

STAR TREK EXCELSIOR: CAT AND MOUSE

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2015 Writing Contest Entry

SCENE 01 "TEASER"

SET: EXCELSIOR bridge

EFFECTS: Misc. bridge control sounds duration of scene

DOVAN:

Commander Neeva, how much longer will we need to finish our initial cartography scans of Gamma P3-11? And why is the communications station empty?

NEEVA:

Just a few more minutes for the scan, sir. Between all of the debris in the system and the fact that we are staying well outside of it I am trying to get all of the detail possible with the long range scan. And Ensign Jovax still has that cold, so I relieved her of duty. I couldn't stand to listen to all that sneezing again, so I am covering communications.

LORHROK:

Not like there is anyone to talk to out here... And with the four nostrils her cold is rather, um...

YUBARI:

Explosive, I believe is the word you want.

DOVAN:

Yes, well, good call Neeva. As far as the scans go, well, just go ahead and take your time, I know this is not exactly optimal cartography procedure but will all of the rocks and dirt floating in P3-11, it looks more like a nebula than a solar system and Excelsior is just too big to move through all that space junk. I spent days in a system like this during the war chasing a Jem'hadar fighter. That was in a much smaller ship and it was still something I do not care to repeat. Still, this is just, well...

YUBARI:

Boring, I believe is the word you want.

DOVAN:

I was searching for something that sounded more captain-y, but boring works.

YUBARI:

Sorry I was unable to find something appropriately captain-y, sir.

DOVAN:

I will overlook it this time, but only because you have a point. Look, people, I know this is the worst way to explore. I would rather be zooming through the system, scanning planets, looking for life and maybe even taking down a few away teams but it is not worth it for a few gas giants and ice balls floating through the chunks that used to be the interesting planets.

LORHROK:

It is all part of the job, sir. It seems like it is feast or famine out here with either way too much excitement or way too much nothing.

ROL:

There is something to be said for boring, though. Boring rarely tries to kill you.

SHARP:

How do you think I feel? I came up on the bridge because I thought this was supposed to be exciting. It does look kind of interesting, though, I suppose. It is like a giant stellar dust mop.

DOVAN:

Captain's log supplemental: We have a new name for Gamma P3-11: The Dust Mop, so named by our restless spacehand Doctor Melissa Sharp. There, it is official.

NEEVA:

Congratulations, Melissa. I never named a system. I do understand what you mean, Alecz. Sometimes I miss the Alpha Quadrant, where every contact is not a first contact and someone else has drawn up the maps! It would be nice to see a familiar face, a Ferengi trader or some even some lovable gruff Klingons.

LORHROK:

I don't know about lovably gruff; even though they are our allies, I have to admit that Klingons still kind of... make me uneasy.

YUBARI:

Oooh, Lorhrok's afraid of Klingons.

LORHROK:

I am not!

ROL:

It did kind of sound like you are, um, sir.

SHARP:

Alec, I can prepare a nice anti-anxiety hypospray just in case.

DOVAN:

Captain's log, personnel addendum: If Excelsior encounters Klingons, my first officer may be transformed into a weeping baby.

LORHROK:

Hey! (Pause) You didn't really put that in the log, did you?

EFFECTS: a warning tone

NEEVA:

Captain, I am getting an energy signature. It was not there a moment ago; it just popped up. Wait, it is gone. No, it is back. Running diagnostic— It is not my equipment, sir. There is some kind of signature blinking in and out.

LORHROK:

Could it be interference from The Dust Mop affecting your readings?

NEEVA:

Possible, but I have multiple indications of some kind of technology.

DOVAN:

Commander Neeva, if we ease up to the outer rim without actually going in the system, will that help you get better readings?

NEEVA:

It certainly couldn't hurt.

DOVAN:

Rol, move us in, but stay on the sidewalk, okay? That street is still too busy for us to play in just to see an energy signature.

ROL:

Aye, sir.

DOVAN:

Well, everyone, The Dust Mop is at least trying to be interesting.

STANDARD EXCELSIOR OPENING AND CREDITS

SCENE 02 "ACT ONE"

SET: Excelsior bridge

EFFECTS: Misc. bridge control sounds duration of scene

ROL:

Taking position one thousand kilometers from system edge, sir.

DOVAN:

Good, hopefully that will help. Commander Neeva, still getting your mysterious energy signature?

NEEVA:

It has come and gone a couple of more times. I am beginning to think that this is not due to interference but something else, like...

DOVAN:

A cloaking device? Mr. Lorhrok, maybe you will get your Klingons after all!

LORHROK:

At this point, that would be welcome just to show you all that they do not scare me. I just, well, still kind of see them as a threat.

ROL:

As someone who sees everything as a threat, I can respect that.

YUBARI:

Careful what you wish for, Lorhrak. Sir, I am detecting five Birds of Prey. Wait— no! Now they are gone. But they were there.

NEEVA:

I saw them, too, Yubari. But the readings were strange. I saw them, lost the energy signal, lost them and have the signature. Running a standard diagnostic on my position... All within specs.

YUBARI:

Mine, too. So they were no glitch.

DOVAN:

Can we tell if they are Klingons or Romulans?

NEEVA:

We got inter-ship communications from the squad, but it was not immediately recognized by the Universal Translator. It is coming through now— What? Sir, it is Klingon but an ancient dialect not spoken for almost three thousand years!

DOVAN:

Come again, Neeva? We have pre-historic Klingons flying around out there?

YUBARI:

That would not be pre-historic. But it would be pre-spaceflight for Klingons.

NEEVA:

Confirming the translation. Ancient Klingon, the root of the modern language.

DOVAN:

So how are they out here? Maybe some kind of ancient off-shoot, like the Vulcans and Romulans, out here developing independently?

SHARP:

Even if they were, Alcar, how would they have Birds of Prey?

DOVAN:

That, Doctor, is a really good point. It does complicate things.

LORHROK:

Do we know of any Klingon ships that have passed through the gate to this quadrant?

DOVAN:

No, not any as of the time we left. And definitely none speaking a supposedly dead dialect.

ROL:

Perhaps they are a warrior priest sect dedicated to returning to what they perceive as classical Klingon values.

LORHROK:

Do groups like that actually exist?

YUBARI:

Several, actually. Some of their beliefs would no doubt give you nightmares for weeks. No offense meant, sir. They really are truly frightening.

DOVAN:

Well, what do you say we find Mr. Lorhrok's boogeymen, Yubari? Yellow alert, people. Let us slowly enter The Dust Mop. Commander Neeva, now that the Universal Translator has identified the dialect are we able to hail the Klingons in their own language?

NEEVA:

We should be able to, but I would like to run it through a couple times just to be sure it is properly translated.

YUBARI:

I can read over it, if you want. I doubt my accent would be correct but this is a dialect that I can at least read.

DOVAN:

Ms. Yubari, you are full of surprises.

YUBARI:

Never underestimate the value of a classical education, sir. Umm, this reads well except that we may want to mention that we are commanded by the mighty Captain Alcar Dovan or something to that effect. If we do not brag, we will appear subservient but if we brag too much it is challenging. Best to throw out the captain's name as if they should know who he is already.

DOVAN:

As well they should, Yubari. Mighty Captain Dovan has a certain ring to it, but should we mention how handsome I am as well?

YUBARI:

We do not want to brag too much, sir. Neeva, are you picking this up?

NEEVA:

Yes, I see the ships again. NO! Not the same ships. I am reading three Jem'Hadar fighters!

YUBARI:

Confirmed. Shields up and weapons hot, too.

DOVAN:

What? Rol, get us behind that miserable ice ball that counts as The Dust

Mop's last planet to hide us from sensors now! And go to red alert! Open hailing frequencies.

EFFECTS: Red alert klaxon

NEEVA:

Communications are not going through, sir. I can't hail them!

DOVAN:

Get that hailing frequency open now! I would rather talk than fight.

YUBARI:

And they are gone again. Is it possible that the Jem'Hadar have adapted some kind of cloaking technology? Perhaps they are with the Klingons?

DOVAN:

I do not like the sound of that at all. Yubari, Neeva, Rol: I want every trick in the book employed to scan for cloaked ships.

SHARP:

I had better get to sick bay, just in case.

EFFECTS: Turbolift sounds

J'NAYA:

What is going on up here? I was just coming to look at your broken solar system and now we are at red alert?

SHARP:

Excuse me, Kestra, I need to get to sick bay.

J'NAYA:

So we are at red alert then?

DOVAN:

That we are, Commander. Why not take the Engineering Station and help looked for cloaked vessels?

J'NAYA:

Should I not be getting back to engineering for the battle?

DOVAN:

No one is shooting yet and the Mighty Captain Alcar Dovan is doing his best to keep anyone from starting.

J'NAYA:

The mighty Captain Alcar Dovan?

DOVAN:

That is what they call me. Now, anyone got Klingons? Or Jem'Hadar? Neeva, do you still have that energy signature?

NEEVA:

I do see it again, but no ships. But then again, now that we are inside The Dust Mop I am not getting optimal readings.

YUBARI:

Agreed. All of this dead planet debris is playing havoc with the sensors. I am afraid it may affect shields as well.

DOVAN:

Great. Any other good news?

NEEVA:

Actually, communications are being affected, too. I am not sure we could hail another ship if we found one to alert them of our friendly intentions and mighty captain.

LORHROK:

Even still, we probably should do a bit more to figure out what is going on out here. Klingons? Jem'Hadar? All the way out here?

DOVAN:

Agreed. We need to keep shields up but let's not energize any weapons. Despite what Mr. Lorhrak may think, Klingons are our friends now. But just to be safe, I want weapons as close to energized as they can be without actually showing up hot on sensors, got that?

CHORUS OF "AYE, SIRs"

DOVAN:

Now, let's try to ease up on that energy reading and see if we can figure out what is going on, okay Rol? Commanders J'naya and Neeva, how about doing all you can to guarantee that we have sensors that will cut through The Dust Mop. Yubari and Lorhrok, I want you all making sure that our shields will stand up to all of this mess. Rol, you fly this ship like you live: carefully. I know we are bigger than my hometown, but move us from rock to rock as much as you can, got it?

ROL:

Aye, sir. I will do what I can but I am afraid that even if we are hidden and

undetected by sensors, every move we make is going to cut a very obvious path through The Dust Mop. We clean out a tunnel of dust as we move.

DOVAN:

Makes sense. Neeva. Yubari, can we track our friends out there by the trails they leave in The Dust Mop?

YUBARI:

I am not sure they are leaving one, at least not one apparent to our sensors.

ROL:

How can that be? When we move we leave a trail I can see.

YUBARI:

The Jem'Hadar fighters are smaller, but the Klingons are large enough that you would expect them to leave a trail, too.

NEEVA:

Yes, unless they have worked out a way to cover their tracks.

YUBARI:

Exactly.

J'NAYA:

It could be that they have worked out a shield modulation that let's them slip through the grime out there. That could not only cover their tracks—

YUBARI:

But keep their shields from being affected by The Dust Mop!

J'NAYA:

Exactly! Sending you some suggestions...

YUBARI:

I will start running models.

DOVAN:

That sounds like a good start, ladies. Neeva, you are our eyes while they fix our shields. Rol, sit tight for a minute and give these two a chance to work their magic but be ready to move and move fast. Lorhrok, it is the First Officer's job to present options.

LORHROK:

Right now, the only other options I see are slowly moving out into the open and announcing our presence or just plain getting the heck out of

here.

DOVAN:

I don't like either of those. I want to know what is going on here without getting shot at!

LORHROK:

I am not advocating, either, sir. They are just the only two options I see at the moment. I want to know what is going on here, too.

ROL:

Question, sir.

DOVAN:

Go.

ROL:

Are we sure that weapons fire will not ignite The Dust Mop? It is just dust, right?

DOVAN:

Smart people, will phasers or photons blow us all up?

J'NAYA:

Pretty sure it won't, but you never can tell until you try. I wouldn't worry about it.

ROL:

That is not as comforting as I hoped.

LORHROK:

Oh, Bev's afraid of blowing up.

ROL:

Yes, of course. Aren't you?

LORHROK:

I suppose I am.

DOVAN:

J'Naya said she is sure we won't blow up, but I am still dedicated to doing this without any shooting, okay? Any news on that shield modulation scheme?

YUBARI:

Narrowed down to a couple promising models. Neeva, can you go over

these?

NEEVA:

On it.

EFFECTS: console sounds

It could be either, but I am leaning towards Beta-4.

YUBARI:

That was my gut feeling, too.

J'NAYA:

We really will not know for sure until we try, though, sir.

DOVAN:

Let's try it then. Yubari, make the shield adjustments. Mr. Rol, be ready on Lieutenant Yubari's mark. Something short, though, just in case.

ROL:

I have just the rock picked out, sir. It looks like half of a small moon so it should be plenty large enough for us to hide behind. Better yet, it is nice and stable.

YUBARI:

Shields are re-modulated, sir.

DOVAN:

Neeva? How does it look out there?

NEEVA:

No sign of any other vessels, the energy signature is active, although a little weaker than it was.

DOVAN:

Alright, then, Mr. Rol. Let's dive to the next fox hole! (PAUSE) How do we look?

NEEVA:

There is a disturbance in our wake, sir. But significantly less than one would expect. Perhaps an eighty five percent reduction, give or take. It is not easy to measure something like this.

DOVAN:

Understood. Are the shields holding?

YUBARI:

Aye, sir. Shields look good.

DOVAN:

Are we good? Is anybody out there?

YUBARI:

I do not see anything out there.

NEEVA:

All clear here as well.

DOVAN:

Well, that is encouraging. Are we close enough for better readings?

NEEVA:

Afraid not, sir.

DOVAN:

Then let us try to sneak in a bit closer. Rol? Do you have a new rock to hide behind?

LORHROK:

How about that one?

ROL:

Looks good. Aye, sir.

DOVAN:

Then move us in a little closer. Now that we have the shields under control let's see about our comm signals, Neeva.

NEEVA:

On it.

DOVAN:

Are we still good after this jump?

EFFECTS: Intercom sound

SHARP:

Sick bay to Dovan.

NEEVA:

Jem'Hadar fighters behind us!

SHARP:

Sick bay to Dovan.

NEEVA:

Birds of Prey approaching from the front!

SHARP:

Sick bay to Dovan, urgent.

DOVAN:

Not now, Doctor. We have big problems up here! Open a hailing frequency!

NEEVA:

I don't think we are getting through, sir. In fact, I am sure we are not. Ships are closing in.

ROL:

Klingons in visual range, sir. They have disrupters charged.

SHARP:

Sick bay to Dovan, urgent.

DOVAN:

Evasive maneuvers! Not now, Doctor!

NEEVA:

Here come the Jem'Hadar, they are weapons hot, too. They are firing!

MUSIC: Something tense for "going to commercial"

BREAK

SCENE 03 "ACT TWO"

SET: Excelsior bridge

DOVAN:

Evasive maneuvers! Get us back behind that rock and charge torpedoes, forward and aft! And BRACE FOR IMPACT!

EFFECTS: gasping, then obvious silence over misc. computer noise

Uh, not to be a whiner but how did they miss us?

NEEVA:

Unsure, sir, but they are gone again.

EFFECTS: intercom sound

SHARP:

Sickbay to bridge, URGENT.

DOVAN:

Everyone, find those ships. Could it be that The Dust Mop affects weapon fire? Someone figure it out. Nothing to lose now, let's try our best to hail these guys if they turn up again. Now, what can I do for you, Doctor? I am kind of busy getting shot at up here.

SHARP:

Are we still at red alert?

DOVAN:

Obviously. No offense, but this is kind of wasting—

SHARP:

We aren't in sickbay, or any of the passages from the bridge to sickbay while I was coming down here. I just tried to report it as a system malfunction to Engineering, but they did not know what I was talking about!

DOVAN:

Thank you, Doctor, we will figure this out. Until you hear something different personally from me, we are at red alert. Expect casualties.

SHARP:

(Pointedly) Of course.

DOVAN:

Not now, Doctor. We surrounded by ships we can't see, Excelsior is malfunctioning and I am doing everything to make sure we leave The Dust Mop in one piece! Dovan out! Neeva, J'Naya, let's hear some good news.

NEEVA:

Sorry, sir. It appears that our hails are being ignored, but I am not sure that they are going out at anything near full power. Or in the right language.

YUBARI:

The Klingon is good. Whatever Jem'Hadar speak is your problem.

DOVAN:

Not now, Yubari. We are not questioning your linguistic skills. Are we any closer to tracking our new friends? (PAUSE) I will take the silence as a no. J'naya, why is the rest of the ship not on red alert?

J'NAYA:

Just getting to Adow now.

ADOW:

(VIA INTERCOM) What is going on up there? Why are we jerking around like a Tarquealian Warbler in the middle of a bunch of broken planets and asteroids? What is wrong with Dovan?

DOVAN:

(LOUDLY) I don't like being shot at. That okay with you?

ADOW:

Shot at? Why aren't we at red alert? Don't they teach that at the Academy?

J'NAYA:

That IS why I am calling, Adow. Dovan ordered red alert a bit ago and we have the bells and whistles up here so why not down there?

ADOW:

On it.

DOVAN:

I want someone to report to every level, spreading the word and seeing who actually got the message already.

J'NAYA:

Got that, Adow?

ADOW:

On it, too.

DOVAN:

Actually, Adow, keep your teams working on the problem. We have plenty of marines with nothing better to do than spread the word through two dozen decks. Alecz, make that happen and have the marines report any decks with functioning red alerts to directly Adow.

LORHROK:

On it, sir.

YUBARI:

There was something not right about those Birds of Prey. I wonder if... I am having trouble replaying their approach at my station.

NEEVA:

I can't pull up the visual record, either.

DOVAN:

I know you have a full plate right now, J'naya, but what is going on with the Excelsior? This ship flew us through the outer rings of Hell and brought us home safe, now it can't even playback a simple visual record?

J'NAYA:

Trying to figure it out, sir. Give me just a minute...

DOVAN:

What did you want to see, Yubari?

YUBARI:

Was it my imagination or did those Birds of Prey have skulls and crossbones on their wings?

NEEVA:

I saw that, too.

ROL:

The lead ship had one for sure.

LOHRHOK:

Pirate Klingons?

YUBARI:

That's just it. There really is not a skull and crossbones motif in Klingon culture. They use some bone related imagery on armor to show that it is literally strengthening that section of the body, but a skull just is not seen.

DOVAN:

So other than the art history lesson, what are you saying Yubari?

YUBARI:

I'm not sure, just that it is not right.

NEEVA:

Could it be a throwback to the time when the dialect we are hearing was in use?

YUBARI:

No, skulls are just not in Klingon iconography. Fearsome creatures, teeth, insanely cruel looking blades, spikes... they would all make sense. Some early Klingon spaceships actually had ramming spikes. But the skull and crossbones just seem all wrong.

DOVAN:

Klingons are not the only culture to use the Bird of Prey. Any chance those are Romulans out there? No, scratch that, why would they have ancient Klingon inter-ship chatter. You know, I am beginning to really dislike The Dust Mop. Okay, people, reports and ideas.

NEEVA:

I think we have the shields adjusted so that they are effective but create a mild field effect that pushes the dust back in behind us as we move with about 95% efficiency.

DOVAN:

There's one in the good news column. Now how about communications?

NEEVA:

Working on that now.

DOVAN:

Do we think our weapons are going to work in The Dust Mop? Anyone figure out how we managed to get out of that last scrape without being hit?

ROL:

I think I just out flew them, sir.

DOVAN:

Oh, do you?

ROL:

Well, yes. Not to brag, but I think they just did not hit us. There is plenty of Dust Mop out there to absorb a few stray shots.

DOVAN:

Okay, then, new question: could The Dust Mop be affecting our targeting?

YUBARI:

Already considered that, sir. But I don't have an answer because I am just not sure about the computer. If it comes to it, I will target visually. I am not too bad at it, if I may say so myself.

DOVAN:

Careful, Yubari. It sounds like Mr. Rol's plethora of confidence may be contagious. But it is good to know we aren't crippled in a firefight. That does bring us to you, Chief Engineer.

J'NAYA:

When I have answers, you will have answers. I have teams on almost every deck manually checking on systems.

DOVAN:

Question: can any of your teams pull up Yubari's missing visuals. Not that seeing them again is that important, but perhaps our problems are local to the bridge and we would do better to move Command for the time being.

J'NAYA:

I actually have Adow on that; she is calling in now.

DOVAN:

Well, by all means, put her on speaker. Adow, could you get visual records of our last run in with the Klingons?

ADOW:

The computer said it gave me the proper timeframe, but all I got was a panoramic view of Gamma P3-11. There were no ships in the record, so I am guessing that it was not actually the proper record.

DOVAN:

Understood.

J'NAYA:

Adow, I am sending you a few ideas. Get me the results ASAP. You have not

been by a food replicator, have you?

ADOW:

Of course. 15 degree water was pure 15 degree water, it would not make me a vodka with real alcohol or an old fashioned vial of rat poison but it made my personal program for Gramma Adow's special soup to perfection.

J'NAYA:

Thank you for that... keep me informed, J'Naya out.

DOVAN:

Time for lunch, Chief?

J'NAYA:

Just testing some of the computer interfaces and databases. No poison or alcohol, so safety protocols are intact and Gramma Adow's soup suggests that the computer is able to access the lowest priority of databases, such as crew replicator recipes. And the water, well, that is just a standard test.

DOVAN:

Did not mean to doubt you. How is that signal?

NEEVA:

It is back, weaker than before but back.

LOHRHOK:

Is it really worth chasing that signal down, sir? I mean, is it worth armed action just to see what is out there?

DOVAN:

Probably not. Unless that signal is the fading energy of some ship or colony on the wrong side of Jem'Hadar and Klingon hospitality. Neeva, am I right to think that someone trying desperately to keep power running would fit the patterns you are seeing?

NEEVA:

Unfortunately, you are very right about that... I can pinpoint the signal for the first time. It is not a ship. It is coming from a particularly large and metallic chunk of broken planet. So possibly an outpost or base of some type.

DOVAN:

Okay, even more reason to get to the bottom of this. Rol, get the coordinates of Neeva's readings and get as there as quickly as possible, keeping us covered as much as possible of course. But I want you to constantly have the shortest way out of The Dust Mop programmed in case we

need to bolt. Neeva, any distress calls from out there?

NEEVA:

No, sir.

DOVAN:

Okay, then. Now that everything is more or less under control, back to our open question: ideas?

ROL:

I have one. You won't like it.

DOVAN:

Okay, let's hear it.

ROL:

Founders.

DOVAN:

Shapeshifters?

ROL:

Sure. They sent out infants to explore the universe, right? They maintained prison camps during the war. Would it be so odd for them to have some weird backwater outpost hidden out here? Plus, Jem'Hadar kind of screams shapeshifter masters are around somewhere.

DOVAN:

It is as likely as anything, I suppose. Don't like the idea of—

ROL:

Told you. But I do have some good news for you, maybe.

DOVAN:

Okay, what is the maybe good news?

ROL:

There is a corridor to that signal.

DOVAN:

A corridor?

ROL:

Yes. There is a nice, straight shot with just dust and not much else in the way. There is not much in the way of cover, of course, but we could just pop out and move right down the corridor and be at the signal's source in just

a few minutes.

DOVAN:

That is certainly a tempting choice. But do we really want to be out in the open?

ROL:

That is the dilemma. And, there are plenty of rocks along the way that could be hiding ships from our view.

DOVAN:

Let me think about this for a second. J’Naya, any good news from your crews?

J’NAYA:

Not yet. Every single crew is reporting in with nothing but top notch results from all systems. It is very frustrating.

DOVAN:

In this case, I can see why.

LOHRHOK:

So, do we go for it or keep sneaking through The Dust Mop?

DOVAN:

Haven’t decided. Even if we slide in there quickly and grab survivors, where do we go from there? There is not exactly a friendly starbase in the neighborhood.

LOHRHOK:

That is an issue either way. But if there are people out there that need our help, every second could matter.

DOVAN:

Both true. My gut says that we should pull ourselves together and take Mr. Rol’s corridor straight to our mysterious energy source to see what we can do, if anything, and then get out of The Dust Mop. Anyone have a problem with that? (PAUSE) Good. Okay, people, let’s take a minute and get Excelsior as ready as we can.

EFFECTS: Intercom sound

Dovan to Dr. Sharp.

SHARP:

Sharp here.

DOVAN:

Our working assumption is that there is some type of outpost or base in the middle of The Dust Mop that has been attacked. We are attempting to get in and render assistance. Be prepared for casualties.

SHARP:

Any idea what species?

DOVAN:

Unfortunately, no. It could be a lifeform we have never encountered, Klingons, spaceshifters, heck it could be super intelligent spacefaring tribbles. Be ready for anything.

SHARP:

Understood. Sickbay will be ready, out.

DOVAN:

We are going to take a run in at this signal. Time for reports, people. Rol: do you have a course to get us to the signal and then out of The Dust Mop as quickly as possible.

ROL:

Aye, sir, with the most likely ambush points highlighted as well.

DOVAN:

Good. Shields?

NEEVA:

We should be ready.

DOVAN:

Communications?

NEEVA:

I think I have them worked out, but we have no idea what this base, if it is a base, is going to have running as far as communications.

DOVAN:

Understood. Weapons? Let's go in ready.

YUBARI:

All I need is a target.

DOVAN:

J'Naya, what is happening with the computer system?

J'NAYA:

We still don't know yet. We are not finding any problems so far and we are using external diagnostic tests, which is slower but more accurate.

DOVAN:

Okay, then. Are we ready to make our run people?

ROL:

That planetoid there is my biggest worry, sir. You could hide a fleet behind it. Once we are past it, there are a few suspicious spots but nothing nearly as dangerous.

DOVAN:

Got it. Well, everyone, deep breath and press ahead. Neeva, how is that energy signal?

NEEVA:

I have a read on it, although the levels are weakening fast.

DOVAN:

Then let's get out there and lend a hand. Mr. Rol, best speed towards Neeva's mysterious signal.

ROL:

Aye, sir!

NEEVA:

Signal is gone again.

ROL:

Approaching the planetoid.

LORHROK:

BORG CUBE!

MUSIC: Something tense for "going to commercial"

BREAK

SCENE 04 "ACT THREE"

SET: Excelsior bridge

YUBARI:

Borg cube, weapons energizing.

DOVAN:

Evasive action, full photon spread. Get us past that cube, now!

YUBARI:

Firing. Multiple hits. I think we took out their main weapons array on this side.

DOVAN:

Well done, as we get around them, be ready to do the same to the other side. Remodulate weapon frequencies.

ROL:

Hold on, this is going to be a bit bumpy.

LOHRHOK:

We are getting past them, great job!

DOVAN:

Rear view, Yubari, give me another spread.

YUBARI:

Firing. Direct hits. What the?

ROL:

The cube is retreating behind their planetoid.

DOVAN:

Sounds good. Rol, find us somewhere to hide and lick our wounds for a moment, too.

ROL:

Got one, easing behind it now.

DOVAN:

Yubari, is something wrong?

YUBARI:

Did we move around that cube, or did it spin to face us as we passed it?

ROL:

We slipped around it.

YUBARI:

Well, the blast pattern on the back was identical to the blast pattern we left on the front, I am sure of it.

NEEVA:

Now that you mention it, I think it was.

J'NAYA:

That doesn't make any sense at all.

LOHRHOK:

Even if we hit the same equipment, the blast should be different.

DOVAN:

You know, it did look vaguely familiar. I think this is beginning to make sense. Any sign of that cube?

NEEVA:

No, none at all. The planetoid must be masking it.

DOVAN:

Must be. Reading that signal?

NEEVA:

I am at the moment, yes. And from here I can tell that there is a good deal of technology in the vicinity. Lots of artificial construction.

DOVAN:

Well, that seems to confirm the outpost theory. Are we ready to make another run at this outpost? I want a detailed sensor sweep of our route. No more surprises, got that? J'Naya, you have good news for me yet?

J'NAYA:

No change yet, sir. We can not find a single thing wrong with any system.

DOVAN:

Okay, then. Rol, you ready to make another run at this?

ROL:

Yes, sir.

DOVAN:

Then let's get back out on the road. Keep the weapons ready, Yubari.

YUBARI:

Aye, sir.

DOVAN:

This time, maybe we should drift in slow. Maybe they won't notice us.

ROL:

Aye, sir. Underway.

DOVAN:

Eyes on, people. I do not want to be caught off guard again. Neeva, still getting readings from our mysterious outpost?

NEEVA:

Yes, sir. They are getting faint but— no, they are gone again.

DOVAN:

Keep scanning. Rol, be ready for evasive maneuvers. Yubari, stay on guard.

LOHRHAK:

We have company ahead!

YUBARI:

Confirmed.

ROL:

Are those the ramming spikes you were talking about?

YUBARI:

Yes they are. Three Birds of Prey with ramming spikes ahead.

DOVAN:

Hail them.

NEEVA:

Either being ignored or ineffective.

DOVAN:

Of course. Rol, can you get us past our new friends?

ROL:

Maybe. The best bet looks like punching through the middle of their formation.

LOHRHOK:

It is us getting punched through I am worried about.

DOVAN:

Agreed, but get us past them to that signal, Rol. Yubari, if any of them makes a move towards us, fire.

LOHRHOK:

Klingons are firing disruptors!

YUBARI:

Returning fire. Hit, hit... missed the third.

ROL:

We are past them.

DOVAN:

Are they following?

NEEVA:

It looks like they are slinking back into their hiding space.

DOVAN:

Isn't that interesting? Press ahead people. Damage reports?

J'NAYA:

Minor damage from several decks. That's strange. We have damage on deck seventeen. That's where Adow is but the report did not come in from her.

DOVAN:

Maybe she is busy with repairs. Are we getting a signal from that outpost?

NEEVA:

We are now, yes.

DOVAN:

Stay ready; I am expecting visits from the Jem'Hadar and Borg, maybe even worse.

LOHRHOK:

There is worse?

ROL:

There is definitely worse.

LOHRHOK:

If anyone would know, it would be you.

NEEVA:

Losing the outpost signal again, sir.

DOVAN:

Keep me informed, but it is okay. We know where they are and we are almost on their doorstep. Rol, Yubari, be extra ready.

YUBARI:

Jem'Hadar fighters. Five, seven, eight, no, a dozen.

DOVAN:

Evade their fire and press ahead, return fire if they start shooting.

YUBARI:

They are firing.

DOVAN:

Of course. Return fire, evade their fire and push through.

J'NAYA:

Damage reports, decks five through nine.

YUBARI:

Destroyed one, crippled two more. Firing again.

ROL:

We have broken through their line.

DOVAN:

Are they following?

YUBARI:

Took out two more. It looks like they are moving off.

DOVAN:

Let me know when they are out of sensor range.

YUBARI:

That is the last one. They are all hidden in The Dust Mop.

DOVAN:

Stay on guard, everyone. Neeva, got that energy signal yet?

NEEVA:

Actually, yes.

DOVAN:

Sounds about right. Keep going forward, Rol. I am more than ready to be done with this and get away from The Dust Mop.

EFFECTS: Intercom noise

Doctor Sharp, how are things in sickbay?

SHARP:

We are ready for your alien casualties.

DOVAN:

No crew injuries?

SHARP:

We have an engineering tech who suffered a mild electrocution checking circuits, but that is it.

DOVAN:

Good to hear. Stay ready. No telling what we are going to face in the next few minutes. Dovan out.

ROL:

This corridor is not nearly as clear as initial readings suggested. It is still better than the rest of The Dust Mop, but I would not suggest a sudden burst of acceleration.

DOVAN:

Noted, but stay on course.

NEEVA:

Losing the signal. It is getting very weak. It is hard to tell if it is cloaking or just plain giving out.

DOVAN:

Okay. Stay sharp. I expect we have not made it through the worst of it yet.

LOHRHOK:

I have movement ahead. It is something big. It is a cube.

DOVAN:

Don't care. Keep moving forward. Rol, don't care how but get Excelsior

past that cube. Yubari, fire at will.

LOHRHOK:

There are two cubes ahead, moving to block our path.

DOVAN:

It doesn't change anything, keep going.

NEEVA:

They are firing tractor beams.

DOVAN:

Put a photon spread up that tractor beam, Yubari.

YUBARI:

Direct hit!

NEEVA:

The beam is broken.

DOVAN:

Keep moving forward.

ROL:

We are getting between them and, hold on, past.

NEEVA:

They are moving to follow.

DOVAN:

I don't care. Move forward.

LOHRHOK:

What is that? A dragon?

NEEVA:

It is something... organic. I don't know where it came from it is bigger than anything around it!

ROL:

That damned thing is bigger than last time!

DOVAN:

Rol, you have faced a giant space dragon before?

ROL:

A time or two, sir.

DOVAN:

All I needed to hear. Move us forward. Take us down that thing's throat if necessary, but you get us to our destination, got that?

ROL:

Aye, sir. Over the tongue and down the throat if necessary.

YUBARI:

Are you crazy, Dovan? That thing looks like it could eat a planet. That might be why The Dust Mop looks like this!

DOVAN:

Have a little faith in your mighty captain, Yubari. I think I have this figured out. Now let's play chicken with this thing.

ROL:

It isn't flinching, sir.

YUBARI:

Permission to fire, sir?

DOVAN:

If it makes you feel better, Yubari, but I don't think it will really matter, do you?

YUBARI:

It will make me feel better.

DOVAN:

Then by all means, let them taste photons!

YUBARI:

Firing phasers and photons, full spread. No effect.

DOVAN:

Doesn't matter. Keep moving!

LOHRHOK:

It is going to eat us!

DOVAN:

AHEAD! Brace for possible impact!

LOHRHOK:

Here it comes!

EFFECTS: obvious silence

LOHRHOK:

Are we dead?

DOVAN:

Nope. Neeva, got that signal?

NEEVA:

It is very faint, about to give out. What is that? Is it what I think it is?

DOVAN:

Well, I think we have our answers. I am no expert, but I would say that is an Iconian gateway. At least, most of one.

YUBARI:

What happened to it?

NEEVA:

Hard to say, but those energy readings are now completely—

DOVAN:

Dead, right?

NEEVA:

Yes, yes. How did you know?

DOVAN:

I think we just saw the last ditch defenses of this facility as its power gave out. When it could, it cloaked itself. When it couldn't it tried to fool us into seeing everything that scared us to chase us away. We saw Mr. Lohrhok's Klingons, emblazoned with extra scary pirate motifs. And remember earlier I mentioned how much The Dust Mop reminded me of chasing Jem'Hadar during the war? Enter the Jem'Hadar. I think it is safe to say that we are all afraid of the Borg. But the gigantic space dragon?

ROL:

Um, welcome to my nightmares, sir.

DOVAN:

Yeah, well, good luck with those. J'Naya, an experiment, if you would. Let's go to Yellow Alert and get your engineering teams to report in. I bet all decks get it this time.

J'NAYA:

Aye, sir.

EFFECTS: Yellow alert klaxon

Decks reporting in now... all at yellow.

DOVAN:

That is more like it. Excellent job, people.

EFFECTS: Intercom noise

Dovan to Sharp.

SHARP:

Sickbay here.

DOVAN:

Doctor, I believe our troubles are over. Why don't you join us on the bridge? There is finally something worth seeing up here.

SHARP:

Are you sure? We are still at Yellow Alert.

DOVAN:

Consider it an order. Dovan out. Neeva, as long as we are here let us get the best scans we can, alright? Now that I suspect that our computers are back in working shape, can we tell if sitting here a while poses any danger?

J'NAYA:

Shields strong and I daresay that sensors are much more accurate than they were just a few minutes ago. Can I go collect my engineering teams?

DOVAN:

Yes, and please extend my compliments to them for their efforts. Alecz, stand down the marines, too. Now, your mighty captain would like to finish up here and move on so let's get with it people.

YUBARI:

One thing, Mighty Captain Dovan.

DOVAN:

Permission to speak.

YUBARI:

Um, "let them eat photons," sir?

DOVAN:

The mighty captain may need some better one liners. Make that a priority, Lieutenant.

YUBARI:

Aye, mighty captain. Aye.

END THEME AND CREDITS