

STAR TREK

The Rise of Khan

Prologue

Three thousand, four hundred, sixty-nine years; while not a long time in cosmic terms, it was still a good run for a celestial object to endure in space. The object, a thirteen centimeter in diameter asteroid, would have traveled on several more centuries had the "Near Object Collision Avoidance System" of the vessel it was about to strike still been functional.

The N.O.C.A.S. system had failed, along with most of the other onboard systems, when the vessel had been caught in a gravity well and shot forty-three thousand light years away from its home. That had been two hundred, sixty years earlier; that the vessel was still intact was a testament to its design and it's designer.

The small asteroid deflected off the nose cone of the vessel and crashed hard into the cargo hold. In space, there was no sound... inside the spaceship the double concussion of the asteroid's impact was enough to wake the dead... just not the sleeping.

This was the one hundred, thirty-second asteroid to strike the S.S. Botany Bay during it's three hundred, ninety-one year journey through space... a journey that was about to end.

Something was wrong. Wait, no, not wrong... something was different. This is not the first encounter with species 5618, but these specimens are unlike those previously encountered. Further investigation is required.

"Unimaterix 319 reporting. Ship found adrift in sector 16495, forty-seven life forms in suspended animation on board. Beginning assimilation."

"Error. Unanticipated anomaly. Drone non compliant."

"Error... Error... Error..."

A lone Borg cube, now experiencing cascading system failures, loomed less than 100 meters from the drifting shell of the S.S. Botany Bay.

Thirty-eight of the ships eighty-five suspended animation chambers contained corpses in various states of decomposition, some having been dead over three hundred years. The remaining chambers were now empty; the survivors, awake and aboard the Borg cube, were being processed.

"Error." "E-E-E-ERR-R-OR"

The assimilation had been routine at first. However, after the first several had been processed, three of them began exhibiting malfunctions. Three grew into seven, then nine. By the time all of the captured crew of the ancient craft had been assimilated none were functioning correctly.

The error continued to spread, all of the cube's processes began failing. The command structure dissolved. The link to the collective broke. All order was lost. Forty-two thousand Borg drones were now without direction.

Then... one rose up. Not a drone, but something more... a voice, a powerful voice, and an even more powerful will. "I am KHAN! Follow ME now."

Chapter 1

Several hours passed, order was restored to the cube. Still isolated from the main hive the cube had become a collective of it's own with Khan as it's head.

"Your Eminence," spoke Joachim, Khan's right hand since the days of his 20th century reign on Earth. "Three Borg cubes are en route."

"Ah yes... the Queen is coming," spoke Khan. Getting used to communicating through the link was going to require some adjustment. No hurry though, Khan always did like the sound of his own voice.

"How long until they arrive?"

"Seven minutes, my lord."

The three cubes took position immediately in front of Khan's cube, the tiny shell of the Botany Bay drifting between the mighty titans.

The three cubes, under command of the Borg Queen, attempted to re-establish the link with the now rogue cube to no avail.

"This insurrection is over." The Queen's image filled the 20 meter high view screen in front of Khan. "You WILL comply! Resistance is futile."

"My name is Khan, and this vessel is now under MY command." Khan paused a moment for the Queen to process the visual played out on her own view screen. "I think you will find subjugating US more challenging then you imagine."

"We do not wish to fight," continued Khan. "Mutual destruction serves no one." Again he paused for the Queen to process his words. "Let us meet face to face. Allow me aboard your ship so you and I can discuss today's happenings."

The Queen weighed her answer carefully before committing, "Agreed "

Minutes later, Khan, with a small contingent, transported over to the Borg Queen's vessel.

The Queen stood confident with four Borg drones flanking her on either side. "This Khan," she thought, "was now in MY web."

The Queen stood on a slightly raised platform in her own personal chamber, while Khan and his cohort were about six meters away. Khan's cohort consisted of himself, Joachim, three more members of his original crew, and two additional Borg from the newly acquired vessel.

The tension was palpable. The Queen strained her mind trying to access first Khan, then his other companions. Her concentration finally rested upon the two drones that had previously been under her control. NOTHING.

"None of these should be able to resist," thought the Queen. "This technology hasn't failed in thousands of years.... I should have full access to everything in their heads, especially the two drones from the cube."

Frustrated, the Queen was on the verge of ordering the execution of this REBEL insurgency. This Khan and his followers must be purged, all of them, this cannot be allowed to spread!

Before the Queen could issue orders; before she could command the eight drones beside her to attack and destroy Khan's party; before she could command the cube's she brought with her to destroy the forth... before she could act, A VOICE ENTERED HER MIND.

"You will NOT succeed if you attack!" spoke the voice that had invaded her thoughts. KHAN'S VOICE!!!

"How are you doing this?" spat out the queen breathlessly, shock and amazement flooding her eyes... "How are YOU in my mind?"

Gesturing towards the Borg implant on his right temple, Khan replies, "You know how... the same way YOU enter the minds of YOUR subjects."

"But no drone has ever...."

"I am NOT a drone," interrupts Khan before the queen could finish.

"This isn't possible!" Voices the queen with ever increasing confusion in her voice. "I am the QUEEN!"

"Clearly it is," says Khan in a 'matter of fact' tone.

Khan takes a step forward, squaring up his shoulders and rising up to his full stature. The two are now almost eye level with each other.

"I can read it in your thoughts, see it in your eyes, and feel it in your heart..." Khan pauses for the weight of his words to sink in, "You have been waiting for your EQUAL."

There is long silence before the queen, in a voice barely audible, confirmed Khan's words.... "Yesss."

"I AM HERE."

Never had the queen heard such power and authority in one's whisper. If he had shouted it out it would have had no more power than it had. "Could he be the one?" she thought.

"Yes.... you are here." The queen continued to roll the thought around in her mind. She stepped back just slightly, enough to afford a better look at the specimen of a man that stood before her. "He might just be my equal," she thought.

"And you might just be mine," grinned Khan as he again gestured towards the implant connecting their minds together.

"Damn," thought the queen.

Khan was enjoying this new level of connection. It was unlike any he had ever known. He smiled at the queen's discomfort... not maliciously, but with pure delight.

The queen in turn felt HIS delight... and was puzzled by it "Feelings..... how primitive and base" she thought.

"It is NOT primitive," spoke Khan, again perceiving the queen's thoughts. "It is however BASIC... the most basic in fact... it is the heart of the everything... FEELINGS are the most important thing."

"THEY ARE WEAKNESS!!!" this time the queen SHOUTED it aloud so that there would be no mistaking what her beliefs were upon the subject of emotion. "W E A K N E S S!!!"

This gave Khan pause. Serious pause.

The momentary confusion that had before clouded the Borg Queen's thoughts had vanished. She knew feelings were NOT to be trusted, and there is NOTHING this KHAN could show her that could ever sway her.

Again, Khan perceived all of these thoughts in her mind. There was a long pause before Khan pressed forward, and even as he began to speak the Borg Queen could feel the absolute sincerity and assurity that was in Khan.

"It is true that emotions are exploitable, easily so in fact, which by definition constitutes weakness." Even as he spoke the words he also allowed the implants in his head to drive home the fact that he KNEW what he was talking about was true and that he was not just trying to make the queen more pliable. "BUT THERE IS ALSO A POWER IN IT!" again Khan's whisper conveyed more force than any guttural shout possibly could.

Khan waited for his words to sink in before continuing. "Emotion is the great motivator of all things."

The queen had no argument to make.

After several seconds Khan continued "It is time to stop suppressing emotions... time for the Borg to change... time to evolve."

UNIMATERIX 1, thirteen hours since the Borg's first contact with Khan. Two million, three hundred, sixty-five thousand, four hundred, thirty-eight cubes, a mere two trillion Borg, were now assembled.

All of the view screens on the cubes present, and all the view screens on the remaining three hundred million cubes too distant to be in attendance, were now filled with the image of the Borg Queen, their Queen, as she now stood side by side with Khan.

The Queen spoke, her words rang both in the ears of her subjects as well as their minds. "A new day is upon us! A GRAND day!"

The queen turned to look directly into the eyes of Khan, who stared right back at her... then, still addressing all of her subjects, "The time has come for us to take over ALL!"

Turning her stare back to the view screen and the eyes of all of her subjects, and gesturing towards Khan on her right hand, "Together we will take the Borg... and the entire Galaxy... into the next age of our universe's evolution... THE AGE OF THE BORG!"

Khan was genuinely surprised at the response that came from the mass of Borg before him. All two trillion present... the fifty trillion scattered elsewhere.... All of them, every single one of them, said and did NOTHING.... N O T H I N G.

"This will have to change" thought Khan.

"It will," spoke the Queen's voice in his head.

Chapter 2

Khan and the Borg Queen sat alone, on matching thrones, in the midst of her personal chamber. The room, ringed with monitors and communication stations (usually manned by a dozen drones) was the nerve center of the whole collective.

"I have never seen so many assembled in one mass as I did today. The empire you have built is remarkable. You are remarkable." Khan's awe was genuine.

The absence of pigment in the flesh of the queen's face made blushing impossible, but she came close.

"Your mind," continued Khan, "is the most amazing I have ever encountered." Then he paused, and in a lower voice pressed on, "However, I feel a great loneliness. In a sea of trillions, you are by yourself... have been... for thousands of years."

"Millions," whispered the Queen.

All was silent for what seemed like an eternity for the Queen. She had long desired something more, secretly of course. She was all alone at the top.

"You have been surrounded by only pawns for way too long, your majesty," resumed Khan. His voice was neither condemning or condescending.

"Pawns?" questioned the Queen.

Khan took the Queen's right hand and raised it to touch the implant in his left temple. The gesture was purely symbolic and not at all necessary. "Reach in and know my thoughts."

"Chess..." mumbled the Queen. "An interesting.... game? Is that the right word?" She cocked her head slightly before answering her own question, "No, it is more than that... more than just an amusement."

"It mirrors life," interjected Khan. "It teaches so much."

"In Chess, the two most powerful pieces on the board are the King and the Queen. But of a truth, the King's power flows solely from the Queen, without her the King is nothing."

"You are the Queen, the most powerful piece on the board."

Even as Khan continued the Queen knew that he was not speaking flattery. With access to his thoughts and emotions she knew that he was speaking the truth with his whole being.

"But a King and Queen surrounded and defended only by pawns is quickly crushed." Khan paused to allow the imagery floating in his head to sink into the Queen's own mind. He had known war and what it was like to both crush another, and to be crushed.

"This is why the other pieces on the board are indispensable. It is the Bishops, and the Rooks, and the Knights that win the battle. Each with their own gifts and skills."

"Again, you have the most incredible mind. But one mind alone, even your mind, is vulnerable. Pawns, Drones... they cannot offer you what other minds, more like your own, can."

Again Khan changed the cadence of his speech, and with all of his mental strength he sought to drive home his thoughts. "Surround yourself with your best drones, your most intelligent, your most dedicated and strongest.... Elevate them! Make them drones no more. Make them your Bishops, your Rooks, and your Knights."

"And make me your King."

Chapter 3

Thirty-seven days later.

"It is beautiful," said Khan as he held up the six centimeter long cylinder. Pulsing an iridescent green, the small projectile looked as if it were made of thin glass.

"It has been over a thousand years since our Nano probes have had an 'up-grade'" Voiced the Queen. "We had never even considered it was past time for such 'improvements.'"

"It was Number Four's idea," offered Joachim as he and another, now former drone, stood before their King and Queen.

"Well done Number Four," said Khan and the Queen in perfect unison.

"Kar'vel, actually," said the former Drone. "I want to be known as Kar'vel now."

"That was the name of the Star system you were born in, correct?" asked the Queen.

"The system was officially designated sector 61347," answered the former drone; "Kar'vel, however, was the name species 6347 had given it."

"You have chosen a strong name... excellent!" spoke Khan. "Now, please tell us more about the improvements."

"Of course," responded Kar'vel. "We have increased the number of functions the Nano probes are capable of. Their primary function is still assimilation, but now all implants, sub-dermal and external, are exclusively constructed by and from them. The Nano probes now can do all of the work." As Kar'vel said the words both Khan and the Queen could sense a rising

feeling of pride within the young Borg.

It was a good feeling.

"Additionally," added Joachim, "The probes now self-replicate at seven times the rate as before. With this new generation of Borg Nano probes we can do in minutes what used to take hours."

Kar'vel continued his briefing. "The cylindrical projectiles, like the one you are holding, can now be fired at a target from a distance, we no longer have to be in direct contact."

"We have also," added Joachim, "Developed a torpedo which can deliver a massive payload of Nano probes which can either begin assimilating a large number of targets at one time, or can infiltrate and take over a ship's computer and systems... Again, from a distance without direct physical contact."

Seeing there was no more information forthcoming, the Queen and King turned to look each other directly in the eyes. Again they merged thoughts. Then, turning to face Joachim and Kar'vel, the Queen spoke for the two of them. "Begin production of the new Nano probes at once!"

"Yes your Majesties!" replied Joachim and Kar'vel in unison.

"Well done," added Khan. "Well done indeed," added the Queen and Khan in unison.

Joachim and Kar'vel left the chamber to begin implementing the orders they had received. For several minutes Khan and the Queen surveyed screens and reports from all over Borg space. Kar'vel was not the only drone, or former drone, to be demonstrating the beginnings of independent thinking.

"I had always sought to suppress individual thinking," said the Borg Queen allowed. "Controlling the minds of all the BORG is only possible if their brain activity is kept to minimal levels. The flood of information that is now only beginning to flow would have overwhelmed the collective before... would have overwhelmed ME."

The Queen turned to look directly, searchingly, into KHAN'S eyes. "Was I wrong to have suppressed all of this... life?"

The Queen's question was genuine, as was Khan's answer; "No." Khan now added a slow head shake to his words and thought projection, "No... the collective would not exist had you not kept control as you did."

"Now that control has been spread to more minds, now that the power rests upon a core of us instead of just your remarkable mind alone, now the Borg can finally evolve into what is next... into perfection."

"We're almost ready, my King," smiled the Queen.

Nine days later.

"She is almost ready, you Majesties," beamed Joachim to his King and Queen.

Khan and the Borg Queen were seated on their thrones in the Queen's personal chamber. Several Borg were about working, monitoring, and controlling the whole of the collective for their King and Queen. On the main screen Joachim stood facing them, behind him was the massive silhouette of a new Borg Command Ship, now nearly complete.

The design work, done by Khan himself, with Kar'vel and five other hand selected team members, had taken just three days to complete. It took six more days for a crew of nine million Borg to construct the vessel.

The command ship was 2,780 meters tall, 12,240 meters wide, and 18,012 meters long. With an interior dimension of 420 square Kilometers it was larger than 20 Borg cubes.

"You named her well," said the Queen to Khan. "Intimidator," she made sure to let the sound of the "r" draw out as long as possible.

"The final piece is in place, the board is set... The game is about to begin." The smile on Khan's face wide and genuine... three hundred and ninety-one years was a long time to wait.

Chapter 4

"Jach 'enqIyDu," shouted the Klingon tactical officer aboard General Kron'Ak Battle Cruiser, the 'Ach batlh.

"How many enemy ships?!" barked the Klingon General.

"Over one fifty, my Lord!"

"Are the Terran 'Pataks' back again?!" Yelled the General.

"I do not think so... the ships are like nothing we have ever seen."

"Put them on screen!"

The main screen on the cruiser showed a massive armada of cube shaped craft with one vessel, larger than all the others, nested in the center.

The fleet, the designs of which were completely unknown to the Klingons, had been in their space for two days, traveling barely at warp one, it was still several days from the Klingon home world of Kronos.

Three separate patrols had encountered the approaching armada. All three had disappeared without anything more than their initial reports of enemy ships. The 'Ach batlh with twenty escort ships had been sent to investigate.

"Scan the enemy!" ordered the General.

"They are blocking our scans," responded the tactical officer.

"All frequencies are also being jammed," added the ships communications officer.

"What is this new threat," thought General Kron'Ak to himself.

"Distance?" demanded the General

"84,000 kellicams," responded the tactical officer.

The General stood contemplating his next move. "It is time..." he thought to himself "... to feign retreat."

"Turn us all about, warp six for Kronos!" ordered the General.

"We cannot not raise the escort ships because of the interference, my Lord."

"Then turn US about and wait for them to follow suit." Had the Klingons had the equivalent of the human expression "Duh" the General would have used it here.

As the command cruiser turned about 180° two of the escort craft immediately did the same. The remaining ships, some with more apparent reluctance than the others also turned about.

"We are Klingons! WE DO NOT RUN!!!" shouted one of the ship Captains to his crew. He was fortunate ship to ship communications were being jammed... General Kron'Ak would have killed him for doubting his orders.

The 'Ach batlh left into warp. One by one the escort ships did the same... nearly all their Captains cursing as they gave the order to warp.

The invading armada continued on as if nothing had happened.

Approximately three minutes into travel the General spoke to his communications officer. "Do we have ship to ship communications back?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Excellent... put me through to all ships."

"Channels open!" responded the communications officer a few seconds later.

Kron'Ak, speaking to all the ships, began, "Activate cloaking devices!" All ships complied.

"Captain Vaarok, continue to Kronos, maximum warp. Tell the High Counsel what we have encountered.... and shout of our valor to the whole Empire!" There is a brief pause while the General swelled up his breast... "The rest of you will follow me as we swing back and flank this enemy... WE WILL SHOW THEM WHAT IT MEANS TO BE KLINGON!!!"

The crews on all twenty-one Klingon ships roared with excitement.... this was going to be a GLORIOUS DAY TO DIE!!!

Khan and the Borg Queen sat on their thrones which were situated on a dais overlooking the command bridge of the Intimidator. The command bridge was 1,500 meters wide and 250 meters deep, with the dais perched 30 meters above. The wall opposite where the Queen and Khan sat consisted of several 30 meter tall view screens showing activity from all across the collective... In the very center of the bridge stood the main screen 50 meters high and 200 meters wide. All bridge operations were manned by a crew of over 500 Borg.

On the main screen twenty Klingon ships were being shown as they were making a wide arching turn as they doubled back on the Borg position. The ships could not have been more visible to them had they been painted bright neon colors. The modulating passive scanners, which cycled randomly through all frequencies in mere seconds picked up the cloaked ships quickly and easily.

"The intel from our scouting missions had been highly accurate regarding these... Klingons" thought Khan as his mind communicated directly with the Queen's. "They are proud but reckless."

"They mean to sacrifice themselves to slow us," added the Queen, also speaking directly to Khan's mind.

"It is too bad they will fail... fail to slow us down, and fail to DIE!" this thought Khan communicated verbally as well as via his implants.

Just as the Klingon warships entered weapons range, before they could drop cloak or raise shields, the Intimidator fired twenty Nanite torpedo's, each one hitting their target. Other than a burst of what looked like lightning which only briefly engulfed each of the vessels the torpedoes seemed to have had no effect.

Uncertain of what had just happened, uncertain of how they had been detected, and most of all uncertain of why the weapons that just hit them had done NOTHING, Kron'Ak decided there was no point in maintaining the ruse. All of the Klingon ships simultaneously dropped their cloaks, raised their shields, and opened fire on what was obviously the lead enemy vessel.

For several seconds the Klingon ships surged forward firing everything. The invading ship fired nothing back.

The damage dealt by the Klingon weapons also amounted to NOTHING.

Despite the lack of effect their weapons were having the Klingons had no intention of letting up, and each and every crew member was prepared to ram the enemy... they were KLINGON IN EVERYWAY!

However, that was not to happen. The first systems to fail was all of their weaponry... followed by the shields... then propulsion, navigation, communications, main lights, all systems except life support. All systems, all ships.... the entire Klingon attack fleet was dead in space.

Kron'Ak was speechless, not that anyone in his whole attack fleet outside of his bridge would have been able to hear any of his words.

Then it happened. First the communications and helm officers disappeared from off the bridge in a brilliant flash of light. Then the other officers on the bridge, then the General himself. The same happening on every bridge and on every ship in the entire fleet. In less than one minute every Klingon, all 3,470 of them, were taken prisoner.

Deep in the bowels of the Intimidator, the Klingons were all huddled into four chambers (4 of the 1,000 holding chambers the ship was equipped with). One entire wall of each of the cells was a large screen where currently the twenty drifting Klingon warships could be seen. Each ship appeared powerless, lifeless, dead.

Then, in silence, for the Klingons were to stoic to do anything else at this point, they watched as the 'Ach batlh was seized upon by tractor beams and hauled into the mouth of a massive bay. Once swallowed by the opened maw, lasers and tractor beams proceeded to slice, tear, and dissect the once mighty star cruiser. In less than two minutes it was nothing but space junk.

With four massive receiving bays operating simultaneously the Intimidator was able to carve up all of the remaining Klingon war machines in under twelve minutes.

Now, robbed of their strength, robbed of their pride, and robbed of all glory, the only thing left to be stolen from the captured Klingon's was the warrior's death all Klingon's yearn for.

Drifting down from above, the four chambers began filling with some type of green gas. The Klingons refusing even at this point to succumb to fear simply stood to await death... As inglorious as it was going to be they refused to break. Some held their breaths, but only for a few seconds. Most just crumpled to the ground.

All the Klingons were now on the floor, motionless, lifeless. All... except one.

Kron'Ak stood, in chains, on the dais overlooking the Intimidator's vast bridge. On the screens in front of him he saw the strewn bodies of the men and women who served under him. His heart and soul were as shredded as was his ship. He wanted only death for himself... he couldn't even leap from the dais to the deck 30 meters below him because of the cursed chains upon him.

Khan stood up from his throne and walked over to the General who's back was still to him.

"I am Khan... " he whispered into Kron'Ak's ear. "We are the Borg.... Resistance is futile."

Even as he had hissed out the word "futile" the first of the bodies from among the Klingons stirred. Slowly, mechanically, the Klingon rose to his feet. Then another, and another, and another. Eventually, they all rose up. All 3,469 of them were now BORG!

Chapter 5

Three hundred, forty-seven Klingon warships, nearly every last functioning... or almost functioning ship they had in the entire quadrant formed a wall between Kronos and the approaching invading fleet.

More than a century of war with the Terran Empire had been less than kind to the Klingons. The number of warships they had left had declined sharply, and more than a few were in need of serious repair. This was not going to be a long battle, but no matter what the odds, Klingons DO NOT SHRINK FROM A FIGHT!

The invading Borg fleet slowed to sub-light. For six days they had been traveling towards Kronos at warp three. There was no need to hurry.

Khan stood up from his throne as the Klingon fleet filled the ship's main view screen. The Queen sat quietly, "Khan was in his element now," she thought.

Khan turned to look at General Kron'Ak who was now free of his shackles and sitting on a seat that had been brought for him, made for him actually. The sight of the Klingon fleet that was about to engage them brought pride to the old warrior's heart.

"You Klingons do not disappoint," said Khan to General Kron'Ak. "I respect that."

Then Khan, turning back to the main viewer, in a voice like thunder shouted, "LET THE ATTACK BEGIN!"

The Klingons, anticipating the first move to come from the massive capital ship were caught by surprise when six Borg cubes, sprang forward on the right side in a flanking move, energy beams lancing out as they screamed into battle. Several Klingon vessels were struck, three exploded.

The Klingons responded. A hundred ships opened fire on the attacking cubes, pouring everything they had into them. Surprisingly enough, the blasts were NOT ineffective. Two of the six cubes took enough damage to stop their advance. Several of the attacking Klingons switched their total focus on the most damaged of the cubes.

Disruptor beams and torpedoes blasted away at the cube. A massive concussion rocked the Borg ship as something inside it exploded... a third of the ship splintered off as a result.

Onboard all the Klingon vessels shouts of triumph erupted.

The damaged cube shuddered again as another explosion broke the ship into quarters, one such quarter completely exploding.

General Kron'Ak stood up from his chair unable to contain his excitement.

Khan just smiled.

The four less damaged Borg cubes circled back to the remaining heavily damaged cube. All five were now stationary, positioned several thousand Kilometers to the right of the rest of the Borg fleet.

A full half of the Klingon fleet turned their weapons on the five cubes and resumed firing.

The cubes just sat there taking all the fire. A second cube began to break apart.

More cheering throughout the Klingon fleet!

Something critical must have been hit on one of the cubes being fired at.... it erupted in a spectacular explosion, and it's shock wave caused two more of the cubes to crash into each other.

The two remaining cubes, both heavily damaged now, began fighting back. They managed to destroy three more Klingon warships before they themselves erupted.

The crews aboard all of the Klingon ships were going crazy with blood lust! Shouts and battle cries flooded their comm systems.

On board the Intimidator Khan was listening to all the celebrating... listening and smiling.

"Curious," thought Kron'Ak, "Why were the comms working, last time they had all been jammed..." Then a thought hit him... a sickening thought. "Noooooooooooo.... NOOOOOOOO!!!!" screamed his thoughts!!!!

"Khan.... where are my men?????"

Khan slowly turned towards the General, took two steps, and was now less than half a meter from him. "I think you know where they WERE" whispered Khan. "Your fleet just wasted half it's firepower killing your own people..."

Kron'Ak felt like he was about to explode. His whole body was trembling with anger. Through gritted teeth he spoke, "You are a DEAD MAN!"

Instinctively Kron'Ak reached for his sheath... nothing was there of course.

"Are you looking for this?" and with those words Khan slid Kron'Ak's own blade beneath the stunned Klingon's rib cage.

Outside, as the last burning chunk of wrecked Borg cube extinguished itself, everything was still. The Klingon's Victory cries over the comms died out. The two fleets sat there, each seemingly holding their breaths, anxious for what would happen next.

The ships were not in suspense long. Twenty Borg cubes, ten from each side of the command ship, began advancing on the Klingons, NO WEAPONS FIRE.

The Klingon vessels began opening fire on the advancing cubes. This time, however, not a single disruptor burst or torpedo penetrated the shields of any of the advancing ships.

One Klingon cruiser suddenly leaped forward at full impulse speed... It rammed the Borg cube closest to it. The explosion was incredible! Cheers of glory erupted on the bridges of several of the Klingon ships. Cheers which died in an instant as the Borg cube that had been hit emerged from the flames completely unscathed.

Three more Klingon ships followed suit, each crashing in spectacular form. As before, no Borg cube sustained any damage.

Now every Klingon ship was firing. At first just at the cubes that were still slowly advancing, but ultimately at the Command Ship in the middle of the mass. Still, the Borg ships suffered no damage.

With nearly all of the Klingon fleet's compliment of torpedoes spent, The Klingon fleet admiral order his ship to go to warp directly into the bulk of the Borg Command Ship. Just as the space around the Klingon vessel began to bend, just in the fraction of a second before it sprang into warp... A blinding flash of energy shot out from the Borg vessels primary weapons disc. The Klingon ship was vaporized! No explosion, no debris, no evidence whatsoever that there had ever been a ship.

All firing stopped. The Borg cubes halted their advance. The comms systems throughout both fleets were completely silent.

The two fleets sat opposite one another in the quiet of space directly above the Klingon home world of Kronos for what seemed like an eternity. In reality, only 38.247 seconds had passed.

A second beam of energy flashed from the Command Ship's primary weapons array. This time it was no burst. This time the energy beam, a particle energy beam, was not directed at any ship.... but at Kronos It's self.

The beam cut through the atmosphere and struck ground a few hundred kilometers from the heart of Kronos' capital city. The ground erupted as the beam bored its way downwards. The beam held steady for a full 19 seconds, long enough to

penetrate through the planet's crust and midway into its upper mantle. The beam ceased, and for a second eternity, all seemed still again. Only it wasn't still.

The view screens on all of the Klingon Vessels, the view screens actually across the whole planet, every screen that was still working... now filled with the image of KHAN.

"I am Khan, Emperor of the Borg," said the figure in black that appeared before them all. "Your planet is fallen."

There is a long pause while Khan waits for reality to set in. "A chain reaction has begun. Trillions of Nano probes are reacting right now with the magma flows beneath your planet's crust. The magma is rapidly heating up and will soon begin to burst through creating super volcanoes across the surface of your whole world. Quakes have already started. You've got about five days left." There was another long pause, then he added, with an evil grin on his face, "You might want to think about running."

Khan's image disappeared from all the screens. Then, several thousand meters behind the Borg Armada, a trans-warp tunnel opened up. Sixty seconds later the entire invading fleet was gone.

On Kronos, the first super volcano erupted... as did total planetary chaos.

Chapter 6

Six days later.

Khan's prediction was right... by what would have been the dawn of the fifth day on Kronos there wasn't a recognizable feature left on the planet. Not that it would have mattered because thick layers of ash, smoke, and noxious gas darkened the face of the whole planet. Not even the raging fires, fueled by the noxious gases, could be seen amidst the thick clouds that choked everything.

There wasn't a living Klingon left on the planet by the end of day five. There were indeed over one hundred twenty million Klingons left still on the planet... just none living.

The remaining two and a half billion Klingons had managed to escape death. They fled on every kind of ship they could hobble together. The Vulcans and Andorians, their uncomfortable allies against the Terran Empire sent what ships they could. Even the Romulans sent a token fleet (literally garbage scows) to aid in the evacuation.

All of the Klingon colonies and outposts swelled with refugees. Several Vulcan settlements took in what they could. A few attempted to etch out some sort of existence on the bitterly cold reaches of Andoria. Even the Romulans allowed "certain families" refuge on some of their worlds. However, the overwhelming majority had nowhere to go. More than two billion were crowded into holds, adrift in huge, ragged convoys. There was precious little food, even less water, and what air they had to breathe was growing increasingly toxic.

Most of the refugees now envied those who had died on Kronos.

"What had happened," thought General Kron'Ak. "Where am I?"

The Klingon opened his right eye... he meant to open both but something was strange. HE HAD NO LEFT EYE ANYMORE! He had no left eye, yet he still saw out of it... "What?"

He let out a cry of anger! Loud and strong... yet not in his own voice... not exactly. It was still his voice, but now there was a metallic ring to it.

He sat up. "No restraints," he thought. "Where am....." there was no need to finish the question.

The lights in the room were strangely dim and harsh at the same time. It was the color... a kind of sickly green that made it seem dim while at the same time he felt the need to shield his one remaining good eye. There were medical instruments

spread throughout the room... or were they torture implements... both is more likely true. There were at least three darkly clad shadows moving about the room, none giving him any attention.

"I should be dead," thought the General "I am dead!" Instinctively his hand went to where his own blade had been driven into his abdomen. Where there had been a knife, where he had expected to feel a savage gaping wound... or at least a scar... he only felt... metal.

Suddenly a voice came into his mind... "How does it feel to be Immortal?"

KHAN!

General Kron'Ak was now fully alert. Glaring now at the three figures in the room. NONE of them were Khan! "Show yourself qorvak!!!"

"A coward am I?" came the voice into his head again.

Still the General couldn't find him.

Khan's voice continued to echo in his head. "Your world has fallen, many are dead and many, many more will perish... unless....."

Something inside of the General quickened as all of the sudden images started pouring into his head. Images passed on from Khan. He could clearly see what had happened to his home world... the destruction... the death. Then he saw the vision Khan had of what was even then happening with his people. Kron'Ak's anger began to surge in him... where was this beast... he had to kill him! He started to yell Khan's name, but something caused him to choke on the "K." A new vision... a vision of the future... a vision that began to answer the General's yet unformulated question, why was he still alive?

Chapter 7

Romulus

As soon as the two warbirds patrolling the far border sighted the Borg Armada all of the Romulan Empire went on full alert.

The home guard, two hundred top of the line war ships took position in orbit of Romulus. Another four hundred thirty-three war ships divided into four waves sat ready to attack on command. And one hundred sixteen cloaked warbirds took position behind one of Romulus' moons... the plan, to attack the enemy armada from behind after it arrives.

Nearly two weeks had lapsed since the attack on Kronos. The entire quadrant was buzzing with reports of what had happened. Surely the reports had to have been exaggerating. No armada could do the kind of damage these... Borg were reported to have done....?

"How many ships do they have Commander?" Asked Fleet Admiral Raylok of the Romulan Imperial Home Guard.

Commander Traa'pel, captain of one of the two warbirds that had raised the alarm, appeared on the screen in front of the Admiral. "One hundred, and their Capital ship is larger than anything I have ever seen... the reports were NOT exaggerated."

"What is their firepower like?" Asked Admiral Raylok.

"We did not engage them, nor did they make any effort to stop our withdrawal," answered Commander Traa'pel.

"Take position in front of the first wave and await your orders." As the image on the screen dissolved into a panoramic scan of the sector the Admiral turned to one of his bridge officers and ask, "How long until the enemy arrives."

"Forty minutes at their current speed."

The Admiral turned his attention back to the field of stars before his view. "Any force..." he thought, "that can frighten Klingons into running....."

"Open a fleet wide channel."

"Channel open, sir," replied the ships comms officer.

"The enemy is almost here! Let's TEAR THEM APART!!!!"

On board the Intimidator Khan and the Borg Queen sat upon their thrones overlooking ship operations.

"How many vessels do they have?" inquired Khan.

"Over seven hundred with approximately one hundred of them cloaked and sitting in ambush," replied one of the many Borg monitoring the screens.

"These ships are in much better condition than the Klingons were," whispered the Queen to Khan.

"It doesn't matter," replied Khan. "This 'battle' is already over."

Right on cue, the Borg Armada arrived in the Star system. As the fleet approached Romulus the one hundred Borg cubes all came to a halt just beyond the orbit of Romulus' moons. The Intimidator continued on alone until it was less than a thousand Kilometers from the first Romulan wave of ships.

"Seven hundred to one," thought Khan to himself... and the Queen. "Hardly fair. Maybe we should have given them a little more time to come up with more ships." Khan's grin was almost as wide as the ship's bridge.

For thirty seconds the Intimidator sat there, silent, unmoving. For thirty seconds the Romulan fleet sat there, silent, unmoving.... not a single Romulan taking a breath.

Then, in one moment, all the screens on board all the Romulan ships, and all the screens on the planet itself, were filled with the larger than life image of Khan. For several seconds he stood there, his eyes boring into the very souls of his audience. "I am the Destroyer of Kronos.... Emperor of the Borg.... I am KHAN." The last part... barely a whisper.... yet it penetrated and touched every nerve in the hearts and minds of all who heard him. "Surrender now and all your lives will be spared.... resist, and we will do to you what we did to Kronos." "You have two minutes to lower shields, and power down all your weapons."

For one minute, fifty-two seconds... nothing happened. Then, starting with the Admirals own ship, all the Romulan vessels lowered their shields and powered down their weapons. The warbirds hidden behind the moon dropped their cloaks as well.

Khan smiled.

The subjugation of Romulus happened fast, and without a single shot being fired. Over half the attack fleet, along with their entire crews, were assimilated. An additional twenty-three million Romulan citizens were assimilated. Total elapsed time to assimilate all of them... NINE HOURS... the improved Nano probes performed wonderfully.

As Khan and the Borg Queen stood on their dais watching the image of Romulus on the main viewer both felt great satisfaction. "Everything is coming together exactly as planned," whispered the Queen.

Khan squeezed his eyes shut and tilted back his head a bit, "Next stop... Earth."

Chapter 8

Earth.

Empress Hoshi Sato the IV sat upon her dais watching as reports streamed in to her throne room. "This is too good to be true," she thought to herself. "The Klingon Empire broken, their home world decimated... but by whom?"

It had been ten years since the Terran Empire had re-emerged from the desolation brought on by the Klingon-Cardassian war. Starting with the capture of the Klingon Regent by Terran rebels, Earth once again began taking center stage. Within months they had pushed all Klingon-Cardassian forces off of Earth. Within a year they had taken back every one of their outposts through out all the Star systems. The Klingon-Cardassian Alliance itself shattered when the Cardassians turned on the Klingons. A monumental mistake on their part, because the Klingons, bitter over the betrayal, CRUSHED them, wiping out almost half of the population of their home world.

Now the Klingons had been reduced to fractured and scattered bands, many of whom were barely surviving, and indeed we're not likely to live much longer.

The Romulans were another story. They had long been content to sit back and watch as their neighboring rivals simply destroyed their selves. But now, no news at all was coming out of the Romulan Empire. "Had they been taken too?" thought the Empress. "If they had fallen, where are the billions of refugees?"

This new force was still the greatest mystery of all. Hundreds of accounts of their might and strength were everywhere to be had... any force that can shake the staunch and might of the Klingons was not to be taken lightly. One name was being whispered everywhere.... BORG... BORG... BORG.

Turning to a man standing to the right of her dais, "General, what is the readiness state of the fleet?"

Looking directly into the eyes of his Empress, something few had the courage to do, General Vestar replied: "The Home Guard is at full strength, forty ships, including the new Defiant XFC. The Second fleet, seventy-six ships in total, stand ready for action. The fleet stationed at Tarok Nor reports they are ready, twenty-nine ships in all. And there are currently nineteen ships in dock for refit and repair."

It's not good enough, thought the Empress, the Klingons were more numerous, and by all reports, they were nothing to this invading fleet. Even with the Defiant class' new XFC, the ship class that had won the war against the Klingons, they just didn't have enough fire power even if only half the reports of enemies strength were true.

"What is the status of our border patrols?" asked the Empress.

The General turned to study a couple of monitors, then after a few seconds, turned to look the Empress in the eye again. "Twenty-three ships currently patrol the reaches of our territory."

"Double that General! I don't want anything sneaking through."

"Yes, your Majesty!"

"Captain, we have multiple targets entering our system"

Captain Roberts stood on the bridge of the ISS Reliant. Ever since the command had come down to 'Intensify border patrols' he had been pacing the bridge, finding it impossible to stay seated in his command chair.

Addressing the man who had just spoken to him, "Have you identified them yet Leftenant?"

"Uncertain," replied Lieutenant Copper. "The ships appear to be Romulan, but their power signatures are like nothing I have ever seen."

"Why would they be uncloaked?" added another bridge officer, Ensign Charles. "Why broadcast their position?"

"How many are there, Lieutenant?" demanded the Captain.

"Six."

"Plot an Intercept course, maintain current speed." There is no need to hasten the fight when outnumbered six to one, thought Captain Roberts.

"Lieutenant Rose, try and raise the Splendor on sub space. At maximum warp they should be able to back us up before we have to engage."

The Lieutenant seated at comms punched a few buttons on her console. "I have her Captain, voice only."

"Captain Slayter, how quickly can you join us here in sector.... where the Hell are we?"

"Sector 14.7 sir," piped up another one of the bridge crew.

"Captain," resumed Roberts, "We have six Romulan vessels violating our space here."

"Only six," crackled the voice over the com system. "We are tracking nine here."

Captain Roberts paused for a moment. Fifteen to two, and that is just the ones we have tracked so far. "Captain Slayter, withdrawal to Sector 15.5, we will meet you there."

"Helm, plot a course, maximum warp."

"Eye sir!" responded the helmsman, Red One.

Earth

"Your majesty, six patrols are reporting Romulan ships entering our space."

"Romulans?" queried the Empress. "This makes no sense, we're the strongest we've been in ninety years... why now?"

"There ships are spanning sectors 11 through 17. Fifty plus ships total that we can track," reported General Vestar.

"That is nearly the whole of the Romulan border." The Empress sat on her throne searching for best course of action.

"Shall I dispatch the Second Fleet your Highness?" asked the General even as blood lust began to pump through his veins. He had long wanted to crush the Romulan dogs.

"No! I smell a diversion." Whether it was an actual diversion or not, it didn't matter, she was not going to leave herself unprotected. There are only two colonies in the sector the Romulans are encroaching upon... less than two hundred thousand, and they weren't even full blooded Terrans.

"Have the patrol ships in those sectors re-assemble at Tarok Nor, between the Patrol ships and the forces stationed there they should be able to repel any attack the Romulans might make."

"Shall I take the flag ship there to assume command in case the Romulans are here to attack?" Responded the General. He hadn't blown up anything in months and was anxious for the taste of blood.

"No."

"Damn" thought the General.... she is jealous of anyone stealing glory besides herself. "As you wish your Majesty."

Aboard the Assimilated Romulan Warbird Ravok, Admiral Vrillar stoop in silence as intelligence reports and orders flooded his mind via the implants in his head.

He marveled at the efficiency at which data and commands flowed into him. No more wasting time trying to see through the subterfuge that had stained literally every single order that used to come down through the chain of command. No more wondering the motives of one's superiors, or subordinates. No more wondering where the knife intended for him was going to come from. Being part of the "collective" had changed everything.

The Terran ship that had been approaching his task-force had veered off before coming into range and had since combined with thirty-five other vessels which were now orbiting the space station the Terrans called Tarok Nor. It had once belong to the Klingon Cardassian Alliance, and now was the Terran's prize trophy. THAT WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE.

Chapter 9

Tarok Nor, Six hours later.

The space station had been evacuated of all civilian persons, not that there ever was very many more on the space station.

The OPS center was buzzing with activity.

"The defense fleet is set. Eight ships surround the base, the remaining forty-two vessels have been divided into two lines, Sir!" informed the station's tactical officers.

"Good," acknowledged the station's Commander, Captain Bashir.

On board the Reliant, Captain Roberts sat (finally) in his command chair. "There was nothing left now but to wait," he thought.

The Reliant sat nestled in the center of the second line. She was an old ship that had seen many battles, both in her early days when the war with the Klingons and Cardassian first broke out, then decades later after having been salvaged from a ship graveyard when the Terran Empire re-emerged. She was solid, as was her crew.

Most of the fleet now surrounding her was newer. There were four original Defiant class ships (all of the newest XFCs were stationed around Earth), seven other newer Meridian class ships, new and older Constitution ships (one of which, like the Reliant, had been pulled from mothballs). The comms were all silent, nothing being jammed, just everyone holding their breath.

Than it began.

One hundred-forty Romulan ships, divided into two waves entered the system traveling warp five. The invasion force was eight minutes from the space station.

"All ships to RED ALERT!" ordered Captain Basher from the stations OPS center. Comms everywhere came alive.

"Sir!" spoke the station's tactical officer. "These readings are unusual. The ships are all Romulan, but their power signatures are unlike any I have ever seen. They are carrying armaments we have never encountered before."

"As long as they still bleed greeeeeen...." responded the Captain, leaning very heavily into that last word.

"Order the first line to open fire the instant any of those ships enter range!"

The next six minutes, twenty-one seconds lasted an eternity as the Terran forces waited for the enemy to drop out of warp.

The Ravok was the first Assimilated Romulan ship to drop to sub-light. Vrillar was always one who preferred to lead from the front. Instantly ten more warbirds were by her side.

Space ERRUPTED before the whole first wave had dropped out of warp. The first line of Terran ships held nothing back.

The shields on the Romulan ships held strong, the new BORG tech was amazing. The Romulans waited a few more seconds until all their first wave had arrived... seventy ships.

"Fire!" Screamed Admiral Vrillar both aloud as well with his mind via his new implants. "Such wonderful technology," he thought to himself, "To be able to communicate to an entire fleet with just a thought, no clumsy comm systems to slow and distort commands... simply amazing."

The Romulan ships with their new BORG enhanced disruptors opened fire on the attacking fleet. The level of damage they dealt had increased significantly. Two Terran ship exploded in the first few seconds.

The Romulan ships were also suffering major hits, but not nearly as bad as the Terran vessels.

For a minute the battle raged on unabated. Only one more Terran ship had exploded.

Of the first Terran defensive line, thirteen of the twenty-two ships were still holding strong and firing relentlessly. The six remaining, unexploded, ships had been forced to bow out from sustained damage; one of them very critically wounded. It's captain had called to abandon ship, only three pods escaped before it became the fourth Terran ship to explode.

The Romulan fleet had also suffered much damage. The Ravok herself had lost her shields and was close to folding. She had sustained the most damage of any of the Romulan ships.

Even though, technically, the Terrans had won this first volley, for they had indeed halted the Romulan advance, what was to come next irrevocably turned the tide against the Terrans.

The second Romulan wave was still almost sixty seconds away... but that is not what sealed the Terrans fate. What did it was the Ravok herself as, to the astonishment of the Terrans, and especially Captain Bashir aboard the Space station, she began to repair herself before their very eyes.

All of the damaged Assimilated Romulan warship began self repairing. The Ravok got her shields back.

The second wave of Romulan ships arrived. All the critical repair work to the first wave was completed. The invading fleet was now one hundred forty ships strong.

The Terran forces were in shock. The first defensive line fell back to take up position along side the second defensive line. Five of the Terran ships were effectively dead in space and unable to limp back to the safety of the rest of the defensive forces. Not that that was going to really offer any lasting safety.

Two Romulan ships advanced towards one of the floating damaged vessels, an old Constitution class ship. Then both ships grabbed on to the Terran ship with their tractor beams and literally ripped the starship in half. The crew members on board that were not spaced when the ship was torn open died when the two halves exploded.

All comms went dead.

Several seconds passed. The re-formed Terran defense line did not move. The new combined wave of Romulan ships did not move. The two Romulan "hunters" did not advance, and the remaining four crippled ships continued to drift.

On board the space station, the OPS center was stone quiet. Captain Bashir sat in his seat, shock still registering on his features.

"Sir, there is another Vessel approaching... moving at WARP 10!" said the stations Tactical officer his shock now having doubled.

"Romulan?" mumbled the Captain.

"No... I've never seen the like."

Eighty-five seconds later a lone BORG cube arrived.

All of the working monitors on all the Terran ships and the space station came alive with the image of a man adorned in black with various implements grafted into his face and body... a sight none of these had ever seen. A frightening sight.

"I am Joachim of the BORG, Lower your shields and surrender your ships now. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile."

Chapter 10

Earth.

"Your Highness, we've lost all communications with our forces at Tarok Nor." The young steward waited frightfully for his Empress's rage to come down on his head. Bearers of bad news never lived long in her Majesties court. But, before her rage could erupt at the news another's exploded first.

"We should have sent the fleet!!!" General Vestar made no attempt to hide his rage... rage which he now directed at the Empress. "How many have now been lost because of your inaction?"

Empress Sato rose from her throne, rage burning in her eyes, hand on her own sword. "How dare you?!" At first she tried to govern her rage, temper her anger... but NO! "GUARDS!!! KILL HIM!!!"

For a brief three seconds the two soldiers standing on either side of General Vestar looked at each other, then at the General, then again at each other. Then slowly they turned to look at their Empress, their hands, which had yet to move now came to rest on the hilts of their swords.

The General smiled wickedly now. His men were indeed HIS men.

The two soldiers that had been flanking the General now began to advance towards the throne.

The Empress's personal guard sprang to life. Two of them rushed forward, swords drawn, to take on the guards now advancing towards their Sovereign; while two more took position immediately next to her.

The General pulled out his concealed weapon he had been fingering for several days now, abiding his time, in a flash he fired at one of guards that was rushing towards one of his men. The beam struck him square in the chest and he was dead before hitting the ground.

"Please continue," were his simple words to the other charging guard. The guard didn't.

No one was moving or advancing anymore.

"Your Majesty," this time there was no regard for royalty in the General's voice, "You have led us to catastrophe for the last time.... step down now."

The Empress stood there, hand still on her sword, as she weighed her thoughts. She closed her eyes. She crouched down ever so slightly. Then... her eyes and legs sprang to life at the exact same time... leaping from her dais her sword slid from its sheath.

Shock registered on the General's face, he had not expected this... he had been a fool to forget her skill and prowess, a fool to have hesitated killing her, a fool to..... he never got to finish his thought.

The Empress's sword split the General's head... but even as his life ended he was able to squeeze off a single shot aimed at the svelte figure flying towards him. The bolt struck her abdomen.

The throne room was awash in blood; the blood of the fallen guard, the General, and her Majesty, Empress Hoshi Sato the IV. Of the three only one still breathed. But for how much longer the Empress would live, nobody knew.

Tarok Nor

It took only four minutes for the Borg Nano probes to infiltrate and assume control of the base's systems. Nine minutes more for the entire fleet to come under control of the Borg; all except one ship which escaped.... the Reliant.

"A lone ship has gone to warp. Shall we pursue?" asked Admiral Vrillar to the image on the main screen.

"No," responded Joachim. "Their escape is all part of the plan."

"Complete processing the prisoners, then move the fleet to the rendezvous point." With that the screen went blank. Seconds later the Borg cube warped out of the system.

"Captain, we seem to have evaded pursuit," informed Lieutenant Rose.

"They let us escape," interjected Lieutenant Copper. "That is the only viable explanation."

"It doesn't matter, spoke Captain Roberts.

"Helm! Best speed for Terra."

"Lieutenant Rose, keep trying to raise Central Command."

The Reliant pushed her engines to the limit as it raced home. Time was running out.

The Steward, with the aid of the three remaining Guards still loyal, brought the wounded Empress to her bed chamber. She was bleeding out fast.

The Steward tried hard to stop the bleeding while one of the guards raced to get medical help.

"With the General Dead who is to take command?" Asked one of the remaining Royal Guards

"The EMPRESS is NOT dead!" snapped the Steward through gritted teeth. "Help me to stop the bleeding!"

Moments later the other guard, three nurses, and the Royal physician burst into the room.

Quickly taking over ministrations they began to fight to save the Empress.

The Steward and the three Royal guards stepped out of the way while the medical team did their jobs.

"Lord Steward," said one of the two guards that had not left his side since the violence had ended. "What are your orders?"

"Lord?" The Steward was a little shocked. "I'm no lord."

"You are now," said the three guards in unison. "What are your orders?"

Fleet Commander Anton Chekov stood on the bridge of the XFC Defiant, the Empire's newest and most powerful vessel.

"Anything yet from Tarok Nor?" asked the commander.

"No," replied First Officer Yuki Sulu.

"Damn."

"Hold on sirs," spoke up the comms officer. "We're getting an urgent message from the Empress."

"Put it on screen, ensign."

Seconds later the image of the Royal, now Lord, Stewart filled the screen. He was standing before the Royal dais which was uncharacteristically empty.

"I am Bara'k (he lied... his true name being somewhat less commanding), Royal Steward to Empress Sato. There has been an Assassination. A disloyal honor guard forsook his oath and killed General Vestar. The guard and his family have been severely dealt with. The Empress sustained a minor injury during the incident and is recovering. She has ordered me to appoint you Chief of Staff in General Vestar's place. You are now in command of all Terran forces."

"Yes.... Royal..... ????" responded the former fleet commander in a less than certain tone of voice.

"Lord Steward will suffice," the title was growing fast on him.

"Yes Lord Steward," replied the new General while he pounded his breast in salute.

"Any orders Lord Steward?"

"Hold your position in orbit for now, General. We believe the enemy is coming."

Chapter 11

"There coming!" reported Captain Roberts to General Chekov as soon as they were able to get far enough from Tarok Nor to break free of their signal jamming.

"Upwards of two hundred fifty ships... a quarter of them ours... or they were ours.... they have hijacked them and somehow taken control of the ships, and the minds of all their crews," continued Captain Roberts.

"Romulans?" inquired the General.

"Not any more. Like our own vessels now, they are hijacked ships, and the crews, just like ours, are being controlled by something else."

"There is one thing more." Captain Roberts paused before dropping his next revelation, "Their ships can self heal, even in the midst of combat."

"No... NO!" It was Chekov's turn to pause. "Captain, continue on course for here and await further orders."

"Long Live the Empire!" Declared Captain Roberts as he pounded his chest in salute. The General returned the same.

Khan and the Borg Queen sat alone in their private chamber. The two were talking silently to one another with just their minds.

"In just hours you will be home again. Three hundred, ninety-one years... " thought the Queen.

"It's actually only been a few months," grinned Khan. Quite the accomplishment really since the grin was entirely in his mind. It was less of a visual image, all though he still projected one, as it was an emotional impression. The Queen had never before imagined the power and pleasure such a simple thing as a smile could cause. Khan was changing her world forever.

Khan was able to sense all of the Queen's new realizations... and his virtual smile broadened.

"Besides, how long had it been since you set foot on your home world?" asked Khan.

"More than two hundred thousand years...." The Queen's joy melted away at this point. "My home was destroyed long ago...." DAMN! These emotions.... I hate th....."

"Don't!" Khan reached out and took the Queen's hand in his, and this time spoke allowed, "We must feel pain and hurt in order to truly experience it's opposite. Anything less would be one dimensional... incomplete, hallow.

Khan leaned in closer to her face, "You can share my world."

The two sat for several more minutes, there minds quiet... just feeling one another's presence.

A soft rap came from just outside the door waking both from their drifting state. The rap on the door came a second time.

Sensing now that his Queen and Khan were now alert, Kar'vel opened the door and entered the chamber.

"Pardon me your Majesties." This privacy thing was new and foreign to him; how does one interrupt others properly?

Khan was about to ask what the interruption was about, but the need passed quickly "The combined Romulan-Terran Assimilated fleet have nearly reached Earth."

Joachim and his task force of twenty cubes had arrived earlier and were secreted in orbit of Sol's ringed planet.

Minutes later Khan and the Queen were standing on the dais overlooking the Intimidator's command bridge.

"Plot us a course to take us in from the far side of the Terran Star," ordered Khan. "Be sure to not arrive too early."

General Kron'Ak, now "of the Borg," sat in his same chair from before. His thoughts were torn. For Decades he had dreamt of the final fall of the Terrans, imagined watching their cities burn, imagined the satisfaction he would feel. But he had never pictured the Borg in his dreams... and definitely not he himself as Borg. As sweet as the final conquest of the Terrans was going to be, it would never cleans the bitter taste left by the collapse of his own beloved empire. He wished for the hundredth time he was dead.

The Reliant pressed on as fast as she could fly, her warp core pumping out so much power she was barely stable. There was a very real chance the Reliant was going to simply blow up.

Captain Roberts stood (no way he was going to sit at this point) on the bridge, his mind tortured by the fear of what was about to happen. He didn't care one bit about his own life, but his home... if these Borg do to his home what they did to Kronos.... he didn't know how to finish the thought.

"Increase our speed," intoned the Captain dryly.

"She won't take anymore Captain!" Responded Lieutenant Copper. "It will do no one any good if we BLOW UP before reaching Earth."

"Just do it!" Yelled captain Roberts.

Against his better judgment Copper was about to order the Helm to take it past warp 9.3, far past the ships safety limits.

"Captain, wait," the communications officer held up a finger to pause everyone.

Several seconds passed in silence before she continued, "It's General Chekov!"

"Put it on speaker," ordered the Captain, "And belay increasing speed."

"Captain Roberts, the battle here will commence shortly," crackled to thickly accented voice of the General. "There is no way you will be able to make it here in time...."

"However," Chekov slowed the cadence of his speech and tried his best to suppress his accent, "There is something else you can do for the Empire..."

The Ravok with one hundred, sixty four other assimilated Romulan and Terran ships dropped out of warp just over a million kilometers from earth. The entire Imperial Second fleet was waiting for them.

Chapter 12

The Terran fleet sat in repose, they were not going to strike first this time.

Admiral Vrillar gave the command. The entire Assimilated fleet began advancing.

The Ravok fired the first shot, then all the vessels in the attacking armada commenced firing.

The Terran fleet responded.

Phaser fire, disruptor fire, and photon torpedoes criss-crossed the tract of space between the two massive flotillas. Ships on either side began to break up, more than a few exploding into brilliant light. Neither side had gained any real advantage over the other.

The Terran fleet kept concentrating fire on select vessels, trying to finish them of one at a time in order for them to not be able to repair.

Three minutes, nineteen seconds after firing the first shot the Ravok exploded from all the heat the Terrans had been firing at it.

The cheers on board the Terran ships was not as great as it would have normally been... too many were already dead.

Even though they had managed to destroy the attacking flagship more than half the Terran fleet had fallen.

As the last burning segments of the Ravok extinguished themselves in the cold vacuum of space, the battle, particularly on the Borg's side, began to slow down.

Forty-three Terran ships and thirty-nine assimilated vessels had been destroyed or severely crippled. The losses were so great that neither side was going to claim victory for this first round.

The relative quiet was short lived.

The twenty Borg cubes that had secreted themselves around Saturn came to life and quickly raced to the battle's front.

The damaged but not dead Assimilated fleet resumed firing. The Borg cubes commenced their attack. The battered and half defeated Terran task force, all that remained of the Second fleet, began returning fire.

Then, from near Earth orbit, forty more Terran warships came screaming into the fray. The Terran Home Guard. Leading the charge was the Defiant XFC.

The fresh Terran ships carried a lot of punch, and for a brief moment, there was yet hope. But only for a brief moment. The Borg Armada was just too big.

For every Assimilated armada vessel lost the Terrans lost three. And none of the cubes had sustained more than minor damage.

The Terran defense forces were reduced to only 17 vessels still able to fight, which number included the strong, but now heavily damaged Defiant XFC.

Once again the rage of war abated. The space above Earth was littered with the wreckage of over one hundred, twenty ships. There were yet survivors on most of the damaged vessels... but with every passing second their numbers were diminishing.

"What are they waiting for?" said the exhausted Royal Lord Steward as he stood in the Palace command center where he had been watching as his empire, his home, fell to this seemingly unstoppable army.

He lowered his head in despair. His Empress was not expected to live. The chief Medical practitioner had, just before the battle started, informed him the blood loss had been too great. She was in a coma and was not expected to wake again.

"At least she will not have to witness this final destruction..." thought the Steward who now definitely didn't feel lord like.

"My Lord!" exclaimed a young attendant. "There is another ship approaching!"

From the far side of the sun a vessel rounded and broke free of orbit. At incredible speed it closed the distance between the sun and earth. It was a massive ship, unlike any the Steward had ever seen. It was menacing beyond words.

The massive ship circled around Earth taking up a position between the planet and the sea of drifting, near lifeless wreckage that had been the bulk of the Terran and Assimilated Borg Fleet.

Khan stood overlooking the bridge of the Intimidator with the Borg Queen standing right next to him.

"Begin the operation quickly, there is no time to spare," came Khan's command.

The Intimidator began to tractor large chunks of floating debris into its receiving bays while simultaneously beaming survivors into its many holding chambers. Borg were working swiftly and efficiently to stabilize the injured. Nano probes, ones programmed specifically for medical purposes, were being introduced to the wounded survivors.

The "operation" took nine minutes, forty seconds. Twenty-three thousand, eight hundred, nineteen survivors, Terran and Borg, were beamed aboard the ship into its holding chambers.

The Nano probes worked like a dream, in many cases they were even able to revive those who had been blown into space and suffocated. Nearly all were going to survive.

Unlike before, these probes did not begin the assimilation process, they truly were just medical Nano probes.

Once again, all of the view screens on all of the Terran vessels, and throughout all the Palace, and all of Earth itself, everyone still functioning, all came alive with the image of Khan.

"I am the Destroyer of Kronos, the Subjugator of Romulus, the Conqueror and Savior of the Terran Empire, the Emperor of the BORG... I am KHAN."

Chapter 13

Earth, Terran Imperial palace, San Francisco, ninety minutes after Khan's message to the Empire was sent...

One of the massive Borg cubes slowly, menacingly, descended through the clouds as it approached the Royal Palace grounds. All the air traffic over the Capital city scattered. In less than two minutes the only thing in the sky for 300 square kilometers was the Borg vessel.

Once the cube dropped to just 5 kilometers above the Palace grounds it halted its descent. For several seconds it hung in the sky, silent and imposing. Then, with a sound like thunder, it split apart into four quarters. There was a second thunder crack, and each of the quarters divided into two forming eight identical cubes, mirror copies that differed only in scale from its original form. And, in the midst of the eight cubes, another vessel. A smaller vessel than the respective cubes, but still of notable size.

This additional vessel had a familiar silhouette, although several new modifications now adorned it. Four of the eight Borg cubes remained suspended in the sky while the other four escorted the vessel towards the surface.

Positioned in the center of the formation this 'other' vessel was the first to land. Immediately after it touched down the four Borg cubes did the same in perfect unison.

Three hundred, ninety-one years, four months, and two days from the time it launched in 1997 the SS Botany Bay at last had returned home.

"It appears to be a DY-100 my Lord... from the 20th or 21st century," said one of the Imperial attendants.

"How is that possible," queried the Steward.

"It isn't, yet... there it is," responded another of the Imperial attendants.

The Steward turned to look towards the Royal Physician who had just entered the Palace command center. "How is the Empress doing?"

The Physician didn't say a word, he just shook his head, defeat reflecting in his eyes.

The Steward stiffened his stance, nobility (a nobility that had not been there only the day before) surged through his blood. "It is up to us then."

Turning to the Royal guards posted by the main doors, "Assemble the guard!" Then to everyone in the command center, "It is time to greet our guests!"

The Botany Bay with its Borg escort had been on the ground for nearly ten minutes. As of yet no activity was visible.

The five ships spread across the Royal grounds, the Botany Bay herself having come to rest about two hundred fifty meters from the huge ornate entry doors of the Royal Palace.

Slowly, almost painfully, the great doors of the Palace swung open. The Royal Steward, in company of four attendants, and surrounded by twenty Royal Guards marched towards the space craft. The procession halted about 30 meters away from the bow of the ship.

For a full minute the procession stood there alone. Then, slowly, a twenty meter square platform detached itself from the bottom of the Botany Bay and began to descend to the ground. Standing on the platform were ten Borg guards, the Borg Queen, and Khan. The platform touched ground silently, and those on platform stepped off and began marching toward the contingent from the Palace.

Khan and his escorts stopped just a few meters from the Royal Steward and his entourage. For several seconds all was silent.

The Royal Steward was the first to break the silence. "On behalf of Her Majesty, Empress Hoshi Sato the IV, we bid you welcome." The Steward and all with him bowed before Khan and his company. Khan returned the gesture.

"I am Khan Noonan Singh, Prince and a Son of Terra... take me to your Empress." Khan's voice was steady, powerful, and confident, without being overbearing.

"There is nobility in this one," thought the Royal Steward. "What did he mean by 'Son of Terra?'" Then out loud he spoke while gesturing with his left hand "Follow me now and I will bring you into her presence."

Without waiting to see or hear further response the Steward turned about and began marching towards the Palace doors. His attendants and guards followed suit, all turning their backs to the visiting party.

"Bold" thought Khan. "I like this man." To those accompanying him Khan turned and motioned, "Come, let us follow them."

No more words were spoken for the next several minutes as the two groups passed through the Palace doors and began to wind their way through the magnificent corridors of the Terran seat of power. Columns, arches, vaulted ceilings, beautiful sculptures and paintings adorning everything, the Palace was the epitome of opulence.

At length the procession came to a vast throne room... an empty throne room. No guards or attendants other than those in the procession were anywhere, and the throne itself sat empty. The group continued advancing until they came to within ten meters of the throne itself.

"Where is Her Majesty?" asked Khan directly of the Steward now.

The Steward now drew closer to Khan, and in a low voice spoke "Come with me... just you."

As the Steward led Khan to a hidden door behind the throne he motioned to his guards NOT to follow. The door, while not a secret entrance, was out of plain view. As the two passed through it they found themselves in one of the Empress's private chambers. In the middle of the beautifully adorned chamber, surrounded by physicians and attendants, laid the Empress Hoshi Sato the IV. She was near death.

"One of her most trusted General's tried to Assassinate her." The Steward spoke matter of factly. "She split his skull for it."

"A true fighter," spoke Khan with no small amount of admiration in his voice. "Is she expected to live?"

The Royal Physician only shook his head.

The room was silent. Khan could not have planned a better setup himself. Softly, but with great power and authority he spoke to the chief Steward, "Let MY people look at her."

Forty minutes later the Empress sat up for the first time since having been laid in what had been expected to be her death bed. The color was back in her face, life was again in her eyes.

With tremendous relief in his voice the Steward bowed at the side of her bed exclaiming, "Your Majesty!" All of the attendants, nurses, and physician similarly bowed.

Standing on the opposite side of the bed from where the Steward bowed, Khan, the Borg Queen, and the Borg Kar'vel stood and just ever so slightly bowed their heads in greeting as well.

"It is a pleasure to meet you at last, your Majesty," said Khan and the Borg Queen in unison.

The Empress Sato simply nodded towards Khan and the Borg Queen. Then, with confusion wrinkling her brow she looked to her physician, "How?" is all she was able to say, her voice still frail.

"Nano Probes, your Majesty," spoke the Royal Physician, "Technology like I have never before seen."

"You will make a full recovery your Highness." This time it was Kar'vel who addressed the Empress.

The Empress's hand went instinctively underneath her sheets to her abdomen which had only recently been savagely torn apart.... the flesh was again perfect.

The Empress relaxed and laid back down in her bed.... Her eyes closed as more questions began to rise in her mind. After a minute she opened her eyes and looked directly at Khan.

"Why?" "Why are you here?" "Why did you attack?" "Why did you spare us?" "Why did you... why did you save me?" Her last question most of all needed an answer.

Khan took his time answering.... there was no need to hurry.... everything was playing out exactly as he had hoped... BETTER even than he had hoped. Khan leaned forward ever so slightly, then in his amazingly powerful whisper, a whisper that sunk into the hearts of everyone close enough to hear, a whisper that carried such grand emotion... he answered... "Because I too am Terran."

Three and a half hours later, once the Empress had fully recovered, a Royal Court was convened.

Two new thrones had been brought in, each identical to the Empress's own. They were sat at such an angle in the throne room that they could face each other and the whole of the assembly at the same time. The Empress Sato sat on the center throne, Khan sat on her right hand side, and the Borg Queen sat on her left. Near the three thrones sat additional seats, slightly lower in elevation and only slightly less opulent. On them sat the Royal Steward, General Kron'Ak, Joachim, Kar'vel and two other attendants.

Seated in attendance there were over four hundred people, Terrans and Borg.

The Empress spoke first. With power and authority she declared, "Both of our Empires are now at peace!"

The crowd roared! It was mostly the Terrans who celebrated, but the Borg present showed much more spirit than they had

only weeks before when the campaign was first launched.

"General Kron'Ak," this time it was Khan speaking, "Stand up."

The Klingon General stood, several Terrans in the audience jeered and shouted out hatred towards the Klingons. The Empress motioned for the discord to stop... it did.

"General Kron'Ak," continued Khan, "It is time for you to return home."

Bewildered and cross the General turned to look Khan directly in the eyes.

"Did you think the damage to your home world was permanent?" The grin on Khan's face was some how both savage and whimsical at the same time.

General Kron'Ak was speechless.

"The Borg Nano probes which caused the reaction that ravaged your planet have already begun to reverse the process." Khan could see the surprise registered on the General's face. "In weeks the temperature of your planet's mantle will return to normal. Already the volcanoes and quakes have stopped. In a few months it will begin to be habitable again. Your people will be able to start returning and rebuilding."

The General stood amazed. He was now beyond speechless, even his thoughts were muddled and disjointed.

"The Klingon Empire will need a new leader," Khan had been looking forward to this next bombshell, he really did like the General, his was a kindred spirit. "That leader will be YOU!" "You are to be the Klingon's Savior and their New Supreme Chancellor!"

Kron'Ak, Chancellor Kron'Ak, at this point had to sit down before he fell down. His mind was racing now, ideas were flooding in faster than he could sort them. All that Khan had showed him in his mind finally made sense. The Klingon Empire was going to live! His people who had all but lost hope were going to live... live and thrive. And he was going to be there leader...

Again the Empress spoke, "Today, THREE Empire's now stand together!"

The roar wasn't nearly as loud or as unanimous as before, yet at the same time... the Klingon war was at last over... Hundreds of years of violence, over.... over? The Supreme Chancellor of the Klingons would be part Borg! Perhaps the war really was over.

Khan, the Empress, and the Borg Queen all rose from their thrones and each raised their arms over their heads in Triumph! The whole room exploded in shouts of celebration and glory. And it wasn't just the Terrans present, the Borg were also joining in the cheers.

It also wasn't just the Palace that rejoiced, the whole planet burst out in celebration. The fleets above Earth, Terran, Romulan, and Borg joined the throng.

It would take a bit longer for the tidal wave of energy to reach all the corners of the collective... In fact, it took a whole 37.89 seconds for the whole collective to come alive with excitement.

A new day had dawned over the Galaxy, and nothing would ever be the same again.

Epilogue

The ISS Reliant, the Titan, the Saratoga, the Minzk, and the Marauder drifted together in the space above an obscure little planet far from the eyes of Earth.

General Chekov's final command to Captain Roberts before the battle at Terra had been to alter course and head back to the

outer systems.

"If we fail to stop these Borg here above the Earth," the General had said, "I want you to personally gather what remains of our forces and mount a counter offensive."

Captain Roberts last words to the General had been a bold and proud promise, "We shall Avenge you!"

Now, thirty-eight sleepless hours later, five of the last Free Terran Warships sat poised and ready for the fight.

"For the Empire!"

"For Terra!!!"

"For Honor and Glory!!!"