

*Starship: Excelsior*  
**"The Man From Syracuse"**  
(Season 3, Episode 6)  
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

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Note: Lines in brackets were recorded but interrupted. The complete line is left here for fuller context:

### **306 RECAP**

**NARRATOR:** *Previously on Star Trek...*

**LOCATION:** ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 1x26 - ACT 4 "The Neutral Zone")

**PICARD:** *Captain's log, supplemental. We have arrived at the edge of the Neutral Zone, where we will now have an opportunity to learn firsthand what happened to our distant outpost.*

**DATA:** Captain, there is nothing left of Outpost Delta Zero Five.

**LAFORGE:** Must have been one hell of an explosion.

**DATA:** Sensors indicate no evidence of conventional attack.

**PICARD:** Can you determine what happened?

**WORF:** The outpost was not just destroyed. It's as though some great force just scooped it off the face of the planet.

**LOCATION:** MINING TUNNEL, DYTALLIX B (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 1 "Conspiracy")

**PICARD:** Tryla Scott. It's said you made Captain faster than anyone in Starfleet history, present company included. Are you that good?

**TRYLA:** Yes, I am.

**PICARD:** Starfleet's finest. Fancy meeting you here.

**RIXX:** We all came secretly, Picard. To discuss the threat.

**PICARD:** What threat?

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D ADMIRAL QUINN'S QUARTERS (TNG: 1x19 - ACT 4 "Coming of Age")

QUINN: Some of us at Starfleet Command became suspicious of certain problems in the Federation.

PICARD: What kind of problems?

QUINN: Something or someone is trying to destroy the fabric of everything we've built up in the last two hundred years.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D HALLWAY (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 4 "Conspiracy")

PICARD: Remember what you told me back at Relva Seven, about the threat that you perceived to the very fabric of the Federation?

QUINN: Jean-Luc, you took me far too literally. I was only referring to the problems involved in assimilating new races into the Federation.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D TRANSPORTER ROOM (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 4 "Conspiracy")

PICARD: It's not Gregory Quinn. It may look like him and sound like him, but it isn't him.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 2 "Q Who")

DATA: The ship is strangely generalized in design. There is no specific bridge, no command center. There is no engineering section.

PICARD: You're familiar with this life form?

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D GUINAN'S QUARTERS (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 2 "Q Who")**

**GUINAN:** Yes. My people encountered them a century ago, scattered my people throughout the galaxy. They're called the Borg. Protect yourself, Captain, or they'll destroy you.

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN ENGINEERING (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 3 "Q Who")**

**Q:** You're nothing to him. He's not interested in your life form. He's here to analyze your technology.

**LOCATION: BORG CUBE NURSERY (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 4 "Q Who")**

**RIKER:** We've entered what appears to be the Borg nursery. From the look of it, the Borg are born as a biological life form.

**BORG BABY:** (coos)

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D ADMIRAL QUINN'S QUARTERS (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 4 "Conspiracy")**

**RIKER:** What's in the case?

**QUINN:** There remains much scientific study to be done. After all, it is a superior form of life.

**RIKER:** Superior?

**QUINN:** Totally.

LOCATION: RECEPTION AREA, EARTH (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")

AARON: What do you know of conspiracies, Captain?

PICARD: Not nearly enough, I suppose.

AARON: That's the charming thing about them, isn't it? When a machination is real, no one knows about it. And when it's suspected, it's almost never real.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D SICKBAY (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")

CRUSHER: A parasitic being has invaded Quinn's body. It has complete control over all brain functions. It seems to breathe through a small gill protruding from the back of Quinn's neck. Look for this, Captain. I believe it will be visible on anyone who has been compromised.

LOCATION: STARFLEET COMMAND – REMMICK'S OFFICE (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")

REMMICK: We mean you no harm. We seek peaceful co-existence.

(Riker and Picard shoot him)

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 3x26 - ACT 3 "The Best of Both Worlds")

BORG: You will surrender yourself or we will destroy your ship. Your defensive capabilities are unable to withstand us.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 5 "Q Who")

Q: You can't outrun them. You can't destroy them. If you damage them, the essence of what they are remains. They regenerate and keep coming. Eventually you will weaken, your reserves will be gone. They are relentless.

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 4x1 - ACT 1 "The Best of Both Worlds Part 2")

DATA: Starfleet reports it has engaged the Borg at Wolf three fifty nine, sir.

(Riker enters)

DATA: Admiral Hanson on subspace, Captain.

RIKER: On screen. Admiral?

HANSON: *The fight does not go well, Enterprise. We're attempting to withdraw and regroup. Rendezvous with fleet –*

(transmission lost)

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 4x1 - ACT 2 "The Best of Both Worlds Part 2")

RIKER: The fleet?

DATA: No active subspace fields. Negligible power readings.

RIKER: Life signs?

DATA: Negative, sir.

LOCATION: STARFLEET COMMAND - DINING ROOM (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")

(Tryla Scott enters)

SAVAR: Well, Captain Scott. Good. Now the setting is complete.

AARON: You don't really think we were in the dark about your intentions, do you?

SAVAR: Patience is one of our virtues, Captain. We didn't go after you, we allowed you to come after us.

AARON: More dramatic that way, don't you think?

TRYLA: Yes, the one thing both races share is a love of theatre. And you've put on a fine show.

PICARD: What race are you? Where are you from?

SAVAR: It's not important. Let us just say we've come a long way to join you.

TRYLA: It's a perfect match. We're the brains, you're the brawn.

(snip)

(Riker draws his phaser and shoots someone. Picard disarms Tryla Scott; Riker shoots her.)

LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D TEN FORWARD (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 2 "Q Who")

RIKER: Why?

**Q:** Why? Why, to give you a taste of your future, a preview of things to come. *Con permiso, Capitan.* The hall is rented, the orchestra engaged. It's now time to see if you can dance.

(Q vanishes)

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D TEN FORWARD (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 5 "Q Who")**

**GUINAN:** Q set a series of events into motion, bringing contact with the Borg much sooner than it should have come. Since they are aware of your existence...

**PICARD:** They will be coming.

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D OBSERVATION LOUNGE (TNG: 1x16 - ACT 3 "Q Who")**

**GUINAN:** When they decide to come, they're going to come in force. They don't do anything piecemeal.

**LOCATION: ENTERPRISE-D MAIN BRIDGE (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")**

**DATA:** Captain, I have attempted to trace the message Remmick was sending. I believe it was aimed at an unexplored sector of our galaxy.

**LAFORGE:** Any idea what the message was, Data?

**DATA:** I believe it was a beacon.

**PICARD:** A beacon?

**DATA:** Yes, sir. A homing beacon, sent from Earth.



**LOCATION: CONTAINMENT ROOM (302-01)**

**BRAHMS: But the Sword is an idea. It's the answer to a question, nothing more: (snip)  
Why did the Borg only send one Cube?**

**LOCATION: SPACE (TNG: 1x25 - ACT 5 "Conspiracy")**

**(As the Enterprise pans away, we hear the sound of the homing beacon blinking its message into deep space)**

**NARRATOR: *And now the continuation...***

**SCENE 306 – 01****LOCATION: FRONT LAWN, BRAHMS RESIDENCE, SYRACUSE, NEW YORK****NARRATOR:** *Many years ago...***(From the perspective of a camcorder)****(Mr. Brahms walks out the front door from the parlor, carrying the camcorder, narrating.)****MR BRAHMS:** Let me just... get out the front door here. As you can see, it's a beautiful neighborhood. East Syracuse is almost as good as Jersey.**(He walks down the sidewalk)****YOUNG TRYLA:** (background) Ensign! Are you ready to beam down?**YOUNG ISAAC:** (background) Let's go, Captain!**YOUNG TRYLA:** (background) Okay. Energize!**MR BRAHMS:** Hey, kids! Say hi to your gram and gramps!**YOUNG ISAAC:** Hi, gram! Hi, gramps!**YOUNG TRYLA:** What's with the holocamera?**MR BRAHMS:** We're making your New Jersey grandparents a video for Mother's Day.**YOUNG TRYLA:** Oh, okay. (to camera) Hello! *Ow revorr!* That's French.**MR BRAHMS:** What's that stick you're holding, Isaac?**YOUNG ISAAC:** This is my phaser!

MR BRAHMS: Ohhh, I see. Are you and your brother playing Starfleet, Tryla?

YOUNG TRYLA: We're not playing, Dad. We're training.

YOUNG ISAAC: Yeah! We gotta stop the Klingons from taking over New Vulcan!

YOUNG TRYLA: Councillor Saavik just invited us down to a last-ditch *teet-uh-teet*. That's French, too.

YOUNG ISAAC: Do the noise! Do the noise, Daddy!

MR BRAHMS: The transporter noise?

YOUNG TRYLA and YOUNG ISAAC: (simultaneous) Yeahhh!

MR BRAHMS: Okay. (imitating *Next Gen* transporter) Whoooooooooooooooooooo!

YOUNG TRYLA: Okay! Here we are: the Hall of Ancient Thought.

YOUNG BRAHMS: Where's T'Pau?

YOUNG TRYLA: I dunno, Ensign Isaac. (pause) Oh, no!

YOUNG BRAHMS: What? What is it?

YOUNG TRYLA: Look out! It's a Klingon platoon!

(She begins running through the grass. Isaac breaks for cover.)

YOUNG TRYLA: It's a trap, Isaac! They're shooting at us! Get to cover!

YOUNG ISAAC: Don't worry, Tryla! I'll protect you!

(He finds "cover" and dives down to the grass.)

**YOUNG ISAAC: (strangely serious – quietly) I'll protect you.**

## **THEME SONG**

*BRAHMS: Space. The infinite darkness. Our civilization is a flickering candle in a howling wind. The endless night slouches ever closer. The threat of Armageddon now hangs by a horsehair. The hour is black, and we have no hope... ...except ourselves.*

*NARRATOR: (grimly) Starring Larry Phelan. ...as Commander Alcar Dovan. Gareth Bowley. ...as Lieutenant Commander Joshua Underwood. Caitlin Heaney. ...as Lieutenant Asuka Yubari. Michael Liebmann. ...as Mister Alex Rol. And Julian Bane. ...as Mister Isaac Brahms. Star Trek: Excelsior proudly presents... The Sword of Damocles, Part Six. "The Man From Syracuse".*

**SCENE 306 – 02**

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

YUBARI: ...but we forgot Lio was coming back with the drinks, right?

ROL: Oh, no!

YUBARI: So he hits the tripwire, and the cake explodes!

ROL: I'll bet he wasn't happy.

YUBARI: (Through laughter) But then — the best part — then Neeva looks up at him, frosting's dripping out his nostrils, and, just, deadpan, she goes: (imitating deadpan) "The worst part is, it's not actually my birthday."

(They both laugh)

ROL: You only knew her for three weeks.

YUBARI: (somber) I know.

ROL: And all these stories —

YUBARI: Tell me about Alec Lorhrok.

ROL: I, um. I never said a nice word to him in my life. Never even told him the truth.

YUBARI: You lied to him for a whole month?

ROL: Not lied. Just — [didn't tell the truth.]

(The door opens, admitting Dovan and Underwood.)

UNDERWOOD: Don't stop on our account. What's going on?

YUBARI: Captain, should you be out of sickbay?

DOVAN: No. Answer his question.

ROL: We're, uh —

YUBARI: Planning the funerals, sirs. For the away team.

DOVAN: It will wait.

ROL: Sir?

DOVAN: It will wait. I can't afford my senior staff time to grieve when we have a mission to accomplish. For now, I don't want to hear the name Alecz Lorhrok.

YUBARI: But sir —!

ROL: (interrupting) Yes, sir. Come on, Lieutenant. It's time to show in our former employer.

(Rol stands.)

YUBARI: ...fine.

(They exit.)

(Pause.)

UNDERWOOD: You just don't want to deal with it, do you?

DOVAN: No.

UNDERWOOD: I understand.

DOVAN: I wish that helped. (pause) Sorry. Thanks.

UNDERWOOD: We still have the *Excelsior*.

DOVAN: Yes. But we've lost a lot.

UNDERWOOD: And we still have a lot to fight for.

DOVAN: You're right. You're right. Well that's almost worth a smile.



**SCENE 306 – A****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE**

(Yubari and Rol emerge from the conference room and cross the bridge to the turbolift. Just as they get there, Brahms emerges from the turbolift, flanked by two security officers. Yubari and Brahms stop immediately before them.)

**NAMELESS ENSIGN #1**

Lieutenant Yubari, transferring custody of the pris — [oner.]

**YUBARI: Guest. Hello, sir.****BRAHMS: Hello, Asuka.****YUBARI: I have custody. You stand relieved, Ensign.****NAMELESS ENSIGN #1: Lieutenant Rol! Welcome back.****YUBARI: That will be all, Mister.****NAMELESS ENSIGN #1: Ma'am.**

(The ensign heads for the lift.)

**ROL: Isaac.****BRAHMS: Hello again, Miste — [r Rol] Well, I suppose I have to call you "sir" now.****ROL: How about "Alex"?**

(Pause..)

**BRAHMS: That was brave of you, using the *Renegade's* warp trail to accelerate your fighters.**

ROL: It was brave of you to let us.

(Pause..)

BRAHMS: Alex, I never wanted to kill – [you.]

ROL: No. I know you didn't, Isaac. You never do. I don't want an explanation.

YUBARI: Well, I do. For everything.

BRAHMS: You're going to get one. I'm sorry, Asuka.

YUBARI: You're apologizing?

BRAHMS: Not because of what I did, no. Because you're going to get an explanation. I had hoped to spare you that.

(Pause. Yubari grabs Brahms and starts leading him.)

YUBARI: Keep your charity, General. It's not worth very much these days.

(Conference room doors swish open.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM

DOVAN: Brahms. Sit.

BRAHMS: Thank you.

(They all sit.)

DOVAN: So. Why'd you kill Leo Amara?

BRAHMS: Commander, I was looking forward to another of our repartees.

DOVAN: We're not having fun this time, Brahms. Half my senior staff is dead.

BRAHMS: Tragic as that is, your officers were fortunate. The rest of us have to live through what happens next.

DOVAN: Is that how you justified the New Victoria massacre, Brahms? "Everybody dies, so why not today?"

BRAHMS: At least it's a philosophy. You just launched galactic Ragnorök out of pigheadedness!

UNDERWOOD: Gentlemen! Please! (Silence.) Why don't we start by reminding me who Leo Amara is?

DOVAN: Keep up, Underwood. Leo Amara was the *Excelsior's* Chief of Special Operations. He was murdered during the trip home from Valandria, on Brahms's orders. Isn't that right, General?

BRAHMS: I no longer hold that rank, or any rank. I'm just "Mister" Brahms now.

DOVAN: Is that so?

BRAHMS: It was the first... successful prosecution of a member of my section in over one hundred years.

ROL: Which is why I was ordered to apprehend him when he escaped.

DOVAN: Well, it's not every day the JAG encounters a man with your... special charms, Brahms. Now let's please talk about Leo? You don't deny you ordered his murder.

BRAHMS: It wasn't a murder. It was an execution.

DOVAN: Oh, well, that makes it alright, then.

**BRAHMS:** Leo Amara was a well-meaning spy. Unfortunately, the law of espionage has little concern for intent.

**(Flashback noise.)**

**SCENE 306 – 03**

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR, AMARA'S QUARTERS (FLASHBACK)

(Amara is at his desk, on the comm.)

CAXTON: *Mister Amara —*

AMARA: I can't believe I'm talking to you.

CAXTON: *Mister Am —* (light groan when cut off)

AMARA: (Interrupting) When I was at the Academy, I signed a petition to charge you with treason.

CAXTON: *Mister ... Amara. (pause.) Look, kid, I'm glad there are people like you at the service academies. You wanted to charge me with treason, which means at least you still know what treason is. Too many of your superior officers don't.*

AMARA: I had forgotten, myself. Until a few days ago.

CAXTON: *Which brings us back to our topic. How can the Centauri Free Press help you inform the public, Lieutenant Leo Amara?*

AMARA: Don't euphemize this, Caxton.

CAXTON: *Not a euphemism. A matter of perspective.*

AMARA: A leak. A leak that could cost trillions of people their lives.

CAXTON: *Then why are you speaking to me?*

AMARA: Because I can't bear the alternative. Because I'm weak.

CAXTON: The Federation was founded on that kind of "weakness."

AMARA: Stow it, Caxton. You have no idea what you're talking about.

CAXTON: *You think? The reporter who's spent forty years trying to expose Starfleet Intelligence doesn't know what he's talking about. (Pause.) You said it was a document.*

AMARA: Fragments, Caxton. Fragments of something bigger. They call it the, uh, Pnakotic (nuh-KAH-tic) Manuscript. Took every favor I had to get what I did.

CAXTON: *And?*

AMARA: It's... damning. It's not just the genetic control and the death squads, Caxton. Do you remember the *Yorktown*? It wasn't just — [lost in space.]

CAXTON: *I don't want to hear it, Amara. You've already said too much for subspace.*

AMARA: Oh, come on, Caxton. I'm in charge of a special operations team. This channel is secure as a Vulcan's promise.

CAXTON: *Fine. Call me paranoid. But you wouldn't be my first source to get killed in an "accident" the night before I go to press.*

AMARA: I'll be careful.

CAXTON: *Can I give you a word of advice?*

AMARA: Please.

CAXTON: *Find an ally. Someone you can talk to. To watch your back. Insurance.*

AMARA: I'm in touch with David Robins at the Manner — [Science Station.]

CAXTON: *Don't give away his name! Christ... And it should be someone on the ship with you. Someone very close.*

AMARA: Julian Bashir told me the same thing.

CAXTON: *That's because it's damn good advice, kid.* (Craxton's console sounds an alert.)  
*Our piggyback is closing.*

AMARA: Listen, the *Excelsior* will be done at Valandria by tomorrow. Zefram Square on New Proxima. Two weeks.

CAXTON: *I'll be there. Good luck, kid.*

AMARA: Amara out.

(Channel closes.)

**SCENE 306 – 04**

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

(Pause.)

DOVAN: And?

BRAHMS: 'And' what?

DOVAN: And you killed him? For talking to a reporter?

BRAHMS: Did you hear the part about trillions of people dying?

DOVAN: So you decided to kill a few yourself. I mean, "Death squads?" Really?

BRAHMS: That's a misnomer at best.

DOVAN: So you didn't have a squad whose job was to kill people?

BRAHMS: The needs of the many outweighed – [the needs of the few.]

DOVAN: The needs of the many? Jehosephat, Brahms, you can justify anything with that!

UNDERWOOD: The point is – Mister Amara didn't agree.

BRAHMS: Amara was a loyal officer. I don't know what happened.

ROL: I do.

BRAHMS: What?

ROL: I was part of that "death squad." And a few nights before the *Excelsior* first left spacedock, we had dinner together.



**(Flashback sound)**

**SCENE 306 – 05****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR MARINE MESS HALL (FLASHBACK)**

THE MAJOR: No, really, Ensign. You should try this.

T’KALA: I will demur.

ROL: Oh, come on, T’Kala. Don’t be such a Vulcan.

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

DOVAN: Hang on. Hang on. I remember this dinner. The chow hall, down in Marine Country. It was Amara, Ensign T’Kala, you Mister Rol, and... come to think of it, that was the Major, wasn’t it?

ROL: Back then, he was Marine Captain Ryan Willis.

DOVAN: What? The Major has a name?

YUBARI: Surprise.

(Flashback sound.)

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR MARINE MESS HALL (FLASHBACK)**

ROL: Oh, come on, T’Kala. Don’t be such a Vulcan.

T’KALA: Every substance must conform to – [its essence.]

ROL: Uh-oh, Vulcan philosophy. Bet they love that in Engineering.

T’KALA: They... do not.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: How are you integrating down there?

T'KALA: They suspect nothing. However, I've had to give Mister Ermez extracurricular instruction on the finer points of the dilithium matrix. His errors may yet expose us before we even leave spacedock. (exhale) Yet the other engineers seem to prefer his company to mine.

ROL: There may be a lesson there, T'Kala.

T'KALA: Yes. Non-Vulcans are irrational, and dangerous.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Mister Amara. Something wrong?

AMARA: Hm?

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Usually you'd be the first one teasing T'Kala.

AMARA: I'm just... not in the mood. It's "illogical".

T'KALA: Your admission is appreciated... ..but uncharacteristic.

ROL: Don't be reticent with the team, sir.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: The mission is too important.

AMARA: (huffs once, then drops his fork.) Well, that's the trouble, isn't it, Captain? How do we know that this mission is important enough to justify what we've been asked to do?

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: We belong to a chain of command, who have — [vetted this plan from top to bottom.]

AMARA: You mean the chaps who sent us into the blender on the *Anbar* mission?

ROL: No one could have predicted — [the bugbomb detonating.]

AMARA: Exactly. The stakes were high enough on the *Anbar*, when it was our lives on the line. And I'm happy to do that, every day, until the day I make the ultimate sacrifice for Starfleet. But now General Brahms is asking me to put my blind trust in him — to have faith that something's going on that's so important that it might end with us murdering an entire Starfleet crew. (pause) That's what this is, isn't it? Never mind the fact that we blow up when the *Excelsior* does. We'll be taking a thousand innocent people with us!

ROL: It won't come to that, sir. Our squad is a last-ditch firewall. If the real operation goes bad — whatever it is — if Captain Cortez can't handle it — if an infestation turns up and if our handler gives the code word... The odds of us actually having to self-destruct the *Excelsior* are... It won't happen.

T'KALA: Lieutenant, if the probability were not non-negligible, our presence here would be unnecessary. Indeed, Mister Amara refers to a grave moral quandary.

AMARA: Don't get me wrong: I've killed a lot of bad guys before, and I have considered it a privilege to dispatch every single one of them. But these aren't the bad guys.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: These are the people we've sworn to protect. I hear you. (pause; he takes a breath) When I took my oath, I never expected my duties to crew and country would ever conflict. But it does, and this isn't the first time. I like to remind myself that these people all swore the same oath, and, given the choice, they'd all gladly lay down their lives for their countrymen just as we are. That's what makes the Federation great. That's what makes these people worth dying for in the first place.

T'KALA: Well said, sir.

ROL: Our enemies will go to any lengths to destroy us, sir. So our society — the greatest society in the history of this galaxy — must go to any lengths to defend itself.

AMARA: Any lengths. (pause) What if it were a civilian transport not a starship?

(Pause.)

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Then our duty would get... harder.

AMARA: That's it?

T'KALA: The same principle applies.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: The same... higher duty.

ROL: Well, I don't know if it's "higher." It's probably the lowest, most monstrous duty there is – saving the innocent by killing other innocents. But they need us to do it. And, deep down, they want us to do it.

AMARA: They do?

ROL: In my experience? Every single one of them.

(Dovan walks up.)

DOVAN: Excuse me.

AMARA: Commander Dovan!

DOVAN: Mister Amara, Mister Rol... I'm afraid I haven't met you other two yet.

T'KALA: Ensign T'Kala, sir. What occasions your visit to Marine Country?

DOVAN: Just getting to know the crew. May I sit?

T'KALA: (near-simultaneous) Of course, sir.

ROL: (near-simul.) Sure, sir!

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: (near-simul.) Sir, no sir!

AMARA: You can have my seat, Commander. I have another matter to attend to.

(He rises from the table and walks off.)

DOVAN: I'm sorry; did I interrupt something?

ROL: I'm afraid so.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Don't worry, Lieutenant, I'll talk to him. His team's in Marine Division; I'll see him tonight at the – don't tell anyone! – surprise inspection.

ROL: I'm not sure he'll listen, sir.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Bah, what choice does he have – ask Captain Cortez for his own department? Sir. Excuse me, sir.

(Pause..)

DOVAN: Oh! Yes: dismissed.

(Willis rises, exits. Dovan and Rol fade into the background.)

DOVAN: (in background) Gosh, I missed replicated food.

ROL: (in background) Don't you live on a farm world?

DOVAN: (in background) Homecooking is overrated.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 06**

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

**ROL:** A few days later, he slipped me a computer chip and hinted about my genetic control. He wanted an ally. He got murdered.

**BRAHMS:** I see. It seems that the Valandria operation induced a disproportionate number of... sudden attacks of conscience.

**ROL:** You took us over a line, Isaac. A line even I hadn't crossed since the *Yorktown*.

**BRAHMS:** I ordered no more than what had to be done to protect Tryla's – to protect the Federation.

**ROL:** That may be. But in the end it was too much.

**DOVAN:** You asked Amara to destroy his own ship without even telling him why.

**BRAHMS:** It was for his own protection. Even Captain Cortez came to understand that.

**DOVAN:** Captain Cortez knew about this?

(Pause.)

**BRAHMS:** Not as such.

**DOVAN:** Thought not.

(Flashback sound)

**SCENE 306 – 07****LOCATION: BRAHMS'S OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO**

**BRAHMS:** Absolutely not! I won't hear of it again!

**CORTEZ:** General, Lieutenant Yubari has sworn an oath – [to protect Starfleet secrets.]

**BRAHMS:** Exactly!

**CORTEZ:** You don't trust her?

**BRAHMS:** No: I trust her completely. She has sworn that oath and I promise you she will die for it, Mister Cortez. If we tell her the reason for her surveillance on board the *Excelsior*, she will take that secret to her grave.

**CORTEZ:** Then why –

**BRAHMS:** Because no one should have to live with that knowledge! Do Vulcans have nightmares, Captain?

(Pause.)

**CORTEZ:** I'm only half-Vulcan.

**BRAHMS:** I'll take that as an answer. Because humans certainly do. I thought that when I found out what was out there, just beyond the black of our frontiers... I thought I would finally get a full night's sleep again. That was five years ago. I'm not going to subject Asuka to that.

**CORTEZ:** Unless you do explain it to her, she's going to be very disturbed by her orders. Surveillance of every man, woman, and other on the *Excelsior*? That sounds like a police state until you know about the bluegills.

**BRAHMS:** She knows I wouldn't order anything more than necessary.



CORTEZ: She also knows about that “any lengths” philosophy you have.

BRAHMS: Which you share.

CORTEZ: I haven’t been pushed far enough to find that out.

BRAHMS: You shot Captain Siresh. I didn’t think anyone wearing Starfleet Red was capable of that.

CORTEZ: I only did what was logical, General.

BRAHMS: That’s what I’m counting on.

CORTEZ: What if Yubari does find something? Do I tell her then?

BRAHMS: No. There will be other safeguards aboard the *Excelsior* to deal with that... eventuality.

CORTEZ: I don’t like the sound of that.

BRAHMS: Of course not. Tolerate it; that’s an order.

CORTEZ: I have a duty to investigate.

BRAHMS: By all means. You’ll find nothing. Now. (He scrolls down a padd.) Mister David Robins has taken leave of the *Sizemore* to get your covert sensor array installed. It should be ready by the time you arrive to take command of the *Excelsior*. You have the scanning area committed to memory?

CORTEZ: One-one-four mark three-eight-eight mark eight, sixty-seven light-years from the Gateway. If the *Anbar* mission compromised us in any way, we’ll see it. How’d the admiralty like the Valandria mission proposal?

**BRAHMS:** That was a stroke of genius, Captain. It eliminated every command candidate in front of you, puts you in a perfect position to perform the scans, and they haven't the least suspicion.

**CORTEZ:** Then it's already been approved?

**BRAHMS:** Yes. Try to look surprised when you get your orders. Particularly if it's Admiral Parker – I can't figure out how much he knows, but I'm certain it's more than he lets on. (sigh) This whole mission is a convoluted mess. The risks we took to get to the *Anbar* were insane, and Sireh was almost our undoing. Now we can't stop looking over our shoulder to see if they found us.

**CORTEZ:** Convoluted? Maybe. But worth it. The intel we've got from the *Anbar* survivors – Even the children – [it's been invaluable.]

**BRAHMS:** I know, I know. And if we're lucky, your mission is about to prove we escaped scot-free.

(Pause. Cortez takes the padd from Brahms as he offers it to her, and scans through it herself.)

**CORTEZ:** Well, it's not quite how I envisioned my first command. But I can't deny I'm looking forward to it. Thank you, General.

**BRAHMS:** Don't thank me yet. Yubari will be handing you high-resolution scans of everything: not just the War zone, but internal surveillance and shipboard communications as well. She's a trained analyst, but she won't even know about some of the scans she's performing, much less what they represent. So we are counting on you, Codename Syracuse. If there's been a breach, you have to identify it all on your own.

**CORTEZ:** I know. And, before you say it: "a breach is an information leak or a development in the War just as much as an actual bluegill infiltration." Well have you taught me your mild paranoia.

BRAHMS: Mild?

CORTEZ: Touché. Will that be all?

BRAHMS: Not quite.

(Intercom chimes.)

SECRETARY: *Analyst here to see you, sir.*

BRAHMS: Right on time. Send her in!

(The door swooshes open. Yubari storms in.)

YUBARI: General, if you don't let me build an agony booth for Emmm Wilkerson and his entire – [team, so help me, I'll hunt them down with a katana myself!]

BRAHMS: Lieutenant Asuka Yubari, I'd like you to meet Captain Rachel Cortez.

YUBARI: Oh. Um -- Ma'am.

CORTEZ: "Captain" will be fine, Lieutenant. I'm glad to finally meet you. I've heard so much.

YUBARI: Well, that's interesting, because no one's told me anything about you.

CORTEZ: Then I'll let the two of you discuss it. Should be... fascinating, General.

BRAHMS: Good day, Captain. Dismissed.

(Cortez exits.)

YUBARI: Here, General. I knew you'd be running out of coffee about now.

(She hands him a cup.)

**BRAHMS:** Mm. Raktajino.

(He takes a sip.)

**BRAHMS:** Mmmmm. That's why you're my favorite analyst, Yubari. Now, what was that about torturing Admiral Wilkerson? Oh, and do you want anything to drink? Irinello?

**YUBARI:** Not today. My arm is...

**BRAHMS:** The pain's that bad? Again? (pause) Asuka —

**YUBARI:** Look, I know! Let's just... ! Let's focus on work. Sorry.

**BRAHMS:** So, Admiral Wilkerson. You haven't found the Devil's Heart, have you?

**YUBARI:** Actually, yes I have, if he'd stop being such a petaQ about Project Timepiece, but first... What does Captain Cortez know about me?

**BRAHMS:** Only good things. I wanted to give your field handler a favorable impression.

**YUBARI:** Field handler... General. But the objections, from your colleagues —

**BRAHMS:** Now, it's not a huge assignment. Routine S&S: scout and surveil. Absolute secrecy, of course, but not physically exerting.

**YUBARI:** I didn't expect a posting on your secret starship the first time out of the nest. What's the operation?

**BRAHMS:** There are a lot of details, but I think the most unusual thing is the rules of engagement.

**YUBARI: Meaning?**

**BRAHMS: You are not to break cover for any reason. If you are shot and dying and they need your blood type for a transfusion, you give them the blood type of your cover identity. This must remain secret. Do you understand?**

**YUBARI: Yes.**

**(Flashback sound)**

**SCENE 306 – 08****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

YUBARI: No! How could I? You sent me into a mission without telling me all the facts!

BRAHMS: It was for your own protection.

DOVAN: Brahms, are you capable of arguing in anything other than cliches?

BRAHMS: I trusted you, Asuka.

DOVAN: Better.

YUBARI: You murdered our officers!

BRAHMS: I did what was necessary.

DOVAN: Slipping...

ROL: Isaac? We've been telling this story backward. I think we need to start from the beginning.

BRAHMS: I thought it would be easier this way.

ROL: All we've been doing is hinting at the nightmare. They need to live it.

(Pause)

BRAHMS: So be it.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 09****LOCATION: SYRACUSE BACKYARD – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

(Tryla turns over in her sleeping bag and calls out to Isaac, who is hesitating in the doorway.)

YOUNG TRYLA: Come on, Isaac!

YOUNG ISAAC: But it's cold out there!

YOUNG TRYLA: Dad said we can only camp out back if we're on the buddy system. So get your sleeping bag and get out here! (pause) That's an order, Ensign Isaac!

(Pause)

YOUNG ISAAC: Yes, sir!

(Young Isaac runs out to Tryla and sets up his sleeping bag.)

YOUNG TRYLA: Captain's Log, Stardate Fifty-one-eighty-eight point five. The away team is present and accounted for, so I hereby declare the Stellar Science Sleepover officially in session.

YOUNG ISAAC: Whoaaa.

YOUNG TRYLA: The stars really come out this time of night. Mom said you can stay up 'til nine-thirty, if you can keep your eyes open.

YOUNG ISAAC: What are they all called?

YOUNG TRYLA: Well, you see those ones there? They're the Big Dipper. *Ursa Major* in French.

YOUNG ISAAC: Yeah, but what are they all called, Tryla? Like, what's that one?

YOUNG TRYLA: That one? At the end? That's Alkaid. The Alkaidians have been at war for ten years. When they give me a starship, we're going to go there and end it.

YOUNG ISAAC: You mean like the police?

YOUNG TRYLA: No, not like that. When I leave, all the Alkaidians are going to be friends.

YOUNG ISAAC: Did you decide what's the name gonna be?

YOUNG TRYLA: Yeah. There's a cool quote I found, from a dead captain named Kirk. He was trying to save his friend but his boss told him no. So Kirk said, "The word is no. I am therefore going anyway." That's gonna be my starship's main quote. So we're gonna call her the U.S.S... *Renegade*. It means breaking the rules. Just like Kirk.

YOUNG ISAAC: Can I come on your ship?

YOUNG TRYLA: Well, yeah. Who else can be my science officer? And mom and dad can be the flyers, and Sam Scott from school will be the doctor.

YOUNG ISAAC: Yech! Sam Scott your crush.

YOUNG TRYLA: He's cute.

YOUNG ISAAC: Bleh!

YOUNG TRYLA: Well you're just gonna have to get used to him, Isaac, because he's gonna be on our ship. And we're gonna make treaties, and discover all sorts of new science, and meet everyone who lives up there. And what we do? It'll last until the stars go out!

YOUNG ISAAC: How?



**YOUNG TRYLA:** Because we'll be building part of the Federation, Isaac. Remember that song we learned in school? Once you're in the Federation, you're friends forever.

**SCENE 306 - 10****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

DOVAN: Wait. You're saying you have a family?

BRAHMS: You ask as though the idea never occurred to you.

DOVAN: It didn't.

UNDERWOOD: We asked for the Sword of Damocles, Brahms, not your life story.

BRAHMS: That is a distinction without a difference, Commander. My sister was already on active duty by the time I made it to Stanford. A lieutenant commander when I started my dissertation on sub-etha signals. Two months after she got married, I got my doctorate in astrophysics and joined Starfleet Academy. I was thirty-two years old, and still following our childhood plan. Until October Tenth, Twenty-Three-Sixty-Four. Until my sister died.

UNDERWOOD: October Tenth.

YUBARI: The same day all those people died at Starfleet Headquarters.

DOVAN: No. Ten people and three admirals supposedly had "heart attacks" that day. But only two died. Dexter Remmick was one. And the other... But that's impossible.

BRAHMS: The other was Captain Tryla Scott of the U.S.S. *Renegade*. The youngest captain in history. Scholar, diplomat, explorer. Your security officers who escorted me here: they're both from races that she brought into the Federation. She was my sister.

(Silence)

DOVAN: Don't be obscene.

BRAHMS: I wouldn't dare.

(Tense Pause.)

DOVAN: Go on.

BRAHMS: They told me it was routine surgery for an undiagnosed heart defect. She died on the table, they said. But I knew it was a lie.

YUBARI: How?

DOVAN: Nine other heart surgeries in one day. Too far-fetched for Isaac Brahms.

BRAHMS: Ha. Dovan, I was a scientist. Paranoia was someone else's job. I knew it was a lie because the woman who forged the Alkaidian Accords doesn't just give up and die on an operating table! So I gave myself a lesson in paranoia. And once I opened my eyes, there was the conspiracy, plain as day. You see, Mister Dovan, while we were taking lecture notes in Tuvok's Protocol class, Starfleet was infiltrated by the very same neural parasites you faced today. Dexter Remmick was host to the queen organism, and the *Enterprise* team had no choice – they had to kill him. But Tryla... The others all lived. Their bluegills fled their bodies and the medics got to them in time. But Tryla. Commander William Riker... shot her, in... just the wrong place and she died.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: I'm... I'm sorry for your loss, General.

ROL: He's okay, just... give him a minute.

(Pause)

BRAHMS: I dug. And I kept digging. It was all I could do, but I was putting together a jigsaw blindfolded. It took time. And yet... the pieces, no more how impossible they seemed, kept fitting themselves together. Eventually I noticed that all the missing pieces were leading me back to one man: the new Inspector General's adjutant. Dexter Remmick's successor. The Inspector's office was keeping something hushed up, even

from the people who were supposed to be in the know. Another conspiracy. I tried to ignore it, tried to move on to the next stage of grief. I'm a scientist, not a spy. But then I remembered what Tryla had died for, what she'd lived for: a Federation she believed would last forever. That Federation she had loved and nurtured was threatened again. There was only one thing to do. I waited for the adjutant to leave Earth. Then I broke into his quarters.

**SCENE 306 - 11**

**LOCATION: STARFLEET APARTMENT – EARTH – DAY (FLASHBACK)**

(Brahms sneaking around, his shoes creaking across the floor as he makes his way from the front door to the desk in the bedroom. He quietly speaks into a recording device.)

**BRAHMS:** This is Cadet Isaac Brahms, Gold Squad, C Company. In the event of my death, let this document stand as a record to the evidence of alien infiltration at the very heart of the Federation.

(He leans over a computer console and starts tapping away at it, still talking as he runs it through various programs.)

**BRAHMS:** If you're seeing this, you've already seen my other evidence. I am now in the apartment of the Inspector General's adjutant. It is November the Second, Twenty-Three-Sixty-Four. The time is...

(He checks his wrist chronometer)

**BRAHMS:** Eleven past nine in the morning. And I...

(The computer boops that it's succeeded at its task.)

**BRAHMS:** ...have just broken into his encrypted database. (He scrolls.) It's all here, the missing files. Coordinates. Tactical maps. Frequency analyses. Could take a while to analyze this; I hope my camera's getting it all. This is hard proof of – (gasp)

(There's a key turning in the front door in the next room.)

**BRAHMS:** My God. He's here. I, uh – I'm going under the bed. Not much, but it's all I have.

(He dives to the ground and crawls under the bed just as the front door swings open. Meanwhile, the adjutant enters. He makes his way around the room, kicking off his boots, tossing his keys on the counter, replicating some tea. Then the footsteps move toward the bedroom. Brahms gets his breathing under control. The adjutant stops, right in front of where Brahms is hiding. We hear him sip the tea and sigh with satisfaction.)

ADJUTANT / ALEX ROL: One lump or two, Mister Brahms?

BRAHMS: What? I – Don't –

(He struggles to get out from under the bed.)

ROL: In your tea. Chamomile, just the way your mother makes it. You always take sugar, but two lumps on a stressful day. Under the bed is not the best hiding place.

(Brahms scrambles to his feet.)

BRAHMS: You can kill me, but if you do the data on your computer goes out to the whole world.

ROL: Two lumps, then.

(The lumps go in. He sets it down on his nightstand.)

ROL: I just want to talk, Cadet.

BRAHMS: Like hell you do!

(Brahms charges, fists flying. He gets a good right hook on Rol, but Rol blocks the next two punches, grabs one of Brahms's arms, and pins him to the bed, face-down, underneath him. Brahms continues struggling.)

BRAHMS: Let me go!

ROL: Since this is tiring for both of us, I'll cut to the chase, Cadet. Can I offer you a job?

(Surprised Pause.)

BRAHMS: What?

ROL: A job. In Intelligence. We've been watching you, Cadet. And we need you.

BRAHMS: Me?

ROL: We were attacked, Isaac Brahms. We were attacked and they killed the best person we have. Who better to hold back the darkness than her brother?

BRAHMS: What darkness? If you're not part of the invasion – which I still intend to prove –

ROL: It was a homing beacon. Sent from Earth. That's the secret my unit has been guarding, Cadet. Not another invasion: but the promise of one. They're coming back. Soon. We need the brave. We need the bold. We need the brilliant. Or the Federation will fail.

BRAHMS: That can never happen.

ROL: Only because of people like you and me, Cadet. People willing to break the rules – and my kitchen window – to risk their lives for everyone else's.

BRAHMS: Like Tryla.

ROL: So... you want a job?

**SCENE 306 - 12****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

DOVAN: Sorry: you worked for Rol?

BRAHMS: He was fifteen years my junior. And the best commander I ever had.

ROL: The only commander you ever had.

UNDERWOOD: Just what kind of a job did you offer him, Lieutenant?

ROL: Well. Interesting question.

(Pause.)

ROL: Who here knows the story of the Sword of Damocles?

DOVAN: Aren't we here because we don't?

UNDERWOOD: He's referring to the legend.

DOVAN: Oh, is this some Earth thing?

UNDERWOOD: Something like that.

(Pause.)

YUBARI: Greek. It was Greek.

ROL: Yes, it was, Asuka.

YUBARI: Damocles was at a banquet with the king.

BRAHMS: King Dionysius, of Syracuse.



YUBARI: Yes. He... was jealous of all the good things the king had. So the king agreed to trade places with Damocles. Damocles... I can't remember.

ROL: He feasted. Wine, women, and song. They treated him like a king and he loved it.

BRAHMS: Until he looked up.

YUBARI: And saw a sword dangling over his head, hanging by a single horsehair. He lost his appetite.

BRAHMS: As I lost mine, the day I joined Alex Rol. The day I discovered what we truly face.

DOVAN: So we've been waiting twenty years for the horsehair to snap, for the bluegill attack to come.

BRAHMS: (chuckles darkly) Were it so easy, Dovan.

UNDERWOOD: Pardon?

ROL: Three weeks later, we were attacked.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 13**

**LOCATION: ALIEN WORLD – DESOLATE, DEAD, WINDY (FLASHBACK)**

(Brahms and Rol trudge through the rocky soil.)

OFFICER #3: I'm sorry, gentlemen: you can't enter the city!

ROL: Alex Rol, Inspector General's Office. My badge.

OFFICER #3: I see. What about you?

BRAHMS: I – [have a duty to accomplish here.]

ROL: He's with me, Commander!

(Brahms jogs to catch up with Rol.)

ROL: They're drawing an incredibly large perimeter around the ruined cities. We can't be less than two miles from the center of town.

BRAHMS: With respect, sir... I think you should slow down before you go over that –

ROL: Holy hell.

BRAHMS: ...that rise, sir. Great Bird.

ROL: I read the reports, but... there's nothing left. There's literally nothing left of Benteen City.

BRAHMS: Other than the crater. And I... have never seen a crater that large.

ROL: It's not radioactive, is it?

(Brahms pulls a tricorder and scans.)

BRAHMS: It was clear this morning. (pause) And it's clear now, sir. Just an odd magnetic resonance frequency. There's no chance this was just a freak accident? This outpost was using an experimental power source — a pan-dimensional vortex inducer. If it blew up, it would have left a crater the size of Nevada.

ROL: That doesn't explain how a dozen other outposts along the Neutral Zone were scooped off the faces of ten planets... But it might make a good cover story. Keep it in mind.

BRAHMS: At least we know it wasn't the Romulans.

ROL: Romulans are nothing, Isaac. I'd rather have two Romulan Wars than one of these attacks. We have twelve. Twenty if you count the Romulan colonies.

BRAHMS: Then you're sure it's the bluegills.

ROL: Just the opposite, actually. That's what has me scared.

BRAHMS: I don't follow.

ROL: It's another race. Someone else trying to kill us. And, well... just look at that crater.

BRAHMS: If you're right... But there's no evidence of that.

ROL: Take off the science goggles, Isaac, and look at this crater. The bluegills infiltrated. They softened us, opened our belly up wide. The goal was to make it easy to conquer the Federation. Whoever did this didn't give a Klingon's brain about conquering anything. They came to scoop every gram of advanced technology off the face of the planet. And they did quite a job of it.

BRAHMS: There's still no evidence. Command won't accept your theory.

**ROL: Doesn't matter. I'm right. Come on, Isaac. We have work to do.**

**(Flashback sound)**

**SCENE 306 – 14**

**LOCATION:** *EXCELSIOR* CONFERENCE ROOM

**BRAHMS:** From that day forward, we were possessed by a nameless dread. *Things* were out there, and we didn't know what or how we could hope to stop them. Starfleet needed intelligence more desperately than it needed it in the depths of the Dominion War, and we had none to give them.

**UNDERWOOD:** But what about — [the homing beacon?]

**DOVAN:** Hush, Underwood.

**ROL:** We worked day and night for months. I chased rumors on the outer rim, trying to discover the fate of a starship called the *Raven*. Isaac traced the homing signal Dexter Remmick had transmitted.

**BRAHMS:** A Ph.D. in astrophysics helped, but it was brutal work. And when it was finished, I found we'd hit a dead end. Remmick's beacon was directed at a location deep in the Delta Quadrant — nearly the opposite side of the galaxy. Decades out of reach. Then Rol got the news.

**ROL:** An earthquake on an unexplored planet, beyond the outer rim — Pnakos (NAH-kohs). The quake uncovered a ruined city, on the order of tens of millions of years old, and the entire planet began to send out a low-level EM signal. If it was a message, we were never able to translate it. But after three weeks, the Starfleet Archaeology team discovered a manuscript in the ruins. It was unreadable, undatable. But pages thirty-five through forty-seven consisted of detailed medical diagrams... of a bluegill.

**BRAHMS:** We rounded up a skeleton crew borrowed the courier U.S.S. *Kallina*, in for a refit. She was barely spaceworthy, but she could hit warp nine point six. That was all that mattered.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 15****LOCATION: SPACE (FLASHBACK)**

(The courier ship *Kallina* whips by at warp 9.6.)

**BRAHMS:** *Commencing night watch, Stardate Four-Two-Two-Nine-Seven-Point-Two. First Lieutenant Isaac Brahms commanding. E.T.A. to Pnakos five hours, thirty minutes. Ship status green. Crew status green. Commanding officer's status... green.*

**LOCATION: KALLINA BRIDGE (FLASHBACK)**

(There's a sensor alert on Operations' console.)

**OPERATIONS:** Picking up a distress call.

**BRAHMS:** What? Origin!

(Operations taps some buttons to confirm.)

**OPERATIONS:** It's Pnakos.

(Brahms taps the intercom.)

**BRAHMS:** Captain to the bridge. Emergency.

(Intercom off.)

(Pause.)

**TACTICAL:** Sir? Should we answer the hail?

**BRAHMS:** Oh. Oh, yes. On screen!

**OPERATIONS:** Noted.

(The comm channel opens, and all we get at the other end at first is a soft fuzz.)

BRAHMS: This is Acting Captain Isaac Brahms of the Starfleet courier *Kallina*. Are you in distress? (pause) Are you in distress, Pnakos?

(At that, there's a loud popping fuzzing noise on the other end.)

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *[This is] Doctor H[arley Warr]en, Special Science Team. We're archaeologists, for God's sake. We're under attack. Hurry.*

BRAHMS: We're on our way. Helm, increase speed to warp nine point eight.

TACTICAL: No one's... ever gone that fast, sir.

BRAHMS: Damn the record books, Tactical. Push her 'til she breaks.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *You need to get here, Captain. Our lives... Our lives... but the Federation must have the data we've collected.*

BRAHMS: Why? What have you found?

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *We were able to translate two pages of the manuscript. Secrets! Terrible secrets, no man should know these things! And like fools, like scientists, we kept going! Now we're swarming with... in them. Can I say their name on an open channel? They've taken two of us. I've shot Doctor Pickman...*

BRAHMS: Stay calm, Doctor. Evacuate your camp if you must. Nothing is more important than your life.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *Where do you think we're calling from, Brahms? We tried — two of my colleagues ran screaming into the night to escape. Only there are things out there, Brahms. Things in the dark not even the manuscripts speak of. All we heard was the screaming. We'd never survive outside, not with our equipment.*

BRAHMS: Leave it, Doctor. Leave it and go.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *Brahms, you don't under — [stand]*

BRAHMS: I understand perfectly, Doctor.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *I have the manuscript with me. I'm going to read out as much of it as I can before the comm room is — [overrun by the creatures.]*

BRAHMS: We will get to you in time, Doctor, and we will secure that intel, but you need to stay alive until we do. I'm not going to choose between a manuscript and all your lives. Now get out of there!

(Pause)

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *Thank you, Captain. We'll see you in a few hours.*

BRAHMS: You'd better. Good luck.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: *Pnakos out.*

(The channel closes with an added power-down effect.)

BRAHMS: Let's go get some answers.

BRAHMS: (present-day) *Captain Rol pushed us to warp nine point eight three. Deck four was destroyed by inertial forces alone. When we entered orbit, the E.M. signal had stopped, and there were no lifesigns. But we found one.*

LOCATION: ANCIENT CITY RUINS – DAY (FLASHBACK)

(A shuddering survivor – mortally injured, shivering from the wounds and from the shock, the terror, and the madness is muttering and moaning. Brahms's tricorder runs over his body, quietly in the background.)



ROL: Doctor, please, we need — Isaac, can you give him anything for the pain?

BRAHMS: By my readings, sir, this man should be lucid. Anything more will more likely kill him. (pause) Fine. I'll try garaphine.

ROL: I want the perimeter checked again. See if you can find out what happened to the advanced equipment.

(Brahms injects the Survivor with a hypospray.)

OPERATIONS: Noted.

(Ops moves out into the ruins.)

SURVIVOR: D — D d — Doc-tor. Doc Hah — ar ar -- rley.

ROL: Doctor Harley is dead.

SURVIVOR: H-How?

BRAHMS: A broken neck like the others. We don't know how.

SURVIVOR: They — They weren't men.

BRAHMS: You mean the bluegills? The insects?

SURVIVOR: Nohhh. Nonononononononononno...

ROL: Who, then? Who killed you all?

SURVIVOR: In the dark! MACHINES IN THE DARK!

(Tricorder flatlines.)

**BRAHMS:** He's dead.

**ROL:** (dismayed exhale) Alright. Let's check the — [ruins again.]

**BRAHMS:** Wait. Clenched. In the palm of his hand.

(Rol finds a piece of paper there.)

**ROL:** You're right. What -- ?

(He uncrumples the page)

**BRAHMS:** One page. One page of unreadable glyphs. That's all that's left of the manuscript?

**ROL:** It's hardly fair.

**BRAHMS:** It's not a question of fairness. I chose this.

**ROL:** What?

**BRAHMS:** They were going to read out the manuscript to me and wait for death. I told them to stay alive and tell us later. I thought that's what Tryla would have done. So now we have nothing. (pause) (He screams in rage and kicks an empty metal container as hard as he can.)

**ROL:** Isaac —

**BRAHMS:** Let's get back to work.

**SCENE 306 - 16**

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

DOVAN: Machines in the dark. The Borg. Right?

UNDERWOOD: I assume.

DOVAN: First the bluegills, now the Borg? Brahms, are you just trying to scare us with Borg ghost stories?

BRAHMS: No. I'm trying to make you see the Borg with new eyes. With my eyes. The machines in the dark. Giving them a name almost makes them comprehensible. Makes them seem... beatable.

DOVAN: We have beaten the Borg. Twice. At extreme cost. Don't you dare question that.

YUBARI: With respect, sir — no, we haven't.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: You have something you wanna say, Yubari, say it.

YUBARI: One of the biggest worries in the analyst community is our "victory" over the Borg. They attacked us, twice, with one cube. Both times they destroyed over half our Fleet. That's not a victory, sir. It's a down payment.

BRAHMS: When the Borg hit the Neutral Zone, they were testing us, a prelude to invasion. We failed spectacularly. Then they suddenly stopped making sense. From a fleet of thousands of cubes, they sent two in eighteen years. Their offensive stopped dead. We were grateful for the reprieve, but terrified by what it might mean. Then the assimilations started.

UNDERWOOD: Started?

ROL: It always surprises me how surprised people are about this.

BRAHMS: Not everyone has access to the *Enterprise* transcripts.

ROL: Good point.

DOVAN: What, gentlemen, the hell are you talking about?

BRAHMS: Until about fifteen years ago, the Borg had no interest in assimilating individuals into their Collective.

UNDERWOOD: Excuse me, what?

DOVAN: Seconded.

ROL: Technology, yes. Planets, yes. Resources, yes. People, no. When the Borg attacked El-Auria, Guinan's people were exterminated, not assimilated. Only their technology was taken. When the *Enterprise* met the Borg at J-Two-Five, the Borg were still only interested in their technology. When the Borg attacked the Neutral Zone, they didn't assimilate the outposts; they stripped the machine elements and destroyed the inhabitants. The same for species two-six-two and two-six-three: they were mined for knowledge, then exterminated. The first recorded example of the Borg trying to biologically assimilate an entire species was on Stardate four-four-zero-zero-two.

YUBARI: The first attack on Earth.

BRAHMS: Exactly. When the Borg took Locutus and announced their intent to "add humanity to their perfection," it was a watershed. Assimilation was a new strategy. One we could not begin to understand.

DOVAN: Hold up, hold up. Good story, Brahms, but this is a bridge too far. The Borg catchphrase is "You will be assimilated resistance is futile." It's not new. Every child from here to Minos Korva plays Borg Tag when they're little. I had a friend on the

*Bellerophon* whose only pickup line was “assimilate this.” Which was... frustratingly successful – The point is: The Borg do assimilation.

(Pause.)

ROL: I know it’s not how you’ve ever seen the Borg, sir, but I implore you – if we are going to stop the Sword of Damocles you have to put aside your preconceptions and trust the evidence. Cross this bridge, or you’re useless to everyone. Isaac, let’s go to the clips.

BRAHMS: Already?

ROL: They never believe us until we play them. This is from the *Enterprise’s* first encounter with the Borg. Isaac?

(Brahms taps a button. On the speaker, something plays, from TNG’s “Q Who?”)

*Q: The Borg is the ultimate user. They're unlike any threat your Federation has ever faced. They're not interested in political conquest, wealth or power as you know it. They're simply interested in your ship, its technology. They've identified it as something they can consume.*

(The computer beeps as the clip ends.)

DOVAN: So... what, the Borg changed their whole paradigm after that?

BRAHMS: Exactly.

DOVAN: The Borg have an overriding purpose to assimilate, Brahms! They didn’t just change priorities one night!

ROL: Funny you use that phrase, sir.

(Rol presses another button.)

**BORG:** *You will surrender yourself or we will destroy your ship. Your defensive capabilities are unable to withstand us.*

**RIKER:** *What the hell do they want with you?*

**SHELBY:** *I thought they weren't interested in human life forms, only our technology.*

**PICARD:** *Their priorities seem to have changed.*

(The computer beeps as the clip ends.)

**ROL:** It was easier to understand this twenty years ago, before the Borg had assimilated billions and billions of people in every quadrant of the galaxy. But it's still true: until recently, assimilation was not widespread.

**DOVAN:** But —

**BRAHMS:** Alright, Dovan, let's say you're right. How do you explain everything we've shown you tonight?

**DOVAN:** I, uh... (exhales disconsolately) Dammit.

**ROL:** Isaac, cue up the next — [clip.]

**DOVAN:** No. (pause) No, that's enough.

(Pause)

**UNDERWOOD:** But the Borg don't sexually reproduce. How did they fill their ranks before they developed assimilation?

**BRAHMS:** Drones don't sexually reproduce. But the *Enterprise* and others have found maturation chambers used for the nurturing of normal Borg infants — not drones, not queens.

DOVAN: If they're not drones and they're not queens... what are they?

BRAHMS: What they've always been, Commander: machines in the dark.

(Pause)

UNDERWOOD: Then why did the Borg start assimilating the entire galaxy?

BRAHMS: And?

UNDERWOOD: And?

DOVAN: ...And why did they only send one cube?

ROL: Finally. The right questions.

(Pause)

BRAHMS: We spent a decade chasing rumors, assembling what evidence we could into an ever-growing manuscript to replace the one we lost. But we had only hints. The closer we looked at Borg operations, the less sense they made. Even rumor of the bluegills was difficult to come by.

ROL: Then, eight years ago, the Federation discovered the Iconian Gateway.

DOVAN: The one we use to explore this quadrant of the galaxy.

BRAHMS: Yes, Exploratory threw a party. But so did we. Many years before, I had been recruited to help Alex Rol trace the bluegill homing signal back to its source. It was out of reach.

YUBARI: But the Gateway changed that. You were able to find the target of the homing beacon.

**DOVAN: Great Bird.**

**UNDERWOOD: Where was it?**

**BRAHMS: Oh, this is where it gets good, Commander.**

**(Flashback sound.)**



**SCENE 306 - 17****LOCATION: YORKTOWN TURBOLIFT (FLASHBACK)**

ROL: This would be easier if we had a ship of our own.

BRAHMS: Well, rumor has it – and you didn't hear this from me – rumor has it they finally started work on the *Nosferatu*. A few more years, and who knows? They might give you the next one.

ROL: I already know what we'll call her.

BRAHMS: This ship will serve our purposes for now. Captain Allan is a genius, the *Yorktown* is a dreadnought – and it has marines coming out its pores.

ROL: I'd feel more comfortable if we had a better idea what's out there.

BRAHMS: Plunging into the unknown. If it weren't for all this, I'd be posted to some starship somewhere, holed up in an astrometrics lab, doing this every single day. Just like Tryla did.

ROL: Space is lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep. And miles to go before I sleep.

BRAHMS: And miles to go before I –

(The turbolift doors open.)

CAPTAIN ALLAN: Gentlemen. I was wondering when you'd get here. We're approaching the coordinates now.

BRAHMS: What do the scans say?

CAPTAIN ALLAN: Nothing yet. Just... dark matter. About what we expected. Once we're inside the nebula, though...

ROL: We'll be ready for anything.

CAPTAIN ALLAN: General, I've assigned an attache to join you for the duration of your mission. Second Lieutenant Ryan Willis, Marines.

BRAHMS: Surveillance?

CAPTAIN ALLAN: Assistance.

(Willis steps forward from a turbolift.)

CAPTAIN ALLAN: And here is now.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Sir! General, sir!

ROL: That's me. Pleasure to meet you, Mister Willis.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: General! Second Lieutenant Ryan Willis reporting for duty, sir!

ROL: At ease.

BRAHMS: We don't get to stand at attention very often in the intelligence corps.

ROL: Decidedly a perk.

(Computer panel alert.)

CAPTAIN ALLAN: General Rol, Engine room reports we are approaching the nebula. Dropping to impulse.

(The ship drops out of warp)

CAPTAIN ALLAN: And penetrating the outer boundary... now.

ROL: Isaac.

(Brahms slides himself into the ops console and starts working the sensors.)

BRAHMS: Picking up... derelict spacecraft. Borg, sir.

(Many more sensor alarms.)

BRAHMS: A lot of Borg.

CAPTAIN ALLAN: How many, Colonel?

BRAHMS: At least fifteen hundred cubes. And rising.

CAPTAIN ALLAN: Tactical! Yellow alert, shields up!

NAMELESS ENSIGN #2: (in background) Aye, sir!

(The ship goes to yellow alert and raises shields.)

BRAHMS: Detecting smaller ships now. Number's off the scale. Recalibrating.

ROL: Derelicts too?

BRAHMS: Scans show they were destroyed in battle.

CAPTAIN ALLAN: A battle? What goes up against thousands of Borg cubes?

ROL: There's only one species I can think of with the numbers and the firepower.

(Pause.)

BRAHMS: We've found them.

**SCENE 306 – 18****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

UNDERWOOD: The homing signal led you back here? Here, to our nebula.

ROL: And when we found the Borg and Bluegill fleets, drifting in space from a decade-old battle, suddenly it all made sense.

UNDERWOOD: I'm afraid I still don't under – [stand].

YUBARI: Oh my God.

BRAHMS: Ah. It's just clicked with Asuka.

DOVAN: But not with me. The bluegills and the Borg fought a battle here, so what? What does it have to do with the Sword of Damocles? Where is the Sword of Damocles?

BRAHMS: Falling.

ROL: Eighteen years ago, the Federation had its first encounters with the two deadliest enemies it has ever faced. Eighteen years ago both of them were preparing all-out invasions of the Federation. Both saw our vulnerabilities. Both saw how to exploit them. We had nothing, Captain. We were waiting for doom on two fronts. And on both fronts doom stopped dead in its tracks almost simultaneously. Do you think that's a coincidence?

(Silence)

BRAHMS: It was no coincidence. The Borg and the Bluegills stopped their offensives against the Federation because they both found more important targets: Each other.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 19****LOCATION: BORG CUBE (FLASHBACK)**

(The power is flickering, some panels spark. We hear three distinct Transporter beams.)

ROL: On second thought, maybe we should have brought a marine team.

BRAHMS: On a Borg Cube? The smaller the team, the safer I feel.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Sir, I thought this cube was dead, sir. Look at it: it's barely intact.

(Brahms starts working a Borg console.)

BRAHMS: It still has minimal power. After all these years... And a Borg Cube with power, Mister Willis, is a Borg Cube that is... adapting. Hand me that cable.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Sir.

(Brahms plugs in a cable and a Starfleet computer powers up.)

BRAHMS: The generator is now connected to the *Yorktown's* main computer, General. We have all the processing power we can use.

ROL: Just be sure to keep it segregated from the Borg. If one of their programs jumps our firewall...

BRAHMS: That's physically impossible.

ROL: These are the Borg.

BRAHMS: I know.

ROL: Activate the link.

**BRAHMS**" Interfacing with Cube computer systems... now.

(Brahms does some precise computer work with both the Borg and Starfleet consoles.)

**ROL**: Alright, let's see if we can get at the Borg database the easy way.

**BRAHMS**: Any idea what a database might look like in a Borg mainframe?

**ROL**: Not the slightest.

**BRAHMS**: It seems as though the Cube doesn't even store files — not that we'd recognize, anyway. The data is all jumbled together. The crosslinks... almost random.

**ROL**: More like a brain than a computer system.

**BRAHMS**: Yes. That's exactly it. I need more power, or I'll never even find the right data sector.

**ROL**: Are you sure it's safe?

**BRAHMS**: That's a joke, right?

(Pause.)

**ROL**: Okay. Do it.

(Brahms taps a command, and a little more power flows into the system.)

**THE MAJOR / WILLIS**: Sir! These alcoves just snapped on! We have biosigns, sir!

**BRAHMS**: I thought this cube was dead!

**ROL**: Not anymore! Willis — [fall back and prepare to shoot!]

**VOICE OF THE COLLECTIVE:** *Your attack is futile. Your fleet's defensive capabilities are unable to withstand us.*

**BRAHMS:** Willis, target that distribution — [node.]

**ROL:** No! Hold!

**BRAHMS:** General!

**ROL:** Borg Collective! You're wrong! Our fleet has already defeated you! Analyze!

**VOICE OF THE COLLECTIVE:** *We have adapted. You will submit to analysis of your biological and technological distinctiveness or be destroyed.*

**BRAHMS:** (sotto voice) Sir, what are you doing?

**ROL:** (sotto voice) They said "fleet," Isaac, not "ship." They don't know the battle's over. They think we're bluegills. Your time has ended! We have arrived; this galaxy belongs to us now!

**VOICE OF THE COLLECTIVE:** *Location is irrelevant. Property is irrelevant. Your strategic advantage has been corrected; you will comply.*

**ROL:** We will not comply! Our life form is superior! Your cultures will adapt to serve the bluegills!

(Brahms's tricorder suddenly goes nuts. A sort of beam passes over the team in a quick sweeping motion.)

**BRAHMS:** Sir, we're being scanned!

**VOICE OF THE COLLECTIVE:** *Species identified: five-six-one-eight human. Neural parasite not present. Our secrecy is compromised. Notify. Notify. Notify.*

**BRAHMS:** Fire, marine! Fire!

(Willis fires before Brahms is done talking, destroying a Borg distribution node.)

(But then, we hear Borg servos and a couple of heavy footsteps; the nearby Borg are waking up!)

**ROL:** They're waking up!

**BRAHMS:** They must be drawing power from our generator!

**ROL:** How are they magnifying it like that?

**BRAHMS:** It doesn't matter! I'm shutting it down!

**THE MAJOR / WILLIS:** Sir, get back!

(Willis fires heavily into the cable connecting the interlink machine to the Borg computer console. The latter explodes in a shower of sparks.)

(The Borg servos power down and shut off.)

(The Away Team breathes heavily in relief)

(Combadge beeps.)

**CAPTAIN ALLAN:** *Allan to Away Team. The Borg Cube just sent out a transmission.*

(Rol taps combadge.)

**ROL:** Rol here. We know. What did it say?

**CAPTAIN ALLAN:** *It was heavily encrypted. No way anything but another Borg could read it.*



ROL: Good. Will the Borg ever receive it?

CAPTAIN ALLAN: *Well, you lit up like a Christmas tree for a minute there, General. We don't know. It might not be strong enough to escape the nebula. But please – try not to do it again.*

ROL: Agreed. Rol out. (pause) Well... so much for the easy way.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 - 20****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

**BRAHMS:** The bluegills entered our galaxy just when the Borg seemed sure to conquer everything. The bluegills challenged the Borg, and the two sides were evenly matched. Their war has dragged on into a stalemate bloodier than a thousand Dominion Wars. But the day that war ends...

**UNDERWOOD:** Winner takes galaxy.

**YUBARI:** And nothing can stop them.

**BRAHMS:** The Federation has survived — all life in this galaxy has survived — because for twenty years the two races that could annihilate us... have been too busy fighting each other. That's the Sword of Damocles, Dovan: not a place, not a thing, but an idea. A fact.

**YUBARI:** So the Borg only sent one cube because... what, their fleet is tied up on the front line?

**BRAHMS:** Yes. Both fleets are. It is the longest battle front in the galaxy, and the war has wiped out hundreds of civilizations in no-man's-land. Everything else within ten thousand light years has been either infested or assimilated. The nebula we're in anchors the extreme edge of the bluegill defensive position.

**ROL:** Still... the Borg could easily spare a few cubes to take the Federation. So could the bluegills.

**DOVAN:** Why don't they?

**ROL:** Consider other cold wars throughout history, Captain. When the Klingons invaded Yontara, when the Soviets put missiles in Cuba — it nearly plunged all sides into a mutually destructive final war. If the Borg or the bluegills made a dramatic move

outside their recognized spheres of influence — if they assimilated Vulcan, or infested the Jem'Hadar — it'd be the twenty-fourth century version of invading Poland.

UNDERWOOD: Except we're Poland.

ROL: Exactly.

BRAHMS: But the biggest reason neither side has attacked us is because they don't care. By far their most attractive targets are each other. The rest of us are simply... dessert.

DOVAN: So those two cubes they used to attack Earth? Was that just a prank? Or do they really really really want Earth, because humans are the universe's specialest flower?

BRAHMS: We thought that. Honestly, for several years - Everyone did. You should have seen the Vulcan studies - trying to find what made humans so attractive to the Borg. Eventually we realized — the Borg didn't want us because we were special. They wanted us because we weren't.

ROL: We know of some early experiments in assimilation: the Hansen family, the U.S.S. *Tombaugh*. Eventually we noticed what they all had in common: they targeted humans.

BRAHMS: The Borg needed assimilation; the war was depleting their numbers and the bluegills could replace their troops instantly. Earth was isolated. On the opposite end of the galaxy, so far from the war it'd take months for the bluegills to hear about an attack. And humans, it turns out, are extremely susceptible to nanoprobes. Humanity was a testbed. The Borg only sent one cube to Earth because the Borg didn't care if they assimilated it. They only wanted to refine the technology. Assimilation succeeded. We can be thankful that their later experiment in time travel did not.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Okay.

(Pause.)

BRAHMS: "Okay?" (pause) That's it?

DOVAN: Yeah. Apparently the Sword of Damocles has been hanging over my head for half my life. Now I know about it. But nothing's changed. None of it answers the only real question I've asked you. You're just dancing around it!

UNDERWOOD: Commander —

BRAHMS: Let him vent, Mister Underwood. He's beginning to realize the magnitude of what he's done. What's your question, Dovan?

DOVAN: Why. Kill. Leo. Amara? Why so secret, Brahms? You killed nine thousand people on New Victoria. Why?

(Silence)

BRAHMS: We didn't understand the secrecy ourselves, at first. This war has devastated much of our galaxy. Why haven't we heard of it? Why haven't the rest of us been used as pawns? As cannon fodder? Because there is one, last, hellish complication in this story, Dovan. We call it Beetlejuice.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 – 21****LOCATION: BORG CUBE (FLASHBACK)**

(A canister rises out of a Borg machine.)

VOICE OF THE BORG: *Compound one-three-zero-three-eight-five.*

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: General, sir!

BRAHMS: Don't worry! – it's a low-level autonomic response. The ship isn't conscious.

ROL: Two hours in one Borg science alcove and you already know how the Cube works?

BRAHMS: Not even close. But if it were conscious, we'd be dead by now.

ROL: How?

BRAHMS: Better if you don't think about it, sir.

ROL: Have you worked out what this compound is yet?

BRAHMS: You can't begin to understand how complex the molecular structure is sir. According to Federation science, it's provably impossible. This compound cannot exist.

ROL: Okay. But what's it do?

BRAHMS: I can only hazard. I think it's a... neural suppressant of some kind.

ROL: Suppressant of what? It must be important; Willis has already found two other dispensaries on this level.

BRAHMS: I don't know. Give me two years and a lab.

ROL: I gave you two hours and a science alcove.

BRAHMS: You obviously have a hunch, General. I'm listening.

ROL: The Borg mentioned that they'd corrected the bluegills' "strategic advantage." I wonder if this neural suppressant has something to do with the neural parasites.

BRAHMS: Well... when I look at it that way... You might be on to something, sir. Assuming the A-region bonds to the cerebro... Oh no.

ROL: What is it?

(Brahms taps some keys on his big interlink device.)

BRAHMS: I need to run this through the *Yorktown's* computer.

ROL: What is it?

BRAHMS: This is preliminary until the *Yorktown* confirms, but... I think it's a vaccine... against bluegill infestation.

ROL: Fantastic! (pause) Right?

BRAHMS: No. This is bad. This is very, very bad.

(Intercom beeps.)

CAPTAIN ALLAN: *Allan to Rol.*

(Rol taps combadge.)

ROL: Rol here.

CAPTAIN ALLAN: *Bad news, sir. Somebody picked up the Borg signal. We've picked up twenty-five inbound ships, all directions. Looks like your bluegills.*

**BRAHMS:** Sir, can we get the *Yorktown* out of here without being detected?

**CAPTAIN ALLAN:** *Afraid not. They've drawn the net too tight. But if we hurry we can still break out without taking on too many at once.*

**BRAHMS:** That's not good enough.

**ROL:** We'll wrap up here, Captain. Rol out. Isaac, what's gotten into you?

(Interlink device beeps several times.)

**BRAHMS:** My preliminary analysis has been confirmed. Sir, we have to destroy the *Yorktown*.

**SCENE 306 – 22**

**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

**UNDERWOOD: You destroyed the *Yorktown*? Why?**

**DOVAN: Does it matter?**

**BRAHMS: We already knew that both sides were trying to keep the war a secret. We saw that on Pnakos, and again when the cube sent out its warning. We didn't know why. Beetlejuice was the explanation. Alex?**

**ROL: Must I? (Pause.; takes a breath) Months later, we were able to reconstruct the first few days of the war. It began with a bluegill attack along the whole border where the Borg had massed their fleet. The first strike was devastating. An entire unicomplex was infested. The Borg lost thousands of light-years in territory. The bluegills were confident. They didn't know that this was all according to Borg plan. In such a massive attack, the Borg obtained massive amounts of data, and they did what they do best – they adapted. In the eight years since we discovered it, the Federation's best scientists have been able to synthesize barely a few ounces of Beetlejuice. The Borg were able to develop and deploy it to every member of the Collective within two weeks.**

**BRAHMS: This created a problem. There was already a risk that, when we found out about the war, we would ally with one side and tip the balance.**

**YUBARI: The Federation is that powerful?**

**BRAHMS: Oh, no. No no no. The Federation's involvement is immaterial. The concern is that all free species in the galaxy might join one side. The Federation, the Romulans, the Dominion, the Hirogen, the Peth, the Brentari... Combined, we might be enough to affect the war.**

**ROL**

**But it wasn't a serious concern, at first. The odds of the entire galaxy agreeing to join one side were nil – especially because no one else in the galaxy wants this war to end.**



**BRAHMS:** Beetlejuice changed that.

**DOVAN:** How?

**BRAHMS:** If the Borg and the bluegills approached you for an alliance, and the Borg offered to give you a substance that would make you immune to the bluegills, which side would you join?

**ROL:** Beetlejuice made it irrational to ally with the bluegills. If word of the war got out, it would pit the whole galaxy against them — a mortal threat.

**UNDERWOOD:** Which would seem to give the Borg a good reason to get the word out. We'd have no choice but to be on their side — even if it meant assimilation as soon as the war ended.

**DOVAN:** Only they didn't. When you got to them in the cube, the Borg were just as worried about secrecy as the bluegills.

**BRAHMS:** Yes. The Borg do have plans to seek an alliance, if the war turns against them. They'd give our troops beetlejuice and keep it from our civilian populations. But they're afraid we'd one day be able to reverse engineer it, manufacture it ourselves. We'd give it to everyone. Then the bluegills would have no reason to attack us, and we'd have no reason to fight them. We'd turn on the Borg, and exterminate them. Their own version of the Sword of Damocles.

**DOVAN:** But the whole analysis is wrong. We do know about the war, and we haven't joined a side. (pause) Have we?

(Pause.)

**ROL:** Not officially. But... we have gone on many dangerous missions in order to preserve our advantage in the War. We have had... a serious effect. As have a number of very brave Jem'Hadar who joined us.

**BRAHMS:** This is the fundamental horror of the Sword of Damocles, **Dovan:** as long as the status quo continues, we are safe. We can preserve that balance – maybe for fifty years, maybe a hundred fifty – but eventually the war will end and we will all be killed or enslaved. But today the bluegills found out what we know. Today, you, Captain Alcar **Dovan,** have broken the secrecy that holds the entire status quo together. You've accelerated the Sword. You've thrust us into the middle of this war, and no matter what we do they'll destroy us – either as combatants, or on a victory lap around the galaxy. God forbid we join the winning side. When the two bluegill cruisers we're chasing get back to their base on Gevinon, they're going to inform the King. A council of Kings will be called. The inescapable conclusion will be reached. Ten weeks after that, a dozen cubes or a hundred battleships – it hardly matters which – will arrive above every world in the Federation. You've undone us. And all the painful sacrifices we've made... are meaningless.

**SCENE 306 – 23****LOCATION: BORG CUBE (FLASHBACK)**

(Brahms is inputting commands on several different consoles of his interlink device)

BRAHMS: Sir, just listen to me!

ROL: I have listened to you, Isaac, and I have made my decision. We are not destroying the *Yorktown*.

BRAHMS: What's wrong with my reasoning? We've always wondered about the secrecy, written scenarios to protect it. Compound thirteen-three-eighty-five explains everything!

ROL: I agree! This, this juice is the key! If the *Yorktown* is discovered here the Sword falls and everybody dies!

BRAHMS: Then what's wrong with my reasoning?!

ROL: The part where we blow up the *Yorktown*!

BRAHMS: Willis! Help me get full access to the *Yorktown's* power systems!

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Sir! I can't do that, sir.

ROL: Willis, if he attempts to destroy the *Yorktown*, I order you to stop him.

THE MAJOR / WILLIS: Sir, if what he says is true, about the entire Federation... I'm afraid I can't do that, either, sir.

(Rol slaps his combadge.)

ROL: Rol to *Yorktown*!

(He slaps it again)

**ROL:** Captain Allan, come in!

**BRAHMS:** You're too late. I've disabled their communications systems. They don't know. It will be mercifully quick.

**ROL:** Isaac, it was one thing when we poisoned the Great Link, they were the enemy. The *Yorktown* is our people. If you do this, you're turning your back on your sister and everything she stood for.

**BRAHMS:** If I don't do this, the Federation is over and everything Tryla stood for is as dust.

**ROL:** What would she have done?

**BRAHMS:** She... would have allowed that to happen.

**ROL:** And you?

**BRAHMS:** I have a theory I've been working on, General. My theory is, that for every bright-eyed idealist in the universe, signing treaties and making discoveries and inspiring children, there has to be someone else. Someone in the shadows who does terrible things so the treaties and the discoveries and the smiling children endure. And I believe that's a price worth paying. For the universe to be lit up by one Tryla Scott is worth a hundred monsters like me protecting her legacy. I've armed the *Yorktown's* self-destruct.

**ROL:** Isaac... you've never disobeyed an order.

**BRAHMS:** Then order me to do what I have to do. Give the word, General!

**ROL:** The word is no!

(Pause.)

**BRAHMS:** I am therefore going anyway.

(He presses a final button. Outside, the surprised *Yorktown* explodes.)

**BRAHMS:** The *Yorktown*... has been destroyed.

(Respectful silence.)

**ROL:** There's going to be hell to pay, Isaac.

**BRAHMS:** Assuming we even make back to Federation space... if they don't send me to prison, they're going to strip my rank and kick me out of the corps. I'll end up a Junior Lieutenant somewhere.

(Pause.)

**ROL:** No, you're not.

**BRAHMS:** It's the consequence for my action, sir, and I'm not sorry for what I did.

**ROL:** You're not going to be demoted, Isaac, because, as of this moment, you didn't destroy the *Yorktown*.

**BRAHMS:** I didn't?

**ROL:** No. I did. You tried to stop me, but I was too fast.

**BRAHMS:** Sir, I can't allow you —

**ROL:** Isaac, you just killed a thousand of our own officers. You can do whatever the hell you choose! (pause) I thought I was ruthless, Isaac. I thought, after the Dominion War, there was no line I wouldn't cross. But I was wrong. You've set a course for us today. Not just us, not just Starfleet — the whole galaxy has to follow the path you've started. If the Federation is going to survive on this path, it is going to need someone...

ruthless... to lead our defense. We need you, Isaac Brahms. Everyone needs you. Lead the way.

(Flashback sound.)

**SCENE 306 – 24****LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

DOVAN: And you have done one hell of a job ever since, haven't you, "Isaac"?

BRAHMS: Do not mock me, sir.

DOVAN: How many more have you killed, Brahms? How are you any different from them?

BRAHMS: Oh, now who's arguing in clichés, Dovan? Face it: you caused more deaths in one day than I caused in a lifetime! And for what? To satisfy your curiosity.

DOVAN: I'm out here because Captain Rachel Cortez told me her on her deathbed that I needed to be out here! That you were wrong about everything!

BRAHMS: Well, Dovan? Am I? Have you seen anything different from what I've told you? Anything to suggest that Cortez's warning was anything more than a drug-addled piece of delirium? (pause) Have you?! (pause) We're done here.

DOVAN: So we are. Yubari.

YUBARI: Sir?

DOVAN: Throw 'im in the brig.

BRAHMS: What? You can't do that.

DOVAN: I beg to differ, Brahms. That's an order, Lieutenant.

YUBARI: Yes, sir. (She stands.) Mister Brahms, if you'll come with me.

BRAHMS: This solves nothing, Dovan!

DOVAN: It gets you out of my sight, Brahms. It's a start.

(Yubari leads Brahms out of the room.)

DOVAN: Mister Rol. Get down to engineering and help Chief Adow stoke the warp engines. We have to catch those bluegills before they can report back to their base.

UNDERWOOD: Thank goodness for this ion storm, or they'd've already sent out a signal.

ROL: Sir, I should be in that brig with Isaac.

DOVAN: Dismissed, Lieutenant. Or whatever you are now.

ROL: Yes, sir.

(Rol exits.)

UNDERWOOD: Well? What do you think?

DOVAN: I think... I've killed everyone.



**SCENE 306 – 25****LOCATION: BACK YARD, SYRACUSE NY – DAY (FLASHBACK)**

YOUNG ISAAC: Take that! And that! And that!

(Tryla walks over to him.)

YOUNG TRYLA: Ensign Isaac, have you secured the pris – [oner?] Isaac, what are you doing?

YOUNG ISAAC: I'm gonna make this Cardassian tell us when's the next ambush!

YOUNG TRYLA: Isaac, stop!

YOUNG ISAAC: But, Tryla, he was gonna hurt you!

(Pause.)

YOUNG TRYLA: I wanna play something else now.

YOUNG ISAAC: They were gonna hurt you.