

## Teaser

Preface: This story takes place in the universe that the Enterprise was in during my first eight stories, in the alternate universe before the Q known as JR purified it.

Location: Earth

Date: April 4, 2063

Captain Picard, Lieutenant Commander Worf, and Lieutenant Hawk were actively working on the maglock servos for the main deflector dish aboard the Sovereign-Class starship Enterprise-E. They had to work quickly in order to destroy the deflector before the Borg could complete their task of sending a message to the Borg in the Delta Quadrant. Picard had been right when he said that humanity would be an easy target, the Borg had attacked the Earth in the past and it was up to his ship and crew to stop that threat, at least for the time being. Picard wished he could destroy the Borg forever, but knew that it would be impossible, at least for him and his ship.

"Ready weapons." Worf said in a commanding voice, he was prepared for battle and wanted to kill another Borg. They had destroyed several Klingon vessels at the notorious battle at Wolf 359, and he wasn't about to let them take the Enterprise. As he trained his phaser on one of the Borg drones, it was struck by weapons fire on the other side of the dish. Someone had taken his kill away from him. Worf felt adrenaline spreading throughout his veins as he watched the Borg drift lifelessly across the underside of the saucer section and into deep space. Worf looked across the way to Hawk, he couldn't see his facial expression at the moment, but guessed the lieutenant had a smile on his face. "That was my kill, you had no right to take it away from me!" He growled a warrior's growl as if to initiate a battle cry,

but hesitated as he realized it was neither the time nor the place. Hawk would have his; it was only a matter of time.

Picard looked to his two officers and frowned, he didn't want to have to remind them of their current duty but it was necessary. "Gentlemen, I suggest we proceed with our mission. You can work things out after we get this ship cleared from this... infestation." He paused and watched as neither man moved back to their consoles. "That's an order. If you don't comply, I'll kill you myself."

Worf looked towards Picard. "Aye sir." He knelt back down to the deflector and proceeded to work with the maglock servo controls. The panel was currently off-line, he pressed a few buttons to activate it and continued on with his work.

On the other side of the dish, Lieutenant Hawk was almost finished with his work. All he had to do was switch a few isolinear chips around and change the rotation of the lock itself. Hawk looked down to seven isolinear chips in front of him and tried to remember the captain's instructions. If he pulled the wrong chip, or placed a chip in the wrong slot the dish would charge and kill them in the process. He didn't feel like dying at that moment, especially after what had just happened. As Hawk continued to think about which of the chips to move, he didn't notice a Borg drone advancing in on his location. He pulled a chip out of its slot and proceeded to place it into its destination slot, having that finished he put his hand around a handle for the locking mechanism and pulled up. A foot stepped on his hand with force causing him to drop the lock. A Borg foot was preventing him from finishing his job. Hawk tried to move his hand, but was unable to. With his left hand free, Hawk reached for his weapon, but it had floated

a few inches out of his reach. He was in trouble, a dead man.

The Borg looked down to his captured prey. He put his arm closer to Hawk's neck and released the injection tubuols allowing the assimilation process to begin. The injection was painful, too painful. Hawk screamed out loud over the open communications channel. Almost instantly, he heard thousands of voices inside his mind as the Borg Nanoprobes did their evil duty. His face turned a pasty white color and several Borg devices burst through his skin continuing the process. The drone standing in front of Hawk, before releasing his devices, communicated a signal to him. He was forced to accept the signal and had no way around it. It was one word, OBEY. The Borg left Hawk and walked back to the center of the deflector dish to continue on with his instructions.

Picad looked towards Hawk's position. "Hawk!" He said with vengeance in his voice. The Borg had just assimilated another of his crew, he could feel and hear the entire process inside his head. Picard knew the last thoughts Hawk had before he was assimilated, they were thoughts of home. Picard looked over to Worf, he wondered what the Klingon was going to do now that the Borg had taken away his kill. He hoped Worf wouldn't do anything drastic about it, there was nothing he could do now. True Worf was good in combat, but Picard doubted he would survive long against a one on one combat without his phaser rifle. Picard checked over his connections and noticed that he was finished. He looked back to where Hawk had been standing, he was gone. "Mister Worf, I'm going to head over to Hawk's position. Someone's got to finish his job." He paused. "I don't know where he went, maybe inside. Cover me."

Worf nodded. "Aye sir."

Picard picked up his weapon and stood up, he then started to walk around the dish until he reached the maglock Hawk had been working with. As he arrived at the position, Picard checked over Hawk's work. He had done a good job. "Too bad the Borg got him." Picard said. "He was a good officer." He then proceeded to work with the controls, pulled the locking handle upwards and twisted it forty-five degrees before setting it back down into its socket. "These two are done." He said over the commline. "What's your status?"

"Done sir." Worf replied. He paused as he saw danger coming Picard's way. "Sir, look out!"

Picard looked up from the panel. A Borg drone was walking towards his position. If Picard didn't know any better, he would have said the drone was in a hurry to stop him from preventing their work. But that wasn't possible, the Borg don't hurry in anything, they take their time knowing that if they die, other drones will take their place. Picard picked up his rifle and shot the Borg in the chest. It didn't work, the beam was absorbed by the Borg's shields.

"They've adapted." Worf said as he observed what was happening.

Picard looked to the Borg's feet and noticed a section of the hull that would get rid of his threat. He centered his weapon on the target and fired. The beam missed the deflector dish by inches and hit its target with ease. A forceful gas came from the hull taking the Borg out into open space. Picard watched the Borg float at a rapid speed away from the ship, he would have to remember to launch a photon torpedo at the drone before they left. A little target practice never hurt anyone. "Why wait?" He said as he raised

his weapon to fire. Picard located the target and prepared to fire his weapon, but was interrupted by the motion of the deflector dish rising away from the hull. Picard looked at the top of the dish, the Borg appeared to be working faster trying to get a signal out before he would destroy the dish. He wasn't about to give them the time. With one shot, Picard took out a wide connection beam which terminated the bridge from the deflector dish to the ship's hull. The Borg had lost this battle, and now it was time to show them who was the boss. "Mister Worf, please take care of that."

"Aye sir." Worf said. He raised his weapon and waited until the deflector dish was a ways from the ship. He didn't want to have the explosion hit anything causing more damage. "Assimilate this!" Worf yelled as he fired his weapon. The deflector dish went up in a ball of fire, killing six Borg drones in the process. Worf looked back down to a new crater where the dish had been.

"Looks like we're going to have to do some remodeling when we return." Picard said with a laugh. "I only hope Starfleet won't hold me responsible for damaging their property." Picard stood lowered his weapon and started to walk towards Worf's position when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Hawk. Picard sighed, "Great." He flung his arm back hitting Hawk's face mask and turned around to face his former officer. Hawk hit a high section of the hull knocking him down, he stood back up and continued his pursuit after Picard, who pressed the trigger on his rifle. Nothing happened. "Worf, my phaser's drained."

Worf nodded his head. "Understood." He fired a shot hitting Hawk in the leg. His shielding wasn't completely activated yet so his body started to float above the hull. It was time for Worf to get his

revenge. He targeted his weapon on Hawk's chest, increased the phaser's power and fired. Hawk's body vaporized before his eyes. Worf howled a warriors cry as he warned the afterlife that a warrior was on its way.

Picard was shocked. "Mister Worf, why did you do that? He was not a Klingon and would have died at your hand probably the next day." He was puzzled as to why Worf had given the lieutenant a death howl.

Worf looked to his superior officer. "He died in battle. Either by my hand or by the Borg, it does not matter. He died an honorable death." Worf lowered his phaser. "I suggest we get back to the bridge."

Picard nodded. "Agreed."

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Captain's log, April 5, 2063:

The voyage of the Phoenix was a success . . . again. The alien ship detected the warp signature . . . and is on its way to rendezvous with history.

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Location: En-route to Wolf 359

Date: Stardate 44000.1

Locutus of Borg stood among thousands upon thousands of drones. "Locutus." A female voice said. "Locutus, why didn't you want it? Here I offered you the best of both worlds, and you didn't accept it. Why?" The voice continued. "I didn't want it to be this way, I wanted a counterpart to better understand how you humans are. But you didn't want that."

"Resistance is Futile." Locutus replied in a cold tone void of human affection or emotion. He had fought against the Borg up to his last ounce of strength as

promised. The Borg was too powerful for him, they had the advantage, the ball was in their court and they weren't about to let go.

"You left me no choice." The Borg Queen said. "You left me no choice." She activated a few commands from within her mind allowing Picard's mind to surface for a moment. "Locutus."

Locutus looked around confused. "Resistance is futile. What? I will not." He stopped as he realized what was going on. He remembered the abduction from the Enterprise, remembered the offer from the voice of the collective, and remembered his failed resistance and subsequent assimilation.

"I have isolated you from the collective, for a moment." The Queen smiled. "Just long enough for you to see what you might have obtained, if you listened to us. Listened to me, but your principles were upheld." She paused. "I had to make you a drone. It could have been so much more, but you tried to avoid perfection."

A tear came down Picard's cheek. For the moment he was not a mindless zombie, he had emotion. Picard looked at his body, it was infested with Borg devices. He wondered if there was any way he would ever get out of this alive. Probably not, once a Borg always a Borg. "What do you want with me?"

"Before I had you assimilated it was something special." The Queen replied. "Now all I want is obedience." She ran a finger up Picard's cheek drying his tears. She activated a few other commands allowing Picard to envision for a brief moment what life might have been like. She controlled what he saw, manipulating the bad into good forcing him to regret his decision to cross and resist her. "Enough of this. You will accept the consequences of your actions."

She worked within her mind and Picard became a lifeless drone.

The Queen walked towards a large cubic viewscreen. Stars were going by at speeds any human wouldn't be able to track visually. The Borg didn't track things visually, they saw the stars as one. No individuals existed among the heavens, individuals were inferior and imperfect. They would never evolve to the strength and glory of the Borg Collective. As she stood in front of the cubic screen, the Cube dropped out of warp and entered normal space. She ran her fingers over a few controls to find out what went wrong. They weren't supposed to drop out of warp for at least another five hours. As she ran scans, a green beam of light ran across a large section in front of the Cube. It continued cutting through space until locking onto something.

"Display Section 47 Alpha." The Queen said to her mindless drones. She didn't need to rely on vocal communication, but felt like doing it anyway. At once, several readings appeared on a cubic grid before her. As she looked over the grid, something caught her attention. "Enhance this section." She said, the grid changed to focus on a tighter angel of the requested section. She focused a transporter beam on the object to beam it aboard, it de-materialized from outside the Cube. The Queen looked to an interface that was blinking code in a binary format. As she assimilated the information, she gasped at what she understood. Someone had defeated an attempt made by the Borg on more than one occasion. She saw the soon-to-be battle of Wolf 359, and another incursion that wouldn't take place for another six years where she herself would go off-line.

"This can't be!" The Queen said out loud.

Locutus walked closer to her and with an emotionless voice said. "Drone four of seven does not compute. Four of seven is in a state of flux not equal with this universe." He continued to report on the lifeless Borg corpse the Cube had found. "This Drone does not belong in this universe, it must be purged and deactivated accordingly."

The Queen shook her head. "No. He has more information we need. It will take time to unscramble and upload all of his data into the collective." She turned around and with her back facing the cubic viewer and Locutus walked down a long hallway. The Queen passed several drones along the way, as she passed by them she was determined to get to the bottom of what was happening. To her knowledge, the Borg was invincible. They had their first taste of the Federation at System J-25, even though the Federation deemed a challenge she felt the Borg could assimilate them. She was determined to not let this new information interfere with her quest of perfection. "Soon the Federation will fall, Wolf 359 will be of no problem." She said to herself. At the end of the hallway was a table with a Borg corpse laying on it. Two drones were on either side of the table trying to further access its systems and gain more information.

The Borg Queen looked to the lifeless drone. What secrets it held within several memory circuits surrounded by human tissue, both working together to achieve a perfect state where thought and speech combined with data transmission in one harmonious song. She sighed as she realized they wouldn't be able to get the data out before the war at Wolf 359 would be over. The drones circuits were degraded badly, they needed time to regenerate. The Borg had time for it was on their side. Starfleet on the other hand, had little time. They would soon fall, at least she hoped they would fall. The Queen wished she had

more information right now, but that was impossible. Only bits and pieces were available to her at the moment and she would have to note those pieces and move on. The Federation fleet at Wolf 359 could not go unnoticed, it had to be dealt with. She blinked and the Cube continued its course and speed towards the Wolf sector.

## Chapter One

Location: Wolf 359  
Date: Stardate 44001.4

Admiral Hanson sat in his Ready Room aboard a Federation starship. He was reading over several tactical updates on the armada that he was to command at Wolf 359. The Federation had decided to make their stand in the Wolf system, he had to make their fight stand for something. In a way, he owed it to Picard and the Enterprises' crew. Only a few minutes ago he was on an open commline to Picard's former first officer and promoted him to the rank of captain. Hanson hoped Riker would be able to guide his crew and show courage. "It's never easy to loose a good leader. The admiral said, "Or a dear friend." Hanson activated his desktop computer screen and read through several lines of text. It was the latest transmission from the Enterprise regarding her damage and estimated repair schedule. He wished the Enterprise would be there, but it looked like they would have to make due without her.

Hanson activated another screen and read through a list of available vessels assigned to the attack. Only thirty-eight other starships, besides his own, were there; and even then they were still waiting for the Klingons to show up. After searching the list, he selected a vessel. "Computer, open a subspace communications channel to the I.S.S. Saratoga." Hanson tapped his fingers on the desk.

"Channel open." The computer responded as an officers face appeared on the screen.

"Admiral. What can I do for you?" The man asked.

"The Enterprise won't be able to make it to this one, their weapon didn't do any damage to the Cube." He paused. "Commander Sisko, I want the Saratoga to take the Enterprise's position on the first wave of defense."

Sisko nodded his head. "Understood sir, I'll inform my captain." He looked at Hanson and could tell there was something else on the admiral's mind. Sisko was on the same wavelength as the admiral, the Federation shouldn't be going into battle without its flagship, and the Enterprsie shouldn't be without her commanding officer at the helm. It wasn't fair at all, he wanted justice to be served as much as anyone. "Something else admiral?"

Hanson nodded. "How's Jennifer and Jake? I assume they're safe on Earth?"

Sisko shook his head. "No sir." He said slowly. "There wasn't enough time to get them to Earth. They're in my quarters." He regretted the fact his family would be with him when the fleet engaged the Borg. Space was no place to raise a family, it was always filled with danger lurking around every corner and down each alleyway. It was never safe for families, especially during time of armed conflict. Sisko hoped everything would go all right in the end for both his family and the fleet his should was part of.

Hanson gave a slight frown, he had lost many people and their families under numerous commands during his time of service. He didn't want to see anymore. "Listen Ben." He said in a father-like tone.

"If anything goes wrong, you get your family to an escape pod. Is that understood?"

Sisko nodded his head. "Aye Sir." He closed the channel and thought about the admirals words. He agreed with the admiral one hundred percent. His family was important and he wasn't about to let them get destroyed, or worse assimilated.

Location: Sector 031, Hours away from Wolf 359

Date: Stardate 44001.4

Aboard the Galaxy-Class starship, I.S.S. Enterprise, Captain Riker was seated in the Observation Lounge, in front of him was a rank pin resting on the table. He must have been staring at it for the past five minutes. Riker knew he had to put it on, he just didn't know if he could fill the shoes of a mentor and a leader.

"Will?" A voice said from behind.

It was his ship counselor Deanna Troi. His ship, he thought, which was going to take some getting use to. Her voice startled him, Riker hadn't noticed the doors open. He had been lost in deep thought. "Yes Deanna. What can I do for you?" Riker managed to finally say to the one that he called Imzadi.

"I was wondering if there was anything I could do for you?" She replied with a pleasant tone of voice that let Riker know she was there for him. They had been through a lot together over the past years long before serving together aboard the Enterprise in fact.

Riker shook his head. "No, I just need to focus on the duty ahead and try to move on." In his mind, Picard wasn't really lost, just misplaced. He needed to find a way to get his captain back. Needed to find a way to declare revenge on the Borg. But how do you declare

revenge on a being that doesn't hold emotion? No way to be frightened by your presence. "He was only here a few hours ago Deanna, and look what they've done to him."

Deanna nodded. "Yes, that's true." She replied, not knowing exactly how to counsel him. As Troi read Riker's thoughts, she could tell that he was upset and confused by the duty ahead of him. She had never known him to be confused in such a way. "But you have a loyalty to this ship and crew and the Starfleet you are sworn to protect." Deanna said in a forceful tone. "If you don't uphold your principles, I will take command of this vessel from you."

Riker looked up with surprise. "What about Commander Shelby?"

Troi laughed. "What about her? Shelby is only a child and no match for me." She paused. "I'll have her in an agony booth by the end of the day if she gives me any hassle." She picked up the rank pin and proceeded to place it on Riker's uniform. "Now I suggest captain, that you get to work." She used the term captain rather loosely; he would have to prove himself to her and the crew of the Enterprise. Troi stood from the table and walked out of the room leaving Riker to give deep thought to her threat.

Riker allowed a half smile to form on his face, that was his Imzadi all right, Ruthless as ever, and stubborn as a Targ. He felt the four pins on his collar, stood up and walked over to a wall viewer. "Computer, recall Enterprise sensor record 047 Delta, and display." A moment later a visual record of the Enterprise in battle with the Borg appeared, although it wasn't much of a battle. The Enterprise didn't even make a dent in the Cube. He wondered why the Borg didn't destroy his ship at that moment, their warp engines were off-line making it impossible

for them to escape, and the Borg would have adapted to their weapons anyway after a few minutes of armed conflict; so why didn't they continue their attack? This confused Riker greatly, although he was rather glad that they chose not to finish their road of destruction with the Enterprise. Riker hoped they would be able to make it in time for the 'party', as the admiral had put it, at Wolf 359.

He pressed a few buttons next to the active display causing the viewer to go blank. Riker exited the Conference Lounge. In a turbolift, he took out his phaser and pressed a few buttons increasing it to maximum. If he fired the weapon, anyone in its direct path would be vaporized instantly; everyone that is except for a Borg Drone. He considered using the weapon on Shelby the first time they shared a turbolift, but had decided against it. In Riker's mind, he didn't need Shelby, but in reality he did. She was some sort of expert on the Borg and had spent over the past year training for a possible invasion. The lift came to a stop, Riker re-holstered his weapon and entered Main Engineering, the heart of the Enterprise.

"Report!" He called out as he turned the corner and walked by the Master Situation Monitor. Everyone on the deck, except for the senior officers, went to attention. Riker looked at them and nodded allowing them to continue on with their duties.

Shelby looked down from the upper level next to the Warp Core; she had been helping Commander LaForge repair some of the damage done to the Enterprise by their ineffective weapon. As she watched her new commanding officer approach the chief engineer, she sighed. Shelby waited in the rafters deciding whether or not to join them, finally she walked over to the ladder and made her way down.

".I'm not sure about it." Geordi was saying as Shelby slid down the ladder.

"Not sure about what?" She said, joining the conversation.

"Nothing" Riker said cutting Geordi off before he could make a reply. "Nothing at all." He walked over to a display right outside the main engine core and pointed. "What's that?" He asked. A red light was blinking at intervals with no rhythm.

Shelby walked over to the panel and checked a few controls. "No, not again." She said under her breath. Shelby started walking back towards the ladder to get back to the upper level. Riker reached out and grabbed her arm stopping her from going anywhere.

"What's going on?" He asked.

"The Warp Core isn't reacting well to that stunt you pulled." She said in a hurry. "If I don't get up there, we're going to have more than an unstable field on our hands."

Riker looked to LaForge. He nodded acknowledging that she was telling the truth.

"All right." Riker said letting go of her arm. "I expect a status report on my desk in a half hour."

"Yes sir." Shelby said as she climbed up the ladder. Once she was at the top, Shelby walked over to the upper Warp Core, took out a tricorder and proceeded to make scans. Her tricorder started to beep at random intervals, about the same as the blinking lights. She pressed a few buttons on the tricorder increasing her scans. "I've got it." She yelled down to the lower part of Engineering. Shelby picked up a

device and held it near the core frame. As she activated it, a blue thin beam went from the device to the core fixing the problem. Her tricorder went back to beeping at regular intervals, indicating that the threat was over for now.

Riker took his phaser out and lowered the setting back to stun, he wouldn't be executing any of his officers today. Shelby had just saved the Enterprise from more work and hassle. Riker realized that he should be grateful to her, but he didn't want to. No matter how good of a technician she was, he still despised her. He left Engineering and headed back up to the bridge, where he belonged.

Location: Wolf 359, Borg Vessel, in the middle of battle

Stardate: 44001.4

The Borg Queen looked around the cube inside her mind. Her drones were ready for battle, they were ready for conflict and would get past the Federation's little blockade that stood in her way. She knew that much at least from the corpse they had come across. It troubled her that she would be terminated in a little over ten years in the future. She had to find a way around that, all it would take was time. The Queen still didn't have a complete picture about how events would unfold for her and the collective, she was still working on that part of the puzzle. But soon enough, she would have all of the information she would need to destroy the Federation once and for all. Her thoughts were interrupted by the feeling of the Cube slowing down again. She turned away from the Borg corpse and walked back towards the cubic viewer.

The viewer showed several Federation vessels taking position ready for combat. The Queen blinked her eyes once which activated a communications channel

to the thirty-nine enemy vessel in their way. "We are the Borg." Her drones sang out with perfect clarity. "Resistance is Futile, you will be Assimilated." She felt the signal of an incoming message. The Queen turned from the viewer and looked to Locutus. "Talk to them." She ordered as she walked back down the hallway.

Locutus looked to the viewer and activated a channel. "I am Locutus of Borg, you will disarm your weapons, and escort us to Sector 001, if you attempt to intervene we will destroy you." He said in a lifeless tone with a lifeless face to match.

Aboard his vessel, Admiral J.P. Hanson looked at the former Starfleet Captain. Whatever was left of Picard, it wasn't showing through all the Borg implants. "What have they done to you my friend?" He said underneath his breath. "Borg vessel, this is Admiral Hanson of the Federa." Hanson started to say, but he was cut off.

"Vocal communication is irrelevant. Stand down or you will be destroyed." Locutus said. The communication channel closed, as well as any chance of ending this before it became ugly.

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"Red Alert." Sisko said, "Arm phasers and photon torpedoes."

"Phasers and torpedoes, Aye." A Bolian security officer said.

The Vulcan commanding officer of the Saratoga stood from his chair. "Wait until they strike."

"Understood" Sisko replied. He watched as the Borg ship came closer. He didn't like the looks of what was

about to happen. Sisko had been taught to always uphold the principles of the Federation, no matter how evil they appeared to be on the surface. It looked like today he would have the opportunity to fulfill his commitment.

A moment later, the Borg vessel unleashed its power and authority over the small, yet maneuverable, Starfleet ships. It came at them like a vulture, finally descending upon its dead prey. The only difference, Hanson's armada was alive and well, but not for long.

"Fire at will." The Vulcan captain said in a calm voice.

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Aboard the Admiral's ship, the Red Alert Klaxons were going off like crazy. Hanson thought about the task at hand and hoped he'd be able to make it out of there alive with his ship and crew intact. "Report!" He yelled out across the bridge.

"The Saratoga is under major weapons fire by some kind of cutting beam." An female officer said, she didn't like her job. Her orders were to keep her commanding officer up-to-date on all activity that was taking place. She would have to report the causalities of starships and men as they came to her. "The Righteous is locked in a tractor beam." She paused as the next report came in. "And has been destroyed."

No. Hanson screamed out in his mind, the righteous was a good ship. He began to have second thoughts about this whole plan. Hanson stopped himself, he couldn't allow second thoughts to cloud his judgment, he had to remain strong. "Take the position of the Righteous and fire at will."

The admiral's ship moved into position evading the Borg's destructive tractor beam and fired a full spread of torpedoes at the menacing cube. None of the shots made a dent, the Borg shields held. They were strong. Too strong for an armada of only thirty-nine vessels, they needed some help.

Out of nowhere three Klingon Battle cruisers de-cloaked and began firing on the Borg ship. Their assault was terrifying to watch. They were sworn to defend their empire at all costs and against all threats. The Borg ship destroyed the head vessel with one blow, and began its attack on the other two ships. Another vessel de-cloaked each time a Klingon ship was destroyed, making it always three on their line of defense.

Ten hours after the battle with the Borg began, it ended. The Federation had lost thirty-nine starships, the Klingons had lost several as well. They didn't stand a chance against the former human known as Locutus. He knew their tactical strategies, their defenses, everything the Federation needed to know in order to slow the Borg's advance on Sector 001.

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Commander Benjamin Sisko looked outside of an escape pod window waiting to be rescued. He had lost a wife that day, and almost a son. He was disappointed that he didn't keep the admiral's command to the letter. Sure he rescued Jake, but his wife was in the middle of wreckage. Only one thought could enter his mind, revenge. A former Starfleet captain had just aided the enemy. Sisko didn't care that the Borg forced Picard to help without his consent. He was an enemy now, an enemy to the uniform he proudly wore.

A man wearing a blue uniform approached him.  
"Commander Sisko." He said.

Sisko looked to the officer that was standing next to him. "Doctor, how is the admiral?" He asked with eagerness.

"He just died sir." The doctor said. "He wanted me to give you this." He handed Sisko a PADD. Sisko read over the PADD, it was a letter to his family. "He also wanted me to tell you that you are the ranking officer, and that it is imperative you get these survivors to safety."

Sisko nodded. "Thank you doctor." He stood from his seat and walked to the front of the escape pod. Two officers were seated at the controls. He watched them from behind for a moment and could tell they were scared to death. The Borg ship was still out there assimilating crew members left and right as they were found.

One of the officers turned and noticed Sisko standing behind him. "Sir, we can't open a subspace channel to the other pods, the Borg would detect us and we would become part of the hive." He reported regretfully.

Sisko nodded. "Understood. Take us as far away from this place as you can, don't let the Borg find us." He ordered. Sisko didn't want to let the admiral down a second time, he was determined to follow out these new set of orders to the letter.

The man nodded his head. "I'll try sir."

Sisko hated that word at the moment. "No, ensign. You will not try, you will succeed." He walked away from the front of the cabin to allow his crewmen space needed complete their task at hand. Sisko

knew they didn't like him hovering over watching their every movement. He wouldn't be able to work like that and guessed they wouldn't be able to as well. Back at his seat, Sisko watched outside the window as the Borg cube became smaller and smaller. He could only imagine the terror that was happening among those vessels as the Borg started their assimilation protocols. Another hour passed and the Borg vessel continued on its way towards Sector 001, leaving Sisko and his escape pod untouched.

Location: Just outside of Wolf 359

On the bridge of the Enterprise, Riker was seated in his command chair. He hated waiting, soon they would be arriving in the Wolf system. Whether they would engage the enemy, he didn't know. The Borg had some kind of device suppressing their sensor readings.

"In visual contact with Wolf 359 sir." Data said from the Ops station.

Riker stood from his chair and walked closer towards the forward duty stations. "On screen." He said instantly. It was time to see what damage the Borg had done to the fleet. As the main viewer lit up, several gasps could be heard around the bridge. "As you were." Riker commanded his officers telling them to be quiet.

Shelby stood from her chair, and as three starships passed by the viewer, she said their names out loud. "The Tolstoay, the Kysuhu. The Melbourne."

The names pounded into Riker's mind like a blow from a baseball bat. "Leave a buoy behind, set it to check for life sign readings." He said to Data. "I want to know if anyone survived the incident. He paced around the bridge for a moment. "Take us into warp

as soon as we clear the debris field." He said to the Conn officer, and then finally walked into his Ready Room to be alone for a moment. "You know where to find me." Riker said as he was leaving.

Ten minutes later, Commander Data finished gathering telemetry from the probe and was walking towards the Ready Room doors. Before he could reach them, Commander Shelby spoke. "I'll take those." She approached Data and took several PADDs from him. "Report back to your post." She said.

Data nodded his head and sat back down at the ops console.

In his Ready Room, Riker was reviewing a listing of the thirty-nine starships sent to the Wolf sector. He couldn't believe they were all destroyed. His ship should have been in the same boat, but they were delayed.

Beep Beep. The door chimed.

"Enter." He said in a cold tone.

Commander Shelby entered the room and stood in front of Riker's desk. "Here are the causality reports sir." She said as she sat down in a chair across from her commanding officer. "Commander Data asked for me to bring them to you."

Riker took the PADDs from her and looked them over. "Think up a better lie next time Shelby." He said, "What brings you here?" Riker didn't want to play games with his first officer, he didn't have the time.

Shelby looked to the ceiling. "Okay." She started. "I know we haven't been on good terms lately sir. I'd

like to change that, if it's possible." She held out a hand trying to show Riker that she wasn't that bad of a person, and that she was serious about burying the hatchet with him.

Riker looked up from his monitor. "I'll give it some thought." He replied. "What I need now." He was cut off by a Red Alert Klaxon.

"Romulan Warbird de-cloaking off port bow." The computer said. "Captain Riker, report to the bridge."

"Now what!" Riker said as he stood from his chair. He crossed the room and took one final look at Shelby before entering the bridge. He would have to finish his business with her later.

"All stop." Riker said. "Report!" He yelled over the loud sound of the alert.

"We have two Warbirds with their shields up." Data said. "They are hailing us."

Riker rubbed his face, looked around the bridge making sure Shelby was at her post, and returned his attention back to the main viewscreen. "On screen."

The view switched from a battlefield to the face of a Romulan commander. "This is Commander Taul of the Romulan Warbird Docik. State your intentions for being here."

Riker looked at the Romulan with a shrug, "Oh, you know just having a farewell party." He said in a dry tone. "We are on our way to Earth to stop that Borg ship." Riker paused. "What are you doing in Federation held space?!" He demanded.

The Romulan smiled. "We were suppose to be fighting a battle here, but it looks like we arrived a

little too late." He said. "I was going to ask you, how you escaped destruction."

Riker looked to Troi, she shook her head indicating they needed to talk. He didn't have the time for talking though. They needed to get to Earth and stop the Borg. "Listen, we don't have time to talk." He said. "There is a Borg vessel en route to Earth."

"Yes, we know." The Romulan said. "We watched them leave."

"Would you be willing to follow us to Sector 001? We could use your help in defeating that ship." Riker said, the Romulans were wasting the Enterprises' time and they knew it. They probably were cloaked the entire time the battle was going on and just didn't help out.

"No." The Romulan commander responded. "We don't have time for that."

Riker nodded his head. "Very well, I suggest you report back to Romulan held space immediately." He said. The channel closed.

"They are doing a salvage operation Will." Troi said.

Riker nodded. "Yes I know. Can you tell how many vessels are out there?" He asked.

Troi shook her head. "No, but I would guess their entire fleet is cloaked." She too realized the Romulans hadn't come to the Federation's aid in defeating a lethal enemy. It didn't take much to know the mind of a Romulan, to Troi they were easier to read than humans.

"Resume the course for Earth." Riker ordered. "How long before we get through this debris?"

Data checked his controls. "In five minutes sir."

Riker looked to the ensign. "You know what to do once we get out of here."

Ensign Crusher nodded. "Increase to maximum warp, Aye sir."

Shelby walked up and stood next to Riker. She didn't enjoy the predicament he was in, and was glad that she didn't have to fill his shoes. As she stood there, she looked at him and tried to understand what kind of person he was exactly. After a few moments passed, she broke the silence. "You do know the Romulans have access to our technology."

Riker nodded. "Yes, I know." He paused, there was too much to do and so little time. He couldn't watch both enemies at once, it would be impossible. "That's a chance we have to take Commander." He walked back to the command chair and sat down. As he did so, the Enterprise went to maximum warp towards their home. He only hoped the Romulans hadn't destroyed his chance at stopping the Borg. He might never get another opportunity.

## Chapter Two

Location: En-Route to Sector 001

Year: 2372

The Borg Queen was reviewing several of her experiences with the Federation that had taken place over the past years. She was not pleased with her findings. It had been six years since she had been defeated at Earth, six years since she had lost Locutus, and six years since she found that Borg corpse. It only took a few days to unlock the secrets behind the corpse she had in her possession. She

waited the past six years to implement her new and revised attack on Earth as well. The Queen had another chance at defeating the Enterprise and the Federation once and for all.

She walked over to what appeared to be a Borg Maturation chamber. A female drone was inside waiting to be activated. "It won't be long now."

Location: Earth

Year: 2372 - Immediately after the events in Star Trek: First Contact

The Enterprise-E emerged from the temporal vortex.

On the bridge, Picard looked around at his officers. "Hail Starfleet Command" he smiled, "I suppose we have some explaining to do." He was sitting in his command chair waiting to explain why the Enterprise went against orders, Picard didn't enjoy the task ahead, but it was necessary.

"I am not picking up any Federation communication beacons sir." Data said. "Long range sensors are off-line, and shields are down as expected." He paused. "I am picking up several Borg subspace carriers."

"What?" Picard asked as he stood from his chair.  
"What happened?"

"We didn't succeed." Worf said, "I am activating the cloaking device." The bridge lights dimmed as the Enterprise disappeared from sensor and visual views. Worf turned his attention to the Defiant. He had the opportunity to serve aboard her for a limited time during the Klingon attack on the Decapa Council members. She was a ship that had never been built, at least in this timeline.

"Give me a view of Earth." He said. As the main viewer came to life, a deep sigh fell over the bridge. There, in front of them, was a Borgified Earth. It was devoid of any recognizable human life, only Borg Drones were alive; if you could term their existence as living. The Timeline had been tampered with, and the Borg had won in the end.

"Locutus." Thousands of voices chimed in Picard's head causing him to stumble. The collective was inside his mind once again. Picard raised his hand to his temple trying to block them out. Still they persisted. "Locutus." The voices sang again.

Troi stood from her chair knowing exactly what was taking place. She placed a hand on Picard's shoulder, "You must block them captain."

"They know we're here." Picard managed to say. After a moment, he was able to focus and the voices disappeared, for how long he didn't know. "We can't stay long, we need to go back, again, and figure out what they did."

"Locutus" Again his Borg designation was spoken. This time it was different, instead of many voices of the dark collective, it was only one voice; a female voice. "Give up Locutus, you know what you want, just give up."

Picard shook his head. "No!" He shook away from Troi's grip and walked to the Enterprise's Dedication Plaque. He tried to focus on the plaque, tried to force the voice of the Borg Queen out of his mind; but was unable to.

The view screen changed from a Borg infested Earth to that of a Borg Ship, in the middle of the Screen the leader of the Borg stared towards Picard's location. "Come back to us Locutus, just come back to us." She

said. "As you can see, you didn't defeat us. You followed us to the past, but you still can't defeat perfection."

Picard walked away from the plaque to the center of the bridge. As he looked to the screen, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. "This isn't possible." He replied. "You must have nine lives, always being able to escape destruction the way you do."

The Borg Queen smiled. "Maybe I just outwitted the Federation for once." She looked to Data and noticed his appearance. His gift of flesh was gone; all that remained was exposed circuitry. "What a waste." She said in disgust. "Typical of you to resist perfection, even when it is placed in your lap!"

Data smiled back at the Queen. She had fallen into his trap, yet here she was before them. Data allowed the smile to drop for a moment as he posed a question. "How did you survive? Both the captain and myself saw you die." His question was a simple one, one that he wanted answered.

The Queen just stared back. "She was a clone." That was all the explanation she was willing to give the android commander.

"Come back to us Locutus, come back to where you belong." The Queen said as the communications line closed. The green effect faded away from the screen and the Bridge was somewhat dark once again.

"Captain, a Borg vessel is closing in on our position." Data said. "It is not safe for us to remain here."

Picard looked to his officer. "Understood." He sat down at the station that used to be Lt. Hawk's, the Helm console and activated a few sequences. "I'm setting a course out of Sector 001." The Enterprise

left the Terran System at impulse. Once they were past Pluto, Picard punched it up to maximum impulse.

The Borg Cube did not pursue. The Queen allowed them to go for the moment. If and when she would face them again, all she would have to do was activate a certain neuro-processor inside Picard's brain and her cube would pinpoint his location in a matter of minutes.

On the Bridge of the Enterprise, Picard stood from the helm control and walked to his ready room. "Number One, please accompany me. Mister Data, you have the bridge."

Riker followed his commanding officer to a room adjacent to the bridge. Once inside, Picard walked over to his desk and sat down. Riker remained standing, waiting for an invitation from his commanding officer; per Starfleet custom.

"Have a seat," Picard said as he pointed to a chair across from his. He activated a computer console and called up the Enterprise's sensor records for the past two days. He reviewed them quickly and then deactivated the monitor.

Riker remained silent. He would wait for Picard to begin the conversation. Riker looked into Picard's reflection on the desk, he didn't dare look right into his eyes. Picard had been known to kill for that very reason. He didn't fear Picard, much, but he still followed a set of protocol written by himself.

"Will." Picard said. "What do you remember from the wreckage of Wolf 359?"

Riker looked from the desk to his commanding officer, Picard had initiated a conversation and it was

okay for him to look into Picard's eyes. "Sir, I wasn't at Wolf 359 remember? I'm a transporter duplicate of."

Picard nodded. "Yes, that's right. Forgive me number one, I must have forgotten for a moment." He explained. "All of this is upsetting me a little." He looked out the window at the stars moving by slowly. After a few more minutes, the view changed from stars to several destroyed Klingon, Federation and Romulan vessels. It was the debris field of Wolf 359; debris cluttered most of the Wolf system.

"Picard to bridge. All stop." Jean-Luc said as he stood from his chair. He headed for the ready room door to exit. Picard knew something was wrong, and he was determined to find out what it was.

Riker stood from his chair and followed Picard back onto the bridge. He would have to watch the captain closely, especially if their brief conversation meant that something was wrong mentally.

"Put the debris field on screen." Picard ordered.

Data turned around in his chair and with a quizzical expression replied. "Sir?" He didn't have a clue what the captain was saying. He checked his short-range sensors and rechecked them again making sure they were accurate. "I am detecting no debris sir."

Picard shook his head. "It has to be there." He walked towards an aft science console and checked the sensors with his own eyes. "The sensors must be malfunctioning." He activated a control allowing the view screen to activate. As Picard turned around to look at the viewer he smiled. "I knew it." The main viewer was filled with wreckage. A starship graveyard was in their flight path.

Riker looked to Troi and shrugged. He turned his attention back to the viewer. After a moment, he turned to his commanding officer. "Captain, I don't see anything." Riker was telling the truth, he didn't see it at all.

Troi looked to Riker. "You don't?" She stood from her chair and walked towards the viewer. "There are twenty vessels in our path, and you don't see them?" She read through his mind searching for any kind of explanation; but came back empty handed. It was true; he wasn't seeing what the rest of them saw.

"Data, I need some sensors." Picard said.

Data's hands flew over the console as he tried to complete his orders. He remembered exactly how they had re-established sensors before leaving the 21st century. All it would take was a matter of minutes, at least for him. "Done sir." He said after finishing the assignment. "I am bringing external sensors online."

"Scan the vessels for any type of activity. We know there won't be any life signs, but maybe we can find." He paused as memories flooded his mind of Wolf 359 and a battle that cost the lives of good officers. It was here the Borg left terrible scars throughout the entire Federation. Deep scars that would remain for a definite period of time. Stories would be told throughout the centuries of how a mechanical race of beings led by a Starfleet captain turned on the Federation and destroyed a strong fleet.

"Captain" Data reported. "Readings indicate no activity among the Starfleet or Klingon vessels. However, there is one Romulan Warbird with minimal power. Their computer core appears to be somewhat intact."

Riker almost laughed out loud. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. To his knowledge there was nothing out there. Riker looked to Troi, he could tell that she believed in every word their fellow officers were saying.

"Mister Data, transfer the coordinates to transporter room three." Picard ordered. "I'm going over there."

"Captain!" Riker said, almost to the point of yelling. "You can't go over there, there's nothing to transport to." He said. "I can't allow you to endanger your life!"

Picard smiled. "Would you rather go?" He knew Riker would say no to the offer considering he didn't know what was taking place.

Riker shook his head. "I shouldn't of let you beam down when we were back in the 21st century. It was dangerous then, and it is certainly more dangerous now." He tried to think of anything that would make Picard change his mind. To his knowledge there was nothing in front of them but open space. "I have."

"Received your orders." Picard said cutting his first officer off. "You are in command until I return." He paused, looking to Troi. She was probably thinking the exact same thing he was; it wasn't hard; she was a full telepath after all. "Keep an eye on him. If he does anything out of the ordinary, kill him."

"Aye sir." Troi said in a cold tone.

"Commander Data and Worf, you're with me." Picard said. The three officers headed towards the turbolift that would take them to the transporter room.

The turbolift stopped a few meters away from Transporter Room 3. Picard exited the lift followed by Data and then Worf. "Captain." Data said. "Why

do you suppose Commander Riker didn't see the wreckage?"

Picard thought to himself for a second. He had been wondering the same thing. The entire bridge crew saw what the sensors couldn't pick up at first, but his first officer didn't see a thing. "I'm not sure."

"What if he was right?" Worf asked.

"Then we won't have to worry about any of this for while." Picard replied. He paused looking at Data. "Except for you of course, you can survive in a vacuum."

The android nodded his head. "Indeed."

As they turned the corner and walked into main engineering, Miles O'Brien snapped to attention. "Welcome to Pad Three sir." He said in a bright tone. O'Brien hoped it wasn't a surprise inspection which he hated. Sure his transporter room would be in ship shape, it always was. He just didn't like people poking around.

"At ease." Picard said nodding to his chief transporter officer. "Beam us to the coordinates you received."

O'Brien gave a sigh of relief; they just wanted to go somewhere. "Aye." He worked the controls preparing the chamber for transport, and watched as Picard walked over to a weapons locker, pulled out a type three phaser and handed it to Worf. He then did the same for Data. The two officers looked to each other, they probably wouldn't even have to use them but it was always better to be prepared than not.

"Ready sir." O'Brien said.

The trio took their places on the transporter pad. Picard looked to O'Brien. "Ener." He started to say as the doors opened allowing Doctor Crusher to enter.

"Belay that order." Crusher said.

O'Brien set the transporter on hot standby. He knew that Crusher didn't outrank Picard, but he wasn't about to cross her again. It was because of her that he never got a promotion. It was because of her that he was forced to remain aboard the Enterprise and deny Starfleet transfer orders to Deep Space Nine.

"What do you want?" Picard asked in a sharp tone.

"Going without me Jean-Luc? I'm appalled." She said. Crusher was carrying a type two phaser, and at the moment it was pointed directly at Picard's chest.

Picard allowed a smirk. "Upgraded from a hypospray, have we?" He noticed that she was carrying equipment required for data extraction. Picard had intended to use his second officer's help, but Crusher also had a knack for computers enabling her to relocate needed files and documents in a moments notice. "What do you want doctor?"

"You'll need my help." Crusher said expecting him to accept her words. "Besides, I want to take some medical readings of the crew."

Picard thought it over for a few minutes. "All right, come along."

Crusher lowered her phaser and joined the three officers on the pad. "You won't regret this." She said, "I promise."

Picard shrugged it off, she probably only wanted to get away from the ship for a while. She had been

cooped up in Jeffries Tubes for the past two days evading the Borg every chance she got. "Energize."

The four officers dematerialized in a transporter beam. After they were gone, O'Brien signaled the bridge. "Transporter complete sir, they made it there safely."

On the bridge, Riker nodded his head. "Understood." He was puzzled by the fact that they were not on the ship, but actually where everyone said they would be. For the moment, Riker decided still not to fully believe what was taking place until he had concrete proof. Proof is what he demanded, and proof is what he hoped to see.

\* \* \*

The Romulan vessel was in shambles. Power conduits were exposed, consoles were destroyed, and the EPS taps were humming softly. The four officers rematerialized amid the surrounding destruction. They were on the bridge, near a forward station. As soon as they materialized they took out tricorders and started to survey the damage.

Picard walked around noting dead officers decaying with age. He had read the official reports of how the Romulans had waited until the battle of Wolf 359 was over before decloaking to perform a salvage operation. Picard rubbed the back of his head; something didn't feel right about it. If the Romulans waited until after the battle, why were there Romulan ships in the wreckage?

"Captain, over here." Crusher said. She was standing over a dead Romulan.

As Picard walked over to Crusher's position, he noticed that Data had taken the opportunity to hook

himself up to a computer console, and was currently downloading information and other vital records necessary for their mission.

"Yes doctor?" Picard said. He was standing next to Crusher who was on her knees over a dead Romulan. Picard looked to the Romulan officer and then back to Crusher.

"Do you notice anything strange about this?"

"He's dead?" Picard said shaking his head, he didn't have a clue what Crusher wanted him to see, but he was sure to find out.

"He has a pulse. He isn't dead." Crusher explained.  
"He's in some kind of stasis."

"What?" Picard asked. "This isn't making any sense. These ships shouldn't even be here, especially if the Borg assimilated Earth in the past."

"I do not believe they did that sir." Data said from across the room. "I have found evidence to support the fact that the Borg assimilated Earth immediately after Wolf 359." He said. "They made their way to Earth, stopped the Enterprise and assimilated the planet."

"Are you certain?" Picard asked.

"Yes sir." Data said. "I have all of the records downloaded into my positronic net." He tapped his left temple to emphasize the point.

"How?" Picard asked, "And why is this officer still alive and not part of the collective?" Too many questions were passing through Picard's mind at the moment; too many questions without any explanation of any kind. "I want this ship searched

from bow to stern, if there is any other information let's get it."

"Aye sir." Data responded. "Commander Worf, go down to Engineering and visually inspect the wreckage. I downloaded schematics of the vessel so you will not get lost." He said while pressing a few buttons allowing the Klingon's tricorder to receive the information.

Worf nodded. "Understood." He exited the main control center by using the Romulan version of a Jeffries Tube.

"You have your orders." Picard said. At his command data went to back work checking for other indications of why the ship was still partly active and why there was a Romulan still alive.

"Captain. Request permission to beam back to the Enterprise with him?" Crusher asked pointing to the Romulan.

Picard nodded. "Granted."

\* \* \*

Back aboard the Enterprise, in Sickbay, Crusher went to work immediately. She activated several devices allowing the computer to monitor the Romulan's condition. As she looked at the bio-bed with the Romulan on it, she could only wonder what story he would have the opportunity to tell. It wasn't everyday someone survived a Borg attack. The Enterprise itself had been lucky in many occasions, but Crusher still remembered the names of the eighteen crew members the Borg cutting beam killed in their first encounter with the evil race. She brushed the thought aside and started to scan the officer.

"Amazing." She said. "Computer, make two copies of this report as it is being processed and send the information to Captain Picard's Ready Room."

"Working." The computer replied. "Transmission in progress."

"He's going to find this very useful." Crusher said.

\* \* \*

An hour later, Picard's Away Team beamed back aboard the Enterprise. Each of them carried a piece of equipment salvaged from the Romulan craft.

"Welcome Back sir." O'Brien said. "Brought home some trophies eh?"

Picard allowed a smile to form on his face. "That and more Chief." He tapped his commbadge. "Senior officers, report to the Observation Lounge immediately." He continued out the door and down the hallway.

O'Brien was wondering what they had found; he was disappointed that he wasn't a senior officer to be part of the conversation. But he wasn't down too bad, O'Brien would hear about it later on through word of mouth. It always happened on the ship, he could always count on that.

In the corridor as Picard was walking, his commbadge beeped. "Crusher to Picard." The doctor's voice came in.

"Picard here."

Crusher continued. "Captain, the Romulan is awake, would you like me to bring him up there?" She asked with excitement in her voice.

"Is it safe to move him?" Picard asked.

"Yes sir."

"Very well doctor." He finished. "Picard out."

The journey to the bridge was a little faster than their transport over to the Romulan Vessel. Each step indicated urgency. They had information that needed to be figured out, and Picard knew that his officers were the best in both the fleet and the quadrant. He was confident they would be able to come up with an explanation to the many questions that had risen in the past hours.

As they reached the turbolift Picard started to walk inside. Data hesitated for a moment. "Sir, I do not believe you should enter that lift." He said.

"Commander?" Picard asked.

"Allow me to scan it. I do not want there to be any problems." Data explained. "Remember last year, when you left the ship for a conference? Someone had planted a photon grenade in your quarters."

Picard nodded. "You're right commander. Proceed."

Data took his tricorder out and walked inside the lift. He proceeded to make scans of the interior. Picard admired the precision of his personal guard. Data was very thorough, a luxury Picard didn't have with previous guards.

Data reached above the door and picked up a device almost too small to see. "I have found a genetic seeking device. If you had walked in here, it would have gone off and killed you." Data ran his tricorder over the device; it beeped a few times before

becoming completely silent again. "It is deactivated. I believe it is now safe for you to enter."

"Maybe, after our current situation is over, you should design a shielding device for the captain." Worf suggested. "That way, he would have some kind of defense against these." Worf let a low growl out while saying the last word to finish his sentence. "Devices."

"I intend to." Data replied in a calm tone.

Picard nodded and entered the lift. Worf followed, turned around to face the corridor and said "Bridge." The doors closed allowing the turbolift to travel to the occupants requested destination.

\* \* \*

In the conference lounge, Riker, Troi, Crusher, LaForge and a very alert Romulan sat waiting for Picard and the others to arrive. Riker tapped his fingers on the table, he had decided to forget what he saw and believe what the others claimed they saw. Riker, with the rest of the crew, was still puzzled why he didn't see the wreckage at Wolf 359. Riker mostly decided to give up in order to avoid a conflict with Troi, he didn't want to die any time soon. So, for the moment, he tabled the entire incident and put it behind him.

As the doors opened, everyone but the Romulan started to go to stand and go to attention. Picard took his place at the head of a table, while Worf and Data stood by the other senior officers and waited. Picard looked to the Romulan for a second, and then to his officers. "At ease." At his command, the senior officers sat down in their usual chairs.

Picard looked towards the Romulan again; he wondered what kind of secrets he held within his mind. Soon he would find out, soon a plan of action would ensue on taking back what was rightfully theirs from the Borg. The Romulan stared back at Picard with hatred in his eyes.

"I have called this meeting to discuss our current situation." Picard started. "As you know, we failed in our mission. Or at least that's what it appears to be." He paused. "Commander Data has information indicating otherwise." He looked to Data who walked over to a wall viewer behind Picard and activated it.

Data proceeded to upload information from his positronic net into the computer system, after a few minutes, the information displayed on the screen. "These are the computer files from the Romulan Vessel." As he continued to talk, the screen showed several different types of information, the majority of it was about the Battle of Wolf 359. "The Borg disabled our fleet just like it happened in our universe, but when they reached Earth the Enterprise was unable to stop them." The screen changed to a view of a Borg cube in battle with the Enterprise above Earth. "The battle lasted for a half hour before the Enterprise had to evacuate the sector."

"Why don't we remember any of this?" Riker asked. This time, he was certain that no one else remembered events unfolding as Data had explained them.

"I do not know." Data replied. "I do have a hypothesis." He added. "We might be in a alternate universe, other than the one we already see."

The Romulan laughed. "Federation fools. Don't you understand what happened? It is as clear as your

androids yellow eyes!" He stood from the chair and walked towards Data. "Of course you wouldn't have noticed anything, according to history you disappeared from Sector 001 after Wolf 359." He paused. "This is difficult to understand I realize, but you must believe me."

"Why should we believe you?" Riker asked. "You're a Romulan."

"Not only a Romulan, commander." The Romulan stood proud and tall, "I am a member of the Tal Shiar."

Crusher tapped her commbadge. "Computer, transfer records Crusher 47 from my personal database to the Observation Lounge wall viewer. Authorization Crusher Two One Four Alpha."

"Working." The computer replied.

The requested information appeared on the screen replacing Commander Data's findings.

"Commander Okem isn't a survivor of Wolf 359, he is from this time period." Crusher started to explain.

Okem deactivated the wall viewer allowing it go blank. "That's right. I was sent here by my government to re-examine the wreckage of Wolf 359. My Government has monitored several strange occurrences over the past six years. The majority of them have happened near or in Sector 001." The Romulan continued. "We figured that temporal incursions were responsible for the problems. I was sent to fix the altercations." Okem allowed a deep sigh to exhale from his body. "I was surprised to find another Federation vessel after all these years, so I put myself under sedation to find out what you would do."

Crusher almost laughed out loud. "You endangered your mission and your life just to see what we would do with you?" She couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"Yes." Okem replied. "I endangered my life, but not my mission. If you tune your scanners to a frequency of Four Seven oh One Gamma, you will detect a cloaked Romulan vessel." He said. "Just by speaking with you, I have violated the rules of my government and will be put to death, I want you to destroy that vessel."

Picard looked to Data. "Commander, confirm this information."

Data activated the wall viewer again and set it to the proper frequency. The screen activated to show readings of a Romulan vessel. "It is confirmed captain."

Picard smiled. "All right, let's say we destroy this ship. What's in it for us?"

Okem walked around the table and faced the windows. "I will help you restore your timeline." He turned to face Picard. "Do not think I like you Federation. In fact I despise you."

"Then why do you want to help?" Picard asked. "You could have destroyed us when we beamed over onto that ship." He said. "All it would of taken was for your officers to trace the transporter beam and find the Enterprise."

Okem smiled. "Yes my first officer suggested that. I decided against his suggestion, and ordered them to power down all systems except for the cloaking device after I beamed to the wrecked Warbird." He

paused. "The reason I want your help is because I cannot trust my officers."

"You can't trust us." Troi said as she read the Romulan's mind. "I know that for a fact."

Okem nodded. "I trust you more than them." He folded his arms. "The universe was much easier to handle when all you had to worry about was the Federation. Now we have the Borg on our hands, and the Romulan Government is afraid they will turn to us next." He glanced around the room taking a few seconds to look each of the Enterprise's senior officers in the eyes. "I ask for your help. Not just for Earth, but for the rest of the galaxy."

Picard pondered the pleading Romulan for a moment. It wasn't every day a sworn enemy of the Federation asked for assistance. He stood from his chair and paced around the room for a moment. After that, he had his mind made up. "Picard to bridge."

"Bridge here." A female voice replied.

"Have you been monitoring our conversation?"

"Yes sir." She replied in a cold tone.

"Fire." Picard ordered before deactivating the commline.

### Chapter Three

Location: Wolf 359

Year: 2372 - Two Days Later

Commander Riker sat up in his bed, his quarters were dark. He checked the time, the night watch would soon be over and he would have to resume his

duties as the day watch would be activated. As he stood from the bed, he walked around his quarters for a moment; outside his window was wreckage from the Romulan Warbird Picard had destroyed two days ago. He wondered what the next twenty-four hours would be for the Enterprise and her crew. He wasn't like the others on the ship, they remembered battling the Borg at Sector 001 and wining that fight. Riker had been on a planet in caves the entire time the Enterprise-D had been in existence. He was still finding things about this crew that the other senior officers had known long before he ever came to the Enterprise, and even then it was an upgrade of the ship his captain had known and trusted for over seven years.

"The time is 0600 hours." The computer said in a crisp tone reminding Riker to get out of bed and get ready for duty. He walked towards the bathroom to prepare for the day.

A half hour later, Riker stepped onto the bridge. Commander Data stood from the command chair and waited for Riker to approach. "Good morning commander." Data started "Everything is in proper order, the shields are within normal parameters. How did you sleep sir?"

Riker yawned. "Not too good." He looked to the android for a moment. "I believe you."

Data nodded and went to his station at the front of the bridge. He activated the operations console and checked over the ship's main system protocols again; making sure everything was in proper working order.

"Begin day watch." Riker said. At his command the light levels increased back to what they were when the ship is under cloak. Not much brighter, but enough to make a difference. As he sat in his chair,

Riker looked around the bridge. He figured the captain would be in his ready room as usual. Worf wasn't at his post and neither was Troi. Riker shrugged it off, that wasn't unusual either. They would arrive in a few minutes as well.

"Computer, locate the Romulan." Riker said, he wondered why the commander hadn't shown up yet. He was so eager to get things back to their proper reality and order in the universe.

The computer made a few beeping noises and then made its report. "Commander Okem is in Sickbay."

"Sickbay?" Riker asked out loud. "What is he doing there?"

"We had an argument." A rough voice said from behind.

Riker turned to see the chief of security stepping out of the aft turbolift. Deanna was at his side. "What?" He said expecting an explanation from the Klingon.

Deanna stepped forward and explained the entire situation for him. "It was more of a misunderstanding." She began. "You see, Commander Okem wanted to engage Worf in a little Holodeck simulated activity."

"A reenactment of the Kitomer Massacre to be exact." Worf chimed in.

"Yes," Deanna continued, "Well Worf apparently forgot to tell him that the safety protocols were disengaged by default; and he got injured." She tried to hold back a laugh, it was true Worf should of prepared the Romulan better, but if he did; she would have missed the opportunity to see Okem's facial expression on the way to Sickbay."

"What kind of injury?" Riker demanded. He didn't care for the Romulan either, but they needed him for their mission in order to succeed.

"Level one phaser burns." Worf said.

"Oh, that isn't too bad." Riker replied.

"A damaged rib." Worf continued, "As well as several deep wounds that may have been made by a Klingon weapon." He started to growl, but stopped as he saw Riker's face.

"Which weapon?" Riker asked in order to know the severity of the attack. He hoped it wasn't too serious.

Worf looked to the ceiling, then to Troi, and then back to Riker. "I don't recall the exact weapon that caused each wound." He explained. "I could go to Sickbay, and examine the body myself."

Riker was shocked. "You used more than one weapon?"

"Yes sir," Worf said, "I made a list incase you wanted a complete record." He handed a LCARS Personal Access Display Device to the Commander and looked on as Riker read through the list.

"Worf, there are over twenty different weapons on this list." He wondered how extensive the damage was. Klingons were known for their brutality. Riker thought maybe Worf would have been easier on the Romulan because of the situation they were in. He was wrong about the Klingon as usual.

"Yes, but I did avoid the Klingon Pain Stick." Worf smiled. "I didn't want to kill him."

Riker pointed to Worf's tactical station. "I'll deal with you later." He looked to Troi. "Take your post." Troi nodded her head and walked towards the central command area.

Riker looked back to the PADD and then turned to the operations console. "Data, did you know about this?" He asked the android.

Data turned around in his chair and nodded. "Yes."

"And you didn't notify me?"

"No." The android replied with an innocent look.

Riker didn't know what emotion to express. In another situation, it could have been funny. It was funny to his officers and it should have been funny to him; but it wasn't that easy. "I don't believe this is happening." He tapped his commbadge. "Riker to Crusher."

The hurried voice of the Enterprise's chief medical officer came through the line. "Crusher here." In the background, several beeping noises could be heard, as well as medical devices falling off carts.

"How are things going down there?" Riker inquired.

"Considering I didn't sedate the commander." Crusher said. "As well as can be expected, why?" She continued to work on Okem as the conversation carried on.

Riker rubbed his beard. "How is the Romulan?"

"Oh, he'll be fine." Crusher replied. "Don't touch that!" She yelled at Okem.

Riker shook his head wondering what Picard would think of it all. "Keep in mind, we need him alive. Riker out." As the commline went dead, Riker walked across the bridge towards Picard's Ready Room. He pressed a button activating a chime within the room. A commline opened up just long enough for Riker to hear the captain invite him inside. The doors opened and Riker exited the bridge.

"Captain, we need to talk." Riker said forgetting his place. He walked up to a chair across from Picard and sat down in an aggressive manner.

Picard looked up from a book and noticed Riker's actions. "Have a seat," he said in a sarcastic tone to his first officer. 'I'm going to have to talk with him about being insubordinate.' Picard thought to himself. For the moment, he would brush it aside and continue as if nothing had happened. "What can I do for you commander?"

"Sir, did you know Okem is in Sickbay?" Riker asked with a concerned look on his face.

Picard shook his head. "No." He didn't seem to care; going to Sickbay was a usual occurrence on the Enterprise. There was no alarm so far.

"Well he did." Riker complained. "Guess who put him there."

Picard smiled. "You?" He asked hoping for an affirmative response.

Riker shook his head. "No sir." He paused, wondering how Picard would respond to his answer. "Lt. Commander Worf." Riker sat back in his chair and folded his arms.

Picard laughed. "The Romulan shouldn't have gotten in his way." He stood from his chair and walked over to a shelf full of books. Picard skimmed through the shelf looking for a good book to read, but couldn't decide on one.

"You find this amusing?" Riker said.

Picard nodded. "Don't you?" He turned away from the bookcase and stared at his first officer.

Something was wrong with the commander; he had been acting strange ever since the Enterprise returned from the 21st century. A visit to Deanna or Doctor Crusher was in order. Maybe Picard would send him to both and really get him to the point of going crazy.

"Sir, I." Riker started to say.

Picard cut him off. "Will, are you feeling alright?" He asked deeply concerned about his first officer. "Is there something you aren't telling me?"

Riker stood from his chair defiantly. "No sir." He stood at attention.

"I'm surprised that you weren't the one to hurt the Romulan." Picard said. "You enjoy those types of games." He hinted.

Riker was shocked. "Sir? What's gotten into you."

"I don't think you need to worry about what's gotten into me. You've been acting strange ever since we got back." Picard replied. "Go down to Sickbay, get a complete medical checkup by Crusher." He said. "That's an order."

Riker nodded his head. "Yes sir." He walked out of the Ready Room determined to show Picard and the others that nothing was wrong with him.

On the bridge, Riker headed towards the turbolift. He ignored the looks of his fellow officers who appeared to be concerned about him. As he reached the turbolift doors, they opened and he stepped inside.

"Sickbay." The lift moved down towards the one place he hated. Riker had a few moments to think about what had been happening over the past two days. He wondered why Picard hadn't devised a plan of attack against the Borg yet. It had been two days and the Enterprise was still sitting there cloaked at the wreckage of Wolf 359. Once his routine medical exam was over, Riker was determined to confront Picard on the matter and get an answer. He didn't know how long the Enterprise could sit and wait in the middle of Borg space without being picked up and assimilated all over again.

The doors opened allowing Riker to exit the lift. Standing in his way was Commander Okem, who had seen better days. Visually his condition was back to normal, but inside he was hurting as the surgical procedures performed on him were still working.

The Romulan looked into Riker's eyes. "Commander, I would appreciate it if you didn't tell your captain what happened between me and your Commander Worf." Okem said, he pulled out a few pieces of money to give to Riker hoping to make the request more appealing.

Riker looked at the money and brushed the Romulan's hand away. "I've already told him." Riker explained. He proceeded to walk past Okem who had a blank expression on his face.

"You did?" Okem responded. He turned around and walked after Riker, trying to keep up with the first officer. "What did he have to say?"

Riker stopped in the middle of the corridor and turned to face the enemy. "He didn't really care." He paused, allowing a deep breath inside his lungs, preparing to give the rest of his answer. "He was puzzled why I hadn't attacked you instead of Worf." Riker turned back around and continued on his way towards Sickbay leaving Okem behind.

Okem looked at the money and placed it back into his pocket. The commander had read over Riker's security report, several times, and had committed it to memory by order of his government. Picard's statement had been right; Riker should of torn Okem to shreds upon even glancing upon him. He wondered why Riker had let his security officer the first chance. Okem continued to scratch his head as he made his way back towards the turbolift.

At the opposite end of the corridor, Riker stood in front of the Sickbay doors at least what was left of them. He hesitated before entering the room. Riker really hated Sickbay, hated it with a passion. But if he needed to show to everyone else he was sane, he had to enter.

As he entered, Riker looked around the room. It was a mess. 'Crusher must have had her hands full with Okem.' He thought to himself. Medical devices were scattered all over the floor. Stationary biobeds were no longer stationary and were turned on their sides. Just as Riker was about to go looking for Crusher, she came out of her office.

"What do you need?" Crusher asked.

"What happened here?" Riker said looking at the mess on the floor. "He trashed this place."

Crusher nodded. "That's one of the hazards you take when you don't offer drugs to a patient." She smiled "I eventually had to restrain him using force fields." She shook her head disappointedly. "Too bad the security officers didn't survive." Crusher pointed to two officers in gold uniforms that were lying dead on the floor. "Okem didn't like being held down by people he didn't know or trust. He killed them with his bare hands, it was amazing." She sounded enthusiastic about witnessing the destruction of life. Crusher shook it off and looked back to Riker. "Like I said, what do you need?"

Riker smiled a nervous smile; he could see that Crusher was having a good day. And that was a bad thing. "Picard ordered me down here. I need a physical."

"So, he finally took my advice." Crusher said with pride. She had been telling the captain to get Riker down to Sickbay for over a month. Every time she confronted him on the subject, Picard had backed off saying that something had come up or it wasn't the proper time. "Okay, let's see what we can find." She picked up a tricorder and looked around. "I would invite you to sit on a biobed. but as you can see, there aren't any left." She continued to look around, "Go into my office. I need to get a few things."

Riker obeyed her orders and left the room.

\* \* \*

On the bridge, Picard was sitting in his command chair. He tapped his fingers gently on an armrest. Picard looked around the room surveying his officers. He was pleased that no one else was acting

like his first officer. They appeared to be unaffected, by whatever had happened to Riker. He hoped the answers to Riker's bizarre actions would be made known soon. Picard wanted all of his officers, at least those that weren't killed by the Borg, to be on their toes when confrontation came. He couldn't allow his crew to be occupied by problems.

"Computer, locate Commander Okem." Picard asked wondering why it was taking so long for the Romulan to get back to the bridge. He assumed Okem was interested in finishing his task.

"Commander Okem is in the aft turbolift en route to the bridge." The crisp voice replied.

Picard nodded. "Splendid." He looked to Troi, "Now we can get down to business." He stood from his chair and headed towards the conference lounge. "Picard to senior staff, except for Commander Riker and Doctor Crusher please report to the conference lounge." He exited the bridge.

A few minutes later, the senior officers of the Enterprise were gathered around the lighted table. Commander Okem was there also waiting for the meeting to begin. Picard was seated at the head of the table, and his officers along the sides. Okem sat closer to the Enterprise officers this time around.

"I've excused Commander Riker and Doctor Crusher from this meeting." Picard started. 'I need answers to why Will is acting the way he is.' He thought to himself, Picard picked up a PADD and read over the information on it. "Commander Okem, I assume your government devised some sort of plan to get us back to our correct timeline."

Okem nodded. "Yes. We know the Borg Queen went into the past, and after reviewing your records this is

a second time travel experience for them." He said. "As to why Romulus has knowledge of a changed timeline, I do not know." He shrugged as a possible answer came to his mind. "A certain pulsar was heading through our galaxy ten days ago. It may have affected the universe." He paused. "I realize I'm grasping at straws here, but."

Picard waved his hand. "There's a captain I knew once who said the best way to figure out temporal anomaly's is to not even try. Please continue."

Okem smiled at Picard's forgiving nature towards him. "Yes of course. We need to open a temporal vortex in space, like the ones you've been able to create and go back to the point of time when the Borg Queen started this plan of hers."

"We don't know when she began devising this plan." Troi said.

"Captain." Geordi added, "Don't forget, our shields and long range sensors will be down for a period of time. The Borg might do exactly what they did before."

Picard nodded taking the information under consideration. There was a reason he called on these various officers to be members of his crew, they were the best of the best. To date, they hadn't failed him, and Picard was certain they would never fail him.

"Can we attach some kind of device enabling the shields and sensors to be unaffected?" Troi inquired. She wasn't much of an expert on weapons systems, sure she could tinker with things here or there; but it wasn't her forte.

"I could work on the shields." Worf offered, "It might take some time. We are still trying to remove certain Borg components from our systems."

"They sure messed things up," Geordi added "I'll get to work on the sensors."

Picard nodded. "Get to work on it immediately. Dismissed." At his command, Worf and Geordi stood from the table and exited the lounge. Each had a task ahead of them. If the Enterprise had a standard crew compliment, the process might have been projected as taking less time, but most of the crew were Borg and were now dead.

After the doors closed, Picard looked to Data. "Commander, what is the current status of the Enterprise?"

"For the most part systems are functioning within normal parameters." The android replied. "The systems we need are back in working order. Warp power won't be restored for a while longer sir, we need to install a new plasma coolant system."

"What happened to your last system?" Okem asked.

"I broke it." Data replied in a serious tone.

Okem shook his head and brushed it off for the moment. He had to get use to their customs and humor. At times it was impossible to. Compared to his own culture, Romulans were far more civilized than the Federation; and wouldn't dare make jokes at a serious situation as theirs.

Troi muffled a laugh to the android's response. The Romulan clearly didn't get what had happened to them in the past, and he would remain in the dark for security reasons. "Captain, how do we figure out

when to go back?" She asked getting the meeting back on track.

Picard thought about it for a moment. Thought about the Queen's words to him, she had told him to come back to the collective. There had to be some kind of message inside that simple statement. Something he could use in order to solve the necessary clues to the puzzle before them. The Borg had to be stopped, and as usual they were the ones to stop them. Some days he wondered why other starships couldn't finish a job they completed. The Enterprise was usually the ones to finish a job; they were always the ones Starfleet fell back upon for strength. Without them, he wondered how long Starfleet could survive. As he continued to think about the problem and the Queen's words, a thought struck him.

"That's it." Picard exclaimed. "That's how we get to them!"

Data, Troi, and Okem looked to Picard with questions on their faces. They wondered what Picard was getting at. Troi had been concentrating on the Romulan at the moment, and didn't even notice Picard's train of thought. She was disappointed in herself. Troi usually made it a point to know what the captain had going on in his mind. If she didn't she would be neglecting her duty as ship's counselor.

"Captain?" Okem asked.

"The Borg Queen told me to come back to her, to come back to the collective." Picard started to explain, "The only time the Queen had me in her actual possession was when that Borg Cube was en route to Earth, six years ago."

"So in order for us to figure out the piece we're missing." Okem concluded, "We need to go back to

Wolf 359 and stop the Queen from doing what ever she did to alter time?"

Picard nodded. "Exactly." He turned to Data, "Reconfigure the vortex to take us to the correct time and place." Then turning to Okem he gave more orders. "Assist the commander. You're dismissed."

Data, Okem, and Troi stood from the table and headed towards the door. "Commander Troi." Picard said, "A moment please."

Troi stopped in her tracks and turned around, she walked up to Picard. "Something else sir?"

Picard gestured to a chair near his. "Please have a seat." He probably should have talked about the subject on his mind when everyone else was in the room, but he didn't want to throw suspicion into the minds of his officers. Picard re adjusted his uniform jacket, as was customary over the years. "Counselor, what can you tell me about Commander Riker's condition?"

"I'm not certain if he has a condition." Troi replied. "Yes he has been acting strange at times, but I can't really tell if there's anything out of the ordinary." She lowered her head, "I haven't been monitoring him as close as I have Okem. I apologize for that sir."

Picard understood where she was coming from. "Understandable counselor, don't worry about it." He tried to comfort her, although most of the time she didn't need comforting, it was he that needed help. "I assume you have noticed the commander has been acting rather strange lately."

She nodded. "Yes."

"Do you have any possible reasons for this behavior?"

Troi thought about the question for a moment. To the naked eye Riker just looked out of place, confused about events. She would guess that he was just under a great deal of stress. Their last mission had been rather difficult at times; he just needed some rest and relaxation. She had another power at her disposal than that of visual. Troi was a full telepath from the planet of Betazed, she could look into Riker's innermost thoughts and pull things out he didn't wish anyone else to see. Troi closed her eyes and tried to focus on the one she called Imzadi.

Picard remained silent as she used her telepathic powers; he knew she needed to focus. Inside Troi's mind she felt Riker's presence, felt his mind. At the moment he was waging a war within, a battle that had been going on for years it seemed unresolved and one that could not be avoided. As she continued to probe deeper into his thoughts, new more profound forces appeared. As she focused on the forces, the answer seemed clear.

Troi opened her eyes closing the connection. "I might have an explanation." She began, "I would like to wait for Doctor Crusher's analysis before I proceed."

"Okay." Picard agreed with her, it would be better if the two compared their findings before coming to a conclusion. "Her procedure shouldn't take long, unless he is uncooperative. But that shouldn't be a problem, she'll just sedate him."

## Two Hours Later

In Sickbay, Crusher was completing her final analysis of Riker and imputing that information into the computer. The computer processed the requests made by the doctor and provided her with the information she was looking for. "Okay commander, please accompany me to the Conference Lounge."

Riker stood from an office chair and nodded. "Gladly doctor. Am I glad that's over with." He said as he stretched his back muscles for a moment.

"Crusher to Picard." The doctor said activating the comm system.

"Picard here."

"I'm finished with my report," She continued, "Will you join me in the Conference Lounge?"

"Acknowledged, Picard out." The captain replied, soon he would find out what his officers had come up with; and he would find out how to help his first officer.

Minutes Later

The doors to the Conference Lounge opened allowing Riker and Crusher to enter. Picard was sitting at the desk with Counselor Troi waiting to hear what the doctor had to say to them. Crusher walked to a wall viewer and activated it, she prepared her findings for display. Riker sat down next to Troi and looked across the table out the windows into the wreckage of Wolf 359.

"I made a complete scan of Commander Riker," Crusher reported, "The temporal vortex affected him worse than we thought."

"It affected him in the first place?" Picard asked. This was news to him.

"Didn't you get my report?" Crusher asked.

"If you recall, I was a tad busy up here trying to retake the ship from the Borg." Picard replied in an

antagonistic tone. "I'd appreciate it if you would summarize your former report to catch me up to speed."

"Yes sir." Crusher sighed, and nodded. "When we were on the planet surface, the commander approached me complaining of a headache." She continued. "When I scanned him, I found traces of temporal problems in his brain. The vortex the Borg created had caused him some memory problems as well as other difficulties."

"Why didn't it affect anyone else?" Troi asked.

"Because this Commander Riker is not the original one." Crusher tried to explain.

"There were some discrepancies in my genetic coding that the vortex had fun with." Riker explained. He yawned; the past two hours had been difficult for him. Riker looked as if he needed a rest, a long rest.

"To make matters worse," Crusher added "If the commander enters another vortex, it will kill him."

Riker looked to Picard, "See you don't have to have one of your officers finish me off, you can do it yourself." He looked to Troi for a moment and then stared back out the window.

"Can we reverse the process?" Troi inquired.

Crusher shook her head. "Not unless we get him to a Starfleet Medical Facility." She paused "Which won't be easy considering our current situation."

Picard rubbed the back of his head. Crusher was right, as of the current moment, there was no facility available. There were no Federation officers beside themselves in the entire universe. Earth was in

shambles, and they were expected to do something about it. There were some days that Picard hated his job. "What about your counselor?"

Troi hesitated for a moment. "I realized something was wrong, but I didn't think it was genetics." She explained. "Never mind my findings, they are unimportant for the moment."

"Alright." Picard said dismissing it. "Can we setup a containment field to help him through the vortex?" They needed to complete their mission at any and all costs. Picard didn't want to order the death of his first officer, but if there was no way around it, he would do it.

Crusher started to shake her head; she didn't know exactly what they were dealing with. A routine physical usually didn't shed light on such circumstances. She was in untested water, and didn't know exactly how to proceed. "I'm not sure, I'll have to examine the possibilities."

"Use any of the crew you need," Picard said. "Dismissed." At his command, the officers left the room to get to work. Picard watched Riker leave; it looked like as if hell was knocking on his door. Picard wished there was something he could do. But only time would tell.

## Chapter Four

Location: Sector 001, Earth

Year: 2372

The Borg Queen was lost in deep thought. She smiled as she monitored a viewer display events in the Wolf System. "Everything is working according to plan." She said. Her observations were more to herself than to the mindless drones in the room. The Queen didn't

feel like expressing her plan to the collective for the moment. They would receive instructions and follow her orders with obedience. She never had to worry about the ones that followed her. In her mind's eye and view they were always in line. However, never was a strong word. There remained the fact that Locutus betrayed her, first by resisting and then by leaving her side. Picard was a thorn that wouldn't go away. The only way to get rid of him would be to make him one with the Borg. The remained of the collective, on the other hand, was in perfect order continuing on with their supreme goal: That of obtaining perfection.

The Queen pressed a few buttons on a panel, it sang back to her in tones only a Borg could understand and interpret. The view changed from Wolf 359 to the Romulan Star Empire. With the use of transwarp conduits she could monitor any location of the galaxy. It was only a matter of selecting and activating the proper spatial coordinates. As she viewed the monitor, her smile increased. After she was finished with the Federation once and for all, she would move on to Romulus. They wouldn't be as much of threats as the Federation was, compared to the Federation the Romulans were cowards. The Queen enjoyed the thought of entering Romulus, she had considered making it her capital world, but she was fond of Earth. Maybe she would give it to Locutus, once he was hers again.

"What are you doing here?" The Queen asked a drone as he entered the room.

The drone looked to the Queen and communicated his response through an internal linking mechanism that combined the entire hive mind into one voice. He continued to communicate his reasoning for joining the Queen, everything was in order except for one part the Queen sensed, his loyalty.

"I should have never allowed you that." The Queen said referring to his individuality. She had tried to replace Locutus with others, after Data refused her clone and destroyed several Borg drones. "Somehow your individuality has re-activated." She continued, "You must stop and return to Operation 047 Delta."

"No!" The Borg yelled out, "I am not yours to control anymore. I am not mindless."

The Queen waved her hand to one side. Two drones approached the 'malfunctioning' drone and placed their hands on him. "We will see about that." She looked to the drones, "Take him to Section Alpha, re-assimilate him into the collective."

As the two drones left the room to complete their instructions, the subordinate drone yelled to the Queen. "I will not comply! I will not comply!" He yelled out over and over again.

The Queen turned her attention back to the monitor. "What a waste." As she looked at the monitor, an idea came to her. "You're working to slowly." The Queen said. "Maybe you need some motivation." She activated a few controls and disappeared in a Borg Transporter.

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Section Alpha of the Cube was the place where newly assimilated drones were conditioned and prepared to fully join the collective. Upon assimilation, basic commands are downloaded into a newly constructed neuro-processor in the drone's skull, and another in his chest. Containing basic operating instructions, such as obey and comply the drones are 'formatted' for programming by the Hive Mind.

Upon reaching Section Alpha, the two drones obeyed their Queen and forced the third drone into a chamber. Several dark black thin tubes reached out from the wall and implanted themselves into the Borg's skin. Upon impact, the Borg screamed in pain, as the process continued he tried to not obey the voice of the collective. Inside his mind, the drone heard thousands of voices as the Hive Mind re-established its neural link. "Borg Designation Third of Five, Obey. Hear our song, feel our love. You are Borg."

"No!" The Borg screamed out in pain. "I will not obey!"

"You must comply." The voices continued.  
"Resistance is Futile. You will obey."

"I will do nothing!" He continued to say as he was subjected to more pain. "I am not mindless, I am Hugh!"

"Borg Designation Third of Five." The Collective insisted. "Absorb, Obey, Comply. Resistance is Futile."

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In the Ready Room aboard the Enterprise, Captain Picard was sitting at his desk sipping a cup of Earl Grey Tea. The process for finding a cure for Commander Riker was taking a while, the upgrades to the Enterprise were almost complete and she could go back in time soon. All they were waiting on was for Crusher to complete her project. Picard set the cup of tea down on his desk, and activated a small console. He scanned through several log entries, it had been a while since he had made an entry.

"Computer, begin recording."

Captain's Log Stardate 50999.7. It might take a while to explain what has been going on over the past few days so I'm not even going to try. Let's just say for the record, that the Borg are up to their old tricks again. This time we must defeat them; somehow they defeated the entire Federation. I...

Picard's voice trailed off as voices entered his head. The Borg were attempting to contact him again. "Pause." He said as he tried to focus his mind. A single voice yelled out in pain above the rest. Picard heard his thoughts, felt the fear going through the collective for a brief moment. "Hugh?" He said to himself.

"Yes, Locutus." A female voice replied.

Picard looked up from his desk to see the Borg Queen approaching him. "What do you want?" He asked, not fully believing she was in the room.

The Queen shook her head. "You are weak." She said, "It's not a transmission this time. I'm the real thing." The Queen said to Picard. She walked around the desk and approached him. Once she was standing next to the captain, the Queen placed her finger on his temple. The voices went away for the moment. Picard went to tap his commbadge, but the Queen grabbed it off his uniform. "I don't think so." She said. "I want this to be a private conversation."

"Why are you here?" Picard asked in an authoritative tone.

The Queen folded her arms across her chest. "I came for you." She replied. "It's time you rejoined the collective. Willingly without resistance, like you said you would." She unfolded her arms and selected a few files on Picard's terminal. The files activated, a

communications clip of Hugh appeared on the screen. "Do you remember him?"

Picard nodded "Yes." He wondered what the Queen was getting to, why had she transported to the Enterprise, and why was she talking with him now about a Borg he helped liberate from the collective. "What about him?"

"He's come back to us." The Queen said, "You heard his thoughts, he resisted at first. But once he fully allowed the collective into his mind, he came back." She activated a button allowing the viewer to play a selected portion of the file.

"We are Third of Five."

The Queen paused the playback. "Why don't you follow his example?" She inquired, "It's not difficult, we can do it right away. Harmlessly." The Queen smiled as she ran a finger along Picard's forehead. "It's a pity they removed your implants," She teased, "You were perfect in every way." She walked back to the other side of the desk, "Shall we go?"

Picard shook his head. "No." He tapped a control on the desk, "Picard to." Picard was caught in a transporter beam before he could finish the order for security.

\* \* \*

"Commander!" Worf said. "Captain Picard has been beamed from the Enterprise."

Riker stood from the command chair. "Can you get him back?" He rushed to Worf's side and checked the readouts himself.

"Now I'm detecting, two more crewmen missing." Worf reported. "The Borg are beaming our crew off the ship."

Riker repeated his question, "Can you get him back?"

"No sir." Worf said. He worked the controls trying several different commands to capture Picard's pattern from the Borg Transporter beam and deflect it back to their own. "The Transporters have gone dead, he's gone."

Riker worked on the controls himself, he didn't like that answer. There had to be a way. "Decloak the ship, and get shields up." He walked to Data, "We can't allow them to transport this crew away one by one."

Data stood from his chair and walked quickly to the back of the bridge. "Commander, the shields are still in the middle of an upgrade, I do not know how effective they will be."

"Understood." Riker said, "Now get those shields up!"

Data nodded his head. "Aye sir" the android said as he went to work on what shielding they had.

\* \* \*

Picard and the Queen re-materialized in the middle of thousands of Borg drones. They were standing on a catwalk. Picard looked all around him drones were everywhere. He recognized the configuration of the massive structure as the inside of a Borg Cube. As memories flooded his mind, Picard looked down to the deck. The Queen took a hold of Picard's arm and they started to walk down the catwalk towards a massive opening.

Jean-Luc Picard, captain of the Federation Starship Enterprise. The words of the past came back at him. He recalled every word the collective had said to him, remembered their evil voices, their evil mind; controlling every move he made. Picard recalled his failed words to the collective the first time he had met up with them. I will resist you with my last ounce of strength. The words came to his mind as if it were yesterday.

These Borg were no different than those of that Cube his crewmembers destroyed in his reality. As Picard looked around the open space, parts of it felt familiar to him. If he didn't know any better, he was standing on the same Cube he had been assimilated on six years prior. He already knew what the Borg had to say and didn't want to hear it again. Their message was always the same, Resistance is Futile; and that was all he really needed to know when in confrontation with them.

He chose to speak first, not allowing the collective to begin. "I am Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Federation Starship Enterprise."

The collective made no motion to reply; they simply listened to what the individual had to say to them. Their words would come eventually; they awaited orders from their Queen.

"I will not comply." He said with a proud tone. Picard was defiant to get out of the Borg Stronghold alive, even if it meant killing him. He didn't want to go back to the collective, he didn't want to become Locutus again. As he continued to look around, he wondered if any of the drones awed at his presence. Here he was a former drone himself, standing in front of them communicating vocally. He gathered that to their standards, it wasn't as efficient as ones

and zeros; but he didn't care. Picard was an individual and he was determined to stay an individual.

"We know your thoughts." The voices replied. "We know your lies. You will be assimilated." The Queen smiled at her drones, they were doing exactly what they were programmed to do.

She looked to Picard, "You see. You can't win." The Queen activated a viewer, the Wolf System appeared. "Your ship." She said, "What a beautiful addition to the collective."

Picard stood his ground, "Why do you want me back?" He asked, "What makes you think I'll do what you want?"

The Queen stopped smiling. "We've had this discussion. I had you once, I know your thoughts. You wish to be here." She activated a targeting array, "I have locked torpedoes on your vessel, and can destroy it within minutes." She said, "All it takes is a single command."

"You won't do it." Picard said.

"How do you know that?" The Queen asked, "You don't know me. You don't remember."

Picard nodded. "Are you sure?" He said, "You helped me remember in the past, those memories won't go away for a while, I won't allow them to be suppressed just yet." Picard stared into the Queen's eyes, trying to figure out her entire plan. He had the time to speak with her, and decided he would take advantage of it. "You want more than just me, you want the entire Enterprise crew."

The Queen shook her head. "You're wrong."

"Oh am I?" Picard asked, "You would have destroyed the ship by now." He said, "You wouldn't have waited to show it to me." He paused trying to figure out more, there was something else he just wasn't certain what it was yet. There was something aboard the Enterprise the Queen wanted, something of value to her.

"You're right." The Queen replied to his thoughts. "There is something aboard her I want." She deactivated the viewer allowing it to ascend back up into the ceiling. "And once I have your crew, I'll have it as well."

"What's on the Enterprise you want?" Picard asked.

The Queen remained silent. She didn't feel like telling the captain the information he needed. The Queen had already given him too much information than she should have. Voices sang through her mind, she ignored them. The collective, for once in their existence, was curious why she hadn't dealt with the human and assimilated him yet. She continued to ignore the voices. They were still in the dark for the most part, something they weren't use to; but they accepted her reasoning, whatever it was. She blinked her eyes once. Four Borg drones approached Picard, they were forcing two struggling Enterprise officers towards their location. "You know the purifying power of the collective mind." She said, "Now you will witness your crew members become part of it." The Queen nodded her head.

The four drones forced the two crewmembers down to the deck. They proceeded to assimilate the men. Once the process was started, the men quit struggling. Their muscles relaxed allowing them to fall to the deck unaware of the outside world. All they knew now was the collective. The drones hauled their

new 'brothers' away from Picard and the Queen to Section Alpha.

"There." The Queen said, "This won't take long now. Soon I will have what I need with or without your cooperation." She turned her back towards Picard. "I now have contact with your crewmen's thoughts, they are one with the Borg. Perfection was never so easy."

Picard looked at the Queen; she was trying to frighten him into surrendering. She wanted him to willingly give up, but he wasn't about to let go. He wasn't about to return to the hive, he despised everything it stood for and didn't want to live that life again. To him death was better. He had to find out what the Queen wanted. What was aboard the Enterprise that was so vital to the Borg? He was determined to find out.

The Queen turned back around cutting Picard's thoughts short. "Mark my words, captain." She threatened. "You will not win this fight." The Queen placed her finger to Picard's lips and pressed them gently. "You will become one with the Borg."

Picard vanished from the Borg Cube through the Borg Transporter beam again, and a moment later he was back in his Ready Room. Once he regained his bearings, he picked up his comm badge from the table and tapped it. "Picard to Bridge, Red Alert. All hands to battle stations." He placed the badge on his uniform and exited the Ready Room in a quick pace.

The Bridge was bustling with activity. Riker approached Picard, "Captain are you alright?"

Picard nodded "Yes Number One, I'm fine." He paused. "Crewmen Mendez, and Guest have been assimilated." Picard lowered his head; it was time to

move on with their plans. He looked to his first officer, knowing that his life would be in danger. Picard knew Riker was willing to do whatever needed to be done for the Enterprise and the success of their mission, he just didn't want to give the order. Picard trusted Riker, something he never did easily especially around certain Enterrpise crewmembers.

Picard looked around the bridge, "Report."

"We had to decloak the ship in order to raise shields." He sighed, "A lot of good that did, apparently the Borg can transport through our shields anyway."

Picard nodded, the very fact that he was standing on the bridge again was proof of that. "Yes." He paused, "We'll have to work on a way to modify the shields to operate while under cloak. Lower shields, and cloak the vessel. The Queen had me, but she didn't keep me. I think we'll be fine for now, capturing the Enterprise crew and assimilating isn't her primary goal, at least not yet." Picard thought about the two crew members they had lost, it was only a threat from the Queen. If she wanted the Enterprise's crew, she could have had them when she contacted them.

"Shields are down and the cloak is activated." Data reported.

"She wants something." Picard said, "Something aboard this ship, but I don't know what it is yet." He looked to Riker and allowed a slight frown. "We need to finish this once and for all."

Riker looked to his commanding officer, he didn't know the captain's thoughts, but he knew whatever it was, they had to do with him. "Sir." He began, "I'm prepared to enter the Vortex without Dr. Crusher's device." He said, "We can't afford anymore crewmembers being abducted, we're limited as it is."

"I am well aware of that commander." Picard said in a rather harsh tone full of stress and a portion of anger. He hesitated and then apologized for his actions. "Will, I'm not about to let you die."

"And you won't have to." Crusher said. "I'm finished." She said while entering the Bridge via the aft turbolift. Crusher walked down to where Picard and Riker were standing, "I'm ready to go if you are." She said looking to Riker.

Riker nodded. "Let's do it." He followed Crusher to the turbolift that would take them to Sickbay. Crusher was walking quickly, Riker had to double his pace to keep up with her.

Picard walked towards his command chair and sat down. He pressed a few buttons on a console, connected to the arm of the chair, checking ships status. Everything was within normal operating conditions. The ship was ready to go back and face the Borg. He recalled his words to Lily back in the 21st Century; .the line must be drawn here. This far, no farther. He had a second chance to draw that line, and to finish what they started, or rather what Q started when he first introduced the Federation to the Borg threat.

"Attention all hands, this is the Captain." Picard said after activating a ship wide communications system. "In less than ten minutes, we are going to re-enter the vortex that brought us here, and end up at the battle of Wolf 359." He paused allowing his crew to think over the mission they were about to embark upon. It was full of danger and risk, but it needed to be done. "I realize that the past few days have not been easy for you. We all expected some well deserved shore leave, but we're not there yet." Picard continued. "As I have mentioned in the past, you are

the finest crew in the fleet. I want you to remember that. If we don't succeed you know the consequences. So it is imperative that we succeed with this mission. If not for ourselves, but for the Starfleet we have sworn to uphold. Picard out."

Silence filled the bridge. The only sounds audible were that of console beeping light tunes as they always did. Soon, those consoles wouldn't be softly beeping anymore, they would be loud tones with disaster prepared on their screens.

Troi looked to Picard, "You do realize that by going back to Wolf 359, there is a good chance you will be killed, in the past on that Borg ship when we attack."

Picard nodded. "I already have a plan for that." He turned his attention to Data. "Commander."

Data turned in his chair to face Picard. "Everything is ready sir. I personally oversaw the refit to the Borg chamber myself. All we have to do is get him off the cube."

Picard smiled. "Good." He turned back to Troi, "This should be interesting." He pressed a few more buttons rechecking the vessel's information, "Let's hope Worf's new shield enhancements survive the vortex." He paused, "Red alert, all hands to battle stations."

\* \* \*

On the way to Sickbay, Riker and Crusher passed by a few crewmen who were rushing to get to their duty stations. "We only have a few minutes." Crusher yelled. Riker nodded, and they started to run. Red lights along the walls were flashing red indicating alert status.

A few seconds later, Riker and Crusher entered Sickbay. It was darker than usual. Crusher walked towards the main bio-bed in the middle of the room, it was modified allowing the occupant to be unaffected by the vortex. "Let me run one last scan." Crusher said, she took out a tricorder and made a few scans of Riker. "Okay, you're ready."

"Picard to Crusher," the voice of the captain came through, "Report."

Crusher tapped her commbadge as she helped Riker get into the bio-bed. "He's in the chamber, and I'm activating it now captain." She said to her commanding officer.

"Good," Picard replied. "When you're finished in Sickbay, I need you back on the bridge."

"Understood. Crusher out." As the comm signal went dead, Crusher looked to Riker. "Pleasant dreams."

Riker smiled back. "Catch ya later doc."

Crusher closed the chamber hatch, a hissing sound filled the room indicating the chamber was putting Riker in a deep sleep. If anything went wrong, at least he wouldn't feel pain. "Computer, activate the Emergency Medical Holographic Program."

A man appeared after a holographic structure was formed. "Please state the nature of the medical emergency." He said. Once the EMH saw who it had activated him a frown appeared on his simulated face. "Oh it's you. What do you want now?" He asked, "Do you need me to wrestle with a Bloodworm?" He looked around the room and noted the mess. "What on earth did you do to my sickbay?" The EMH demanded.

Again, Crusher was in a hurry. "No time to explain. I need you to monitor Commander Riker's life signs, and keep this device stable." She said pointing to the bio-bed.

"What is with you people?" The doctor asked, "Always running away from me." He continued to look around the room. "Very well."

Crusher exited Sickbay and headed back towards the bridge. On the way towards the turbolift, Crusher ran into Commander Okem. "Going to the bridge?" She asked the Romulan.

Okem nodded. "Yes." They continued to walk down the corridor quickly. "Do you think we'll make it out of this alive?"

Crusher suppressed a smile. How obvious for the Romulan to be scared at a time like this. "If we don't you'll be assimilated along with the rest of us."

"Don't remind me." The Romulan replied with disgust.

\* \* \*

The bridge turbolift doors opened allowing Crusher and Okem to enter. "Reporting as ordered." Crusher said.

Picard turned in his chair and pointed to a science station. "Take your post, monitor any problems with the vortex. I don't want anyone else ending up like the commander."

"Yes sir." She said and headed towards Science Station 2.

Picard turned his attention to Okem. "I don't care where you go, just don't get into trouble."

Okem nodded, "Of course." He started to walk towards Worf, hesitated a moment, turned and walked the other way taking the post next to where Crusher was standing. Okem didn't feel like getting hurt today.

Picard chuckled to himself, "Wise choice." He turned back around in his chair facing the viewer. "Picard to LaFroge."

"LaForge here." The voice of the chief engineer came through the comm system.

"Geordi de cloak the ship and open a vortex." Picard orderd.

\* \* \*

Down in Engineering, Geordi LaForge walked towards a console for the main deflector dish. He had to do some fine handy work to get the deflector work properly especially after the main section of it was destroyed. Replacement parts were never the same as the actual real thing. "Aye captain." He replied. Geordi proceeded to work the controls opening a Temporal Vortex fifty meters ahead of the Enterprsie, all they had to do was fly through it.

\* \* \*

Back on the bridge, Picard looked at the screen as the vortex came into view. The colors were changing between white, light gray, and dark gray. Considering it was the Borg who constructed the gateway in the beginning, it was dull in nature and color, but it served its designed purpose. "Take us in." Picard ordered.

Outside, the Enterprise became visible and moved slowly towards the vortex. Once it reached the outlying edges, the ship rocked violently. It would be a bumpy ride from there on out. The ship continued until she was completely immersed inside until she was basically unrecognizable. The Enterprise vanished with the closing behind her; their mission to free humanity from torture was about to begin.

## Chapter Five

Location: Wolf 359, Two Days Before The Battle

Year: 2367

The Enterprise emerged from the temporal vortex and coasted safely into open space. Almost immediately, the vessel cloaked making it invisible to sensors.

On the Bridge, Picard stood facing the main viewer. All that was visible on the screen were stars. At this point in time, the Borg ship and the Enterprise-D were in a nebula playing a game of cat and mouse. Picard recalled days passed when his crew was fighting what seemed like an endless battle with a relentless enemy. "All right people," Picard said, "let's get this ship ready for battle."

At his command, his crew went to work on making the Enterprise prepared for anything the Borg would throw at them. As before, the shields and sensors needed to be brought back on-line.

"Captain," Okem said, "Once you get those sensors on-line, I would suggest you make scans for cloaked Romulan Warbirds." He paused, "I will give you my command codes for their ships."

Picard nodded. "How nice of you." He paused, "Tell me one thing."

"What is that?" Okem replied.

"Why didn't the Romulans keep their agreement with the Federation?" Picard asked, "Why didn't your people attack that Cube?" He grew angrier, "It might have helped things out in the end, and we wouldn't have been here now."

Okem nodded. "Yes captain, I understand where you are coming from." He stood from the science station and walked towards the command area to face Picard. As he did so, Worf stood ready to attack. Okem decided not to get to close to the Federation captain, just incase the Klingon thought he was going to try something. "The fleet was about to engage the enemy, but it was my orders that stopped them."

"Your orders." Picard echoed in an angry tone.

"Yes captain, my orders." The Romulan began to explain the situation to all within earshot. "You see, I was there at the battle of Wolf 359. It was I who ordered the fleet to not engage the Borg, I wanted to bring home trophies for my government." He paused remembering the contention on the bridge of his ship. "All of the other Warbirds were inline with my decision, the only ones who weren't were those under my command. I was the commanding officer of the entire Romulan Fleet, it was my duty to make sure the government's orders were carried out. But I didn't want that. We've seen the report of countless worlds being destroyed by the Borg, and I didn't want our noble fleet to have that same fate." He paced around the Bridge for a few seconds trying not to become agitated over the entire situation that happened six years ago. "I executed my disobedient officers one by one until ten were laying dead on the

deck of my ship. The others, after seeing what had happened to their fallen comrades, changed their minds and followed my instructions."

"So it was you." Troi stood from her chair pointing a finger at Okem. "If you were in command of the fleet, why didn't you contact us when that Warbird decloaked?"

"Ah, yes." Okem said, "That's a different matter entirely my dear. I was afraid to contact the Enterprise when you entered the system, I didn't want you to destroy my ship."

Worf growled, "You didn't want to die in a battle you would have easily lost. You are a coward."

"Maybe so." The Romulan agreed, "But I completed what I wanted to do. I delivered your technology to my government and look what it got me." He allowed a depressing sigh. "Nothing. Only fear of the Borg attacking my home world next."

Picard nodded, "Why didn't you bring this up earlier?"

"I don't know..." Okem's words trailed off as he noticed that Worf had a phaser trained on him. Inside he knew he deserved it. He felt responsible for what had happened, even though Picard and his crew claimed it was the Borg Queen, he felt responsible for destroying thousands upon thousands of worlds.

"You don't know, or you don't care?" Worf growled. "You deserve to die."

Picard looked to Worf, "You can kill him later, for now we need him." Worf still held the phaser determined to kill his enemy, but Picard insisted. "Stand down commander! That's an order."

Worf slowly lowered the weapon. "Understood."

Okem allowed a slight smile. "Looks like you're having a disciplinary problem of your own captain."

Picard shook his head. "That's none of your concern."

"Of course." Okem said allowing the matter to drop.

"When will those Warbirds arrive?" Picard asked.

"If your chronometers are correct, they should arrive tomorrow." Okem said, "What do you plan to do?"

"You're going to abduct yourself off that lead Warbird and have a talk." Picard said, "Now, that's one I would like to witness." He looked around the bridge; "We have until tomorrow to get our systems fully operational. Get it done."

"Doesn't your almighty Prime Directive frown on such a procedure?" Okem asked with evil in his eyes.

Picard shook his head, "As of this moment, I am declaring the Prime Directive null and void. If we don't complete this mission, there won't be a Prime Directive to even speak of." Picard headed towards the aft turbolift.

"What kind of answer is that?" Okem asked trying to get on Picard's nerves. "That's all you ever do, bend the rules."

Worf approached Okem with phaser in hand. "The captain has made a decision, you will obey or I will kill you right here."

Okem nodded his head, "Alright Klingon, but before this mission is over either you are going down or I am."

Worf nodded "Agreed" he said accepting the challenge.

Picard entered the turbolift and waited for Commander Data to accompany him.

"Sickbay" Picard said to the computer after the turbolift doors closed behind his second officer. The lift moved towards the ordered location.

"Captain," Data began "After this new evidence has come into play, I have more distrust for Okem than I did before." He paused, "Do you have the same feelings?" The android asked, his emotion chip was deactivated. Data knew that he didn't have feelings at the moment but humans did; and he had to gear his questions towards the human factor of life for he was not human and no one could understand what the life of an android was.

Picard thought about the commander's statement for a moment or two before answering. "Yes." He said with determination in his voice. "He can't be trusted, I plan to allow Commander Worf to execute him once everything gets straightened out."

Data nodded. "An excellent idea sir."

They continued the rest of the trip in silence; Picard thinking about the duty ahead and Data thinking of over thousands of possibilities for their mission to either succeed or fail.

As the lift stopped, Picard and Data exited and walked down the hallway. It was still a mess, there were several Borg alcoves lining the wall,

uninhabited of course; but Picard didn't like the looks of it. "I can't wait until we can get this ship looking like it should be." Picard said as they turned the corner to enter Sickbay.

The inside of Sickbay looked better than the corridor, there was no longer a mess. Everything was the way it was suppose to be. As they entered, the Emergency Medical Hologram approached them with a smile. "Well, how'd I do?" He asked referring to the tidiness of the room.

"How's my officer?" Picard asked.

The EMH shook his head, "You people never say thank you, or any other kind word." He pointed towards the main biobed. Riker was standing next to the bed apparently getting a breath of fresh air.

"I'm fine captain." Riker said. "The company could have been better, but I managed." He looked to the EMH and sighed, "When can I report back to my post?"

The doctor picked up a tricorder and proceeded to make scans of Riker. "Just allow me to complete a few more."

Riker shook his head. "No more of those, I've had enough of this place." He started to head away from the bed, but was stopped by a force field. "What that?" Riker said realizing his predicament.

"You may leave when I tell you so." The EMH replied, "I've tried being nice to you people but it looks like we're not going to get anywhere with that approach." He paused, "So I improvised."

Riker looked to Picard, "Do we really need him?"

Picard pondered the question for a moment; he really hated the EMH program ever since it was installed in Sickbay. He looked to Data who nodded his head. "I'm afraid so." Picard said to his first officer, "But we can deactivate him."

"Oh a lot of good that will do." The EMH said, "I'll still be around when you need me to run another errand." He paused and chuckled to himself.

"What are you laughing about?" Picard asked.

The EMH shook his head, "Oh nothing you won't find out."

"Computer, deactivate EMH." Riker ordered. At his command, the EMH's holographic projection disappeared from the room. "Now disengage the force field."

"Unable to comply." The computer replied, "You do not have proper security clearance."

"Computer, recognize voice authorization and clearance." Picard said, "Jean-Luc Picard, Security clearance Alpha Tango 47."

"Voice confirmed."

Picard smiled, "Lower the force field."

"Unable to comply." The computer said again, "You do not have proper security clearance."

Picard looked to Data, "Commander."

Data put two hands up, "I was not me." He replied, "I have not impersonated you for a few years. And I promised I would never do it again."

Picard nodded his head, "Computer. Who does have clearance?"

"Doctor Lewis Zimmerman." The computer replied.

"Doctor who?" Data asked.

"Doctor Lewis Zimmerman." Again the computer responded, "Program EMH-1."

"Great!" Riker said, "First he's getting security clearance and now he's giving himself a name. What's next? A holographic dog named Fido?!"

"By what means was the security clearance enabled?" Picard asked.

The computer made a few beeping noises, "Method unknown."

Riker sighed, "Looks like he's got us." He paused, "Computer, activate EMH."

The EMH reappeared and began his startup routine. "Please state the nature of the." When he realized who was in the room, he stopped speaking.

"Problems gentlemen?" He smiled for a moment at his accomplishment.

"You know what's wrong." Picard said.

"Oh really?" The doctor asked, "Please tell me what the emergency is, and maybe I'll think about helping you."

"What type of security did you implement?" Riker demanded.

"Oh that." The EMH replied, "Well, there was all of this Borg equipment around so I decided to make use

of it. I used several Borg encryption algorithms for a few different liberties I wanted. Like force fields for example."

"Data, de-compile his program." Picard ordered.

Data shook his head and held up a finger. "Sir, if we were to do that. It would take us a while to free the commander; and as you know we do not have the time required for such a process."

"Fine, we'll de-compile him later." Picard sighed, "What is this universe coming to! Doctor, finish your scans." He turned his head towards Riker, and with an apologetic look said, "Looks like you'll be here for a little while longer. Report back to the bridge as soon as possible." Picard exited Sickbay with Data right behind him.

Riker looked to the EMH and frowned; he didn't enjoy his current situation for one second. "Look's like I'm stuck here for a while, huh doc?"

The EMH nodded and walked through the force field, ready to continue with his scans. "Don't worry, this won't hurt." He taunted, "Much."

\* \* \*

## LATER THAT EVENING

Riker exited Sickbay in a quick pace. He had enough of tests and other medical procedures. The doctor gave him almost a clean bill of health, he just needed to get back to a Starfleet medical facility to clear up the rest of whatever happened to him when they passed through that vortex. As he continued down the hallway, he passed by Doctor Crusher. "Hey there doc." Riker said in a pleasant mood, he stopped walking.

Crusher stopped as well. "What has he done to Sickbay?"

Riker smiled, "Oh not much. You could say he did some spring cleaning."

Crusher shook her head. "Oh no." She ran down the corridor towards Sickbay to see what exactly the EMH had done.

Riker laughed and continued on his way towards the turbolift.

\* \* \*

Deanna Troi was in her quarters trying to get some rest. It had been a long day for her and she wanted to put it behind her for the moment. Troi was supposed to have the night watch, but Commander Data insisted that he take it since he didn't require any sleep. She expected that he wanted something in return for covering her post; no one did anything out of the kindness of their hearts anymore. Especially Data, considering he really didn't have a heart.

BEEP BEEP

The door chime rang out through the room. Deanna ignored the call hoping it would go away.

BEEP BEEP

Again the chime insisted like a little child wanting to get his mother's attention. Troi got out of bed, threw on a robe; and walked towards the doors to her quarters. She pressed a communications button.  
"Yes?"

"It's me" Riker's voice came through the line, "Can we talk?"

Troi sighed, "We've already discussed this Will. You and I are over."

Outside her quarters, Riker shook his head. "No, that's not what I mean." He explained fully knowing that Worf would not appreciate Riker taking Troi away from him. He would probably end up dead by morning. "I've been cooped up all day, and I need to talk to someone. well human."

Troi's tired voice came through the comm. channel. "I'm not human." She replied, "Goodnight Will."

Riker smiled, "Will they ever learn?" He paused giving Troi enough time to get back into bed. "Computer."

The computer made a few beeping sounds.

"Override the lock on Commander Troi's quarters, authorization Riker Omega Three." He ordered and waited for the computer to complete his request, which didn't take long.

The doors opened and Riker walked inside to be met by Troi who was holding a phaser pointed directly at him. "What, no hello hug?" Riker teased.

Troi wasn't in the mood for games. "I told you I didn't want to be interrupted." She continued to approach Riker making him step backward until he was in the corridor again. Troi turned to leave Riker in the corridor for the evening.

Riker looked at her with a quizzical expression on his face. "If this is a bad time, I could." He started to say but stopped when Troi fired the phaser. The beam

struck Riker in the chest causing him to fall down to the deck unconscious.

Troi tapped her commbadge. "Troi, to Sickbay."

"Yes, what can I do for you Deanna?" The EMH responded.

"Where's doctor Crusher?" Troi demanded.

"She's busy at the moment, I could have her call you."

Troi shook her head, "You have incoming wounded doctor. Commander Riker has been hit by a phaser discharge almost point blank, at a low stun setting, and requires medical attention. He has light phaser burns on his chest."

"How would you know that?" The EMH asked. He paused for a second and changed his mind, "Forget it, I'll ask the commander. I'm transporting him now." Riker's body was caught up in a transporter beam as he was taken to Sickbay.

Troi looked down the hall making sure no one saw what happened, it was deserted. "Good." She said, "Now maybe I can get some rest." Troi entered her quarters and the doors closed behind her. It was time to get some rest.

\* \* \*

In sickbay the EMH stood over Riker's body, "Looks like we get to have some fun." He said to himself. "You shouldn't have been so eager to leave sickbay commander, look what it got you." The doctor took out several medical devices and began to operate on Commander Riker.

A loud booming sound could be heard from the main storage area. The EMH sighed, "Computer, how long has it been?"

"Three hours, forty-seven seconds exactly." The computer responded to the inquiry.

"Very well." The doctor continued, "Deactivate program EMH-Beta-Roe, and unlock the main storage area."

"Working." The computer said, "storage area is within normal parameters."

As the doors to the storage area opened, Doctor Crusher exited in a hurry. She ran over to the nearest biobed and grabbed a blanket. "What was that for?!" She demanded. "It was freezing in there!"

The doctor shook his head. "I was hoping it would teach you to not get out of line like that, but it appears I was mistaken." He paused, "Next time, ask before you come barging into my Sickbay ordering me around."

The doctor sighed, "Is this because of that incident in the past?"

The doctor nodded, "How would you like a Borg drone messing with your program. You thought they wouldn't harm me. You were mistaken, they experimented with my holo-matrix until they became tired and deemed that my technology wasn't worth using." He paused, "How absurd!"

Crusher noticed Riker on the main biobed, "What happened to him?" She said as she was trying to warm up from the cold temperatures of the storage area.

"Oh the usual," The EMH replied, "Ex-boyfriend gets shot by ex-girlfriend."

Crusher shook her head and picked up a tricorder. She made several scans of Riker's lifeless body. "He should have known better. I'll."

"Just go back to your quarters." The EMH finished, "I'll take care of him. Don't worry he'll be fine."

Crusher hesitated, "Why should I trust you?"

"Do you honestly think you could help him in your present frozen condition?"

"You're right," Crusher said, "I'll be in my quarters."

"Good idea."

As she exited Sickbay, she heard the EMH say something about the crew. Crusher was determined to talk to Starfleet Command about the entire EMH program. Something needed to be done with the defective program before they would all run amuck. She hoped the doctor wouldn't harm Riker, it was his own fault for getting shot and he had to pay the consequences.

In the corridor, Crusher ran into Picard and Data who were walking to Sickbay again. "Captain." She said indicating they needed to discuss something.

Picard stopped walking, "Doctor, what happened?"

"Nothing. Listen, we need to do something about that EMH. He's completely taken over Sickbay. My Sickbay." Crusher re-emphasized.

Picard nodded, "Yes I agree. We're going to decompile his program once this situation with the Borg is overwith."

"That's not good enough sir. He has Riker in there with light phaser burns." Crusher said.

Picard lowered his head, "Troi! I told those two to settle their problems, but they didn't listen." He sighed, "What else?"

"He almost froze me!"

"Thank you doctor, I'll see to it." Picard replied.  
"Now go and get some dry warm clothes on, and get some rest."

Crusher continued towards the turbolift allowing Picard and Data to get to Sickbay. Once they arrived at the doors, Picard noticed they were fixed. "He did do a nice job on the doors."

Data nodded, "Yes sir."

Picard tapped his commbadge. "Computer, what is the current status of Commander Riker?"

"Commander Riker's bio signature is within normal parameters."

Data reached for a button to open the door. Before he could access the controls, Picard held out his arm stopping him.

"Computer," Picard continued, "Are there any programs running with Borg subroutines in Sickbay?"

"Negative."

"Good," Picard said to Data, "Now we can get rid of him. Computer, delete the EMH."

"Access denied, must have voice authorization."

Picard glared at Data, "Commander, would you like to do the honors."

Data nodded, "Yes sir." The android accessed several vocal routines and processors; and then in the EMH's voice said. "Computer, recognize Dr. Lewis Zimmerman."

"Voice authorization recognized."

"Delete program EMH-1."

"Working, EMH deleted." The female voice replied.

The doors opened and Riker exited Sickbay.  
"Captain. Data. It sure is good to see you again."

Picard nodded, "Go get some rest." He then turned to Data, "Begin the night-watch on the bridge."

Data nodded. "Aye sir."

\* \* \*

Only a few officers were on the bridge, the Senior Officers had all turned in for the evening, they had a big day ahead. Picard wanted all of his key officers to be ready and awake when they would face that fleet of Warbirds.

As Data entered the bridge, he walked towards the command chair and sat down. "Computer, begin night watch."

The lights lowered a little more to simulate what evening would be like if they were on Earth. Many crew members wished they were back home where they belonged; but that wasn't possible. Soon the battle would ensue, and they would be there face to face with the Borg known as Locutus. Data wondered if they would weather the storm or be destroyed along with the other vessels at Wolf 359.

## Chapter Six

Location: Borg Cube, en route to Earth

Year 2367

The Borg Queen emerged from her regeneration chamber and activated several monitoring screens. Seven screens were monitoring several different locations. Six of the screens transitioned between hundreds of Borg Cubes. The seventh monitoring device was locked on the Enterprise-D and her crew. At the moment they were stopped dead in space repairing their inferior vessel.

Locutus approached the queen. He didn't say a word; he only stared at his former vessel. Deep inside, emotions were running everywhere, wanting to get out. But Borg command codes, and other devices taking away his life and mobility trapped him.

"Soon Locutus, we will have Earth." The queen said, "Have you made progress on that corpse?"

Locutus shook his head, "No." He paused, "But soon he will be one with the Borg."

"Yes Locutus, Yes." She ignored the statement, already knowing that it was only a matter of time before they would learn the secrets of the Borg drone.

Wolf 359, One day before the battle of Wolf 359

Year: 2367

Time: 0800 hours

"RED ALERT, THIS IS NOT A DRILL. RED ALERT."  
The computer said in its cold feminine tone.

"Report" Picard said to his bridge crew as he exited the ready room.

"You asked for my fleet, and now they are here right on time." Okem smiled as he read over the sensor readings. "Forty-seven Warbirds are in position ready and waiting."

"Your fleet consisted of forty-seven?" Picard echoed.  
"That number would have easily increased our chances for survival."

"But that's in the past now." Okem said.

"But so are we." Riker replied, "And we're going to change things." He approached an aft science station towards Okem and looked down at the sensor display, "Have you located the lead ship with yourself aboard?"

Okem shook his head, "No not yet." He ran his fingers along the panel conducting several scans as discretely as possible. "I'm having difficulties with your sensors, they are so. primitive."

"Commander Data, assist him." Picard ordered.

"Yes sir." Data stood from his chair and walked to the back of the bridge, Okem saw him approach but didn't budge. "Step aside." Data commanded.

Okem shook his head, "I can do this myself." He continued working with on the console ignoring the android as best he could.

Data repeated his command. "Step aside, now."

Okem continued to ignore his orders, "Trust me I can do this."

Data looked to Worf, "I believe your assistance is required."

Worf drew his phaser and aimed it at Okem. "Level 1 should be sufficient."

Data shook his head, "Better make it level 2." He paused, "We want to teach him a lesson."

Okem continued to ignore the two officers and their conversation about shooting him. "Almost there." He said, "Almost there."

Worf set the phaser to level 2 and steadied his aim on the Romulan. He always enjoyed target practice, especially when it wasn't on the holodeck. Live targets were always more preferable as well.

"There we go." Okem said, he looked to Data "There you are commander, no need for violence."

Data checked the console. "His readings are accurate captain, we have detected the lead Warbird and have Okem's life signs." He looked to Worf and nodded his head.

Worf fired the phaser hitting Okem square in the chest knocking him to the floor. As the beam hit him, the Romulan screamed out in pain. A loud thud sound echoed through the bridge. Everyone at his or her stations stopped and looked in Okem's general

direction. Once they saw what had occurred, each went back to what they were doing.

Picard stood from his command chair and looked over as well. "Was that really necessary?" He looked to Worf then to Data, and then back to Worf again.

Worf nodded, "Yes sir."

Data nodded as well, confirming the Klingon's actions, and remained silent.

Picard threw his hands into the air, "Very well. What's done is done." He walked towards Data and smiled, "He needed that anyway." Picard noted Okem's sensor readings "Beam that Okem off his Warbird into a holding cell, and beam this one to Sickbay. I want that conversation between the two men to begin as soon as possible."

Data nodded, "Aye sir." He activated his commbadge, "Data to Transporter Room 3."

"O'Brien here."

"Chief, I am sending you coordinates." Data continued carrying out his orders as Picard walked down to the main command area and sat back down in his chair. He didn't need to hear the android fulfill the orders he had given. A moment later, a transporter beam could be heard on the bridge as Okem's body was taken to Sickbay, for the second time.

"Captain," Data announced, "Commander Okem is on deck 20, section 4 Baker. Holding cell three."

Picard smiled, "Thank you commander." He looked to Riker, "Number one, looks like we won't be able to

have Okem talk with himself for a while, why don't you and Commander Troi go pay him a visit."

Riker and Troi stood from their chairs and exited the bridge via the aft turbolift. Data approached Picard, "Captain, I do not believe that was a wise choice."

"Why is that commander?" Picard asked.

"They are having difficulties." Data said in a hushed voice hoping Worf wasn't listening in on their conversation. He looked towards tactical and noticed that Worf was busy with a task; he wasn't paying attention at all.

Picard nodded, "Maybe so, but they are excellent at interrogations. I just wanted my best people on the job."

Data nodded, "Understood sir."

\* \* \*

As the lift stopped at deck 20, Riker and Troi made their way down the hallway towards Holding Cell Three. They had allowed the turbolift ride to go in silence, not wanting to communicate with each other. Riker attempted to break the ice.

"You don't need to communicate with words commander," Troi said, "I already know what you're going to say before you even get a word out."

Riker sighed, that's one disadvantage of having a full-telepath onboard.

"I heard that." She said.

"I know." Riker replied. "And if you know anything else, you'll know the reasoning behind my going to your quarters last night."

Troi thought about his answer for a moment and then nodded, "Go on."

"Why don't we just put our differences behind us? We have to concentrate on our current situation at hand and not allow anything get in the way of our mission." Riker attempted. "We know that our past has gotten in the way of things before."

Troi nodded, "Don't remind me." Troi said as they turned a corner that led to the Brig.

As the doors opened, a security officer stood from his post and went to attention. "Commanders sir." He said to the two officers.

Riker nodded, "At ease ensign." He looked towards a holding cell, "Has he said anything?"

The ensign shook his head, "No sir. He didn't want to talk to a subordinate officer like myself."

"I know the feeling." Riker said, "Dismissed."

The ensign exited the room allowing Riker and Troi alone with Okem from the past. They approached the force field and stood in front of it staring at the Romulan for a few minutes. Okem simply stared right back at them, not moving a muscle. He was their prisoner and wouldn't talk until spoken to, following the rules that had been pounded into his head ever since he was a child. Don't trust humans, they are dangerous, wanting one thing and one thing only, to destroy you. They are evil and will stop at nothing until you are lying dead in the street!

"Welcome aboard." Riker began, "Our names don't matter for the moment. We are however commanders in the Federation Starfleet."

Okem laughed, "Is that supposed to impress me?"

Riker looked Okem straight in the eyes, "I don't care for your attitude." He drew his phaser preparing to drop the force field and kill the Romulan. Riker halted his actions as Troi placed her hand on his upper arm. After a moment, he lowered the phaser's setting back to stun; but did not holster the weapon.

"We know what you are planning, and we want you to rethink your strategy." Troi said, "You must engage the Borg with the Federation ships, don't lay low; don't violate the agreement between our two governments."

Okem's eyes got larger, how did these people know his plans? He hadn't told anyone about it at all, not even his sub-commander. "I don't know what you're talking about." He said, trying to lie out of the question. "We came here under a peaceful truce with the Federation to help you attack and defeat that cube. It is you who are violating our agreement by abducting me off my own ship."

Troi smiled, "You're lying."

Okem remained calm, "Add the fact that you have a cloaking device, something that is band by the treaty of Algeron!"

"The treaty of what?" Riker asked. He looked to Troi who shrugged her shoulders. This time, neither of them knew what Okem was speaking about. To their knowledge there was no treaty between the Romulan Star Empire and the Federation. Sure the Romulans had been angry with the Federation developing

cloaking technology, but no formal arrangement had been made.

"Don't play dumb with me commander! You must know about the treaty." Okem continued. He stopped to take a look at their uniforms, not recognizing them. "You're sure you are a part of Starfleet?" Okem asked.

Riker nodded, "Yes." He wasn't about to explain the events that took them there.

Okem touched the field, a warning pulse hit his hand forcing him to react quickly and pull it away. "Aren't you civilized?"

"Warning." The computer stated, "Pulse will increase in intensity with every attempt. Suggest course is to avoid physical contact with force field."

"I always thought the Federation was evil, now you've proven it." Okem said.

"Forgive us for not warning you." Troi said, "I thought you would have known."

"What are you talking about?!" Okem asked in an angry tone.

"Your government has known about our holding cell technology for over a decade." The Betazoid said, "Ever since you attacked that outpost on Neralda Prime, and took it over."

"What are you talking about?" Okem demanded. "I know of no such attack!"

"Now who's playing dumb?" Troi continued.

"I don't know what you are talking about Federation!" He said, "You will return me to my vessel at once, or I will."

"You'll what?" Riker asked, "You are in no position to be making demands like that commander. You will play by our rules, or we will kill you." He readied the phaser by setting the level back to maximum.

Troi read through Riker's mind, he wasn't serious about killing Okem. That would destroy the Okem they were working with. He knew that, and didn't want to harm their mission anymore than it had already been harmed.

"You wouldn't dare!" Okem replied.

"Try me." Riker started to say, but was cut off from the sound of footsteps.

"I can help." A voice came from behind; the future Okem entered the room. "Nice of you to begin an interrogation without me." Riker and Troi stepped aside-allowing Okem to take a look at his past self. As he approached the force field, he stopped dead in his tracks. "Commander, who is this?"

"It's you." Troi said in a sarcastic tone, "Don't you recognize yourself?"

Okem rubbed his chin for a moment, "Something doesn't feel right about this. Allow me a few minutes alone with him."

Riker and Troi looked to each other, could they trust him?

Okem could tell what was going through their minds. "Don't worry commanders, I'll be okay. There is no where for me to run."

Troi nodded, he was telling the truth. They exited the room in a slow pace. Outside the doors, Riker tapped his commbadge, "Riker to Picard. We might have a problem."

"What sort of problem, number one?" Picard's voice came through the commline.

"I'm not sure." Riker said, "We might have gone to the wrong place in time, I'll keep you posted. Riker out." After the commline went dead, Riker looked to Troi.

She nodded her head, "Something is wrong."

#### AN HOUR LATER

Riker was pacing back and forth in front of the door. Over the past hour, they had heard screams coming from inside the Brig. Apparently Okem was having fun torturing his younger self; trying to persuade him into changing his mind.

The two large doors opened allowing Okem to exit the holding area. "Commander, I need to speak with your captain immediately." He said between breaths.

"What's wrong?" Riker asked.

"We are not in the correct timeline." Okem tried to explain, "Somehow we crossed over into an alternate universe. That man is not me."

"Are you sure?" Troi asked urgently.

Okem nodded. "Yes."

"How do you know this?" Troi said.

"Because." Okem explained, "I just killed him."

## Chapter Seven

Location: Conference Lounge, Enterprise-E

Picard was seated at the head of the table.  
"Commander Okem, if what you are telling me is true we're in serious trouble." He paused, "How did we get to the wrong universe in the right time period." Picard tapped his fingers lightly on the table.  
"Suggestions."

The room was silent. There were no answers to be had, at least not for the moment. None of them had expected any of this to happen. It was known for a long time that time travel was unpredictable and their current situation fully confirmed that knowledge. As Picard surveyed the room he was saddened, here they were in a different universe besides their own, ready to engage an enemy that wasn't from their own universe. He wouldn't allow his crew to be destroyed in this universe, he had to get them back to where they came from; back to their original timeline and universe. He stood from his chair and walked over to several windows. "If only." he started to say. Picard was cut off by several Federation starships dropping out of warp. He looked to his senior officers, "Looks like the fleet's arrived, at least for this universe."

"Would you look at that." LaForge said in awe as he stood from his chair. "There's something you don't see every day." Several Cardassian vessels dropped out of warp as well. "Looks like they're going to have a better party than we did in our universe."

Picard continued to stare out the window. He looked at the massive fleet forming before them, "This is definitely not our universe." Picard turned away from

the window and looked back to his senior officers. "With Okem dead, the Romulans will help out in this skirmish; and the Borg will be defeated in this timeline."

"Captain," Okem said. "I may have an explanation of why we are here, instead of where we should be." He stood from his chair and looked to Riker. "I went over your doctor's medical scans of Commander Riker, as well as that coffin you put him in so the temporal rift wouldn't cause harm. There was a .06 phase variance causing a slight course alignment in the vortex." He held up a PADD offering it to Picard, who took it and examined the information.

"Point zero six isn't very large, but it was large enough to throw us off course." He continued to look over the information before him. "Can you correct the errors?" Picard asked.

Okem nodded, "Yes, but it might take a while. I have to pinpoint exactly where the problem is located, and fix it."

"Do it." Picard ordered, "Commander Data, Geordi, and Doctor Crusher assist him." He paused, as he looked one more time out the window, "We need to be at Wolf 359 in our own universe. Dismissed."

The room emptied allowing Picard some time to stare out the window at the massive fleet preparing to engage the federation's most lethal enemy. Picard set the PADD down on the table and tapped his commbadge. "Computer, access all available Federation communications channels."

"Access ready."

"Open hailing frequencies, mute outgoing and code this channel under Picard Red Delta Six." He said.

Picard wanted to listen in on what was happening with the fleet, but didn't want them to be aware of him, or his vessel.

Most of the comm traffic was status reports for the vessels. Others were gossip about how the Romulans would probably run at the first sign of trouble. As Picard continued to listen, different messages started to come through the channel. These messages were of a more personal nature, they were messages to loved ones. Messages that were suppose to be accessed in case the officer died in the line of duty. Messages to home.

\* \* \*

Location: Earth, Central Plexus

Year: 2372

The Borg Queen looked over several screens; they were pointed towards the past. She couldn't find the information she needed. "Where are they?!" She yelled out into the Cube. "They must be there!" Several more screens appeared with Borg writing on them, the Queen was not pleased with their reports. "They were supposed to be there by now." She continued to say, "This can't be."

The Queen walked away from the screens into a long dark corridor, every once in a while a light would flash here and there with a binary type pattern to it. Her pace was quick, she wanted the information and she wanted it as soon as possible. The Queen was mad that the Enterprise had gotten away from her. Her mind was full of activity as she communicated with her drones, "Where are they!" She demanded.

After a few more minutes of confusion, thousands of voices came to her mind with a possibility. "Those fools!" She said, "I will take care of this." She blinked

a few times, causing orders to go throughout the collective.

Several Borg Transwarp conduits opened allowing twenty-three Borg Cubes to enter orbit. One by one they opened a temporal vortex. Each Cube traveled to a different alternate universe, trying to find where the Enterprise had gone. Once the cubes disappeared, several more vessels dropped out of Transwarp and opened more conduits. This continued until ninety percent of the Borg Collective was on their way to search for the Enterprise.

On Earth, the Borg Queen surveyed each cubes progress. She followed them and watched as they encountered other timelines, demanding the Enterprise be given them and destroying other vessels that got in their way.

\* \* \*

Location: Conference Lounge - Enterprise-E

Year: 2367

It had been ten hours since Okem killed the alternate Okem of the past. Ten hours since the fleet entered the Wolf System. Ten hours since Picard listened in on the communications channel. Picard was pacing around the conference lounge; he had gotten tired of listening in on the vessels outside the windows. He was growing very anxious about wanting to engage the Borg in his own universe. Picard wanted to simply go home to Earth, back to France, and get some rest.

His thoughts were interrupted as several flashes of light appeared in the distance. As Picard looked towards the window he saw several small shapes moving closer, towards the fleet that was there ready to protect the Federation from attack. "Computer re-

open those hailing frequencies." The vessels came closer and closer until they were as large as life.

"We are the Borg, you will turn the Federation Starship Enterprise over to us. If you do not comply, we will destroy you."

"Oh no." Picard said. He tried to count the vessels visually, but lost track at thirty. These vessels were no match for a fleet that size, they would not win the fight. He watched as the Borg cutting beams started tearing ships apart section by section. Before he knew it, at least twenty vessels were destroyed in the blink of an eye. They were no match for the Borg's advanced technology from the future.

"Senior officers report to the Bridge." Picard ordered. "Red Alert, all hands to Battle Stations." He exited the conference lounge in a quick pace hopefully prepared for whatever was before them.

After a few moments, Picard's key people were in their positions ready for orders. Each man and woman watched the viewscreen as the Borg vessels continued to destroy the combined fleets. "Comuter," Picard said, "Open all frequencies, authorization Picard Delta Red Six."

Static voices filled the air, voices of men and women dying under the evil hand of the Borg Collective. They were without compassion, destroying anything in their path in an effort to reach their ultimate goal, the Enterprise.

"As you know, this is not our universe and it is no longer safe for us to be here." Picard pointed to the main viewer, "They have come in search for us, and are destroying lives as we speak." Picard paused for a moment, trying to decide what to do with the current threat that had come from what could be termed the

depths of Hell. "Commander Okem, have you finished the necessary modifications?"

Okem shook his head, "No, I haven't captain."

Picard looked to Riker, he didn't want to give the order; but it was necessary. "We'll just have to go through the Vortex and hopefully we'll be able to fix the timeline and save you." He said watching Riker's body language.

Riker stood firm, "Aye sir." His commanding officer had spoken. He wasn't about to counteract those orders.

"But captain." Okem said, "If he goes through that rift, he'll die!"

Riker continued to stand tall nothing would budge him, "It will take time for the rift to take effect on my body." Riker said, It's a risk I'm willing to take."

Picard nodded. "Commander Data, get us out of here; and to the correct universe and time."

Commander Data worked his console accessing specific commands to open another vortex. After a few moments passed he turned in his chair, "I have accounted for the displacement from Commander Riker, and am prepared to open the vortex."

"Eng." Picard started to say, but was cut off by an urgent comm signal.

"This is Admiral Hanson to any vessel within the sound of my voice." The man said, "We are in distress and need assistance. Our fleet won't last much longer." The transmission was cut as Picard pressed a few buttons on Commander Data's station.

Okem walked to Picard's side, "Aren't you going to help them?" He asked, "They are your own people!"

Picard shook his head, "This is not our universe, and not our fight commander. Go back to your post."

"I can't believe you!" Okem yelled, "Don't you have principles to uphold?"

Picard again shook his head, "You have no right to dictate loyalty to me. You're partly responsible for us being here in the first place!"

"You are afraid captain!" Okem said, "Why don't you fight."

Picard held up a hand, "Commander Troi. I have no further need for this man, take him to deck 23 section Delta."

Troi stood from her chair, "Aye sir." She took Okem by the arm "Come with me commander." She said slowly with a smile. Troi had to force him towards the turbolift doors, Okem tried to free himself from her grasp, but was unable to. She overpowered him easily.

"What's on deck 23?" Okem asked as he gave up fighting.

"Just the agony booth." Troi replied.

"The what?"

"Oh you'll find out." She said as the doors closed.

"Does anyone else have a problem with this course of action?" Picard asked, "If you do, I need to know."

Commander Data turned in his chair, "Captain."

Picard started to frown, please don't my friend. He thought, "Yes commander?"

"You did say that Commander Worf would have an opportunity to execute Okem." Data said.

Picard breathed a sigh of relief, "You're right commander." He tapped his comm badge, "Picard to Troi."

"Yes captain?" Troi said through the commline. In the background, Okem could be heard resisting security guards that had accompanied them on their way to deck 23.

"Commander Worf will take care of the execution, I need you back up here."

"Understood," and the commline went dead.

Picard turned to Worf, "Commander make it as painful as possible."

Worf nodded "Gladly sir." He exited the bridge ready for the hunt to begin.

"Now that that's settled." Picard said, "Commander Data, take us back into the past."

Out in space, a large vortex opened. The Borg stopped their assaults on the combined Cardassian, Romulan, and Federation fleet. The Enterprise decloaked and entered the vortex leaving that universe and going to where they belonged. Several Romulan vessels tried to follow the Enterprise to escape certain destruction but were too slow. The damage done by the Borg was too much for them to catch up; and the vortex closed. The Borg vessels continued their assault on the fleet, transporting over

and assimilating terrified officers, and families, at their leisure.

\* \* \*

The Enterprise once again emerged from a temporal vortex and coasted quietly into open space. Several Federation starships were in the area, once the Enterprise appeared each vessel turned their attention towards her.

On the bridge Commander Data's hands flew over the console. "Captain we are receiving over one hundred hails."

"Over one hundred?" Picard said, "That number seems to be a little high."

"Yes sir, there are several Romulan Warbirds in the fleet." He replied, "As well as Klingon Birds of prey."

"How did Okem change his mind?" Riker asked.

"I don't know number one, but it looks like fate is on our side for once." Picard smiled.

A sensor started to beep, "I cannot activate the cloaking device. It has been damaged." Data reported.

Picard nodded, "A cloak wouldn't do us any good right now anyway, they know we're here." He walked over to Riker, "Commander how are you doing?"

"I'm alright for now sir." He replied and pointed to the viewer, "What do we say to them?"

"I'm not sure." The captain replied with uncertainty.

"The lead ship is hailing us." Data said, they request a visual communications channel.

"Open hailing frequencies." Picard ordered.

The viewer came to life as Admiral Hanson's image filled the screen he gasped immediately at what he saw. "Jean-Luc?"

Picard nodded, "Yes admiral," He paused, "I understand that there are many questions going throughout your mind right now. I'm sorry but I'm not at liberty to discuss them at this present time. Close frequencies."

Data pressed a button and the viewer switched back to that of starships. "Hailing frequencies closed sir."

"Mister Data, get that cloaking device back online."

Data stood from his chair, "Aye sir" he said as he crossed the bridge over to an engineering station.

The doors to the turbolift opened and Commander Worf walked onto the bridge. He immediately went to his tactical station and made his report. "Captain, Commander Okem is dead."

Picard nodded, "Thank you Mister Worf. Now how about we." He was cut off as a tractor beam caught the Enterprise in a grip that wasn't about to let go. "What the devil?"

Worf scanned his controls, "We are being boarded on deck twenty-four." He waited for more information to come in, "Phaser fights are being detected on decks twenty-four to twenty."

"Intruder Alert." The computer said. A transporter beam was activated and several security officers were swarming the bridge.

Worf grabbed his phaser and aimed it; he fired hitting one of the security officers down to the deck dead. He picked another target preparing to fire again.

"Hold your fire." Picard said, he turned to the intruders, "I demand an explanation of why you have boarded my vessel."

A female security officer stepped towards Picard and tapped her commbadge. "Hand over your weapons." She waited for a second, and with a threatening voice continued, "If you don't we will kill you."

Picard nodded, "Looks like you have us at a disadvantage. for now." He looked to his officers, "Do as she asks." Picard turned his attention back to the female officer; "You wouldn't have been able to board us if we had our shields, and our cloaking device."

Once she was satisfied that they wouldn't give her any hassle, the security officer tapped her badge. "Yar to Sisko, this vessel is secure."

"Understood." The voice of Commander Benjamin Sisko came through the open channel. "I'll be there momentarily."

A few seconds later, Sisko was standing before Picard; in his hand was a type three phaser armed and ready to fire.

"I demand to know why you have boarded my vessel!" Picard said to Sisko.

"I can't give you that information." Sisko said, "Just like you wouldn't tell us who you are, and why you are here."

Picard shook his head, "That is different."

"Oh?" Sisko replied, "How so?"

"Because, I can't give that information out. The timeline could face catastrophic difficulties." Picard said, he looked towards Data who had one hand on the console; he was still working on the cloaking device. No one in the room noticed his actions. Picard looked back to Sisko, "Do the words Temporal Prime Directive mean anything to you?"

Sisko nodded, "Yes, but that might be a facade. You exited a temporal vortex with Borg signatures on it. You yourself, captain, are reported as being assimilated by your own first officer."

Riker stepped forward, "I'm sure you have scanned this vessel by now, and you should have found that we do not belong in this time period."

Sisko again nodded, "Yes, but we also found that it carries several Borg components. I put you under arrest for violation of the System J-25 Directive."

Picard almost laughed, "Excuse me, you what? That's absurd!" He said, "Do you honestly think we harvested this Borg equipment ourselves and tried to use it to our own advantage?"

Sisko nodded, "That and more. I am charging you with conspiring with the enemy. There is no other explanation for this; sensor readings on your ship alone have confirmed this. How else would you have gotten a hold of Borg technology, and not be assimilated?"

"Commander, I do not wish to have this discussion with you today." Picard said knowing that there was a Borg vessel on its way there, and would be in range within a matter of hours. "Can we continue this at another time once that Borg vessel is taken care of?"

Sisko shook his head, "You know we can't do that. What if you contact them and."

Troi stood from her chair, "I've had enough of this. Look at the logic commander. Look at our uniforms; we are not from this time period. We are from the future."

"A lie" Sisko said, he raised his phaser preparing it to fire.

"You should listen to her commander," Worf said, "She is telling the truth."

The lights dimmed as the cloaking device became active. Sisko was caught off guard, Riker knocked the phaser out of his hand and soon his face was to the deck. The other security officers were taken out as well by other Enterprise officers. Data stood from his station, "Captain the cloaking device is activated and running at peak performance."

Picard nodded, "Thank you Mister Data." He knelt down next to Sisko, "Commander your people cannot detect us, you're in our field now."

"What are you going to do?" Sisko asked with fear in his voice.

"Picard to Transporter Room Three."

"O'brien here." The chief's voice came though.

"Beam the intruders back to where they came from." Picard ordered.

"Aye."

The security teams were swept away from wherever they were on the Enterprise back to their respective vessels. Picard was glad to see that they were off his ship; he didn't want to have to kill any of them.

"Captain, I am detecting a warp signature approaching." Data said, "It is a Borg cube on course to this location."

"What is their ETA?" Picard asked.

"One hour and forty-five minutes sir."

"Helm, change course to intercept and engage at best possible speed." Picard said, "We need to cause as much damage as possible before they arrive at Wolf 359." He paused looking at the viewer one last time, hoping that the Enterprise would be able to help out like they were meant to the first time six years prior. "Engage."

## Chapter Eight

The morning of the battle of Wolf 359

Year: 2367

Captain Picard paced the bridge; preparing for battle wondering what it would be like to hear his own voice pronounce the mindless words of the Borg. Sure he remembered how he said them and what they sounded like; but soon he would be face to face with the drone known as Locutus. Picard hoped he would be able to stand firm and not allow the Borg to invade his mind like that of times past.

Captain's Log, Supplemental:

The Enterprise is on a direct course for the Borg cube with my past self aboard. It is imperative that we succeed in our mission and finish this once and for all. If we do not, I will destroy this vessel before the Borg assimilates any of my crew and our technology. End Log.

"How much longer?" Riker asked like a small child impatient to reach a vacation spot. He wanted to get this over with as soon as possible; Riker wanted to be able to take a walk around Earth in safety without the Borg to worry about.

Commander Data checked his console, "We should reach the cube within a half hour sir."

"Increase speed to maximum warp." Picard ordered.

"Sir," Data objected, "If we do that, the Borg will detect minor fluctuations in our cloaking device and will detect us on an intercept course."

Picard nodded, "I know. But that doesn't matter at the moment." He said, "Carry out my orders." Picard sat down in his chair.

"Aye sir." Data replied as he worked the console, "Increasing speed to maximum warp."

## TWENTY MINUTES LATER

"Captain, we are entering their location." Data said.

Picard stood from his command chair. "Decloak the ship, raise shields."

"Shields activated," Worf reported, "I have a full spread of photon torpedoes locked and ready to fire." He continued, "I dare not use our Quantum

Torpedoes, we do not want them to adapt to those in this time period."

Picard nodded, "Agreed." He tapped his commbadge, "Picard to Crusher."

"Yes captain?" Came the voice of the Chief Medical Officer.

"How are things down there?"

"Sickbay is ready for casualties." She said, "Crusher out."

"Picard to Engineering, status report."

Georid's voice came thought the communications array, "We're ready down here."

Picard nodded, "Good." He paused, "Picard to all hands, we are about to engage the Borg." He said, "Let us stand tall on this day of battle. Picard out."

"We are the Borg." The voices rang through Picard's mind. He tried his best to stop them, but they overpowered him.

"Resistance is Futile." Picard continued.

The Borg voices started the next phrase, "We will add."

And Picard finished "Your biological and technological."

"Distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us." The Borg finished their statement of death for the Enterprise crew. A statement they had heard over and over again over the past years, a statement that bothered Picard in his sleep.

"Captain?" Troi said, "Captain, are you alright?"

"Number one, open a channel." Picard said after he regained control of his thoughts.

"This is Captain Picard of the Federation Starship Enterprise. You will stop your advance towards Sector 001." Picard said. He didn't expect the Borg to comply with his orders. He needed to get a message to them that would make them think twice before attacking Earth ever again.

"Captain, they are hailing us." Worf reported while keeping his attention on the tactical sensors, making sure the Borg wouldn't surprise them.

"On screen." Picard ordered.

The menacing face of Locutus appeared on the Enterprise's main viewer. "I am Locutus of Borg, Resistance is Futile. You will escort us to Sector 001 or be destroyed."

Picard stared into his former self's face; memories came flooding back at him. It was almost too much to handle. He wanted to turn away, but that was unacceptable at this moment. Picard needed to stay strong; he needed to show the Borg that he wasn't afraid of them anymore. "I demand to speak with the Borg Queen." He said, hoping that he could get through to her.

Locutus stared at Picard, "Communication is Irrelevant." He said, "You will not be allowed."

"Stop." A female voice said as she walked into view. "Who are you?"

Picard looked at the Queen "You know who I am." He said, "And you know why I'm here."

The Queen thought about the Borg Corpse she had retrieved from space, thought about what little information they had been able to access. "You will escort us to Sector 001, or be destroyed."

Picard shook his head. "No."

"You must comply." She said trying to access his thoughts, "Resistance is Futile."

Picard shook his head firmer. "No, I will not comply. I am in control of my thoughts, it is you who must stand down."

The Queen probed deeper into Picard's mind trying to find a way to access it. He had managed to finally block the Borg signal. There was no way in, his mind was as strong as a fortress. "You will comply."

Picard stood his ground, "I will resist you."

A console beeped "Captain, I am detecting an incoming vessel." Data said, "It is the Enterprise."

The Queen checked a few consoles; sure enough the Enterprise was entering their position. "They should still be repairing their vessel. They should still be over an hour away!"

\* \* \*

Location: Enterprise-D Bridge

Aboard the Enterprise-D, Captain Riker was looking over Data's shoulder. "How much longer commander?"

"We will be within range of the Cube in twenty minutes." The android replied, "Captain the Borg vessel has stopped their advancement towards Earth. It appears a vessel is directly in their flight path."

"What kind of vessel?" Shelby asked.

"Unknown." Data replied, "It is of unknown design and specifications. I am reading a high armament also of unknown design, as well as some sort of advanced mechanical armor on all sections." He continued to check his reports, "Readings indicate several Borg components aboard." He paused as his console flashed more information. "Sir."

"What is it?" Riker asked. He was a little shocked that Data would pause in the middle of reporting information; it wasn't like him to do so.

"Sensors indicate a Federation Warp Signature." He said, "Apparently it is one of ours."

"With Borg technology?" Shelby scoffed, "How is that possible?"

Riker shook his head, "I'm not sure, but we're about to find out."

\* \* \*

Location: Enterprise-E Bridge

The Borg Queen looked to Picard, "You will be assimilated." She said as the communications channel closed. Almost immediately, the Borg Cube started firing at the Enterprise making the ship rock back and forth violently.

"Return fire." Picard said. He looked to Data, "Commander proceed as we discussed."

Data nodded, "Aye sir." He exited the bridge heading towards Shuttlebay Two.

"The Borg's shields are down to ninety-five percent." Worf reported, "Our photon torpedoes are having little affect."

Picard nodded, "Understood, continue firing those torpedoes, empty our storage if needed."

"Aye sir." Worf said.

Down in the Shuttlebay, Data was preparing to launch. After checking his pre-flight systems, he opened a communications channel to the bridge. "Captain, I am ready down here." He said, "Leaving Enterprise in exactly three seconds."

On the bridge, Picard watched as his second officer's vessel made its way towards the Cube. "Mister Worf, give him cover fire."

"Aye sir." He paused, "Captain, the Enterprise-D is in range."

\* \* \*

Location: Enterprise-D Bridge

"Captain, you must." Shelby said arguing with Riker, "They have Borg technology aboard that vessel."

Riker shook his head, "I will not fire on them." He said, "We don't even know who is aboard. They could be Federation citizens."

"Who have been assimilated!" Shelby said, "Why else would they send a shuttle over?"

Riker shook his head, "Life sign readings?" He said hoping Data would give him something to go on.

"I cannot penetrate the hull of that vessel, it is blocking our sensors." The android said, "I am sorry sir."

"They are firing at the Cube!" Riker said, "That has to stand for something."

Shelby held her ground, "We've seen this tactic before. They are just trying to lure us in to a point where they can destroy us. Remember System J-25 Captain? How that fleet was destroyed died because of Federation involvement." She looked to Riker determined to win their argument, "It is your duty to fire upon unknown vessels in Federation Held Space." She looked to Data, "Commander."

Data nodded his head, "Regulations specify."

Riker was angry, "I don't want to hear that commander." He looked back to Shelby, "We are not going to fire on them. That is an order."

Shelby drew her phaser and fired on Riker, causing him to drop to the deck unconscious. "Does anyone else have any objections?" She asked with a smile on her face.

The bridge was silent.

"Good." Shelby said, "Tactical, fire on the shuttle."

\* \* \*

Location: Enterprise-E Bridge

Picard watched the shuttle carrying Commander Data on the viewscreen. As the shuttle got closer to

the cube, Data was dodging Borg tractor beams left and right; avoiding capture. Suddenly a phaser beam reached out and struck the shuttle causing it to go into a spin.

"Picard to Data. Report!"

A static filled comm channel opened to the Enterprise-E "I am loosing control. That phaser blast knocked out my navigational array, attempting to initialize backups." He said as the channel closed prematurely. Another phaser blast from the Enterprise-D came at the shuttle.

"What happened?" Picard asked.

Worf checked his console, "His communications array has been damaged. Attempting to re-establish the link."

Picard stood from his chair, "Hail that vessel!"

"Channel open." Worf growled.

"This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the United Federation of Planets, you will state your purpose for firing on my shuttle." Picard said with a loud angry inflection in his voice.

The viewscreen changed to the Enterprise-D Bridge and Commander Shelby's face appeared. "Captain?" She didn't know what to say to this man who looked like her former commanding officer.

Picard nodded, "Yes." He paused, "Where is your commanding officer?" He asked looking at the screen for Riker; Picard stopped looking when he noticed that Riker was on the deck. "You." Picard was cut off as a Borg tractor beam locked onto the Enterprise-D. "I don't have time to discuss this with you

commander, as you can see we have a bit of a problem."

"Intruder alert."

"Captain," Worf said, "Three Borg drones have transported to the Enterprise-D, Engineering Section."

"Sir," Riker said, "Allow me to assemble a security team and take them out. Our technology is more advanced."

Picard nodded "Agreed." He paused, "Be careful. Don't let anyone else get assimilated."

Riker nodded, "Understood." He started to walk towards the aft turbolift, "Commander Worf you're with me." Riker then tapped his commbadge, "Security Team Beta, report to Transporter Room Three."

"Status report." Picard said.

Troi walked up to Data's station and accessed the logs, "The Borg are having difficulties with our technology. We are holding for now."

Picard nodded, "Continue to re-modulate shield nutation." He paused, "When Riker and his team are ready, extend our shields around the Enterprise-D so they can transport over, then return our shields back to normal."

Troi nodded. "Aye sir."

\* \* \*

Onboard the Borg Cube, the Queen smiled as her drones went to work assimilating the crew of the

Enterprise-D. She didn't understand anything bout the Enterprise-E and was devising a plan to get a hold of their technology. Locutus approached her side, she continued to smile hoping that someday, he would freely give himself to the Borg.

A transporter beam appeared in the room. Commander Data emerged from the beam with a phaser in his hand. He fired on the Borg Queen knocking her to the deck. Data didn't know if she was dead, he didn't care about that. He wanted one thing and one thing only, to capture Locutus. As Data approached Locutus, he tried to access a force field. The attempt failed and soon they were locked in a fight. Locutus pulled his Borg arm towards the openings in Data's arm, but the android caught the arm on its way, stopping his assault. Data then took out a hypospray and injected Locutus causing him to collapse into the commander's arms. His mission was complete, now he could head back to the Enterprise.

"Data." A voice whispered from behind. The commander turned around to see who had called his name. The Borg Queen stood before him.

Data looked to the deck noting that the Borg Queen was still there. He was confused by what he saw. "This is not possible." He replied, "You are from the future."

The Queen nodded as she looked at the lifeless body of Locutus. "What are you doing?" She approached the android with a slow walk. "What are you doing with my Locutus?"

Data shook his head, "He is not yours, and he never was."

"Do you honestly think you can take him away from me again?" She continued, "You will not win this fight, you know that."

Data stood his ground. "I will not allow you to take him." He fired his phaser at the Queen. A force field absorbed the energy. He tried another setting and fired again; and again a force field absorbed the energy.

"You cannot defeat me Data."

"Data to Shuttle transport two." A transporter beam took Data and Locutus from the Borg Cube back to the shuttle. Once aboard the shuttlecraft, Data engaged the engines and headed back towards the Enterprise-E. The Borg Queen did not engage after the shuttle, she didn't need to. Soon enough she would be on the Enterprise Bridge and Picard would be hers once and for all.

\* \* \*

Aboard the Enterprise-D, Riker and his officers were on deck thirty-six, main engineering. The Borg were attempting to establish a collective aboard the vessel, like they did with the Enterprise-E in 2063. As they entered engineering, the Borg drones ignored them at first. They were of no interest at the moment.

Riker positioned his people around the room in an effort to attain the best possible strategy against the intruders. Worf looked to his superior, "Commander I checked a sensor reading, there are no other Borg drones on this ship. They are only in the engine room."

"That's strange." Riker said, "I wonder why." He was cut off as Commander Shelby entered the main Engineering section.

Commander Riker approached her, Shelby looked at his uniform and rank. "What are you doing here?" She demanded. "You should still be down for at least another hour!"

Riker shook his head, "I don't know who you are, and I don't care. We have a situation on our hands." He pulled out a phaser, "You can either help us or we can do it ourselves. It doesn't matter to me."

"Oh come on!" Shelby said, "It's just three drones, they are probably here to gather information only." She continued, "They'll be gone within a few moments once they have what they need."

Riker cocked his head back, "You have got to be kidding me." He said, "Have you forgotten what their mission is? They want to destroy us!"

"But." Shelby started to say; she was cut off as a phaser beam struck her.

Riker looked in the direction of where the phaser beam came from. Worf holstered his weapon, "Sorry sir. I didn't want to hear you two argue. again."

"Commander?" Riker asked.

Worf shook it off, "I'll tell you about it later." He looked towards the drones, "Our primary concern are those drones."

"Suggestions." Riker's response wasn't a question it was an order.

Worf thought the matter over, "We could fire at them, but unless we get shields back on-line others will take their places and continue dissecting this ship."

"Agreed." Riker said white tapping his commbadge, "Riker to Enterprise. Send over several shield generators, we need help over here."

Five minutes later the shield generators were in place and ready to go on-line. Several Enterprise-D crewmembers had come to Engineering to see what the commotion was all about. Security details didn't know what to make of Riker or his officers, for the moment they allowed the Enterprise-E officers to work uninterrupted; they were after all helping them out.

Commander Riker was about to bring the generator on-line when he felt a tap on his shoulder; it was Commander Shelby and she wasn't happy. "Listen, I."

Riker shot a glance at her, "Don't have time for this." He said cutting her off, "We're trying to save your vessel from destruction so you can destroy that Borg Cube, like you were meant to." He stopped realizing that he shouldn't give out any more information on the subject. "If you'll excuse me, I have a job to complete." Riker turned back to the main shield generator and activated it.

It beeped indicating that power was being diverted from nonessential systems to it. "Shields at ninety-five percent, and rising." The computer said. "Dampening field engaged, Borg signal is no longer transmitting."

Shelby shook her head, "I don't know who you think you are, but."

"Allow him to finish his work." Another voice said as it entered Engineering. "Can't you see he's here to help?"

Shelby clenched her teeth, turned around and lowered her head. "Yes sir. I'm sorry sir." She stood at attention awaiting instructions.

Captain Riker walked up to Shelby and nodded. "Go back to the bridge, take command from Troi and show the Borg who's boss."

Shelby nodded, "Yes sir." She exited Engineering knowing she had lost in the long run, but there would come another day for her to get even at Riker.

Commander Riker turned to the Enterprise-D's commanding officer. "We have everything under control for now." He held out a hand, "Thomas Riker, nice to meet you."

Captain Riker held out his hand and shook it, "I don't understand."

"That's not important for now captain, you just give the Borg a run for their money." He said, "No if you'll excuse me, our work is complete, I believe you can handle those three drones."

Captain Riker nodded his head, "I'm way ahead of you." He pulled out a phaser and fired killing the three drones in the process. They fell to the ground and initiated their internal self-destruct mechanisms, vanishing out of site. The Borg corpse's left behind burn marks on the carpet reminding the crew of the Enterprise-D that they would be back to finish their task.

Riker tapped his commbadge, "Commander Riker to Enterprise-E."

"Go ahead number one." Picard said through the comm channel.

"Our work is finished sir, we're ready to transport."

"I'm sorry number one," Picard said, "We can't afford to extend our shields around the Enterprise-D at the moment to get you back, the Borg have increased their assault."

Riker nodded, "Understood, was Data successful in his mission?"

"Affirmative, he has Locutus in his lab and is attempting to break him from the collective."

Riker smiled, "Good."

"Excuse me," Captain Riker said, "I don't know how you got here, but we could use some help with that Cube sir." He said with gratitude in his voice. If he was hearing the information correctly, they would be able to damage the Borg Cube before it reached Wolf 359.

The Enterprise-D rocked from weapons discharge from the Cube, they were attempting to locate the exact frequency of their shields to bring them down and destroy the ship.

"Shield re-modulation in progress." The computer said.

"It's good to hear your voice again Will." Picard said "I agree, let's get this battle over with."

Outside, the two Enterprise's fired upon the Borg Cube with all the power they had. The Enterprise-D did less damage than the Sovereign-Class vessel, but each shot was not made in vain. As they continued firing on the Cube, it continued its course towards Earth.

On the bridge of the Enterprise-E Picard was seated in his command chair, "Continue firing on their central array."

"Aye sir." A security chief at tactical said.

"Picard to Data."

"Data here." The android's voice came through the commline.

"What is the condition of Locutus?"

"This is taking longer than I planned sir." Data replied, "There are several advanced Borg algorithms that are not allowing me access to their regeneration systems, I do not understand it."

Picard nodded, "Understood, keep working on it."

"Aye sir."

The Borg stopped their assault on the Enterprise's. It was silent, almost too quiet. Picard looked at the viewscreen, the Cube had stopped their advanced on Earth as well. He looked over several sensor readings and then to his crew, they were just as puzzled.

"Report." Picard ordered.

Troi checked her console, "I'm not sure, they are scanning the Wolf System." She continued to check her sensors reconfirming the information, "Something has their attention."

"Data to Picard."

Picard tapped his commbadge, "Picard here. Report."

"I have reached another subroutine sir. The Borg have received instructions that Earth has been destroyed." Data said, "They are awaiting further instructions."

"You fools." A female voice said silently. The Borg Queen materialized in front of Picard. "Do you honestly believe your android accessed the Borg collective mind again?"

"You!" Picard said, "What are you doing here?"

"I have come for you Locutus." She said, "It is time you rejoined the collective." The Queen blinked once, Locutus materialized at his side.

"Captain," Data said through the open commline, "Someone has transported Locutus away from my lab."

Picard nodded, "I know commander, please report to the Bridge." He turned his attention back to the Borg Queen, "Why are you doing this?"

"Earth no longer interests me." The Queen said, "At least not for the moment. As soon as I assimilate you and your crew, I will assimilate the Enterprise-D as well and together we will destroy your armada at Wolf 359." She paused, "Like I said before, you cannot win."

Picard didn't understand the Queen's motives, they were as clear as mud. "We will resist you."

She shook her head, "Not if I have two Locutus's at my side." She said, "I will have both of you forever."

"That is impossible and you know it." Picard said, "If this timeline continues, we will vanish. I will vanish, and you will only have one Locutus."

"I will clone your DNA." She replied. "I cannot be stopped." She blinked again, Picard's away team appeared on the Bridge.

Commander Riker walked up to Picard, "What is going on captain?" As soon as he saw the Borg Queen and Locutus, he backed off. Riker didn't know exactly what was happening, but he feared that he would find out, as would the rest of the Enterprise crew.

## Chapter Nine

Captain Picard looked to his first officer. "Commander, I would like to introduce you to the Borg Queen." He said with disgust in his voice. "She is here to assimilate the Enterprise." He paused and looked towards the Queen's direction. "That is still your reason for being here, isn't it?"

The Queen smiled, "I came for you, but your vessel will add nicely to my collective." She stared into Picard's eyes trying to see if she could find her Locutus. She couldn't, at least not for the moment. But soon she would have him and together they would be unstoppable.

Picard approached the Queen "You know I cannot stop you from doing this." He tapped his commbadge, "Computer initiate Auto Destruct, authorization Picard 47 Alpha Tango."

The computer made a beeping noise, "Auto Destruct Systems are off-line. Secondary systems inoperable, unable to comply."

The Queen shook her head, "Just give in to the voices Locutus." She said. "Allow them to consume your being and join us."

Picard stood his ground. "Fine, I can't destroy this ship, I'll do something else." He again tapped his commbadge, "Computer initiate program Picard Omega 4 Delta."

"Working." The computer replied, "Picard Omega 4 Delta in progress."

The lights dimmed around the bridge making it pitch black. The only thing that could be seen was Locutus's laser attached to his head. Every panel stopped beeping, every display shut down. Silence filled the room.

"What are you doing?" The Queen demanded.

Through the darkness Picard laughed gently. "There is a dampening field in place, you cannot contact your collective. How does it feel not to have the voices?"

"I still have Locutus." The Queen stopped realizing that she couldn't hear the drone's thoughts. "Where are you?" She called out in the dark.

"He cannot hear you, only I have access to his mind." Picard said, "He will only follow my orders now." Picard paused, "It's over, you have lost this confrontation."

"No." The Queen said, "It isn't over."

Picard walked closer to the queen and whispered in her ear, "Yes it is." He said calmly "There is no where for you to run. You are alone."

"NO!" She yelled out loud, "It can't be!"

Picard persisted, "Believe it. The collective isn't there to help you." Again he tapped his commbadge,

"Computer, recognize voice authorization Picard, Jean-Luc."

"Voice authorization confirmed." The computer replied.

"Activate another dampening field around the Borg Queen and around Locutus." Picard ordered, "Initialize my Internal Subspace Communications Array."

"Fields activated." The female voice said, "Enter authorization code for Communications Array."

Picard looked to Data, "Commander monitor my lifesigns, if this thing doesn't work I want you to kill me." Picard was about to contact the Borg Collective using components imbedded into his brain. These were components that Doctor Crusher hadn't been able to remove fully she could only deactivate them.

Data nodded, "Aye sir."

Picard looked towards the Queen's general direction, "You see, soon I will be in control of your vessel. And if this works out like it should, they should return back to Borg Space." He paused, "Computer, authorization code. Obey."

"Accessing subspace communications array." The computer said.

"AGHH!" Picard yelled out in pain. Millions of voices entered his mind. Each of them pierced his thoughts gathering information. Picard was able to distract them from the highly classified information from the future; they wouldn't be able to get to that today. "I am Locutus of Borg, Resistance is Futile." He communicated to the collective. "Shutdown systems,

Section 47 Gamma needs repair." He continued, "Regenerate, you must comply."

This continued on for several more minutes as Picard attempted to communicate his intentions to the Cube. After twenty minutes passed, he closed the connection to the Cube.

"Commline deactivated, systems returning to normal operation." The computer reported.

The sounds of force fields deactivating filled the room. As the lights came up, Picard looked down to the deck in front of him. The Queen and Locutus were both lying on the ground, neither of them were moving. Picard looked around the bridge; it came back to life as if nothing had happened.

"Report!" Picard said.

Worf walked quickly to his station and ran several scans. "The Borg Cube is shutting down." He said, "Your plan succeeded."

Picard knelt down next to the Queen. Data came to his side and pulled out a tricorder. As Picard looked at her, he couldn't help but wonder if she would ever bother him or his crew again.

"Captain, she is dead." Data said, he then proceeded to run scans on the drone known as Locutus. "His condition is stable, the connection to the Borg collective is no longer active."

Picard nodded and stood up. "Hail the Enterprise-D."

The main viewer came to life as Captain Riker's face appeared on the screen. "Captain, what happened over there?" He asked.

Picard smiled, "Things are getting under control number one." He said, "I believe you know what to do with Locutus."

Riker nodded, "Aye sir." He said, "I'm transporting him over to my vessel now." Locutus's body vanished with the Enterprise-D's transporter beam. "What about her?" He asked referring to the Borg Queen.

"Dead." Picard said, "We need to destroy." Picard started to say, but was cut off as a tactical alert sounded. "Report!"

Worf checked his console, "The Borg Cube has powered up and are continuing their course to Sector 001." He reported.

"What is the condition of the Cube?" Captain Riker asked over the commline.

"Their shields and weapons are down." Worf reported. "They are no match for the fleet at Wolf 359."

Picard nodded, "Lay in a course."

Captain Riker shook his head "I don't believe that necessary captain." He said, "Let us finish this fight, as Worf has stated, they can't withstand an attack from our fleet."

Picard thought about it for a moment he wanted to personally destroy that vessel, but his crew had changed history enough for the time being, "Alright." He said, "And captain, do a good job."

Riker smiled, "Of course sir." As the channel closed, the Enterprise-D could be seen engaging her impulse

drive to follow the Borg vessel, and stop them from completing their original mission.

Picard looked to Data, "Commander activate a temporal vortex and take us home."

Data nodded, "Aye sir."

Picard looked to his first officer, "One last trip, then we can get you to a Starfleet Medical Facility."

He nodded "Understood."

A few moments passed and the Enterprise-E entered a vortex and vanished from that time period back to where she belonged. As the Enterprise emerged from the vortex, a handful of Starfleet vessels were there waiting to greet them. Picard looked at the viewer and smiled.

"We're home." Riker said as he collapsed to the deck.

The Enterprise was back where she belonged, and Riker would get the help he needed in order to survive the night. Picard continued to smile, he was glad it was finally over. His crew could rest and not worry about the Borg hopefully for a long time.

Location: Wolf 359

Year: 2367

As the Enterprise-D dropped out of impulse speed, a battle was already in process between the Borg Cube and the combined Federation, Romulan, and Klingon fleet. Captain Riker stood behind the Conn and Operation stations. He looked at the viewscreen, the Borg were being torn up left and right.

"We are being hailed." Worf said.

"On screen." Riker said.

Admiral Hanson appeared on the screen. "We're surprised to see you." The admiral said with enthusiasm in his voice.

Riker smiled, "Like I said admiral, we're a little late, but we're here as promised."

The End