SHIPS REPORT PERSONNEL BEING TRANSPORTED AWAY THROUGH COMPROMISED SHIELDS.

7. AT APPROXIMATELY T+00:16:00 359/C IS AUTHORIZED TO ENGAGE AND PERFORMS A WARP HOP TO ENGAGE BORG, 90 PERCENT OF 359/A AND 359/B HAVE BEEN DESTROYED OR DISABLED. COMSTARTAC ATTEMPTS TO RALLY SURVIVING FORCES AND TO PERFORM CONTROLLED WITHDRAWAL OUTSIDE OF BORG EFFECTIVE WEAPONS RANGE BUT BORG PURSUE AND CONTINUE TO HARRY FORCES.
8. SHIPS WHICH HAD REPORTED BOARDING PARTIES CEASE COMMUNICATION AND BEGIN TO MOVE TO LEAVE THE GRAVITON AOE. *SELAYA* COLLIDES WITH *ENDURANCE* DURING THIS MANEUVER.
9. *COLUMBIA* COMES UNDER SUSTAINED FIRE FROM THE BORG AS NUMBER OF ACTIVE TARGETS CONTINUE TO DWINDLE. *COLUMBIA* IS DESTROYED ROUGHLY THREE MINUTES AFTER DIRECTLY ENGAGING THE BORG, COMSTARTAC IS PRESUMED KIA.
10. LAST REMAINING SHIPS OF TASK FORCE 359 ARE DESTROYED APPROXIMATELY T+00:24:00 AFTER FIRST CONTACT WITH BORG.
11. BORG REMAINS IN SYSTEM CONDUCTING SYSTEMATIC SENSOR SWEEP FOR APPROXIMATELY 32 MINUTES BEFORE DEPARTING WOLF 359 SYSTEM AT HIGH WARP.

UPWARDS OF 10,000 PERSONNEL KIA/MIA.

# WOLF 359 TACTICAL MAP

0887345-359

4587345-333

117458

FBP-BETA  
609-343

FBP-DEMCA  
096-845

FBP-TANGO  
115-4715

11720/A

24533/B

36912/F

45451/T

TG • 359/A  
11720/C

TG • 359/B  
38295/G

FBP-GAMMA  
494-710

FBP-DELTA  
221-0802

FBP-ALPHA  
738-345

15042/C

29024/D

43025/D

59001/J

503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517

20955-67119

0887345-359

873005854

03020-03027 • A - G  
00029-00040 • A - G

USS BONESTELL • OBERTH CLASS  
GRID 03024/A

USS RHINE • DANUBE CLASS  
GRID 00028/A

AUX TACTICAL CARTOGRAPHY • 47

98170147 • 557

GAMMA-PIE 51257003





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.

