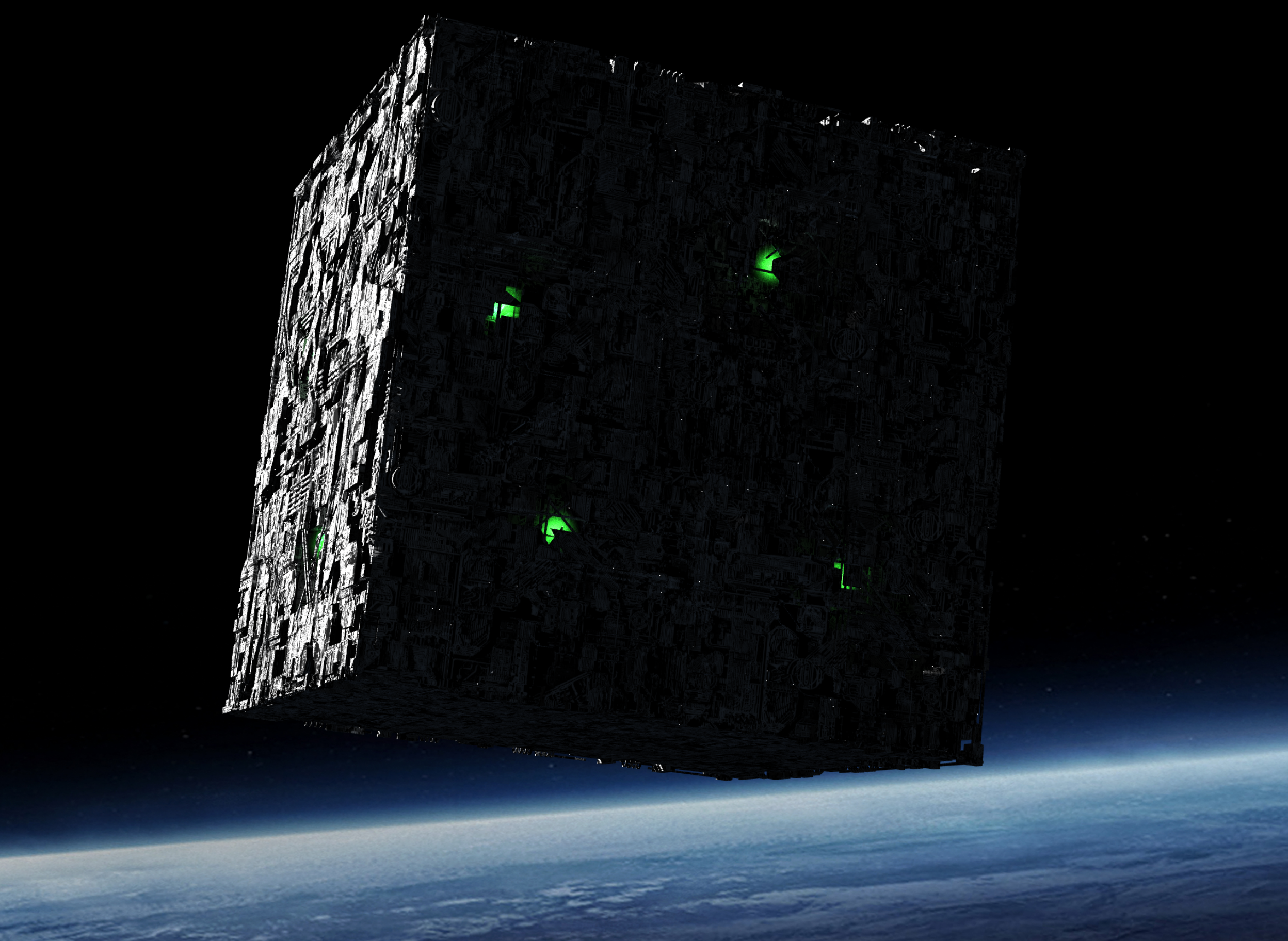


— WE HAVE —
ENGAGED
THE BORG

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



ANDY POULASTIDES & ERIC V. MUIRHEAD



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First Edition: Summer 2023



First Edition: Summer 2023

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TIMELINE

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

LINEAR COLOR KEY

Galactic Events

USS *Enterprise-D* Events

Borg Incursion

2123

New Providence Colony founded on Jouret IV

PRELUDE

Historical context to Wolf 359

2293

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

2311

Tomed Incident — Romulans retreat behind Neutral Zone

2332

Romulans first encounter "Borg"

2343

Galaxy class Development Project launched

2350

"Project Corvidae" authorized by Starfleet Intelligence

2363

USS Enterprise-D launched

2364

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

2366

The destruction of New Providence
and the acquisition of Locutus

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

•42761.3

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

2365

43997.05

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

- Crimson Tacit issued, Starfleet recalled to Sol System

- President addresses Federation, "We Must Negotiate" speech

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

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

43975.2

CONTACT LOST WITH NEW PROVIDENCE COLONY

43992.6

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

43997.2

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

43999.8

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

44001.4

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

44001.6

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

44002.3 • 2367

The Battle of Wolf 359 and Sector 001 Invasion

44002.3

BORG ARRIVE AT WOLF 359

44002.350

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

Enterprise arrives at Wolf 359 12 hours behind Borg cube

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

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

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

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

BORG SHIP IS DESTROYED BY INTERNAL CASCADE FAILURE

44012.3

- *Enterprise* ordered to McKinley Station for repairs

2396

USS *Hood* formally decommissioned
at Wolf 359 Memorial Station

2376

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

2373-75

DOMINION WAR

50058.9

- Min Zife inaugurated as President

50893.5

- Second Borg Incursion

2371

Shanthi Returns as
CINC of Starfleet

2370

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

47538.5

- USS *Defiant* launched from Antares shipyards

48650.1

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

2369

KLINGON CIVIL WAR

2368

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

44152.6

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

44038.1

Fleet arrives in Wolf 359 led by USS *Endeavour*

POST-WOLF 359 & ONWARD

Salvage, recovery, and Incursion-related aftermath

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0887345-359

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258 730 021 001

• 963 554 663 663
7X3 0E0 5A2 A32

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• 147 987 170 010

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001

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470

489



4091

4346

8845

9932

12122

A dynamic space battle scene from Star Wars: The Force Awakens. In the center, the Resistance's Millennium Falcon is firing its main cannons, creating bright blue energy beams. To its left, a First Order TIE fighter is engaged in combat. Above the Falcon, a larger First Order ship, possibly a Star Destroyer, is visible with its red lights glowing. The background is a deep space filled with stars and other smaller spacecraft. The scene is framed by orange and purple decorative elements.

CHAPTER 8 AFTERMATH

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EL'RIK ZH'UHEAD

STARFLEET ACADEMY, SAN FRANCISCO, EARTH

Stardate 45904.2 – 2368

Zh'uhead and I take a final stroll around Starfleet Academy's campus. The sun is setting to the west as we pass through the Japanese Gardens towards the gravel path that follows the meandering edge of the bay. A pair of cadets in running gear jog past us at a speed that makes our old joints ache. Zh'uhead is silent, but I can't help the impression that he is leading me somewhere with purpose. Finally, about 300 meters down the path, he takes me through a gap in a hedge. I must have passed this spot dozens of times in the last two and half decades, but never realized there was anything beyond this group of bushes.

After five more meters, we pop out right at the edge of the water. The panorama that confronts us is absolutely stunning. The Golden Gate Bridge is directly in front of us. Its solar panels shimmer as orange light reflects off the glistening wavetops. The sea air surrounds us as a few seagulls caw on the distant breeze. Otherwise it is completely quiet.

It's only then that I take stock of our more immediate surroundings. A small patch of manicured green grass, less than half the size of a tennis court, butts up against the shore. A few wooden benches around the periphery of the space indicate that this is a spot meant for extended contemplation.

In the very center of the space is a one meter tall cube of black marble. Carved in irregular intervals over its blank surface are 40 stars. Each is meticulously decorated with gilded paint so that they seem to burst forth from the lifeless surface of the cube in the fading sunlight.

What you're looking at is the only official memorial on this entire campus to Wolf 359. Back when they put this up in 2370, there was talk about putting it right in the center of the quad so every cadet would pass it on their way from the barracks to class. However, certain members of the Alumni Association felt that would be too "depressing" for young leaders in training, so they stuck it back here.

[Zh'uhead takes a deep breath and takes in the landscape for a moment.]

Piss-poor reasoning aside, I think they might have made a better choice.

You know, for nearly a decade, this was the only official memorial in the entire UFP? There was not an insignificant number in the government that wanted to bury Wolf 359 in the pages of history and let it go forgotten and unmourned. The problem with forward leaning organizations is that failure is difficult to justify or explain. It took another decade of bloodshed and conflict to force the higher-ups to realize that the Federation people needed more central places to come together and confront their memories of trauma and death. That's why they finally passed that bill in the council to convert the Ossuary at Wolf 359 into a public museum and memorial.

Do you see that plaque at the base of the cube? Read it.

[I study the inscription mounted beneath the memorial.]



Herald, save thou thy labour;

Come thou no more for ransom, gentle herald:

They shall have none, I swear, but these my joints;

Which if they have as I will leave 'em them,

Shall yield them little...



Gift of the Class of 2354



Shakespeare's *Henry V*, when the young king tells the French messenger before Agincourt that he and his comrades would rather die than submit to their demands.

◇ But Agincourt was a great victory. Wolf 359 was a defeat.

Are you sure about that? Wolf 359 changed everything for the United Federation of Planets. Almost overnight, the Federation Council tripled Starfleet's defense budget. In less than two years, the most anti-interventionist government in recent UFP history was wiped away by a peaceful election and transition of power. A new wave of reformist officer thinkers who were

dismissed as crackpots before were suddenly given a real voice in command policy and modernization planning. Shelby, Sisko, Gomez, Janeway, and others worked together to help rebuild and transform the fleet from a mass of floating space hotels to a lean, sharp organization that could both explore and defend equally well.

No fewer than 14 new starship classes introduced after 2366 incorporated lessons learned from the Borg and Wolf 359 into their designs. Innovations from quantum torpedoes to bioneural gel packs, and even holographic back-up crew members can trace their lineage to that battle. When the Borg returned in 2372, Starfleet defeated them in less than 72 hours with no loss to any civilian population or infrastructure. That's a *huge* victory in my book.

♦ It also created a group of radicals like James Leyton.

Yes, that is true. But Wolf 359 also forced the Federation to confront its own mortality. What seemed like an unbeatable juggernaut coasting to the end of history was almost wiped clean from the face of the galaxy in less than a month in 2366. We realized that we couldn't just focus on making new friends, but also had to be prepared to confront new enemies that would never tolerate or accept our way of life. It was a lesson that pushed us to help free Bajor from occupation. It kept us focused on the Cardassian DMZ when every single gul and legate seemed to want to test the boundaries of the new treaty. It allowed us to stop the Klingons cold in the Archanis Sector when they came calling in 2374... it built the Starfleet that rallied the Alpha Quadrant and defeated the Dominion.

We lost 11,000 at Wolf 359, but their sacrifice ended up saving us all. They gave their lives so that two old Starfleet officers could stand in this quiet spot almost 30 years later, remembering them as the sun disappears into the tranquil Pacific.

WILLIAM ROSS

PHILEDELPHIA, EARTH

Stardate 57436.2 – 2380



There is no question in my mind: without Wolf 359 we would not have survived the Dominion War. None whatsoever.

When I look back 20 years, Starfleet was just a paper tiger. We were complacent and in no fit state to mount any kind of prolonged military action. Hell, if the Romulans had known just how poor things were they could have waltzed right up to Vulcan, had their reunification, and there would have been nothing any of us could do about it. No, as tragic as Wolf 359 was, even with the 11,000 dead, without that defeat we would have been utterly annihilated by the Dominion and the death count could well have been in the hundreds of billions. Believe me, I saw the projections. They did *not* make for happy reading.

Even as it was, it took us a long time to really absorb the lessons from 359. In the immediate aftermath there seemed like a real push for change and we started projects like the *Defiant* and *Prometheus*-class, but almost immediately there were voices asking if this was an overcorrection. The Borg threat was still viewed as more of a long term problem and there was a feeling that now with knowledge of their capabilities and with advanced warning we would be better placed to face them; "*rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno.*"

♦ I'm sorry, a what?

It means "a rare bird in the lands and very much like a black swan." A swan is a large type of bird that was common on Earth before the nuclear wars. In ancient Rome and throughout the Middle Ages swans were white and the idea that a swan could be any other color was simply impossible. That was the way of it throughout all of Europe until an explorer found a black swan in Australia, on the other side of the planet. In an instant the world shifted. Something

impossible had happened and what had been true in the morning was now false.

♦ I still don't think I understand.

My point is, that even while the Holland Commission was in progress there was a view within Starfleet that the reason we lost at Wolf 359 was the technological superiority of the Borg and not because of the failures within Starfleet. That's not to say that we could have stopped the Borg with conventional means, but our response was sorely lacking. They saw the Borg as a black swan; it was something impossible until it wasn't and then it was just a rare event that we would now be prepared for. They were still hesitant to consider that the golden age of peace might not reign until the end of history, but may have been just a high point in a cycle. The same cycle that has been playing out for countless years for all the powers of the quadrant.

This was exacerbated when Cardassia signed Amrita's peace treaty and gave up Bajor. Now, not only had we defeated the Borg but there was peace with Cardassia and Bajor was finally free. You can see why we started to slip back into old habits. The more tactical vessel projects were put on the backburner and we slid back towards business as usual.

You would be forgiven for imagining that with the discovery of the wormhole to a region of space completely unexplored, we might display some caution. But the call of the frontier is ingrained into every Starfleet officer and so we drove headlong into the Gamma Quadrant. It was only when the *Odyssey* was lost that Starfleet finally understood the galaxy had changed and immediately put the *Defiant* and *Prometheus* programs back into production along with upgrades to the rest of the fleet.

We also revised the training regimen and started to implement fleet deployments and secured logistical supply lines. They even reformed the Marines. Yet, despite all that, we were still caught flat-footed by the Dominion. Partly because we still didn't know how to wield Starfleet as an effective fighting force, and also because the Dominion engaged in covert ops and diplomacy – something the Borg never did.

There were challenges of course. Jim Leyton's coup used up a lot of the goodwill Starfleet had managed to garner following 359, but without the wake

up call – or rather, the bloody nose the Borg gave us – we would have been at least five years behind where we were at the start of the conflict. As it was, we took close to a year just to find our footing. Imagine if the Dominion had shown up in 2365. I think they would have steamrolled over the entire quadrant in under 18 months.

AKELLEN MACET

◀ CDS TRAGAR, BAJOR SYSTEM ▶▶ Stardate: 56539.2 – 2379 ▶

The Cardassian Union has something of a tumultuous relationship with the United Federation of Planets. During the later 23rd century, relations were cordial and there were even overtures made about Cardassia joining the Federation, but a military coup and the formation of the Central Command put an end to any possibility of an alliance.

When Cardassia annexed Bajor in the early 24th century, the Federation placed them under sanctions and this led to some 50 years of tensions and skirmishes – referred to by some as the Cardassian War, although there was no formal declaration of war by either side. President Amitra made ending this dispute the cornerstone of her administration and these efforts were almost completely derailed by the arrival of the Borg in 2366. Despite this, tensions continued to rise, culminating in Cardassia aligning with the Dominion in 2373 and a devastating war that ended up costing millions of lives.

While visiting Deep Space Nine I was given the opportunity to speak to Gul Macet, captain of the Galor-class ship Trager, to get his impressions of relations between Cardassia and the Federations during the 2360s. His resemblance to his infamous cousin Skarin Dukat is uncanny – hence the interview taking place on his ship rather than on the station itself.

Your people have a saying, that the flapping of an insect's wings can cause a hurricane on the other side of the planet?

♦ Yes, it's called the Butterfly Effect.

Ah, the butterfly is the insect?

♦ Yes.

I see. Well, the Borg are perhaps somewhat *large* for insects, but the analogy still holds true. Your defeat at Wolf 359 led to huge ramifications within the Cardassian Union. In 2366 we were desperate for peace. The war was never popular with the people of Cardassia, but the longer it continued the more entrenched we became. The more desperately the Central Command needed a win to show that it had been worthwhile, that there was meaning to all the death and suffering the war had visited upon our people. But the Federation and Starfleet refused to engage in a meaningful way. They simply enforced the

sanctions that had been visited down upon us after the annexation of Bajor. The border skirmishes were not sufficient to appease the hawks in the Central Command and led them to push for more aggressive forays into Federation space. But there was a feeling within the military that any attempt to go toe to toe with Starfleet would result in our decimation.

This view persisted for close to two decades and was accepted as fact. The sanctions devastated our economy which led to us seeking alternative sources for resources – including Bajor – but as the mines there ceased to yield materials in sufficient quantities to sustain the Cardassian war machine it became inevitable that we would have to accept the reality of our situation and sue for peace.

So when Amitra's administration started to make overtures of a negotiated peace rather than dictating terms the Central Command saw an opportunity to salvage some dignity.

When the Borg invaded Federation space and the final peace talks were canceled it was a devastating blow. We wondered if the overtures had merely been a ruse all along to make us use up more resources and to put pressure on us from the civilian population who were tired of the hardships they were enduring. Once we received word that the Starfleet had destroyed this invader and Amitra again reached out to conduct the peace talks the Central Command would have likely signed away Cardassia Prime. They immediately agreed and the peace treaty was ratified less than a month after Wolf 359.

Only when the true extent of Starfleet's defeat at Wolf 359 became understood did the Central Command begin to question everything they had believed about the Federation. We conducted our own analysis of the battle from what data we had and it quickly became apparent that Starfleet was not some undefeatable juggernaut. While its larger ships were impressive, they were too few in number and too widely distributed to be effectively deployed.

There grew this sense within some quarters of the Central Command that we had rolled over and showed our belly to a toothless old *keres*.

You might rightly ask how such a failure of intelligence would lead us to this conclusion, especially when the Obsidian Order proclaimed itself as the preeminent intelligence agency in the Alpha Quadrant. In truth, the order was

far more adept at telling those in power what they wanted to hear and quelling dissent within Cardassia's borders. Much like Starfleet, they were able to maintain a reputation that perhaps reality would not support.

Almost immediately there were calls for the treaty to be scrapped and to renew an offensive to seize disputed territory. Fortunately, there was enough opposition within the Central Command to ward this off, at least for a time. But now that the mask of Starfleet's invulnerability had been punctured it was impossible to stop what was to come.

The hawks within the Central Command rapidly rose to prominence by claiming that they had not wanted to agree to the treaty and how under their leadership Cardassia would have never been forced to cede any territory. Immediately they started a program to re-arm, taking full advantage of the reduced sanctions and lack of Starfleet interference with transports crossing the border to begin a program of rearmament.

Many of us were not included in these plans, and if we had been would not have cooperated, but for many in my government they sought power and strength. They felt that the only way to demonstrate and exercise that power was through conflict and bloodshed. Rumors flowed about how the Federation had tricked us into seeking peace in the first place.

That sense of being put upon and refusal to take responsibility for our own actions is what allowed Dukat to rise to power and put us in the thrall of the Dominion. He was able to play the various sides against each other and see his enemies eliminated or exiled until making himself some sort of Imperator. Every time anyone would move to question him or doubt what he was saying he would point back to Wolf 359 and remind them all that they were wrong about Starfleet and that if they had listened to him and his ilk then the Cardassian Empire would have stretched across the quadrant.

Dukat always did have a thing for *melodrama*.

I do not think we were wrong to pursue peace and I'm not convinced that should we have continued to fight we would have been in any better position, but what I do know is that if we did, many millions on both sides would have died and when the Dominion did inevitably arrive we would have had even less chance of defeating them.

BRUNT

NAGAL RESIDENCE, FERENGINAR / Stardate: 53165.5 – 2376

I enter a suboffice of the Nagal Palace's Reception Center. I inform them I'm looking for "Brunt, Former FCA Official." The man I am looking for used to be one of the most feared liquidators in the entire Ferengi Alliance. Now, he's a sub-secretary to an assistant, to an aide to Grand Nagus Rom. Suddenly, a short Ferengi behind one of the 10 desks lining the lime-colored walls flashes me a lascivious grin and taps a latinum-plated coin receptacle in front of him. Expecting this, I remove a slip of gold-pressed latinum from my jacket and place it where he's gesturing. His grin somehow grows even more devious.

How may I assist you? You look like you could provide our nagus with a number of new and wonderful business opportunities.

♦ I am the one who contacted you about the interview for the Federation report on Wolf 359? I'm here to receive your statement.

Oh, it's you...

[His grin turns into a glowering frown.]

It began prior to the Borg's invasion and under the leadership of that dodgering old coot Zek. The Ferengi Alliance was positioning itself to open new markets in the Federation. There was a lot of opposition to this move, given how backwards your society was. There would be numerous challenges to establishing trade with a society that did not use currency. But it was felt that it would make you easier to exploit and opening up this potentially lucrative market went a long way to aid in the recovery from the great monetary collapse.

The FCA spent several years studying possible markets for exploitation and to ensure the best possible return for the investors. The Federation had

been this enigma for decades. How do we gain access to this market without losing our sovereignty and identity? We had observed how the Federation works: Starfleet would arrive proclaiming overtures of peace and harmony. It would then move to what you call “second contact” where the worth of the civilization was weighed, measured, and decided if it was suitable to join the Federation and what it would cost. If they did not measure up, we saw time and again Starfleet would impose sanctions and restrictions citing the “Prime Directive” or some other obscure piece of legislation to justify their bigotry. Still, as the 62nd Rule states “the riskier the road, the greater the profit” and so around 2364 we started to open up these markets, remembering of course the 28th Rule of Acquisition

♦ *Always negotiate from a position of strength?*

That’s right, you don’t see many *hew-mons* taking the time to learn the rules. Frankly, it’s just *rude*. We felt that to ensure the Ferengi Alliance would retain its independence and the sovereignty of our capital markets we had to project strength and to show Starfleet that we were not just another civilization for them to steamroll. [he chuckles ruefully]

Everything was proceeding well and already we were seeing overtures from within the Federation to establish diplomatic ties and open markets to help avoid future conflicts. Oh, it was *glorious*. We had observed from their interactions with the Cardassians how the Federation would bend over backwards to avoid any sort of conflict and I must confess I was swept up in the excitement of it all. New market openings were a cause of celebration on Ferenginar; a sense of hope that finally the worst of the monetary collapse was behind us and another era of growth and prosperity was at hand – portfolios had not looked this healthy in *decades*.

There was a plan to slowly build our influence and start to ease the perceived military aggression over the course of several years, but this fell aside when the Borg attacked.

I think it’s safe to say that Wolf 359 was an unmitigated disaster for the Ferengi Alliance. I would go so far to say that we might never recover from the aftershocks. The invasion immediately called into question the stability of the markets within the Federation and there was a run on the banks. There was also

a real concern that it could undo the recovery and bring about an even larger collapse. I was working at the Ferengi Futures Exchange at the time, and we had to bar the doors to stop investors breaking in. We even had to activate force fields on the windows of the taller towers to stop fund managers throwing themselves down to the streets below – there was still a substantial backlog of vacuum-desiccated remains to clear and to add more would just further harm the stock price.

There was a real sense of horror at the prospect of these Borg. We knew the Federation would be a tough nut to crack but there was profit to be had there, but with the Borg...*nothing*. No room for negotiation, no factions to play against one another, no vices to be exploited. They were the antithesis of everything Ferengi society stood for. Our only hope was to put our faith into the Federation and hope they would prevail, and they did! I know several lucky Ferengi who made what I considered highly questionable wagers with the Ferengi Gaming Commission on the Federation not only surviving but defeating the Borg. They won big – one of them even had his own moon!

Once it was clear that the Federation and its markets had survived the Borg we realized that they had also been applying the 28th Rule and were not in as strong a position as we had believed. Advantage: Ferengi.

Zek accelerated the plans and with the signing of the Cardassian peace treaty we were well placed to capitalize on the Federation's renewed desire for treaties and alliances! I admit those first few years were glorious. Take joy from profit and profit from joy!

This new arrangement allowed Ferengi businesses to set up on any Federation world or outpost, including the Bajoran System – ultimately giving access to the Gamma Quadrant. But while we were all focused on the profits and the latinum we failed to notice the other more insidious side of doing business with you.

It was subtle at first, possibly written off as a few bad eggs or the result of over exposure to *hew-mons*. We dispatched liquidators and at first seemed we were on top of the problem but then Quark happened. [he says the name with a visible sneer] Naturally, Zek wanted to be at the forefront of the new financial opportunities in the Gamma Quadrant and the drive to grow the economy. Rule 45: expand or die. But Quark had been seduced by your Federation ideals, your

sense of “fairness,” of “equality,” of “decency”! By the time we realized the risk it was too late. Our economy was so interlinked into that of the Federation to withdraw would have caused a collapse not seen in our lifetimes.

Now look at us: Rom sitting on the nagus’s throne, females wearing clothes and earning profit, *CHARITY!* On Ferenginar itself! There is even talk of a universal living wage if you can imagine!

I take it back, we didn’t survive the Borg. We didn’t die at Wolf 359, but that was where the wound was inflicted, and we never recovered. You can add the Ferengi Alliance to that wall you have on that station there. Now if you will excuse me I have to go prepare dinner for the nagus.

ELIAS VANTAVEL

DAWES STATION, CERES

Stardate 45378.4 – 2369

My shuttle arrives at Dawes Station, a construction and repair annex of the Antares fleet yards located on Ceres. Two Excelsior-class and one Ambassador-class starship are undergoing upgrades as I arrive, while a much smaller ship is under construction. I don't recognize it. It doesn't have the standard configuration of a primary hull and two exterior nacelles that have dominated Earth ships since the pre-Federation era.

Captain Vantavel is a large, burly man with sharp, brown eyes and thick Rasputin-like eyebrows. He's animated, like a whirling dervish when he talks about ships and their systems. His massive bulky hands look like they've been torn apart and rebuilt from years of getting in to repair the guts of systems. But he knows the office so well, he deftly avoids knocking over any of the dozens of ship models on his desk and credenza. He has the energy of three warp engines, which is appropriate since he's a Starfleet engineering duty officer. EDOs will never command starships by choice. They're interested in the dynamics of the ship and how to make them operate optimally. They can, however, command bases, specifically ship repair facilities.

Do you know what this is?

[Vantavel pulls a long metal object off the wall and hands it to me. It's nearly a meter in length but heavier than I expected - I nearly drop it. At one end is an attachment with serrated edges.]

Yeah, I thought you'd be surprised. It's not some lightweight composite – that's why it's heavy. It's steel. This is a giant pipe wrench. It's what they used when they were building old navy ships on Earth centuries ago. But we don't use those anymore. Our tools and materials have evolved, but designing and building a ship still comes down to just a few factors: what do you need the ship to do and how much power will it need. There's only so much power a starship can have and you can't build one that uses omicron radiation. For a century, Starfleet has functioned on the assumption of peaceful exploration. I never liked the design of our starships – from a combat perspective that is. You saw a few of the models out there.

We've been saying for years that our ship designs are vulnerable to attack. Look at the struts for the nacelles. Those are tritanium but given the right

circumstances, an enemy can hit those and knock the wind out of your sails permanently. What are you going to do if you're the USS *Shitsalot* 20 light-years from the nearest starbase and one of your nacelles is separated from the secondary hull? You're dead in the water until a tugboat comes out to get you.

Look, I love the old birds: the *Excelsiors*, the *Ambassadors*, and the *Constitutions*. Hell, I served as chief engineer on the *Yamaguchi*. Absolutely loved tending to those engines. But Wolf 359 was a completely different game. You have a Borg cube that is about 3,000 meters on each side. Do you know how much power that thing has? Now throw any one or a dozen or a hundred of our ships against it. The Borg lasers cut through the nacelles of half a dozen ships, spun them out of control, and then picked them off one by one. We had exploration ships not combat ships. Like I said, I've been banging this drum a long time. I can send you copies of articles I wrote for every construction symposium for the past decade. We needed a complete redesign of our ships.

[Vantavel pulls up a screen to show the blueprints for the strange craft I saw being built.]

She's the next generation, She's basically a weapons system encased by a thicker hull with interior warp nacelles. I picked up this idea from a naval history course at Starfleet Academy.

[He expands the blueprints. I can now see the registry number: NX-74205.]

Think about it this way. A ship is limited by its power source. That power has to feed weapons, shields, sensors, life support systems, transporters, medical, food replication, sewage treatment, and a few other things. A ship is powered, but is also *limited* by its engines. If you want a big *Galaxy*-class, then you need a big engine because you have everything but the kitchen sink in those big boys. It's an exploration ship that has defenses, but also over a thousand people. It even has a bar and an arboretum. Those need power. And the more power you devote to those "nice-to-haves," the less you have for the fundamental defensive and offensive capabilities.

After the *Enterprise* encountered the first Borg cube, we knew we needed a tough little ship. One of the officers who helped work on it with me says it has teeth. This is *Defiant*. We've minimized all shipboard systems to make it the first purpose-built warship in Starfleet history. Nearly all its power goes to its weapons and defensive systems. Sure, it'll have a science station but it's

extraneous compared to any other starship. No, this little ship will stand up in a fight against a Borg ship at least as long as its bigger brothers and sisters and we'll be able to build a hell of a lot more of them.

It's double-hulled. That's why it can take a beating more than our other ships and the double-hull protects the warp nacelles. We actually invested using a substance harder than duranium or tritanium. Ever hear of the doomsday machine? It was a planet killer that destroyed the old *Constellation* and nearly the *Enterprise*. It was said to be miles long and it had a hull of neutronium. A substance that hadn't been encountered before. At least it wasn't in our databases then and we've checked the records of partners and planets with whom we established contact since.

Anyway, this was the only source. My team came up with a crazy plan. What if we could extract the neutronium from the doomsday machine and apply it to this new class, this *Defiant*? I got permission from Starfleet Command to take a runabout and a repair ship with me. The great thing about my team is that they didn't think it was a crazy idea. They just wanted to give us a real edge against the Borg – or any other threat.

The bulk of the machine is stored at a secret facility. I can't disclose the location of course, but *damn*, it was an impressive structure. We took the runabout inside. Starfleet had sent ships before to get as much information on it, but we were looking at it from a different perspective: how to exploit it. The three of us got into spacesuits and were sent gear from the repair ship. We tried everything we could to pull apart the material, but whoever built it wasn't going to let us cannibalize it. We spent four days and finally had to give up on it. Too bad. Can you imagine what that could have done to really revolutionize our ships' survivability?

I can give you the timeless line about how we need bigger, more powerful ships. That's not what we learned, despite what we do at this facility. We learned about loss. 11,000 Starfleet personnel dead. You hear about the number or the families of those lost. Starfleet sent out a priority message ordering all EDOs to assist in the aftermath of Wolf 359. 40 ships – or at least what was left of them. With some ships it was a rescue operation, with others it was just a salvage op. I went aboard each ship personally. Life support was gone on most of them, so we were in suits. At first we looked for survivors, then we just went into recovery mode.

When we build ships and launch them with fireworks and fanfare, we don't realize how bloody they can be. Pieces of Humans, Vulcans, Denobulans, Andorians, Tellarites...at least what we assumed were the various races based on blood color or skin tint and texture. Then there were the frozen bodies. There were so many just floating in space as their ships lost hull integrity. My crews couldn't handle those. We waited for a hospital ship to recover them. But I'll never forget what I saw there or why we can never let that happen again.

EVELYN HOFFMAN

USS *THUNDERCHILD*, EN ROUTE TO ORGANIA

Stardate: 51642.7 – 2374

On stardate 50893.5, some six years after the events of Wolf 359, Deep Space Five detected a Borg ship entering Federation space at high warp on a course that would take it directly to Earth.

Unlike six years ago, Starfleet was now prepared for the threat the Borg represented, and immediately put into place a series of measures that had been implemented in the wake of the 2366 incursion. One of these measures had been the reevaluation of the Akira-class ships. Originally conceived as a replacement to the venerable Miranda-class, the program was abandoned at the behest of the Amitra administration, and only the two test articles (Akira and Kaneda) were built. The Kaneda was pressed into service by Admiral Hanson and performed exceptionally well before being crippled and then destroyed. In the aftermath, Starfleet ordered construction of the Akira-class to be accelerated, and many ships – including the Thunderchild – served with distinction when faced with the Borg in 2373 and during the Dominion War.

I was the exec on the *Thomas Paine* in '66 and we had been mustered in Sol in the Oort cloud. After Wolf 359, we were just expecting to die. Last year, though, we felt more confident – we knew the Borg would be a formidable force, but not one that was insurmountable.

I think the big difference was this time we had a sense of what to expect. When the first cube showed up it was just so far beyond our comprehension I don't think anyone really understood the threat. There was no living memory of things like the doomsday machine or V'ger – those were just stories we were taught about at the academy; our day to day was watching out for Ferregi Marauders or Cardassians on the border.

After Wolf 359 and with the formation of Strategic Operations, there was a massive shift inside Starfleet. We received briefing packets and updated tactical profiles almost weekly as they learned more from the wreckage at 359 and started to understand just what had gone wrong. When I was given command of *Thunderchild* in '70, one of the biggest changes was the amount of time we spent training for the Borg to return.

Admiral Hayes instituted a sweeping reform of the way the fleet was

organized and contracted the Zakdorns to run war games and joint exercises; they brought in captains who had seen action along the Cardassian border to talk us through their experiences. They even brought in instructors from the Klingon Elite Command Academy to help formulate new training regimes to get Starfleet captains to start thinking more tactically. There was a lot of pushback from some quarters – some captains reigned in protest, feeling the move to a more “militaristic mindset” betrayed the very ideals of the Federation and Starfleet. On the whole, my experience was that most of Starfleet recognized that we had grown far too complacent and now risked losing the Federation to external threats.

We also reviewed the flight recorders from the ships lost at 359. That was rough having to watch our friends and colleagues go up against the Borg, but what was harder was the knowledge that in their position we would have done the same thing. I think a large part of the problem then was we didn’t think we could lose. Now we knew that we could, we had to make sure that we *didn’t*.

Tensions had been growing out near the Bajor System and war was looking inevitable. *Thunderchild* was heading to Deep Space Nine to begin patrols along the Cardassian border when the word came in from Admiral Hayes that they had lost contact with Ivor Prime and they suspected the Borg. We changed course even before the confirmation came through. One of the changes that had been instituted was the subdivision of Starfleet into 12 fleets with pre-designated muster points. We were assigned to the Ninth Fleet and so headed directly to our muster point in Stameris while Admiral Hayes and the 12th were in the Typhon Sector.

The Borg ship was “hauling ass” as my grandmother would say, remaining at high warp and it wasn’t stopping for anyone. Once the fleet had assembled we moved to intercept. There could be no waves of attack, no single ships moving within weapons range of the Borg. Our doctrine now was to rush the cube en masse and ensure the Borg would be unable to focus their fire on any one ship. We tapped into the priority channel and could hear the engagement begin. When the Borg cut over the comms with their litany it sent a chill right down to my core but we weren’t afraid, we were determined. A lot of us were more than a little resentful that we’d never had had a chance to avenge the fallen at 359. This was our chance.

We moved to join the attack as the Borg passed the Ophiucus System and continued to pile on the pressure until we arrived in Sol. Our casualties had been surprisingly light with the Borg largely ignoring us – so focused on getting to Earth – but once we dropped out of warp things started to get more dicey. At sublight speeds our ships were more maneuverable but we couldn't open up the ranges like we had at warp. We started losing ships. Even the *Defiant* was taking a beating. We tried to move to give them some cover, but that's when the *Enterprise* swooped in from nowhere.

I will admit, I was a bit conflicted seeing her arrive. On the one hand, the *Sovereign*-class is a beautiful machine and we could have really used its firepower, but we all knew who her captain was and there were some questions as to how wise it would be to put him in this position. It wasn't because Picard had been Locutus. Starfleet had specifically ordered any captains that had been at Wolf 359 not to engage and advised us to offload any crew that had been on ships lost at 359 before we moved to the muster points. The very last thing you want to do is put someone who had gone through such a traumatic experience back through it again. It creates an unstable element and you don't want that in the middle of a combat environment.

Endeavour went down as *Enterprise* arrived. Old Amasov had been desperate to have a shot at the Borg ever since 359. He went down with the ship, but he managed to get Hayes into an escape pod. With the loss of the admiral and the tactical overview there was the risk that the Borg would be able to push through and we would lose cohesion, but Picard stepped up and showed us all why it was a mistake to ever question if he should have been there. I don't know what sort of insight he had about the cube or its inner workings, but he ordered the entire fleet to concentrate our fire on one part of the cube. The sustained fire and the extra kick from *Enterprise* and its quantum torpedoes finally spelled doom for the Borg.

This was different to the one from '66, that one seemingly just exploded. I know it was something to do with the crew of the *Enterprise* but it didn't feel earned. There was no catharsis, no justice for the ones we lost at 359. But this one? Yeah, we did that, we showed the Borg that we can adapt just as well as them, and resistance is *never* futile.

TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT FROM THE VOYAGER INQUIRY

ACCESS INCLUDED AUDIO FILE "8.07"

Following the rescue and recovery efforts and after reviewing the logs recovered from Wolf 359, the question lingered of what had happened to the ships taken by the Borg. Starfleet believed that in addition to the *USS Hood*, the *USS Roosevelt*, *USS Selaya*, and *USS Righteous* had been taken by the Borg and their ultimate fate remains unknown. Some answers came in 2379 following the return of the *USS Voyager* which had been trapped in the Delta Quadrant since 2371. The following is an excerpt from the debriefing of Captain Kathryn Janeway upon the ship's return to Earth.

FLAG OFFICERS PRESENT

Vice Admiral Jeremiah Hayes
**CHIEF OF STARFLEET
STRATEGIC OPERATIONS**

Vice Admiral Thomas Henry
CHIEF OF STARFLEET SECURITY

Vice Admiral Alynna Nechayev
CHIEF OF STARFLEET PERSONNEL

Captain Kathryn Janeway
CAPTAIN OF USS *VOYAGER*



HAYES: Thank you, Captain. I am sure the DTI will have more questions in relation to the actions of this Braxton, but those will have to be conducted under a closed session as per the Temporal Prime Directive. I would like to turn your attention to stardate 50614.2. This was your first encounter with the Borg?

JANEWAY: Technically that would be stardate 50541.6. We encountered the remains of the Sakari civilization on what we had believed to be an uninhabited planet. Over the course of our investigation we discovered the remains of a Borg drone. We had known this was coming from the

moment the Caretaker transported us to the Delta Quadrant and now we were finally approaching Borg space.

We soon came across the Nekrit Expanse, a vast sparsely-populated nebular region that was considered impossible to chart due to the plasma storms, electrodynamic turbulence, and electrokinetic storms. Attempts to go around could have added years to our journey. I ordered scouting parties in shuttles to travel ahead of *Voyager* to identify any potential routes to get us through faster and that was when we had our first encounter with active Borg, albeit separated from the larger collective.

Commander Chakotay and Ensign Kaplan picked up a distress call and moved to investigate – the signature appeared to be Federation in origin. Upon arrival on the planet, they were attacked and Ensign Kaplan was killed. Chakotay was taken by a group of former Borg drones led by one Riley Frazier, a Human who claimed to have been science officer on the *USS Roosevelt*.

HAYES: Do we have confirmation on her identity?

HENRY: We have been able to confirm there was a Lieutenant Commander Frazier on board the *Roosevelt* when it went missing at Wolf 359 and *Voyager's* transporter's biometric logs confirmed her identity to within 92 percent probability.

NECHAYEV: Was there any sign of the *Roosevelt* or the other ships lost at 359?

JANEWAY: No, we did locate the cube that the drones claimed to have come from, but scans did not detect any sign of the *Roosevelt*. Chakotay reported four other officers from the ship on the colony.

HAYES: Thank you, please continue.

JANEWAY: Frazier was heading up what she described as a "cooperative" made up of a number of the former Borg. Chakotay observed Humans, Romulans, Klingons, and many other species from the Alpha, Beta, and Delta Quadrants. Presumably, there were some Gamma Quadrant species, but we aren't caught up with the latest reports. It appears that since becoming freed from the collective old grudges and enmities between species started to reemerge, fracturing the community and plunging the planet into a civil war.

Riley wanted us to help her extract a piece of equipment described as a neuroelectric field generator to restore the link between their minds. After consideration, I refused the request. It would be tantamount to forcing former drones back into a collective against their will, regardless of the promises made by Frazier. I offered supplies and even to take anyone who wanted to leave with

us on *Voyager*, but she declined. My suspicions were confirmed when she was able to use that same technology on a more limited scale to force Chakotay to activate the cube and its remaining Borg. She claimed that after the generator had established her new collective that they destroyed the cube, but we have no way to verify that and we did not have the resources to force the matter. We dropped warning buoys advising any ships to avoid the system and of the presence of Borg and continued towards the Alpha Quadrant.

NECHAYEV: I find it very disturbing that a Starfleet officer, one who was taken at Wolf 359 no less, would be complicit in returning to a collective and imposing it on thousands of others.

JANEWAY: I have since spoken to Seven about this, and based on discussions with her and my own observation of Borg that have been freed from the collective there is an addictive quality to the neural link. When we disconnected her from the collective it was a constant struggle to stop her running back for at least the first 18 months.

HENRY: Yes, speaking of Seven of Nine, would you mind explaining to us the events of stardates 50984.3 through 51007.8? I have reviewed the logs and there are a number of items I would like clarification on, including these "Undine" (Species 8472 as per your log entries) and your decision to offer aid to the Borg in exchange for passage through their space.

HAYES: Thank you, Thomas. Before we get to that, let's break for lunch. We'll resume at 14:00. I know we are all very eager to hear the captain's account. Until then we are in recess.

END OF FILE

THOMAS RADEMAKER

UTOPIA PLANITIA, MARS

Stardate 57871.3 – 2380

For over 200 years, Utopia Planitia has been at the cutting edge of starship design and construction. The yards were where all six of the original Galaxy-class ships were built and later the Intrepid-class ships. Today, in the aftermath of the Dominion War, a lot of the yard's facilities are turned towards refit and repair of ships that were damaged in the conflict but there are still dedicated teams continuing to push the envelope of starship designs into the 25th century and beyond. Thomas Rademaker heads up the yard's Vesta-class development project to bring slipstream capable ships to the fleet.

I don't want to sound melodramatic, but it's the single biggest technological development since Zephram Cochrane's warp flight! The Borg attack was a tragedy – whatever else I say I just want to make that very clear and I don't want to dismiss the cost in lives – but it pushed almost every aspect of our technology well beyond the bleeding edge.

We knew they were technologically advanced – officially we'd known that ever since J-25 – but there was only so much we could glean from scans. We knew they had extraordinary regenerative abilities and they were able to communicate and process information at near subliminal speeds. But it was all so abstract that without being able to study it in person it was like showing someone from 20th century Earth a tricorder and then trying to ask them to explain its workings.

After the cube had been destroyed there was a lot of debris to be sorted through, but once again it was so utterly alien to anything we are familiar with even now. We're barely beginning to understand a lot of what we have there. So much of the Borg's technology is subsumed from their assimilated victims that we can't really comprehend how it communicates with such disparate systems. It also doesn't help that a lot of the more exotic components have been whisked away to places unknown; I heard the word "temporal" uttered, so likely the DTI.

Even with the resources of all that wreckage and the scans we have made,

it would be years, likely centuries, before we made any great breakthroughs in our understanding of the technology. No, the real boon came when they towed the *Hood* into Inbhir Ghòrdain.

She had been boarded by the Borg and partially assimilated during the attack. They had been able to purge the plasma manifolds into the engine room itself – nasty stuff. But it stopped the Borg cold, so they cut their losses and ran. What we were left with was the Borg technology already integrated into our systems!

Once the ship was in dock we were able to get teams on board to see just what the Borg had done. From the logs of the surviving crew and from the flight recorders we could see the Borg were primarily focussed on the engine room and the deflector dish. The engine room made sense: if you control the engine room you de facto control the ship and can bypass the bridge entirely, but why the deflector? That was a mystery to us. Presumably it had something to do with the propulsion method they used to get the *Hood* from Wolf 359 to Bolus in a matter of hours. That's a two week trip at high warp so you can imagine we were very eager to understand just what was going on there.

Unfortunately, the plasma purge had destroyed much of the engine room and the ship's computer had initiated a data cascade as a result of the security program their chief engineer had activated so we didn't have the full picture, but this was *huge*. We had the pieces, we just needed to understand how they went together. We started running simulations and models to understand exactly what the Borg had done. Ironically, it appeared to be very close to the transwarp experiments of the 2280s for which the *Excelsior* itself served as the testbed. Those experiments ended in failure, but the spaceframe was sound and we're still using them a century later...which should tell you something about the engineers back then.

We figured out that the Borg had crosslinked the warp drive into the main navigational deflector, which they then focused into a boundary layer of spacetime we're calling the quantum barrier. The deflector, in effect, bored into the barrier and then in conjunction with the warp engines created a quantum field around the ship – think of it as a wormhole with no fixed point. The ship can then move via its impulse engines through this boundary layer allowing the ship to travel huge distances relative to the observer in realspace. It will absolutely

revolutionize spaceflight! Imagine being able to travel from Earth to the far Delta Quadrant in a matter of *months*! And it would give Starfleet a massive tactical advantage: we would be able to deploy ships and reinforcements from across the Federation practically instantaneously.

Unfortunately, there were still some considerable hurdles for us to overcome before we could look to deploying the slipstream drives on Starfleet vessels. The destruction of the *Hood's* engine room meant we did not have access to whatever modifications the Borg had made to the warp core. We had images and sensor data from the flight recorders and there was a pile of molten scrap that was removed from the ship, but that was no good. We had to try and work backwards to figure out just what the Borg had done. There was also a computational part of the puzzle: from the logs we had and from our computer models the field would need near continuous modification and alignment to remain stable. If the field were to break down the ship would be unable to enter the slipstream or – even worse – would be thrown violently back into realspace resulting in the loss of the ship. Most of the isolinear based systems were just not fast enough for the speed of data transmission that was required. We discovered the Borg used some sort of bioneural interface between the drones and the computer to facilitate the computations. That alone was a great breakthrough and we were able to synthesize a gel pack system to replace the isolinear systems. These were installed into ships starting with the *Intrepid*-class.

We also discovered that to enable a ship to easily move into the slipstream the stellar dynamics of the spaceframe were important. The Borg had taken two *Excelsior*-class, an *Ambassador*, and *Kilimanjaro*-class ships, but they had made no attempt to take *Miranda*, *Nebula*, or *Galaxy*-class ships. Now this is speculation on our part, but we surmised it might have been that these hull types did not fit the profile to allow the Borg to modify them for the technology.

We continued to work on the project for several years. We had our pathfinder, the *Spirit*, in which I managed to do short slipstream hops but we couldn't maintain the field for any length of time. We just couldn't get the geometry right. We continued testing the *Spirit* without any real breakthrough until 2376 when Starfleet was able to establish communication with the starship *Voyager* which had been stranded in the Delta Quadrant since 2371. When the ship's logs were collected we discovered they had encountered a slipstream capable craft and what was more it had been deliberately designed to mimic a Starfleet design.

This was the eureka moment because we could get a sense of the optimal shape for a ship to move into slipstream. We decided the easiest thing to do was to build a copy of the ship and to test the technology directly, so we built the *Dauntless* and you know what? It only worked!

We conducted a series of mission tests and proof of concept operations with the ship. It performed flawlessly, but because we had worked backwards from this alien design it wasn't fully optimized for the sort of missions Starfleet wanted. *Dauntless* is a good ship and is still in the fleet but we were able to put what we had learned into the next generation of Starfleet slipstream ships: the *Vesta*-class.

The first of which was launched last year. We have two more on the slips, and plans for five more in the class, but that's just the start. From the data collected from *Voyager* we learned they were able to retrofit the technology to allow the *Intrepid*-class hull to perform short hops through slipstream, with some more work it's our hope we can retrofit the technology to certain ship classes and truly open up the galaxy for Starfleet. We'll be able to push the frontier out further than ever before, there's even talk about an expedition to the Andromeda Galaxy! With slipstream it would be possible to make the journey across intergalactic space in under a decade!

We're still learning more every day from the Borg technology we now have access to, and with the help of the xBs on Ohniaka III we might be able to improve the quality of life for *all* species.

GUINAN

USS ENTERPRISE, QUALOR SYSTEM

Stardate 46231.8 – 2369



I do wonder, sometimes, what it would be like. To see the galaxy through the eyes of the Borg – I don't mean being assimilated or anything like that. I mean...what do they see when they look out into space, do they even do that? Take them for example.

[She gestures over to the large viewports at the look out from the prow of the ship, while many people are sitting and enjoying their drinks there are a number of people who are just staring out into space.]

Do you think the Andorian is seeing the same thing as the Benzite? Or the Xindi? It's not just a question of biology and eyes and brains processing the information differently; we are all shaped by our experiences, by our history, by our cultures. We may not speak in metaphors like the Tamarians, but our collective experience is just as important to how we interpret the world around us. I don't think the Borg have that. I think each drone just sees the galaxy as resources to be consumed and drones to bring into the hive.

For all of the pompous windbag that he is, Q was right about one thing: it is wondrous out here.

In a way, the Borg could be viewed as a cautionary tale for the Federation. They take beings from any culture they find and integrate them into the whole, but they don't *celebrate* those differences. They don't seek to *understand*, just to assimilate.

There have been times in Humanity's past where there were voices calling for anyone who looked different to them or thought differently to be destroyed. They fought bloody wars over it; I was there and it wasn't pretty.

But, eventually, you learned to not only tolerate those differences but to embrace them and celebrate them. It made you stronger and when you

ventured out into space and encountered other species your first instinct has always been to run towards them in the spirit of friendship rather than conquest. Let me tell you, that is very rare in this galaxy. The Federation is made up of many worlds and of many people, but the kernel at the center, the seed that grew into what we have around us now, that was Humanity. On a road not taken you might have ventured into space and conquered all you encountered, but whatever that “Terran Empire” might look like it would be brittle and would never endure.

The Borg don’t feel, they don’t love, they don’t care, they just *are*. That’s why we’re still here, because Starfleet values the individual. This crew risked it all and bet on the entire future of the Alpha Quadrant because they believed in Captain Picard. There is an old Vulcan saying: *“the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few,”* but logic is only part of the equation. Emotions are real and are important; they let you continue to fight against what you know to be wrong even when logic tells you you cannot succeed.

This won’t be the last we hear from the Borg, they will be back. When you get down to it, it’s a small galaxy, you’re going to bump into each other again, but if Starfleet and the Federation remain true to their ideals and doesn’t forget their core principles, then I don’t think you have too much to worry about from them. Now if you will excuse me I have to get back to the bar, but feel free to stay a while. Maybe take in the view.

[With a smile, she gets up and walks back to the bar where already a number of patrons move to order. I take my drink and move over to the large viewports looking out at the nearby star and the majesty of the space beyond.]



EPILOGUE

USS *HOOD*, WOLF 359 MEMORIAL STATION

Stardate 73403.2 – 2396



When I woke up this morning on board the *Hood*, it was a Starfleet vessel with a crew and a mission. Now it is a museum and a memorial. Outwardly nothing has changed and yet the ship feels almost alien to us as we walk through the airlock and step back onto the ship. All around us are civilians and dignitaries who are being escorted around and given a tour of the memorial station's newest exhibit.

We pass numerous groups being given tours by veterans; they stand back respectfully as the veterans explain what various systems would do or what a room was used for. Some are telling tales from their time on the ship, not just from Wolf 359 but some from the Battle of Chin'toka and other battles from the Dominion War. We stand towards the back and listen respectfully. Some nod respectfully at Admiral DeSoto, who smiles and returns each nod before we move on.

As we walk down one of the corridors, we suddenly find ourselves face to face with Captain Riker. He is older than I remember (which is to be expected) but I heard he had lost his son recently. Something like that would age anyone. There is more gray in his beard and hair and he seems somehow smaller than the man I first interviewed in the immediate aftermath of the Borg attack. His wife, Deanna Troi, comes around the corner holding the hand of their daughter. She looks around 10 with mousy blonde hair, and hides behind her fathers leg.

Riker and DeSoto smile warmly and they embrace. Troi then gives the admiral a kiss on his cheek as they embrace, Riker comes over to me and gives me a handshake. "It's good to see you here, the admiral tells me that you finally finished your book."

I can feel the blood flush to my cheeks but I smile and nod in affirmation. "Just finished before we left Sol Station, the advanced copies should be ready to go by the end of the year. I'll make sure they send one to you."

Deanna comes over and plants a kiss on my cheek. "It had better be a signed copy" she says teasingly. "Let me introduce you to our daughter Kestra." The young girl who is standing behind her father peers around his legs and offers a half-hearted wave. I return it with a smile.

"I was sorry to hear about Thad," says the admiral as he places a hand on Riker's arm. In an instant the mood shifts and the smiles drop from Riker and Troi for just a moment.

Riker nods and smiles appreciatively. "Thank you. It's been hard and it will take time, but we're okay." The admiral gives Troi another hug and whispers something to her. I can't hear what exchanges they share but she smiles and nods without saying a word. I feel rather awkward being a witness to this clearly private moment and start to look for a suitable exit but Riker seems to sense my discomfort or perhaps looks to change the subject for his own ease.

"Came to say your goodbyes?" he asks as he turns back to the admiral.

"Yeah, I figure I won't be out this way much, so best to say my goodbyes now. Did you come out on the *Titan*? Or the *Enterprise*?"

"Neither, we took a shuttle from Nepenthe to Starbase 17 and then took a commercial transport here," Troi responds.

"So, do you still remember your way around the old girl, XO?" asks DeSoto, teasing his former first officer.

"Absolutely, Sir," Riker responds with a grin.

"Then lead on: let's give her the once over one last time." We follow Riker's lead as he sets off towards the turbolift.





We spend the next couple of hours walking around the ship. Robert and Riker are busy in conversation and I spend my time talking to Deanna Troi. We had spoken several times before and corresponded during the Holland Commission, where she often deputized for Captain Picard when he declined to be interviewed. When we reach the engine room we encounter another tour group being shown the now inactive warp core and the plasma injectors. Parts of the computer systems here have been modified to resemble the blues and teals that the computer took on following Alison Obena's act of self-sacrifice to save the ship.

As we talk, I notice Kestra has moved away from us and found some young Tellarite pups. They're engaged in some game of tag around the back of the engine room and as their game intensifies so does their laughter. It is at odds with what took place in this room and Troi goes to collect her daughter.

She comes back with a sullen-looking Kestra, not happy to be told off in front of her new friends. The Tellarites' father has also come to collect his pups, DeSoto and Riker come over to see what the commotion is. Troi starts to apologize for the commotion but Desoto smiles and raises a hand.

"It's okay Deanna, it's actually nice to have children laughing on *Hood* again. I haven't heard that in a long *long* time."

"Maybe so, but this really isn't the most appropriate place for playing tag?" she says looking down at Kestra.

"True, but what happened here was so little girls like Kestra could continue to play tag." He crouches down so he is eye level with the girl. "Hello, Kestra, do you remember me?"

The girl nods her head enthusiastically. "You're Uncle Robert."

"That's right, I used to be your dad's boss a long long time ago. Would you like me to tell you a story?"

The girl hesitates for a moment, then comes forward and the admiral stands up and takes her hand. "I would like to tell you the story of a very dear friend of mine. Her name was Aly and she was the best engineer I ever knew. She taught your Uncle Geordi everything he knows..."

They walk out of engineering hand in hand, the girl enthralled by the tale.

Riker places his arm around his wife and kisses her on the cheek. Troi puts her arm around him and they follow the pair out, leaving me alone in engineering. It feels strange to be in this space now restored to an impression of what it looked like in 2366. I'm wondering what I should do with the rest of my time before departure when the door opens and the admiral comes back in, now carrying Kestra.

"Come on - keep up, or you're going to miss the story."

He winks and cocks his head towards the door with a smile. I return the smile and follow them both as he continues his tale of how Alison Obena and a young Commander Riker used to stop him having any fun on away missions...





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.

