

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

12x20 - "Futile."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and on the *Star Trek* tie-in novels
by Pocket Books

TNG 17x20 - "CARTE BLANCHE"

Returning to the Azure Nebula and the devastated fleet, Picard calls Command for orders. There are none - Bacco passes on the message that *Enterprise*, Picard and anyone working with them have free rein to do whatever they can to stop the Borg armada, no questions asked. *Enterprise* rendezvous with *Titan*, *Aventine* and *Voyager*, and Picard holds a big meeting of all the captains to come up with options. Admiral Jellicoe orders the specs for transphasic torpedoes distributed to the entire fleet, even the Klingons. It's a risk, but it is the only weapon they have that works. Chancellor Martok takes command of *Sword of Kahless*, joining General Klag on *Gorkon*, but it is not enough to stop the Borg from ramming right through their fleet and carrying on for Qo'noS. A desperate last defence is not enough to stop the Borg from destroying Deneva, one of the largest colony worlds. The entire planet is scorched, glassed, dead.

TTN 01x20 - "CARRION"

Hernandez forces one of the last subspace tunnels wide enough to let *Titan* return to the Azure Nebula, but Riker agonises over leaving his crew behind. On *Axion*, Inyx and Vale confront Ree about his violent actions towards Troi; Ree explains that his venom put Troi into stasis, giving her more time. Disgusted, Inyx forcibly whisks Troi away to attend to her. With *Titan* damaged from the journey, Ra-Havreii is forced to scavenge supplies and replacements from the corpses of the blockade fleet. Hernandez re-accustoms herself to being on a Starfleet ship after centuries away, and is delighted by the huge range of never-before-seen alien species onboard. She also realises that since leaving *Axion*, she is able to hear the voice of the Borg - as she experiences visions of Borg drones attacking her. Meanwhile the Borg attack Deneva, where Tuvok's son Elieth sacrifices his own life to help others get away.

VOY 10x20 - "DODO"

Voyager has just barely survived the mass Borg invasion. Paris immediately takes command, getting Chakotay and Kim to sickbay. Half the crew is dead - Dr Kaz included, host and symbiont both. Paris activates a basic EMH Mark 1 to look after the

fallen crew. When *Titan*, *Aventine* and *Enterprise* return, Paris meets with the other captains to discuss their options, but not before sending an encrypted message to B'Elanna - "Now." In her tiny slipstream shuttle, B'Elanna dumps a load of random scrap... 4527 BCE: After the Caeliar cataclysm (TTN 1x16 "Whatever It Takes"), the third remaining city-ship *Mantilis* crash lands on a frozen Delta Quadrant world. Four crew from *Columbia* are aboard, and a handful of surviving Caeliar, including Lerxst and Sedín. Graylock asks where and when they are - Lerxst replies that they are 60,000 light years from Earth, and thousands of years in the past. There is nothing they can do - this is where they will all die.

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE

The Vesta-class *Aventine* ZOOMS through open space at highest possible warp.

After a moment, the Sovereign-class *Enterprise* ZOOMS through space after it, chasing the *Aventine*.

PICARD (v.o.)
Captain Dax, please. See reason.

2 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Captain EZRI DAX grits her teeth. Before her in the pit, flickering and wavering on the damaged transporter/holo platform, is a hologram of PICARD, pleading with her.

PICARD
(continuing)
Cease this futile pursuit and
return to the nebula with us.

Dax looks past Picard to the helm station behind him, crewed by Bolian male lieutenant THARP.

DAX
Tharp, maintain course and speed.
(to Picard)
You saw the same readings I did,
Captain. More than seven thousand
Borg ships, heading straight into
Federation territory, not to
mention the Klingons and the
Romulans. What exactly do you
expect me to do about that?

PICARD
I expect you to act rationally.
The Borg armada has a head start
on you, and it's moving away at
speeds we can't hope to match.

DAX

Maybe you can't. But the *Aventine* has a quantum slipstream drive, and this sounds like the perfect time to fire it up.

Behind her, first officer SAM BOWERS and science officer GRUHN HELKARA exchange a worried glance - they know the slipstream drive doesn't work, but they can't contradict their captain in public.

DAX

There's a war on, Picard, and I plan on being part of it. Keep up if you can. *Aventine* out.

PICARD

Wait!

Relief ops manager RIORDAN doesn't know what to do, but Dax seems to be holding off...

PICARD

Captain Dax, please listen to me. Sacrificing your ship and your crew in this manner serves no purpose. Going into battle against overwhelming odds can be brave, or it can be futile. But going into battle without a plan is worse than futile - it's wasteful.

Dax fumes in her command chair - she hates the idea of doing nothing, but Picard is making good points. Plus she can feel her crew around her, agreeing with Picard.

DAX

What do you propose we do?

PICARD

We'll contact Starfleet Command and request new orders. They may not even be aware that our ships are still in service, after what happened to the blockade fleet.

DAX

Contact Starfleet Command? No offence, Captain, but that's not exactly the response I expected, given your reputation.

(beat)

But... I suppose it can't hurt to ask.

(to helm)

Tharp, bring her about and head back to the nebula.

Tharp works his panels, and we feel the ship SWERVE at high warp. The stars on the screen likewise swerve around.

PICARD

Thank you, Captain. I promise you, we will stop the Borg. But blindly throwing ourselves at a wall is not the way. The *Enterprise* will rendezvous with you at the Azure Nebula. *Enterprise* out.

Dax is a bit annoyed that Picard took control again right at the end. But she has been reluctantly convinced. Annoyed at herself for giving in, she looks to Bowers at her side.

BOWERS

You're doing the right thing, Captain.

DAX

If you say so. I just hate feeling like we're running for cover when everyone else is fighting for their lives.

BOWERS

Running for cover?

DAX

It's the eye of the storm, Sam. All the Borg ships are moving away from the nebula. It's the safest spot in known space.

BOWERS

Which makes it the perfect place
from which to plan our next move.

DAX

I wasn't aware we had a next move.

BOWERS

We don't - at least, not yet. But
I have a feeling that's about to
change.

Dax turns back to look at the screen, not happy...

BLACK OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

3 INT. STARBASE 7 - COMMON AREA

The Andorian starbase's version of the Promenade - a public thoroughfare with shops, bars and airlocks (as seen in [DS9 9x05 "No Place Like Home"](#)). And the place is in chaos.

The wide passage is packed with surging civilian EXTRAS - mostly Andorians but some other species for variety - shouting and pushing as they try to reach the airlocks. A handful of Starfleet OFFICERS are all trying their best to control the flow through the bottlenecks of the airlocks.

Admiral ZENKAR, the Saurian commander of this station, is there, trying to shout over the din but having no success.

ZENKAR

Everyone, please remain calm!
There is room for you all but we
must proceed in an orderly fashion
or you may come to injury.

SHAR pushes through the crowd towards the Admiral. They speak quietly, not wanting to be overheard.

SHAR

Admiral - Captain Vaughn informs
you that the *Kirk's* auxiliary
craft are available to assist in
the evacuation. Captains Sisko and
Henderson made a similar offer.

ZENKAR

Henderson? The *Venture* arrived?

SHAR

Yes sir, twenty minutes ago.

ZENKAR

Alright, thank you, Lieutenant.
Please make the arrangements.

(beat)

Although I'm not sure even that
will be enough. This crowd seems
to double by the moment, and they
refuse to follow my instructions.

Shar pulls a tricorder from his back pocket and works its
controls for a moment. He looks up at the taller Saurian...

SHAR

Cover your ears, Admiral.

Zenkar looks askance at the junior officer, but does as he
is told. Shar presses a final button on his tricorder...

...and an ear-splitting SQUEAL emits along the Promenade,
much as in [DS9 12x05 "Trial and Error"](#). All the extras
CRINGE from the sound, covering their various auditory
organs, knees buckling and antennae quivering.

After a moment, Shar cuts the signal, and SILENCE follows.
Zenkar nods admiringly to Shar, then clears his throat.

ZENKAR

Everyone, please listen. We have
enough room for all civilians to
leave the starbase if you wish. In
fact, I actively encourage it. But
no-one will get anywhere if we're
not calm and patient. Follow the
instructions of my officers, and
they will see you all to safety.

Suitably cowed, the civilians begin to file through the
airlocks in a much more orderly fashion.

SHAR

Admiral... do you really believe
anywhere is safe from the Borg?

ZENKAR

What I believe is irrelevant,
Lieutenant. This is about what
these people need to hear.

Zenkar stands firm. Shar nods, understanding that.

4 ON SCREEN - NEWS REPORT

The public speaking platform we have seen before in such eps as [DS9 10x11 "Harmony"](#), now viewed via a DS9 wall screen. Bajoran First Minister ASAREM stands at the microphone, shaken but holding it together for the sake of her people.

ASAREM (screen)

You will have all seen the news. You know what has happened, and what is coming. I have spoken with the Chamber of Ministers, with the Militia Over-General, and with the Vedek Assembly... and we all agree that any Bajoran citizen who wishes to leave, to escape by any means necessary, is free to do so. There will be no judgement, no shame. This is not a time for such things. Every ship capable of flight is, as of now, pressed into service as an escape vessel.

OPEN OUT to reveal...

5 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

...RO LAREN sitting behind her desk, watching this on the wall screen of her office. Major CENN stands nearby.

ASAREM (screen)

(continuing)

The usual restrictions on travel through the wormhole are lifted. Members of government in every town, city, village and outpost are as I speak receiving their orders. Please contact them for assistance. Good luck... and may the Prophets go with us all.

The broadcast ends, returning the screen to standard background data. Ro ponders the matter.

CENN

Well?

RO

Well what?

CENN

Are you going to go?

(no answer)

You heard her. All Bajoran citizens. Not all except Starfleet officers. You could go if you want. Leading people to safety is as honourable as staying to fight.

RO

Is that what you signed up for?

CENN

I stood by and did nothing while the Cardassians raped my world. I don't intend to do that again. But I'm not talking about me.

RO

Truth be told, for a moment there, I couldn't rule it out. But where could we run to anyway? The Borg will destroy Bajor, then chase us down wherever we go.

CENN

You know I've read the prophecies back to front a hundred times. And there is no prophecy about Bajor being destroyed by cybernetic monsters from the Delta Quadrant.

RO

Just because there's no prophecy doesn't mean it won't happen. Maybe the Prophets couldn't predict it because the Borg kill them too on their way through the wormhole to visit the Dominion.

CENN

The Prophets can't be killed.

RO

Oh yeah? Read up about Keiko
O'Brien and the *pagh*-Wraiths.

CENN

It's simply a matter of faith,
Commander. Even if you don't have
faith in the Prophets, then have
faith in something.

Ro doesn't want to ponder the matter any longer, so she
changes the subject.

RO

How's the map coming along?

CENN

I've collated all reports from
Starfleet, and Mister Candlewood
has converted them into a visual
representation. It's set for real-
time updates as we receive them.

RO

Show me.

Cenn steps towards the screen. Ro gets up to join him.

CENN

Computer, display programme Cenn
Alpha.

The screen changes again to display a MAP:

6 INSERT - THE MAP

The established MAP of Federation space, with BAJOR at the far left and the AZURE NEBULA at the far right. Major known systems are marked in between, including all the worlds already destroyed or attacked by the Borg.

Reports of sightings or attacks by Borg vessels have been converted into a slowly moving wave, creating an expanding

red overlay across space, beginning at the Azure Nebula and spreading out into Federation, Klingon and Romulan space.

Cenn's finger reaches in to point...

CENN (o.s.)

This is the advancing front of the Borg fleet.

7 BACK TO SCENE

Ro looks at this, daunted.

CENN

(continuing)

As you can see, Bajor is one of the furthest Federation worlds from the nebula. We have the most time of everyone to prepare. These worlds here... they're probably under attack already.

RO

And Starfleet has three hundred fewer ships to defend those worlds than it did six hours ago.

CENN

Yes, Commander.

As they both stare grimly at the map...

8 EXT. SPACE - AZURE NEBULA

The starship graveyard, all that remains of the blockade fleet that once numbered more than three hundred ships. Debris tumbles, sparks explode, gasses hiss as they escape. *Aventine* and *Enterprise* both drift back into view...

9 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Seeing this on the giant main viewscreen, Dax is ashamed.

DAX

Lieutenant Mirren -

Ensign Riordan looks around at her. Dax grits her teeth.

DAX

My apologies, Mister Riordan.
Please scan for distress calls,
survivors... anything.

RIORDAN

Will do, Captain.

As the ensign begins his work, Dax glances at Bowers.

BOWERS

Mirren is in sickbay, Captain.
Doctor Tarses says she'll be fine.

DAX

This ship already lost four senior
officers, Sam. Another three have
had their guts nearly torn out.
And I was so eager to fight...
that I abandoned all the people
who might need me right here.
(beat)
Maybe Julian was right.

RIORDAN

Captain! I'm picking up two
Starfleet distress calls. One's
from *Voyager*...
(confused)
...and the other's from *Titan*.

BOWERS

Titan? *Titan* wasn't assigned to
the blockade fleet, it's out in
the Beta Quadrant. Confirm.

HELKARA

Ensign Riordan's readings are
confirmed, sir. The transponder
matches USS *Titan*, under command
of Captain William T Riker.

RIORDAN

Told you. In fact, I'm reading transporter signals between *Enterprise* and *Titan* already.

BOWERS

Picard's helping his old XO.

DAX

Then we help *Voyager*. Tharp, track the distress call and find that ship. Bridge to engineering.

LEISHMAN (comm)

Go ahead.

DAX

Mikaela, prepare damage control teams. *Voyager* needs our help.

LEISHMAN (comm)

Captain, you realise we just got our asses kicked by the Hirogen, right? You remember that?

DAX

Lieutenant, *Voyager* just got their asses kicked by several thousand Borg ships steamrolling over them. Prepare your teams. Dax out.

The line drops. Bowers offers her an encouraging smile.

BOWERS

See? Things're looking up already.

Dax grumbles under her breath...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

10 EXT. SPACE

A BORG CUBE advances through space, huge, dark and ominous.

A small, helpless freighter vessel FIRES its feeble weapons on the Cube, to no effect whatsoever.

The Cube SHOOTS the freighter to atoms without breaking a metaphorical sweat, and keeps going.

11 INSERT - THE MAP

The line of the Borg armada has advanced a little from where we saw it only a matter of hours ago, spreading further into Federation and Klingon space. Several more ICONS representing star systems have turned RED.

CENN (o.s.)

Adelphous Four, Devnar Four, and Yridia Prime have already been attacked, their populations either completely wiped out, or as near as makes no difference.

12 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

Cenn stands by the wall screen, which features the map, pointing as he mentions more systems.

CENN

(continuing)

Japori Two and Gamma Hromi Two are being attacked as we speak - Starfleet vessels are defending them as best they can.

(points)

The Borg are also advancing into Klingon space. Martok's fleet has successfully defended Morska, but Beta Thoridor, Rura Penthe and Khitomer have all fallen, and they are heading for Qo'noS itself.

Cenn looks out across the room, which features Cmdr Ro, Lt Cmdr EVIK, Lt NOG and Lt CANDLEWOOD from DS9, as well as Captain GOMEZ (human female) and Lt Cmdr TEV (Tellarite male), both of the *Da Vinci*. All look suitably horrified.

CENN

Projections suggest that the Borg will reach -
(Fed side)
- Hyralan, Celes, Castor -
(Klingon side)
- H'Atoria and Archanis within the next few hours.

RO

Thank you, Major. I don't need to hear any more right now.

Cenn takes his seat at the table next to Ro, leaving the map up on the wall. Candlewood can't take his eyes off it.

CANDLEWOOD

It's like a great big dead zone, from the Azure Nebula on out.

Ro sends Candlewood a look - shut up.

RO

I want to know what our tactical options are. What can we do to defend Bajor and this station? Everything's on the table.

NOG

Captain Gomez, I was reading through your reports. You were working with *Voyager* recently?

GOMEZ

That's right - on recreating the enhanced shields and phasers they were given by a friendly Borg in the Delta Quadrant.

NOG

Any chance you could do the same for DS-Nine? Or the *Defiant*?

TEV

(blustering)

Impossible. I already evaluated that suggestion before you ever made it, of course. And it is quite out of the question.

RO

Why's that?

GOMEZ

It turns out the method they used was dependent on the Intrepid class's bio-neural circuitry. Nothing else can handle it.

TEV

And since neither your *Defiant* nor this Cardassian mining monstrosity boast anything so advanced -

GOMEZ

(gently admonishing)

And neither does the *Da Vinci*...

TEV

- that advantage is sadly beyond your grasp.

RO

Thank you for your explanation.

TEV

I sensed you needed it.

Ro bites her tongue, while Candlewood desperately tries not to laugh. Gomez looks apologetic. Evik clears his throat.

EVIK

We do have one advantage, however - Starfleet Command has finally seen fit to distribute the specs to create transphasic torpedoes.

CENN

To create what, sorry?

GOMEZ

Another toy *Voyager* brought back from the Delta Quadrant. It's the only weapon that's always worked against Borg vessels.

EVIK

Starfleet kept a tight rein on the technology to reduce the chances of the Borg adapting to it.

CENN

But they've released it now?

EVIK

It was a weapon of last resort.
(glance at map)
We have reached the last resort.

RO

So we can install these torpedoes on the *Defiant*? And the station?

NOG

Yessir. I've got every industrial replicator on this "Cardassian mining monstrosity" ready to replicate its little heart out.

CANDLEWOOD

And I've already started work on the programming. It's tricky - it's all based on generating a destructive subspace compression pulse, which the torpedo delivers in an asymmetric superposition of multiple phase states. Which means that every torpedo has to have a unique transphasic configuration, which is generated randomly by a dissonant feedback effect.

TEV

(huff)

Obviously.

RO

Can you do it?

CANDLEWOOD

Well, given that I am awesome,
yes. It'll be ready to install by
the time Nog's replicated them.

RO

Okay, this sounds like progress.
Now what about Bajor? How do we
protect the planet itself?

They ponder the question, seemingly without inspiration.

NOG

Captain... I'm just thinking back
to your assignment with *Voyager*.
Your report said you actually
managed to make the entire planet
of Troyius disappear?

GOMEZ

Only temporarily, but enough for
the Borg to lose interest and pass
the planet over, yes.

Candlewood smiles quietly to himself.

RO

How did you manage that?

TEV

You wouldn't understand.

RO

(grits teeth)

More importantly, can you do it
again - for Bajor?

Gomez hesitates to answer...

GOMEZ

I'm sorry, Commander, but no. Like Tev said, we already looked at that. And I'm afraid the emissions from the wormhole and the Denorios Belt would prevent us from doing the same thing here.

NOG

Like whatever stopped the Iconian gateways from working here too.

GOMEZ

I guess.

Hearing that, Cenn smiles broadly. Ro sees it...

RO

Major, what the hell are you smiling about? They just told us there's no way to protect Bajor.

CENN

No, Commander. Sorry, but you weren't listening. What Captain Gomez and Lieutenant Commander Tev just told us was that the Prophets don't need us to protect Bajor... because They're going to do it for us. Just like They always have.

Evik shares a warm look with Cenn. Ro does not share it.

RO

Alright - John, Nog, get to work. Everybody else... keep thinking. Dismissed.

They all get up from the table and leave the room in pairs - Gomez and Tev, Nog and Candlewood, Evik and Cenn. Ro sits at the table on her own, staring at the map. But then...

QUARK (o.s.)

Hmm-hmm.

Ro turns to see that QUARK is standing in the open doorway.

RO

Quark - what are you doing here?

QUARK

I was looking for you. Firstly, to ask for something from you. And secondly... to ask if there's anything you need from me.

Ro softens, and Quark takes the opening to enter the room.

RO

Thank you, Quark. But honestly, I don't think there's anything you can do right now.

QUARK

I can keep you fed and watered. And... there's always this.

He steps up to the MAP of Federation space still on the wall screen, with its inching red line of death and horror.

RO

That's supposed to be classified, you know. Starfleet eyes only.

QUARK

I'm an important diplomat. And a close friend of the station commander. A very close friend.

Ro gets up to join him at the screen, gazing at the map.

QUARK

This was what I wanted to ask about, actually. I want to put this map up in my bar.

RO

What? Quark, that's... Absolutely not. Why would you want that?

QUARK

People talk, Laren. They know what's happening out there. But they have no way of knowing the details, the specifics. This map could give them that.

RO

I thought you wanted to keep them distracted, not terrified.

QUARK

I've tried. It's not working.

RO

Quark... aside from being against my orders, I really don't think this is a good idea. What about the Thirty-Ninth Rule?

QUARK

"Never tell your customers more than they need to know." I love a woman who knows the Rules. But I think they need to know this, Laren. You lead these people now. They deserve to know the truth.

Off Ro, who is considering this...

13 INT. STARBASE 7 - COMMON AREA

Back to the Andorian version of the Promenade. The crowd of Andorian-and-other civilians has now thinned substantially, most of them away onto escape shuttles. Admiral Zenkar, Lt ch'Thane and the other officers herd the last few along.

SHAR

The transports are almost full, Admiral. The starbase is almost completely evacuated of civilians.

ZENKAR

Thank you, Lieutenant ch'Thane. But I believe there are still a handful remaining...

Zenkar gestures, and Shar turns to see his bondmates - ANICHENT, DIZHEI and THIA, the last of whom carries their baby LATA - hurrying along the Promenade. They all look rushed and harried, with Anichent carrying three bags.

Seeing them, Zenkar politely excuses himself.

ZENKAR

I have business to attend to in the command centre, Lieutenant. If you'll excuse me.

SHAR

Thank you, Admiral.

Zenkar walks off, and Shar moves to greet his bondmates with intense hugs.

DIZHEI

Shar! *Ch'te* - do you know what's happening?

SHAR

Yes, Dizhei - you are all getting on an escape shuttle immediately. You must go, while there's time.

ANICHENT

But Shar - what about you?

SHAR

I will be fine, *th'se*. And you will all be fine too - if you get on that shuttle and leave now. Where is Charivretha?

DIZHEI

We could not contact her. I assumed the Parliament...

SHAR

No matter. I will find her and get her to safety as well.

THIA

Come along everyone, we should do
as he says. Good luck, Shar.

Shar gives each of his bondmates another hug, antennae touching intimately. Finally he strokes the cheek of his young child, and places a gentle kiss on its forehead.

SHAR

And our future goes with you.

ANICHENT

We love you, Thirishar.

SHAR

And I love you too. More than
anything. Now go, please.

THIA

We will keep you Whole in our
thoughts, Thirishar.

SHAR

And you in mine. Go!

They finally do. He watches them walk through the airlock and out of sight, refusing to let his fiercely roiling emotions out. They were the last to go.

He turns and stalks quickly down the empty Promenade...

SHAR

I must find zhavey.

Off Shar's determination...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

14 EXT. SPACE - AZURE NEBULA

Against the backdrop of swirling blue gasses and blasted starship husks, the four ships rest in loose formation, all looking beaten and bloodied.

Enterprise, Aventine, Titan and Voyager - the latter near-crippled from its encounter with the Borg armada.

15 INT. ENTERPRISE - CREW LOUNGE

NOTE: this scene will require coverage from all possible angles and perspectives, to be used in the respective concurrent episodes of all four series.

The door OPENS, and Dax and Bowers enter together. They see PICARD, WORF and PARIS already here, all looking tired and worn down, standing near some tables over by the expansive picture window. They all turn at the new arrivals...

PICARD

Captain Ezri Dax, Commander
Samaritan Bowers. Welcome to the
Enterprise's crew lounge... or to
give it its full title, the Happy
Bottom Riding Club.

As Paris chortles under his breath, Worf glowers darkly.

WORF

I refuse to call it that.

Dax and Bowers shake hands all round, with an extra smile of friendship between Dax and Worf.

PICARD

I've had the steward set up some
food and drinks for us while we
talk - please help yourselves.

BOWERS

Oh thank God - I'm starving.

Bowers heads over to the buffet which is laid out along the bar. Meanwhile the door opens again...

PICARD

Ah - and here comes our final guest now, the very man who named this venerable establishment.

WORF

And then transferred away so he did not have to face my wrath.

RIKER

You're still grumbling about that, Worf?

Joking to cover the sadness, RIKER enters and heads to greet his old friends. But behind him comes another figure who causes Dax to GASP in surprise - *Columbia's* captain [ERIKA HERNANDEZ](#) (from ENT 4x03 "Home" et al).

DAX

(whisper)

Captain Hernandez...

Not knowing anyone here, Hernandez only nods politely to all these people as she follows Riker into the room.

RIKER

Captains, Commanders, please allow me to introduce a recent guest aboard the *Titan* - Captain Erika Hernandez, formerly of the starship *Columbia*.

Dax remembers...

16 **FLASHBACK - DS9 12x15 "GHOST SHIP"**

Dax climbing the back of crashed ship *Columbia* in the constantly shifting desert...

Then Dax exploring the dark and spooky corridors of the deserted ship, observing its shattered insides...

17 **BACK TO SCENE**

Ever the student of history, Picard reacts with amazement.

PICARD

The *Columbia*... you can't mean the original *Columbia*, surely?

HERNANDEZ

It's a long story, Captain.

PICARD

No doubt. I look forward to hearing it - at another time. We have much to discuss first.

Picard gestures for them to join him at the tables. Worf, Riker, Picard and Paris all do so, but Hernandez hovers uncertainly by the door. Seeing this, Dax approaches her.

NOTE: During the below segment, PICARD joins RIKER by the windows to talk (this conversation appears in TNG 17x20 "Carte Blanche" and TTN 1x20 "Carrion"). WOLF speaks with PARIS across the coffee tables (this conversation appears in VOY 10x20 "Dodo"). BOWERS happily browses the buffet.

DAX

Captain Hernandez... it's an honour - not to mention a surprise - to see you again.

HERNANDEZ

I'm sorry, have we met?

DAX

I'm Ezri Dax.

HERNANDEZ

Dax... I knew a Tobin Dax a long time ago, in fact he calibrated the warp coils of my ship. Was he an ancestor of yours?

DAX

Not exactly - he was me. In a way. I couldn't tell anyone at the

time, but 'Dax' wasn't Tobin's surname - it was the name of the symbiont he carried inside him.

(touches own stomach)

And which I now carry inside me.

Quietly surprised, Hernandez looks down at Dax's stomach, then back up at her face. She blinks away the shock, rubbing her forehead as if working off a headache.

HERNANDEZ

I have to say, I've had my eyes opened more these last few weeks than the past couple centuries combined. Talking dinosaurs, cyborg kangaroos... now one life-form living inside another. There was a Trill on *Titan's* crew - Keru. Does that mean he has one of these... symbionts, as well?

DAX

Ranul Keru? No, I don't think so - or at least he didn't the last time I met him.

Hernandez looks around the room, at all these people hanging out and chatting like old friends.

HERNANDEZ

Well... seems like everybody knows each other these days. I haven't known anyone from the Federation in quite some time.

DAX

You know me.

Dax smiles hopefully - Hernandez smiles back.

PICARD

Captains...?

Dax looks over to see Picard expecting them. She beckons Bowers, who has stocked up on food for them both, and all three join the rest at the tables, making a total of seven.

PICARD
Commander Paris, will Captain
Chakotay not be joining us?

PARIS
Chakotay is in *Voyager's* sickbay.
I'm in command for the moment.

PICARD
I see. Well then, to business.
Perhaps we could start by bringing
each other up to speed. The
Enterprise first fought the Borg
over Ramatis... sadly too late to
save the population. Then we
proceeded to Korvat - ten million
citizens died before we were able
to destroy the Borg there.

17 **FLASHBACK - TNG 17x15 "THIRD OF FIVE"**

Over Korvat, *Enterprise* fires four TRANSPHASIC TORPEDOES at
the Borg cube. Even as the cube is torn to pieces, it gets
off one last shot - a thick beam of destructive green power
that hits the surface, creating a MUSHROOM CLOUD of death.

18 **BACK TO SCENE**

WORF
But many thousands were saved.

PICARD
Indeed. It was in these encounters
that my chief engineer detected
sirillium traces on all the Borg
vessels. Based on decay rates, we
were able to determine they must
have come from the Azure Nebula.

DAX
And that's where I come in. The
Aventine had been in the Gamma
Quadrant, investigating the
wreckage of an old Earth ship -
the NX-02 *Columbia*.

HERNANDEZ
(jaw drops)
The *Columbia* survived?

BOWERS
I'm afraid I wouldn't say that,
Captain. The ship had travelled
through a subspace tunnel and
crashed on a desert world, with no
apparent survivors. I'm sorry.

19 **FLASHBACK - TTN 1x16 "WHATEVER IT TAKES"**

Columbia PLUMMETS to the surface, CRASHING with deadly
force into the shifting sands of the endless desert.

20 **FLASHBACK - DS9 12x16 "THE BLAME GAME"**

Dax and Kedair stand on the crashed *Columbia's* back, gazing
out across the desert while work bees dot the surface.

21 **BACK TO SCENE**

Hernandez steadies herself.

HERNANDEZ
That's okay, Commander. I'd given
up on them centuries ago.

DAX
After some trouble with an alien
life-form that had taken up
residence in the wreckage, we
discovered the subspace tunnel
that had carried the *Columbia* to
the Gamma Quadrant... and that
tunnel brought us here, where we
found the *Enterprise*.

BOWERS
And discovered that there wasn't
just one tunnel - there were
dozens, all intersecting here.

HERNANDEZ

That makes sense.

(off everyone's
curious looks)

The *Columbia* was attacked during the Earth-Romulan war. We limped to the nearest world for help... and that turned out to be Erigol. The people were super-advanced and super-pacifist, but also super-isolationist. Once we were there, they wouldn't let us leave. Some of my people objected to that.

WORF

What happened?

HERNANDEZ

They took a team to one of the other city-ships, Mantilis, and forced the Caeliar to open a subspace tunnel -

DAX

Wait - did you say Caeliar?

HERNANDEZ

Yes, why?

DAX

The alien who killed some of my crew and stole a runabout - it called itself Arithon of the Caeliar. He was looking for something called the gestalt.

HERNANDEZ

I'd say he found it.

PICARD

I don't understand.

RIKER

We checked the historical records. Captain Hernandez's account of the destruction of Erigol, and the

date of the supernova that created
this nebula... are a match.

22 FLASHBACK - TTN 1x16 "WHATEVER IT TAKES"

The planet of Erigol EXPLODES... subspace tunnels surround the planet as dozens of Caeliar city-ships try to escape through them. Only three succeed, plus the *Columbia*.

23 BACK TO SCENE

Picard realises the truth with amazement...

PICARD

The Azure Nebula is the remains of
the Caeliar homeworld?

HERNANDEZ

Apparently so. The city-ship we
were on, *Axion*, was one of only
three to escape that we knew of.
But what my crew had done made the
tunnels traverse time as well as
space... and we ended up hundreds
of years in the past... and deep
in the Beta Quadrant.

RIKER

And that's where *Titan* found them.
We detected some distortions that
were similar but not identical to
Borg transwarp signatures... and
we fell into a trap. The Caeliar
didn't want *Titan* to leave any
more than they did *Columbia*.

PARIS

Hold on - if you went back in time
by hundreds of years, how are you
still here now hundreds of years
after your own time?

HERNANDEZ

The Caeliar are effectively
immortal. And once they infused
me with their catoms... so was I.

24 **FLASHBACK - TTN 1x18 "ONE BY ONE"**

In the Caeliar's operating theatre on Axion, Hernandez is infused with catoms... and is reborn.

25 **BACK TO SCENE**

The scientist in Dax perks up...

DAX

Catoms - I've heard of those.
Programmable matter. They're only
theoretical though - no-one has
ever been able to master them.

HERNANDEZ

The Caeliar did. They're made of
them. And now, so am I, at least
partially. That's how I was able
to use the tunnels to get *Titan*
back to the nebula, despite the
Caeliar's... "reluctance". They
tried to shut down all the tunnels
using soliton pulses to stop me.

PARIS

Then that's what brought the Borg
armada down on the blockade fleet.
If the tunnels were being closed,
they were in danger of losing
their chance... so instead of
sending just one cube at a time,
they sent seven thousand.

26 **FLASHBACK - VOY 1x19 "APERTURE 27-C"**

The subspace tunnel opens up, and thousands of Borg cubes pour through, utterly overwhelming the blockade fleet and ramming right through it like it's not even there. *Voyager* is at the forefront and takes the brunt...

27 **BACK TO SCENE**

Paris looks back at them blankly, clearly haunted...

PARIS

Half my crew is dead now. Captain Chakotay is in critical condition under the care of an EMH with three hours' worth of experience. My chief engineer says we only survived because of the shield enhancements the *Da Vinci* gave us.

DAX

My own chief engineer is already leading damage control teams to help *Voyager's* crew.

RIKER

And mine is salvaging components from the remains of the fleet. We'll share whatever we find.

BOWERS

I admit this is all fascinating, but is any of it relevant to stopping the Borg armada from obliterating the Federation? Seriously, what's the plan here? What's our next step?

PICARD

The commander has a point. We need to focus on the future, not dwell on the past. I'm open to ideas.

But nobody has any ideas to offer. They all gaze out of the window at the ship graveyard, an omen of what is to come...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

28 EXT. ANDOR - THERIN PARK

The gorgeous public park area seen in DS9 12x05 "Trial and Error". Grassy areas and gentle stone paths, with the tall and gleaming towers of the city beyond, and the snow-topped mountains further beyond that.

29 INT. VRETHA'S OFFICE

Shar barrels through the door without ceremony, into his mother VRETHA's office. He finds her at her desk, gazing out of the window with its view across the city and park.

SHAR

Zhavey, what are you still doing here? You should be on one of the escape shuttles.

VRETHA

I am needed here, Thirishar.

SHAR

That is nonsense. There must be continuity of government in the event of a disaster. You are government. You must leave.

VRETHA

Thirishar, my people need me. I was elected to represent this world. That is a duty I undertook with the greatest solemnity, and I will not abandon it now.

SHAR

Zhavey... no! You must -

She gets up from the desk and takes him gently by the arms.

VRETHA

Thirishar, my brave *chei*. This is where I belong, with my people.

You belong out there, with yours -
protecting the keep, as *chan* does.
Your family is away safely?

SHAR

Yes. But the shuttles could get
you to safety as well...

VRETHA

I will be safe here. With the
magnificent Starfleet Lieutenant
Thirishar ch'Thane to protect me,
how could it be otherwise?

SHAR

Zhavey... please...

VRETHA

It is my duty, Thirishar. I do
what is necessary to protect my
world, my people. I am the mother
you raised me to be.

They lean in close, touching antennae.

VRETHA

You have your own duty to perform.
Go now. I will see you soon.

Tears threatening, Shar backs away. They both know this is
likely goodbye for good, but neither wants to spoil the
illusion. Smiling with sad pride, Vretha watches him go.

He closes the door behind him. And a moment later, Vretha
hears a ROAR and a SMASH - Shar has PUNCHED something in
his fury. She forces back her own tears, and turns to look
out of the window at her world again - while she can.

30 **EXT. SPACE**

Another BORG CUBE advances, with a SPHERE and an OBLOID
visible behind it.

A Defiant-class ship, the *Ajax*, flies into view, pummelling
the cube with its pulse-phasers. (This is part of the
battle over Deneva, seen in TNG 17x20 "Carte Blanche".)

31 INSERT - THE MAP

The red line of the Borg armada has inched forward a little more, a larger portion of the Federation now painted red.

EVIK (o.s.)

Are you certain this is a good idea, Quark?

32 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

The map shows on a large SCREEN hung from the first-floor balcony for the entire bar to see. Smaller versions are relayed on wall screens. In front of each, a small group of civilians have gathered to watch the map's progress.

Evik stands with Quark at the bar, observing this.

EVIK

(continuing)

I can't imagine it's doing very much for morale.

QUARK

They need to know we're all in this together, Commander. That nobody's keeping any secrets from them. Isn't it better to know for sure, than to be forced to guess?

EVIK

What if they don't want to know?

QUARK

Then they don't have to. I'm not forcing anyone to stay. I haven't seen a single Starfleet officer in here all day except you.

EVIK

My officers are out offering their support to the public. Except for any with tactical or engineering experience - they're helping Nog install the transphasic torpedoes.

QUARK

And how's that going?

EVIK

Slowly. They're complex beasts.
But it's something to focus on.

QUARK

Well, tell them from me... drinks
are free at Quark's for Starfleet
until this nightmare is over.

EVIK

...Really?

QUARK

No, you're right, that's a stupid
idea. I take it back. Drinks are
discounted. By ten percent. For
groups of six or more.

Evik almost chuckles... until he hears a gasp of shock out
among the crowd, from someone looking at the screens...

33 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

Nog sits at the engineering console. He looks across to
Candlewood at sciences, the other way to ALECO at tactical,
down to Cenn at the ops table. All are working hard. Ro
senses his distress, and approaches gently.

RO

Nog - you okay?

NOG

Just can't help worrying about
Shar. And Captain Sisko and
Captain Vaughn... but mostly Shar.
They're assigned to defend Andor
right now... and the Borg will hit
them before they hit us.

RO

I know. But we're keeping an eye
on reports, we'll know when...

An ALERT sounds on Cenn's console. He looks up to Ro.

CENN
More Starfleet reports. More
attacks by the Borg.

RO
Feed them into the map, Major.

Reluctantly, Cenn does as he's told. Ro and Nog look up to the main viewscreen, which shows the updated map...

...and both GASP in horror.

34 INT. ENTERPRISE - CREW LOUNGE

Dax is refilling her coffee when she hears a SMASH - a cup has dropped and broken. She turns and sees Hernandez nearby - staggering, something affecting her body...

WORF (o.s.)
Captain!

Worf's concerned bellow brings Dax's attention to Picard, who is similarly affected, GASPING and SHUDDERING. Picard TUMBLES to the deck by the windows as Worf rushes to him.

Hernandez likewise CRUMPLES to the deck, and Dax rushes to her. Bowers, Paris and Riker just wonder what is going on.

From his place on the deck, propped against the chairs, Picard looks in horrified understanding across the room to Hernandez, who looks back in similar fashion...

PICARD
Deneva...

HERNANDEZ
Risa...

35 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Quark looks at the screen in horror, seeing the red line reach a certain planet - RISA.

EVIK
The Borg are attacking Risa...

QUARK
Moogie...

36 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

Nog looks in horror at the main viewscreen in Ops...

CENN
It's confirmed. The Borg are
launching simultaneous attacks
on Deneva and Risa as we speak.

NOG
Moogie...

Ro lays a comforting hand on his shoulder.

37 EXT. BEACH HOUSE - BALCONY

The open air balcony of Zek, Ishka and Prinadora's house on the edge of an isolated Risian cliff edge. ISHKA stands on the balcony, looking out across the ocean...

...and in the distance, she can see the thick GREEN BEAM of energy coming down through the atmosphere and PUNCHING the planet's surface, water evaporating into MIST around it as it inches slowly closer...

ZEK
Hee hee hee! It looks like a giant
Calabrian fountain.

Ishka is terrified, but ZEK doesn't see the danger coming. She turns and YELLS...

ISHKA
Maihar'du!

The huge silent Hupyrian servant BURSTS through the doors from the house, stops in horror at the view on the horizon.

ISHKA
Get the shuttle ready.

Maihar'du nods eagerly, and runs back into the house.

ZEK

Ishka, sweetness? Are we going
somewhere?

ISHKA

That's right, Zekkie. We have to
leave, now.

ZEK

But I don't want to leave.
(re the view)
It's pretty.

She GRABS his arm and DRAGS him grumbling back into...

38 INT. BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

...the main room of the house, with all its pretty white
marble and garish gold decoration. PRINADORA, Nog's mother
and Ishka's personal assistant, is just entering from
another direction, looking confused...

PRINADORA

Ishka, what's going on? Maihar'du
was moving faster than I've ever
seen him...

ISHKA

No time to explain. Don't even
pack a bag, just help me get Zek
down to the shuttle bay.

ZEK

But I don't wanna go! I want to
watch the pretty green fountain!

Zek starts heading back out onto the balcony, determined,
struggling against Ishka.

ISHKA

Prinadora, help me!

The younger Ferengi woman moves to grab Zek's other arm, but in doing she catches a glimpse of what's outside...

39 **EXT. RISA - SURFACE**

The green beam of destructive energy, kicking up more dust and sea and mist as it inches its way closer to the house.

40 **INT. BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM**

Prinadora gazes in horror...

PRINADORA
Ishka... what is it?

ISHKA
It doesn't matter - help me!

She looks back over her shoulder in desperation, and sees that Maihar'du is back. He nods his head enthusiastically again, indicating the shuttle is ready.

ISHKA
Zekkie, please, it's time to go...

ZEK
No! You can't make me!

MAIHAR'DU
NOW!!!

They all look around in amazement - Maihar'du has never spoken aloud before, but he has full-on *shouted* now. That alone is enough to get Zek's attention...

41 **INT. CAVERN - STAIR CASE**

The four of them - Ishka, Zek, Prinadora and Maihar'du - rush quickly down hard metal STEPS that switch back and forth like an old-fashioned fire escape, down through a cavern cut into the rock upon which their house was built.

TILT DOWN more, and we can see the former Nagus's private shuttle sitting on a docking platform, its engines already running, its hatch open and waiting...

42 **INT. FERENGI SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

Maihar'du dashes in and quickly takes the pilot's seat, working the distinctive Ferengi controls to get the ship underway. The others pile into the shuttle behind him.

Zek takes the seat beside Maihar'du, CACKLING in excitement now - it's like a game. Ishka makes sure to buckle him in safely. She turns to Maihar'du...

ISHKA

Go! Now!

No time to nod, Maihar'du works the controls...

43 **EXT. RISA - SURFACE**

A HATCH in the side of the cliff opens, revealing a tunnel, and the Ferengi shuttle SHOOTs out of it.

It quickly turns, flying UP into the sky, and away from the ever-nearing destructive GREEN BEAM, which is pulverising the land and the sea into nothing but dust and gas...

FOLLOW the shuttle, up and higher through the atmosphere, until we pass through the exosphere...

44 **INT. FERENGI SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

They are out into open space. Looking out through the front window, they see...

...two dozen other SHUTTLES of various configurations and sizes, all making a desperate life-or-death run for it.

Maihar'du looks to Ishka questioningly...

ISHKA

Anywhere. Just... away.

Maihar'du nods and turns back to his controls. Beside him, Zek GIGGLES happily, innocent and ignorant as a child.

Ishka places a loving kiss on Zek's giant bulging head, and another on Maihar'du's. Then she turns to enter...

45 **INT. FERENGI SHUTTLE - REAR CABIN**

...where Prinadora is staring out of the rear window, at...

...the planet of Risa, with SIX BORG CUBES firing multiple giant beams of deadly green energy, scouring the entire surface clean, exterminating everyone and everything.

More shuttles and freighters and anything that can fly can be seen nearby, everyone desperately trying to escape.

Ishka joins Prinadora at the window, looking out at this view with horror. The younger woman turns with wet eyes...

PRINADORA

I don't understand...

And Ishka can't explain.

Around them, the other shuttles JUMP TO WARP and one by one disappear into open space. We feel this shuttle RAMP UP...

46 **EXT. SPACE - PLANETARY ORBIT**

The tiny Ferengi shuttle JUMPS TO WARP as well, stretching out into the distance to escape by the skin of its teeth.

Leaving the world of Risa alone, being razed without any significant resistance by half a dozen deadly Borg cubes...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN

47 INT. ENTERPRISE - CREW LOUNGE

Hernandez struggles up from where she landed on the deck, staring daggers across the crew lounge at Picard.

HERNANDEZ

You... You're the one they call
Locutus.

PICARD

(horrified whisper)
How can you possibly know that?

PARIS

Wait, you can hear the Borg?

Hernandez looks around at the other officers - Riker, Dax, Worf, Paris, Bowers. They all look disturbed.

HERNANDEZ

Are you telling me you don't hear
it? I've heard it since the moment
we arrived in the nebula. But I
didn't recognise you until...

PICARD

(steps close, quiet)
Do you know what you've been
hearing? Its name?

HERNANDEZ

Yes. Do you?

PICARD

To me, it's just a roar of voices.
More a noise than a chorus.

HERNANDEZ

I hear all of them. Every voice,
adding to the others. But I also
hear the unifying voice.

PARIS

The Queen.

RIKER

Can you communicate with them?

HERNANDEZ

No. I can only eavesdrop on their party. I'm definitely not invited.

DAX

It must be the Caeliar's catoms. The nanoscopic machines in your body are tapping into the Borg's frequency somehow. Erika, you mentioned the Queen - can you tell if she's leading the attack on the Federation right now?

Hernandez closes her eyes, listens quietly to the voices in her head...

HERNANDEZ

Yes. The armada is under her direct control. She's young, newly installed. Full of fury. She even thinks of herself as expendable, as long as Earth is destroyed.

PICARD

But why? What's driving them?

HERNANDEZ

I can't tell. It's too muddled.

DAX

(into action)

We have to use this.

PICARD

I don't see how, if all Captain Hernandez can do is listen in. I hear their voice myself, and all it's done is taunt me.

DAX

But she hears it clearer than you.
That suggests her connection is
deeper somehow.

HERNANDEZ

Commander Paris - why do you call
her the Queen?

PARIS

It's not her official name, it's
just what we've all fallen into.
I guess it's a metaphor - because
the Borg operate like a hive of
bees, with a queen in charge.

PICARD

You know that's a flawed analogy,
Mister Paris.

HERNANDEZ

But it's close enough to work
with. I can feel the Borg
destroying millions of lives on
Deneva and Risa right now, and I
know you can too, Captain.

BOWERS

(sudden inspiration)
Supercedure.

PICARD

I beg your pardon?

BOWERS

It's the technical term for the
process by which bees replace old
queens with new ones.

(off their looks)
My uncle kept a few hives.

WORF

(quietly impressed)
You will present yourself to them
as a new Queen.

PICARD

Now hold on a moment. I'm hardly an expert on the subject of bees, but I seem to recall learning in elementary school that most beehives react to the arrival of a strange queen by killing it.

HERNANDEZ

(thinking it through)

Then I won't be a new Queen. I'll just impersonate the old one.

RIKER

How? I mean, I'm sorry but that sounds kinda vague. What makes you so sure you can trick them?

HERNANDEZ

Her voice - the Queen's - is unique. I can retune my catoms to resonate to her frequency. My thought patterns would be a dead ringer for the Queen's.

PICARD

This sounds incredibly dangerous.

DAX

We're in a dangerous situation, Picard. It's time to start taking a few risks.

PICARD

Risks are one thing, but you're back to suicide missions again.

DAX

You're the one who said we were expendable!

PICARD

Yes, but -

Paris speaks out loud, rolling right over Picard. He is clearly getting into the plan-making mode.

PARIS

We'd need to patch her directly into the Vinculum to make this work. Any time we've tried to tap into the Borg like that, there has to be actual physical contact.

HERNANDEZ

So how do we do that?

PICARD

You don't. It's impossible. The Borg will see you coming, and their drones will overwhelm you.

BOWERS

Not if we take out the drones first. Captain Hernandez doesn't have to step foot on a cube until we've secured it.

PICARD

And how on Earth do you plan to do that?

WORF

The Hirogen's power dampeners.

Picard looks in disappointment at Worf - et tu? Worf has the sense to look a little ashamed.

BOWERS

Those were only small scale.

DAX

Then we use the *Aventine's* chain pulsar weapon to drain their power from a distance, and the Hirogen's dampeners for close range.

PICARD

You'd never get close enough. They'd shoot you out of the sky before you got anywhere near.

PARIS

Then we need the element of surprise.

DAX

We need the slipstream drive.

BOWERS

With respect, Captain, slipstream is not yet proven. The drive is experimental, and it caused major damage the last time it was tried.

Picard breathes a sigh of relief - the plan is scuppered.

HERNANDEZ

What is slipstream drive?

DAX

It works by focusing energy via the main deflector to break the quantum barrier. It can take us across light years in seconds. The problem is the computer - it can't keep up. We designed the chroniton integrator to scan a few seconds into the future, give us time to calculate the phase variables. It still wasn't enough. But we would only need those few seconds -

HERNANDEZ

(shrug)

Doesn't sound too complicated. I can take a look at it for you if you want.

PARIS

You'd need to find a suitable candidate - something small, a scout, travelling on its own.

HERNANDEZ

Captain Riker, I had a glance around *Titan* earlier. It has some pretty amazing sensors.

RIKER
Finest in the fleet.

HERNANDEZ
Then I'll tap into those, find
myself a sacrificial lamb.

RIKER
I'll put you in touch with my
chief science officer.

And now Riker is turning against Picard as well. Why can't they all see how wrong this is?

DAX
Then the *Aventine* slipstreams in,
and takes out their shields with a
quick chain pulsar and a couple of
low-yield transphasic torpedoes
before they know what's hit them.

PARIS
I can give you *Voyager's* enhanced
phasers and shields too.

WORF
I understood that those measures
required bio-neural circuitry.

BOWERS
Aventine has bio-neural circuitry.

DAX
Perfect. So then the strike teams
beam in with projectile weapons,
chemical explosives and energy
dampeners, and we go deck by deck,
section by section, till we secure
the cube. Then we send Erika over
to do her thing... and we crown a
new Queen.

There, the plan is out. Dax, Bowers, Paris and Hernandez look between themselves proudly. Picard clears his throat.

PICARD

I certainly can't fault your ambition. But I cannot endorse this plan. It's beyond dangerous.

DAX

Picard, you're the only one here not onboard with this. Don't you want to stop the Borg?

PICARD

(incensed)

No-one in this room wants to stop them more than me, Captain. But you run the risk of giving the Borg access to a staggering new level of technology in the form of these Caeliar catoms. That cannot be allowed to happen. Furthermore, the Borg are no longer mindless plodding drones. You severely underestimate their speed and ferocity. This will not work.

DAX

Then what's your plan?

PICARD

...I don't have one. Yet. But -

DAX

Well I do. And more than half the people in this room are with me.

PICARD

Captain, this is foolhardy, and I forbid you to go through with it.

Forbids her? Dax stands tall, straightens her uniform.

DAX

Everyone in this room honours your rank and experience, Captain. But I count the same four pips on my collar as on yours, and I don't

need your permission. I need to
do something... so I'm doing it.

(to the others)

Come on.

Dax heads to the door, Bowers her strong right hand.

Paris puts down his coffee cup, and after a moment to smile
- Dax reminds him of Janeway - he follows them too.

Then Hernandez follows Dax as well.

HERNANDEZ

You're certainly not Tobin
anymore.

Riker is torn - Picard is his mentor, but he agrees with
Dax on this one.

RIKER

I'm sorry, Jean-Luc. She's right.

And Riker heads over to join Dax.

At the door, Dax looks over her shoulder to make contact
with Worf, and she can see the difficulty on his face. He
does believe in her, but he has sworn loyalty to Picard.
She nods to him, understanding - she does not blame him.

They depart, leaving only Picard and Worf remaining,
against the backdrop of the ship graveyard.

BLACK OUT

END OF SHOW