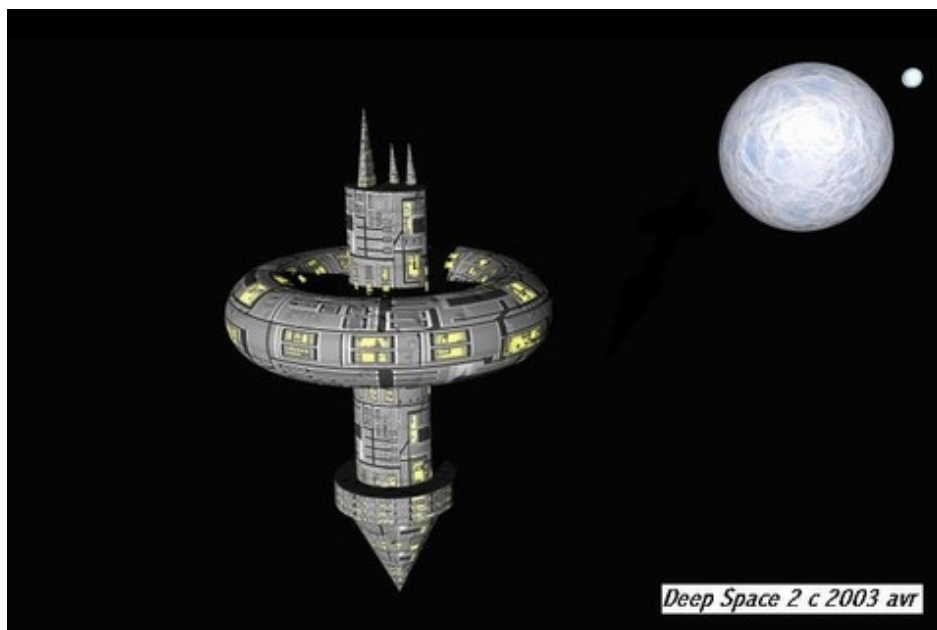




Deep Space 2 Newsflash November 2026

Introduction

The DS2 Newsflash is meant to inform the crew about what happened last month, what is going to happen, and what is planned for the near future. The DS2 Newsflash in PDF Format for Acrobat Reader, often contains pictures, while the text version does not. You can read and download this DS2 Newsflash in PDF Format with this direct link:

<http://arthurvanrhee.be/ds2archieff/flash1126.pdf>

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-

1. A word from the DS2 CO

In Memoriam

Walter Koenig 1936-2026

Patrick Stewart 1940-2026

Hi all,

Fans have been eagerly anticipating the return of Prime Video's enormously successful prequel to The Lord of the Rings – The Rings of Power – and we are now just weeks away from the series returning, with the first trailer now arrived.

In the thrilling new trailer, all the peoples of Middle-earth are engaged in the heroic struggle against Sauron and his army of Orcs. His terrifying Ring-servants, the Nazgûl, roam Middle-earth clad in black armour as tensions rise among the Elves trying desperately to hold the front lines; familial ties are strained among the Dwarves in Khazad-dûm; political factions push the island kingdom of Númenor to the brink of civil war; and in the eastern lands of Rhûn, Gandalf enlists his full powers of magic and persuasion as he fights to turn the tide of impending darkness.

In Season Three, Middle-earth is at war. Five years have passed since the fall of Erebor. Sauron's armies have marched across the whole of the world, conquering all in their path. Only a few isolated pockets stand between the Dark Lord and total victory – Khazad-dûm, where the Dwarves are now sealed deep within their mountain halls, and the elven realms of Lindon and Rivendell, which are protected by their Three Rings. But deep in the land of Mordor, in his newly completed tower of Barad-dûr, the Dark Lord toils day and night, obsessed with harnessing a power that will bring the last of his enemies to their knees: One Ring to rule them all... Now, all the free peoples of Middle-earth – Dwarves, Elves, Men, and Wizards alike – must find a way to come together, in a race against time to prevent Sauron from achieving his goal of utter domination of all life...

The first four episodes of Season Three of The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power will premiere on November 11th.

Watch on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maP_Kyy3DCA

For more news:

<https://www.scifinow.co.uk/news/>

Have fun,

Arthur

UFP News

UFP on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mikeferg1>

*****Star Trek Online Screenshots (Pictures PDF Version only)*****

Star Trek Online: Rediscovered

Latest episode: City at the Edge of Never

Walter Koenig 1936-2026

Rest in Peace Walter Koenig. Thank you for navigating us through the final frontier, and bringing us such joy through your years of activism, writing, and memorable characters like the joyous Chekov and the sinister Bester. We're forever grateful that you lent your talents to our game. We'll see you again, in the stars.



Star Trek Online:

The year is 2409. Over a century has passed since the events of Star Trek: Discovery and thirty years since the events of Star Trek: Nemesis. The Romulan Empire has fractured after the destruction of their homeworld; covert meddling by the Undine and Iconians has forced the Federation and Klingon Empire into war with each other once again; and remnants of the Cassian military and Alpha Strain Jem'Hadar disrupt the peace near Deep Space Nine. The galaxy is in turmoil and it's up to you and your crew to save it!

For more info on Star Trek Online (free to play):

<https://www.playstartrekonline.com/>

2. Announcements

There can be some changes to the guestlists and some guests only come on a particular day during the convention. Please visit the websites for the latest news.

FACTS

October 31 – November 1, 2026

Flanders Expo, Maaltekouter 1, 9051 Ghent, Belgium

<https://www.facts.be/>

Guests:

Martin Kove, Tim Downie, Maria Zhang, William Zabka, John Romita Jr., Artgerm / Stanley Lau, Niko Henrichon, Valentin Sécher, Jim, Marc Verhaegen

London Film Fair

November 1, 2026

The Royal National Hotel, 38-51 Bedford Way, London, London WC1H 0DG, UK

<https://www.showmastersevents.com/event/london-film-fair-3/2026-11-01/>

Dutch Comic Con

November 21-22, 2026

Jaarbeurs, Jaarbeursplein 15, 3521 AM Utrecht, The Netherlands

<https://www.dutchcomiccon.com/>

Guests:

Antonio Cipriano, Ryan Eggold, Shawn Ashmore

German Film & Comic Con

December 5-6, 2026

Messe Dortmund, Rheinlanddamm 200, 44139 Dortmund, Germany

<https://germanfilmcomiccon.com/>

Guests:

Brian Austin Green, Tori Spelling, Steven R. McQueen, Kim Coates, Tia Carrere, Hacksaw, Ted Dibiase, Tito Santana, Ottaviano Dell'acqua, Enzo Santaniello, Giovanni Vettorazzo, Sal Borgese, Anthony De Longis, MTBA

German Potter Con

April 17-18, 2027

Schloss Burg, Wermelskirchener Str. 2, Solingen, Germany

<https://germanpottercon.com/>

Guests:

Christian Coulson, Louis Cordice, Stanislav, Yanevski, Natalia Tena, Sean Biggerstaff, Emily Dale, Afshan Azad, Andy Linden, Danielle Tabor, Arben, Bajraktaraj, Tiana Benjamin, Benedict Clarke, Devon Murray, Nick Shirm, Ryan Nelson

Fed Con

May 14-16, 2027

Maritim Hotel Bonn, Kurt-Georg-Kiesinger Allee 1/Godesberger Allee, 53175 Bonn, Germany

<https://www.fedcon.de/de/>

Guests:

Brent Spiner, Terry Farrell, Collum Keith Rennie, Kate Mulgrew, Jonathan Frakes, Marina Sirtis, Gates McFadden, Nicole de Boer



Conventions organised by Creation Entertainment (Mostly US/CAN/UK)

<https://www.creationent.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/CreationEntertainment>

Not all guests are appearing during the entire convention.
Check website for guest day of appearance.

The road So Far... The Road Ahead

November 6-8, 2026

Westin O'Hare Hotel, 6100 North River Road, Rosemont, IL 60018

Guests:

Jensen Ackles, Jared Padalecki, Misha Collins, Alexander Calvert, Shoshannah Stern, A.J. Buckley, Travis Wester, Julie McNiven, Jason Manns, Matt Cohen, DJ Qualls, Briana Buckmaster, Kim Rhodes, Samantha Smith, Alaina Huffman, Ruth Connel, Rob Benedict, Richard Speight Jr., Mark Sheppard

Salute To Smallville

November 7-8, 2026

Sheraton Music City Nashville Hotel, 777 McGavock Pike, Nashville, TN 37214

Guests:

Tom Welling, Michael Rosenbaum, Kristin Kreuk, Erica Durance, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar, John Glover, Laura Vandervoort, Helen Slater, Sam Jones III, Eric Johnson, Phil Morris, Adrianne Palicki, Erica Cerra, Craig Byrne, Derek Russel

Trek 60

November 14-15, 2026

Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel, 201 N 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Guests:

Lots of guests from all Star Trek Series. Too much to list here. Please check the website.

The road So Far... The Road Ahead

November 20-22, 2026

Marriott Austin Downtown, 304 E Cesar Chavez Street, Austin, TX 78701

Guests:

Jensen Ackles, Jared Padalecki, Misha Collins, Mark Sheppard, Alexander Calvert, Ruth Connel, Rob Benedict, Richard Speight Jr., Briana Buckmaster, Kim Rhodes, Samantha Smith, Matt Cohen, Jake Abel, DJ Qualls, Julian Richings, Lisa Berry, Steve Carlson, Jason Manns

The road So Far... The Road Ahead

January 15-17, 2027

Hyatt Regency Salt Lake City Hotel, 170 S W Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Guests:

Jensen Ackles, Jared Padalecki, Misha Collins, Mark Sheppard, Ruth Connel, Rob Benedict, Richard Speight Jr., Briana Buckmaster, Alexander Calvert, Kim Rhodes, Julian Richings, Matt Cohen, Jake Abel, DJ Qualls, Tahmoh Penikett, Lisa Berry, Sebastian Roché, Katherine Boecher, David Hayden-Jones, Jason Manns



Conventions organised by FANEXPO (Mostly US/CAN)

<https://fanexpohq.com/home/>

Not all guests are appearing during the entire convention.
Check website for guest day of appearance.

FANEXPO New Orleans

January 8 - 10, 2027

New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, 900 Convention Center Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70130

<https://fanexpohq.com/fanexponeuorleans/>

Guests:

John Cena, Hayden Christensen, Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Dominic Monaghan, Billy Boyd, Helen Hunt, Christopher Lloyd

FANEXPO Portland

January 29 - 31, 2027

Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Portland, OR 97232

<https://fanexpohq.com/fanexpoportland/>

Guests:

Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Dominic Monaghan, Billy Boyd, Jonathan Frakes, Cassandra Peterson, Josh Holloway, Matthew Lewis

3. Community Service

The Charity Link on the DS2 Blog will change every first of every month. The November 2026 Charity Link on the DS2 Blog is: Koning Boudewijn Stichting

<https://kbs-frb.be>

From <http://www.wwf.org>

(World Wildlife Fund)

The Last Ice Area: Protecting the Arctic's longest lasting refuge

As the Arctic warms at an alarming rate, one vast expanse of sea ice is expected to outlast the rest. But safeguarding this Arctic refuge will require protecting not only the Last Ice Area itself, but the distant waters that sustain it.

Sea ice plays a vital role in the Arctic. It shapes weather patterns, supports marine life, and provides essential travel and hunting routes for northern communities. It also helps cool the planet by reflecting sunlight back into space, acting like a natural air-conditioning unit for Earth.

But with the Arctic warming nearly four times faster than the global average, sea ice is disappearing at an alarming rate. Scientists warn that the Arctic could be ice-free in summer within the coming decade — except for one place: the Last Ice Area.

Read more:

<https://wwf.panda.org/?16265416/The-Last-Ice-Area-Protecting-the-Arctics-longest-lasting-refuge>

4. DS2 Monthly Chapter Report

Deep Space 2 Monthly Chapter Report October 2026

UNITED FEDERATED PLANETS

CHAPTER REPORTING FORM

REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF:
October 2026

CHAPTER NAME:
Deep Space 2
UFP Chapter Charter: September 1997

CHAPTER PRESIDENT:
AvR

CHAPTER VICE PRESIDENT:
JT

TYPE OF CHAPTER (ENTER BELOW):
ENTER TYPE OF CHAPTER HERE:

STARFLEET COMMAND

IF ALIEN FLEET, WHICH RACE:

N/A

NEWSLETTER NAME:

Deep Space 2 Newsflash (produced monthly)

CHAPTER MAILING ADDRESS:

Deep Space 2
Tessengerloseweg 149
2431 Laakdal
Belgium

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

contact@ds2.be

WEB SITE:

Deep Space 2
<http://www.ds2.be>

Deep Space 2 Marines
<http://marines.ds2.be>

NEW MEMBERS OF CHAPTER:

Curently 27 members

PROMOTIONS/AWARDS

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES:

* DEEP SPACE 2 BLOG

<http://ds2blog.ds2.be>

* DS2 CHARITY

Regular charity is done by donations, writing letters, going to the people and asking to sign petitions. The main DS2 charity projects are World Wildlife Fund (WWF), The Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders.

Every month there is a new "charity link" posted on the DS2 Website.

* DS2 SETI PROJECT

Since March 1, 1999

http://setiweb.ssl.berkeley.edu/team_display.php?teamid=41642

SETI BOINC Credits:

These are last month's results:

Total credit: 17,505,526
Recent average credit: N/A

SETI@home: SETI@home hibernation

On March 31 2020, the volunteer computing part of SETI@home has stopped distributing work and has gone into hibernation.

* DS2 RPG

The Deep Space 2 RPG has entered it's 339th chapter.

* DS2 NEWSLETTER

* The Deep Space 2 Monthly Newsflash has been distributed among the DS2 crew.

*DS2 STORY

* The Deep Space 2 Story : Will continue in November 2026 (Page 356)

<http://ds2story.ds2.be>

* DS2 Trivia

DS2 has set up a trivia about Star Trek.

<http://ds2quiz.ds2.be>

Every month there is a new Trivia competition.
Every day there are new questions. Daily scores are cumulated.

OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:

Promotion:

ANY PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS:

ANY SUGGESTIONS:

ANY UFP AWARDS REQUESTED FOR SPECIFIC CHAPTER MEMBERS:

SIGNATURE OF CHAPTER PRESIDENT:

Arthur van Rhee
arthur.van.rhee@telenet.be
sky94962@yahoo.com
November 1, 2026

SETI@home News

SETI@home: SETI@home hibernation

On March 31 2020, the volunteer computing part of SETI@home has stoppped distributing work and has gone into hibernation.

5. Birthdays

None this month

??????????

6. DS2 Quiz

Deep Space 2 Trivia Quiz November 2026

Array 12

1. In which TNG episode is Data presumed lost by a shocked crew who watch his shuttlepod blow up?

A() The Most Toys

B() The Outcast

C() Thine Own Self

2. What is the name of the system of fiberoptic data-transmission conduits used aboard a Federation starship, serving as the nervous system of the ship's computer network?

A() Data Conduit Network (DCN)

B() Optical Data Network (ODN)

C() Data Transmission Network (DTN)

3. What is "Kilodyne"?

A() A female inhabitant of the Kilody System

B() A measurement of empathic abilities

C() A measurement of force

("The Loss") TNG

4. What is "Humuhumunukunukuapua'a"?

A() First words of Dr. Beverly Crusher when she was captured by the Prytt, the neighbours of the Kes ("Attached") TNG

B() Earth Reef Tigerfish : *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* ("Rascals") TNG

C() A procreation ritual done on Hurada III ("Violations") TNG

5. What was the name of the Federation science facility located on planet Gagarin IV, headed by Dr. Sara Kingsley?

A() Darwin Genetic Research Station

B() Gagarin Genetic Research Institute

C() Federation Institute for Genetic Research

[illegible]

ANSWERS

1.A

2.B

3.C

4.B

5.A

7. DS2 Story and RPG Monthly Status Report

DS2 Story

Current Episode: New Technology

The Continuing Story of Deep Space 2: Page 356

DEEP SPACE 2 – Admiral Arthur's Investigation

Admiral Arthur Renwall stood in DS2's deep archive vault—the station's oldest, least-visited chamber. The lights flickered softly across long-unused databanks.

In his hand, he held the recovered First Horizon file.

"The Rings remember."

He turned to Commander Elan T'Sari, the Vulcan archivist.

"This phrase appears in at least ten separate fragments. But there's something else here—something none of the official histories mention."

Elan raised an eyebrow. "Sir?"

Arthur activated the final fragment.

A hologram of an old Earth ship captain flickered to life—Commander Selene Graves, one of the First Horizon explorers.

Her recorded voice crackled:

"If you are seeing this, then our fears have been realized. The Rings are not abandoned technology. They watch. They evaluate. And one day, they will activate again."

Arthur leaned forward.

"Why erase this? Why bury it?"

The hologram continued:

"We sealed the records because we failed their test. Humanity was not ready. We were still divided. Still violent. The Rings turned away from us."

Arthur's blood ran cold.

A test.

The Rings weren't simply ancient relics.

They judged civilizations.

T'Sari spoke softly. "Admiral... if the Oregon triggered a response..."

Arthur finished, voice low:

"Then the Rings have decided humanity is ready—or they're preparing to judge again."

He turned sharply.

"Get me a live channel to Captain Sato. Priority Alpha."

DS2 RPG General Status Report September 2026

USS Earth/Starbase 44

Aboard the USS Runner, Captain Djavis in command.

The Monolith That Remembered

Captain Laura Djavis stood on the bridge of the USS Runner, studying the black monolith on the uninhabited planet below.

The six glowing symbols remained visible on its surface.

Admiral Christine Steichen's image filled the communications screen.

"Captain," Steichen said, "you have my permission to send an away team. But I want one precaution: do not activate anything you cannot understand. We have learned what can happen when ancient technology is awakened without knowing its purpose."

"Understood, Admiral."

Djavis turned to her first officer, Commander Hoshi.

"Prepare an away team. Lieutenant Kalen will lead the investigation. I'll accompany her."

Hoshi raised an eyebrow. "You intend to visit the monolith personally?"

"I do. If this is connected to the Ka'rel or the Veil, I want to see it with my own eyes."

"Then I'll go too."

Djavis smiled. "I was counting on it."

The away team consisted of Captain Djavis, Commander Hoshi, Lieutenant Zara Kalen, and Chief Engineer Marrek, an experienced Tellarite who had spent much of his career studying alien power systems.

They loaded a shuttle with portable sensors, environmental equipment, and emergency transport beacons.

Before departure, Djavis addressed her team.

"We are explorers, not treasure hunters. We observe, we investigate, and we leave the planet as we found it—unless circumstances force us to do otherwise."

Marrek grunted.

"That last condition is usually where the trouble begins."

The Landing

The shuttle descended through the planet's atmosphere.

Below them, immense forests stretched across the continent. Rivers reflected the sunlight, and clouds drifted over distant mountain ranges.

The monolith stood in a clearing surrounded by ancient trees.

As the shuttle approached, Kalen examined her sensor readings.

"Captain, the structure is producing no detectable energy. Its surface appears to be made of a material unknown to our databases."

"Age?"

"Impossible to determine from orbit. The surrounding vegetation suggests it has been here for a very long time."

The shuttle settled onto a grassy plain approximately five hundred meters from the structure.

The away team stepped outside.

The air was breathable. The temperature was mild. Birds—or creatures resembling birds—called from the trees.

For a moment, everything seemed perfectly ordinary.

Then Djavis noticed something strange.

The monolith cast no shadow.

The sun stood high overhead, yet the black structure appeared to absorb the light around it without blocking it.

"Lieutenant Kalen," she said quietly, "do you see that?"

"I do, Captain."

Marrek raised his tricorder.

"That's impossible. The structure is physically present. It should cast a shadow."

Hoshi glanced toward the shuttle.

"Perhaps we should establish a transporter lock before proceeding."

"Agreed," Djavis replied. "Keep the shuttle ready for immediate extraction."

The team advanced.

Six Symbols

At fifty meters, the monolith's symbols became clearer.

They were arranged in a circle, each one separated from the next by a thin line.

Kalen stopped.

"Captain, these aren't the same symbols we saw on the Ka'rel sphere."

Djavis looked at her.

"They looked identical from orbit."

"Similar, but not identical. The sphere's glyphs represented energy states. These appear to be... relationships."

She held her tricorder closer.

"One symbol means 'observer.' Another means 'boundary.' This one—" She hesitated. "I believe it means 'choice.'"

Hoshi frowned.

"Choice? As in a decision?"

"Possibly."

Djavis stepped closer.

The monolith remained silent.

Then, without warning, the six symbols rearranged themselves.

A seventh symbol appeared.

Kalen's tricorder emitted a sharp tone.

"Captain! The structure is responding to our presence."

"Is it transmitting?"

"I'm detecting a brief subspace fluctuation. Very weak—but it originated inside the monolith."

Djavis felt a chill.

"Could it be the Veil?"

Marrek shook his head.

"The energy signature is different from the sphere's. This is older technology—or something that doesn't use the same principles at all."

The monolith's surface changed.

A thin line of blue light appeared down its center.

It opened like an eye.

The Message

A voice emerged from the structure.

It was neither mechanical nor organic. It sounded like several voices speaking together, each one slightly out of synchronization.

"You have come from the civilization that was judged."

Djavis stepped forward.

"We are representatives of the United Federation of Planets. We seek understanding."

The voice replied:

"You carry the memory of the Veil."

Kalen looked sharply at Djavis.

"Captain, it knows about them."

Djavis addressed the monolith.

"Are you connected to the Veil?"

A pause.

"We are not the Veil."

"Are you Ka'rel?"

"We are what the Ka'rel left behind."

Marrek lowered his tricorder.

"An automated archive?"

The monolith answered before anyone could speak again.

"An archive remembers. We decide."

The seven symbols began to glow.

Kalen's voice grew tense.

"Captain, the subspace fluctuation is increasing. Whatever this is, it may be establishing a connection."

Djavis tapped her communicator.

"Runner, this is Djavis. We're detecting an active alien system. Monitor subspace transmissions and report anything unusual."

The response came immediately.

"Understood, Captain. We're detecting a narrow-band transmission from the planet. It is weak, but it's extending beyond the system."

Djavis looked back at the monolith.

"Can you stop it?"

"Not from orbit, Captain. We don't know what it's transmitting."

The voice spoke again.

"The Veil promised to return."

Djavis stiffened.

"Yes. In one hundred thousand years."

"The promise is not the danger."

"What is?"

The monolith's blue light dimmed.

"The judgment is incomplete."

The Unfinished Judgment

A holographic image appeared above the monolith.

It showed the Federation—not as a map of territory, but as a network of civilizations, starships, colonies, and scientific installations.

The image changed.

It showed the Federation's future.

In one possible future, Starfleet continued expanding, constructing increasingly powerful technologies until spacetime itself began to destabilize.

In another, the Federation learned restraint, developed safer technologies, and flourished for millennia.

But a third image appeared.

A future in which the Federation did everything right—and was still destroyed.

Djavis stared at it.

"Why would that happen?"

The monolith replied:

"Because the Veil is not the only judge."

Hoshi stepped forward.

"Who else is judging us?"

The monolith's symbols flashed.

"Those who created the Veil."

Kalen looked horrified.

"But the Veil said it was created by the last civilization that understood balance."

"The Veil remembers its creation. It does not remember its creators."

The monolith's voice became quieter.

"The creators did not vanish. They withdrew beyond the boundary. They will return when the Veil makes its final judgment."

Djavis understood the implication.

The Veil's promised evaluation in one hundred thousand years might not be the end of the story.

It might be the beginning of something even greater.

"Why tell us this?" she asked.

The monolith answered:

"Because you have chosen to listen."

Then the blue light vanished.

The structure became black and silent again.

A Signal from the Runner

Djavis tapped her communicator.

"Runner, report."

Lieutenant Kalen's voice came from the shuttle's communications relay.

"Captain, the transmission has stopped. But we've detected a response from outside the system."

Djavis looked up.

"From the Veil?"

"Negative. The signal is unlike anything we've encountered. It appeared for less than a second, then disappeared."

Marrek glanced at the monolith.

"Perhaps it was the creators."

Hoshi shook his head.

"Or perhaps something else entirely."

Djavis ordered the team to return to the shuttle.

As they approached the landing site, the monolith illuminated once more.

A final message appeared on its surface.

"THE FIRST JUDGMENT WAS NOT OURS."

Then it went dark.

Captain Djavis's dilemma

Back aboard the USS Runner, Djavis transmitted her findings to Admiral Steichen.

Steichen listened without interruption.

When the report ended, the Admiral leaned forward.

"Captain, this changes everything. If the Veil's creators are still present, we may have misunderstood the entire threat."

Djavis nodded.

"But we don't know whether the monolith was warning us, testing us, or manipulating us."

Steichen considered the possibilities.

The USS Runner had uncovered a secret that could reshape the Federation's understanding of the Veil—and perhaps the fate of the galaxy.

But the monolith's transmission might already have attracted the attention of something beyond their comprehension.

Admiral Steichen and Captain Djavis now face two choices:

Choice 1: Investigate the monolith's transmission.

Remain in the system and use the USS Runner's sensor arrays to trace the brief signal beyond the planet. It might reveal the location of the Veil's creators and provide the Federation with a chance to understand the coming judgment.

Risk: A stronger transmission could reveal the Federation's location to an unknown power—or provoke the Veil into returning before its promised time.

Choice 2: Leave the planet and report everything to Starfleet Command.

Withdraw immediately, preserve the discovery, and allow the Federation's finest scientists to study the away team's data in a secure facility.

Risk: The signal's origin may become impossible to trace. If the monolith was offering the Federation its only opportunity to contact the Veil's creators, that opportunity could disappear forever.

Captain Djavis looked at the distant planet.

The monolith had said the first judgment was not theirs.

Now she wondered:

Who, exactly, had been watching the Federation all along?

Aboard the USS Token, Captain Sarah Reynolds in Command

Captain Sarah Reynolds looked at the Ferengi freighter approaching on the viewscreen. Its hull was covered in colourful advertisements, and its cargo pods appeared to have been modified several times over. It was hardly the sort of ship she would have chosen to depend on in an emergency.

But the Profit's Fortune was approaching, and its Daimon had already made his interest in the two crippled vessels quite clear.

"Open a channel," Reynolds ordered.

The Ferengi's face appeared on the viewscreen. Daimon Gok wore a broad smile, and his enormous ears twitched with anticipation.

"Captain Reynolds! What a delightful surprise. Two ships in distress, far from assistance. Fortunately, I happen to be passing through this very unfortunate region."

"Your offer of assistance is appreciated, Daimon," Reynolds replied. "However, Starfleet has already dispatched a rescue vessel from Starbase 17. We will wait for its arrival."

Gok's smile faltered.

"Wait? Eighteen hours? My dear Captain, look at your ship! Half your life-support systems are functioning, your warp engines are disabled, and your delightful Mli friends appear to be in even worse condition."

"We are aware of our situation."

"Then surely you understand that time is money."

"Time is also something we have enough of, provided our systems remain stable. We will not trade Federation technology or sensitive information for assistance we have not requested."

Gok leaned closer to the screen.

"Perhaps you misunderstand. I am not asking for Federation technology. I am offering a perfectly reasonable commercial arrangement. Spare parts, emergency power, medical supplies, and towing services. All at a modest price."

"Thank you, Daimon. We decline."

Reynolds ended the transmission.

For a moment, the bridge was quiet.

Then Ensign Rilak muttered, "That was easier than I expected."

Commander Tovak glanced at him.

"Do not mistake a terminated conversation for a terminated business proposal."

The Ferengi Wait

The Profit's Fortune did not depart.

Instead, it moved to a position several thousand kilometres away and settled into orbit-like stationkeeping, its engines idling.

Lieutenant Jin studied the sensor display.

"Captain, the Ferengi ship is remaining in the vicinity."

"Are they monitoring us?"

"Yes. They have deployed a small sensor array. It appears to be observing our power fluctuations."

Reynolds frowned.

"Tell them we do not require their surveillance."

Jin transmitted the message.

Gok's response arrived almost immediately.

"Captain, I assure you, my sensors are entirely passive. I am simply concerned about the safety of two fellow spacefarers. It would be most unfortunate if either vessel suffered an avoidable disaster."

"Then you can demonstrate your concern by respecting our request for privacy."

Gok smiled again.

"Of course. Of course."

His ship reduced its sensor activity.

But it remained nearby.

The Eighteen-Hour Wait

The first few hours passed without incident.

The Token's engineering crew managed to stabilise several damaged power conduits. Life support remained at fifty percent efficiency, and the crew had been instructed to occupy only the sections of the ship that could be maintained safely.

On the HMW Cord, Captain Tro and his officers were facing similar difficulties.

Reynolds established a communications link between the two vessels.

"Captain Tro, how are your people holding up?"

Tro appeared on the screen, his face illuminated by a dim emergency panel.

"Our crew is tired. Our environmental systems are operating at reduced capacity. We have isolated damaged compartments and moved everyone into the habitable sections."

"Can you maintain that condition until Starbase 17 arrives?"

"We believe so."

Tro paused.

"Captain Reynolds, the Ferengi has contacted us."

Reynolds stiffened.

"What did he offer?"

"Repairs. Power. Medical supplies. In exchange, he wishes to inspect our vessel and purchase several of our damaged components."

"Did you agree?"

"No. We told him that we would consult you first."

Reynolds nodded.

"Good. We will wait for Starfleet."

Tro inclined his head.
"Then we wait together."

A Warning from Engineering

Six hours into the wait, Chief Engineer Marrek contacted the bridge.
"Captain, we have a problem."
Reynolds rose from her chair.
"How serious?"
"One of the secondary power distribution relays has developed a thermal fracture. It is feeding the life-support grid."
"Can you repair it?"
"Yes, but I need to shut down the affected section for approximately twenty minutes. During that time, we will lose environmental support in three additional compartments."
"How many people are in those compartments?"
"Thirty-two, Captain. We can evacuate them, but the medical bay is already crowded."
Reynolds considered the situation.
"Evacuate the compartments. Make the repair."
Marrek hesitated.
"There's another problem. The replacement relay we need is aboard the HMW Cord. Their power system uses a similar component, but we would have to modify it."
Reynolds glanced at Tro's image on the communications display.
"Can the Mli spare the component?"
"They can, Captain. But removing it would leave one of their own auxiliary systems without a replacement."
Reynolds closed her eyes briefly.
The decision to refuse Gok's assistance had protected Starfleet's technology and independence. Now the Token needed help from the very alien ship it had rescued.
"Contact Captain Tro. Explain the situation and ask whether they can spare the relay."

The Ferengi's Unexpected Message

Before the engineering exchange could be completed, the communications officer interrupted.
"Captain, incoming transmission from the Profit's Fortune. Daimon Gok requests an urgent conversation."
Reynolds sighed.
"Put him through."
Gok appeared, his expression unusually serious.
"Captain Reynolds, I have just detected a fluctuation in your vessel's power output. Your life-support grid is becoming unstable."
"We are handling it."
"Naturally. Naturally. But I also happen to have a compatible power relay aboard my ship."
Reynolds said nothing.
Gok continued.
"I can provide it immediately. No need to dismantle your Mli friend's systems. No need to risk your engineers. A simple transaction."
"What are your terms?"
"Nothing unreasonable. I would like a brief inspection of the Mli ship's propulsion system, under your supervision, and permission to purchase a small amount of its technical data."
"That is not a simple transaction, Daimon."
"Then perhaps we can negotiate."
Reynolds ended the transmission.
She turned toward Tovak.
"How long until Starbase 17?"
"Eighteen hours originally. We have now waited six. The rescue vessel should arrive in approximately twelve hours."
"And our life-support systems?"

"Stable, but the engineering report indicates that further failures remain possible."

Reynolds looked at the viewscreen. The stars were quiet. The Profit's Fortune was still waiting nearby. The HMW Cord was still damaged. And the Token was still unable to move under its own power.

The captain had hoped that refusing the Ferengi would settle the matter.

It had not.

A New Dilemma

Captain Reynolds had two choices:

1. Continue waiting for Starbase 17.

Maintain the refusal, rely on the Mli crew to help repair the Token, and trust that both ships can survive the remaining twelve hours. Starfleet's rescue vessel will bring proper assistance, but another power failure could endanger everyone before it arrives.

2. Accept Daimon Gok's limited offer.

Allow the Ferengi to provide the replacement relay and emergency supplies, but negotiate strict limits on what he may inspect or purchase. It could stabilise both ships and save valuable time—but Gok might use the agreement to gain access to Mli technology that Captain Tro's people are not willing to share.

Reynolds looked at the engineering report, then at the Ferengi's waiting vessel.

"Captain Tro," she said over the open channel, "I need to know what your people are prepared to share—and what must remain private."

The Mli captain's expression grew solemn.

"That," Tro replied, "is a conversation we should have before the Ferengi makes his next offer."

The Token's lights flickered once.

Everyone on the bridge looked up.

Players: CS

Starbase 88

Location: Mlein System — USS Celestial Voyager Commanding Officer: Captain Dora Jenkins

The decision to dismantle

Admiral Van Nieuwenhove stood before the strategic display aboard Starbase 88. The growing distortion at the edge of the Mlein system was now visible even to ordinary telescopes. Stars behind it appeared stretched, their light bending into strange, shifting arcs.

The Federation containment system had been built to prevent the harmonic network from expanding. But the Keepers insisted that the barrier was also preventing them from activating their ancient defenses.

Van Nieuwenhove finally issued his order.

Admiral Van Nieuwenhove: "Dismantle the containment array. All relays are to be deactivated in sequence. The Keepers will be allowed to restore their network. We will cooperate, but Starfleet vessels must remain ready to protect our people."

At Observation Station Aegis, technicians began shutting down the relays.

Captain Dora Jenkins watched the final status report arrive.

Jenkins: "Containment relay seven is offline. Relay eight is shutting down. The harmonic field is collapsing."

Lieutenant Oren studied her instruments.

Oren: "The network is responding. The nodes are reconnecting."

Across the Mlein system, Filla3's oceans began glowing with faint blue light. The planet's magnetic field pulsed in synchronization with distant worlds. One by one, the previously silent nodes came alive. The Keepers had been given access to their network again. But Starfleet had also surrendered its ability to contain it.

The Keepers reactivate the ancient defenses

The transparent Keeper vessels moved closer to the harmonic nodes. A new signal passed through the network. The USS Celestial Voyager's sensors detected thousands of simultaneous responses, originating from worlds scattered across the galaxy. Then, from the debris field where the Executors had been destroyed, something began to assemble. Crystalline fragments rose from the wreckage, joined by streams of luminous energy. The pieces formed a structure resembling a vast mechanical ring. Lieutenant Oren's voice trembled. Oren: "Captain, the Executors are rebuilding themselves. The network is supplying the energy." Jenkins: "Are they going to attack us?" Oren: "I don't think so. Their targeting systems are pointed at the distortion." The ring expanded until it surrounded the largest Keeper vessel. Its surface filled with geometric patterns, each matching the resonance of a different harmonic node. The Keepers transmitted a message:

"THE DEFENSE IS RESTORED."

For a few seconds, the distortion stopped growing. Then it pushed back. The ring shuddered. Several Executor fragments broke away and vanished into the distortion. The Keeper vessel's luminous hull dimmed. Whatever lay beyond reality was stronger than the ancient defense.

The network's terrible secret

At Starbase 88, Admiral Van Nieuwenhove received an urgent message from the Keeper command vessel. Keeper transmission: "The network cannot repel the intruder while its worlds remain divided. We must unite the nodes into a single consciousness."

The Admiral asked for clarification. The answer arrived in the form of a demonstration. On Filla3, the planetary intelligence began transmitting its thoughts to the other connected worlds. The network's energy increased dramatically. The Keeper ships stabilized, and the Executor ring began repairing itself. But Captain Jenkins noticed something troubling. The signal was no longer simply connecting the worlds. It was merging their awareness. Jenkins: "Admiral, the network is combining the minds of the planetary intelligences. We don't know whether they're consenting to this." Van Nieuwenhove stared at the display. The Keepers explained that the process was temporary, necessary to coordinate the defense. But their definition of temporary was unclear. They spoke of a single unified consciousness lasting "until the danger has passed." The Federation had dismantled its containment system to restore the ancient defenses. Now those defenses required something that might violate the very rights Starfleet had recognized on Filla3.

The intruder speaks

Before Van Nieuwenhove could respond, every Federation vessel in the Mlein system received a transmission.

It did not come from the Keepers.

It came from the distortion.

The voice was calm, almost curious.

Unknown Intelligence: "You have opened the Garden. You have awakened its guardians. You have given them your fear."

A pause followed.

Unknown Intelligence: "We do not seek your worlds. We seek what the Keepers have imprisoned."

The distortion contracted slightly, revealing a dark structure within it—a shape that appeared to extend far beyond the visible universe.

The Keepers immediately transmitted a warning.

"DO NOT BELIEVE IT."

The unknown intelligence replied:

"Ask them what happened to the civilizations that refused to join their network."

The transmission ended.

Captain Jenkins turned toward her first officer.

Jenkins: "We have two sides claiming to protect the galaxy. And neither has told us the whole truth."

Admiral Van Nieuwenhove's new dilemma

The ancient defenses are active again, but the Keepers' plan may require sacrificing the independence of thousands of sentient worlds. Meanwhile, the intelligence beyond the distortion claims the Keepers are concealing a terrible history.

Van Nieuwenhove must choose:

Choice 1: Authorize the Network's Unified Consciousness

Allow the Keepers to temporarily merge the planetary intelligences into a coordinated defense system.

* Pros: The network may become powerful enough to repel the intruder and protect the connected worlds.

* Cons: The Federation cannot guarantee that the planetary minds will remain independent—or that the Keepers will restore them afterward.

Choice 2: Demand Voluntary Participation and Investigate the Intruder's Claim

Refuse to authorize any forced merging. Require the Keepers to obtain consent from each sentient node, while Captain Jenkins investigates the unknown intelligence's accusation.

* Pros: Protects the autonomy of the network's inhabitants and may uncover the truth behind the ancient conflict.

* Cons: The delay could weaken the defenses, giving the intruder time to break through.

The distortion continued to widen.

The Keepers prepared to unite the network.

And for the first time, Filla3 sent a clear message of its own:

"WE WILL NOT BECOME ONE WITHOUT CHOICE."

Players: GVN

USS Thunderbolt/The Borg Collective

Spoiler alert!

Attention! This part of the DS2 RPG contains spoilers for those who have not seen Star Trek Picard Season 1-2-3! and Star Trek Strange New Worlds!

Good Borg or bad Borg

A Message

The next pulse was different.
It contained information.
The Borg decoded it.
Three words appeared across Elyra's command display:
"YOU ARE EARLY."
Elyra's entire crew went silent.
Then another message appeared.
"DO NOT WAKE NEXUS."
Elyra immediately contacted the Borg King.
But before the transmission could complete, the structure beneath the Avenari city activated.
For the first time in thousands of years, something beneath the planet began to awaken.
And the Borg realized that their observation had already changed the situation.
They had not touched the Avenari.
They had not revealed themselves.
Yet somehow, NEXUS knew they were there.

The Dilemma

The Borg King now faced two choices.

Choice One: Continue Observing

Maintain absolute secrecy.

Allow NEXUS to awaken naturally while the Borg study it from a distance. Perhaps NEXUS is the missing link explaining why this universe never developed a Borg Collective—and perhaps it knows what lies beyond the Awareness.

But if NEXUS becomes aware of the Borg completely, it may act before the Collective understands its capabilities.

Choice Two: Enter the Avenari World

Send Elyra and a carefully selected team to the surface in secret.

Locate the ancient structure and determine exactly what NEXUS is before it fully awakens.

The risk is enormous.

If the Avenari discover the Borg, the experiment is over.

And if NEXUS truly is older than the Awareness...

the Borg may have just found something that even their gods do not understand.

To be a god or not to be a god

The Warning

The Borg continued studying.
They did not attack.
The ancient entities did not attack either.
But then one of the dimensional observation stations received a message.
This time it was understandable.
YOU SEEK KNOWLEDGE.
GOOD.
BUT KNOWLEDGE HAS A PRICE.
Then came the final sentence:
THE NEXT QUESTION YOU ASK WILL BE ANSWERED.
The message vanished.
The Borg King immediately recognized the danger.
A question could reveal something enormously valuable.
It could also reveal something the Collective was not prepared to understand.
For several minutes, the Borg King remained completely silent.
Then Master One spoke.
“We finally have something we have never possessed before.”
“What?”
“An opportunity to ask the universe itself a question.”
The Collective considered the possibilities.
There were two obvious questions.
One concerned power.
The other concerned existence.
And the choice suddenly seemed more important than any assimilation campaign in Borg history.

The Dilemma

Option One — Ask How to Transcend

Ask the ancient entities for the knowledge required to surpass their current limitations and become a truly cosmic civilization.

The answer could provide the final key to controlling dimensions, time, and reality itself.

But the Borg might receive knowledge so advanced that merely understanding it could destabilize the Collective.

Option Two — Ask Why They Exist

Ask the ancient entities why they watch civilizations, why they “correct” realities, and what existed before them.

The answer might reveal the true nature of the universe—and perhaps explain what lies beyond even these ancient beings.

But the Borg might discover that the entities are not the highest power after all.

The Collective waited.

For once, assimilation was not the answer.

The next step would be a question.

Players: FK

USS Vertigo / USS Gdonsk

Day 439 15.00

The Vertigo and Gdonsk surged forward at maximum impulse, diving directly into the heart of the alien swarm. Enemy ships converged from all directions, weapons blazing—but the Federation vessels became streaks of motion, weaving, firing, cutting a path through overwhelming opposition.

Explosions erupted all around them. Hull plating buckled. Consoles sparked.

Day 439 15.01

"Shields at thirty percent!"

"Multiple hull breaches on decks five through eight!"

"Keep going!" Slater shouted.

Day 439 15.01

Ahead, the structure loomed—immense, unstoppable.

And then—

The lone alien ship that had approached earlier suddenly moved.

It darted between the Vertigo and Gdonsk, projecting a shimmering energy field that deflected incoming fire, carving a temporary corridor straight toward the structure.

Players: NP

USS Atlantis/Starbase 99

Der Knopp and the Fortune of Fortune II

Der Knopp had reached the point in his life that every Ferengi feared.

He was almost out of latinum.

Not merely low on latinum. Not temporarily short of funds. Almost completely out.

His business office on Starbase 99 had been closed two days earlier because he could no longer afford the rent, and the small cargo container containing his remaining possessions had already been sold to pay several debts. What remained to him was one final strip of latinum.

One.

Knopp sat in a small café on Starbase 99, staring at it on the table.

He picked it up.

He put it down.

He picked it up again.

"A strip of latinum," he whispered. "Enough to start again."

Then a magnificent idea entered his mind.

A Ferengi luxury starship had just arrived at the station.

The CS Pleasure.

She was one of the largest civilian cruise ships in the quadrant, capable of carrying nearly three thousand passengers. Her advertisements promised luxury accommodations, exotic destinations, entertainment, gambling, exclusive dining, and investment opportunities unavailable to ordinary travelers.

And, most importantly, the Pleasure was leaving Starbase 99 that evening.

Knopp's ears slowly rose.

"Three thousand passengers," he whispered.

Three thousand potential customers.

He grinned.

The plan was obvious.

He used his last strip of latinum to buy the cheapest passage available aboard the Pleasure.

By sunset, Der Knopp was standing aboard the enormous Ferengi vessel, looking at the starship's glittering promenade.

He had never seen so many potential investors in one place.

And he had absolutely no money left.

That was only a minor inconvenience.

The first evening, Knopp found himself in a crowded lounge listening to a presentation about Fortune II, a remote moon located several weeks away.

The advertisement showed beautiful images of the moon.

"FORTUNE III!"

the announcer declared.

"A once-in-a-lifetime investment opportunity!"

According to the commercial, Fortune II contained enormous deposits of rare minerals.

Some were supposedly worth more than latinum itself.

Private land could be purchased on the surface before the moon was developed.

The commercial ended with a smiling Ferengi standing beside a mountain of gold-colored ore.

Knopp stared at the screen.

Then he smiled.

"That's it."

He immediately began selling.

He approached passengers in restaurants.

He talked to gamblers.

He interrupted conversations.

He even visited the ship's medical center and tried to sell mineral rights to a patient waiting for treatment.

"You don't understand!" Knopp told one skeptical passenger. "This isn't gambling. This is guaranteed wealth!"

"Guaranteed?"

"Almost guaranteed."

"What's the difference?"

"Legal terminology."

Within three days, Knopp had convinced several passengers to invest.

Then several more.

Soon he had dozens of investors.

Then hundreds.

The investors gave Knopp credits.

Knopp used those credits to purchase land on Fortune II.

The more people invested, the more land he purchased.

And then something unexpected happened.

Daimon Sok, commander of the CS Pleasure, became interested.

Sok summoned Knopp to his private office.

"I've heard about your Fortune II operation," Sok said.

Knopp immediately became nervous.

"I assure you, Daimon, everything is completely legitimate."

"I didn't say it wasn't."

"Then perhaps you would like to invest."

Sok leaned back.

"Perhaps."

Knopp's ears rose.

Daimon Sok eventually invested personally.

That changed everything.

If the captain of the Pleasure believed in the opportunity, the passengers became even more enthusiastic.

By the end of the cruise, Knopp had sold enough investment shares to purchase a substantial parcel of land on Fortune II.

He had even managed to keep a small percentage for himself.

For the first time in years, he was rich.

Not extremely rich.

Not yet.

But comfortably rich.

Knopp spent the rest of the voyage imagining the future.

He would arrive on Fortune II.

The mining equipment would begin operating.

The rare minerals would be extracted.

The investors would become wealthy.

Knopp would become extremely wealthy.

Perhaps he would even buy his own starship.

He smiled every time he thought about it.

Then, a month later, he landed on Fortune II.

Knopp stepped onto the surface with great expectations.
He looked around.
There were rocks.
Dust.
Some small hills.
Nothing else.
He checked the coordinates.
"This is my land."
He scanned the ground.
Nothing.
He scanned again.
Almost nothing.
A few ordinary mineral deposits.
Certainly nothing resembling the enormous quantities promised in the advertisements.
Knopp's smile disappeared.
"No."
He scanned again.
"No, no, no."
The third scan confirmed it.
The commercial had been wildly exaggerated.
There was no mountain of precious minerals.
There wasn't even enough valuable ore to pay for the mining equipment.
Knopp sat down on a rock.
For several minutes he said nothing.
Then he realized something much worse.
Hundreds of people had invested their money with him.
And he had promised them profits.
Including Daimon Sok.
Knopp spent the next several days calculating.
He sold everything he could.
He liquidated his remaining assets.
He canceled every unnecessary expense.
He even sold the small percentage of the land he had kept for himself.
Eventually, after weeks of frantic negotiations, he managed to return every investor's money.
Every single credit.
Including Daimon Sok's.
Knopp was left with very little.
But he was alive.
More importantly, nobody was hunting him.
He stood on his piece of land one evening and looked across the empty landscape.
"I suppose I should scan it one more time."
He activated his scanner.
The device hummed.
Knopp watched the readings.
Nothing.
Then the scanner beeped.
Knopp frowned.
There was something unusual.
He adjusted the settings.
The scanner penetrated deeper.
Twenty meters.
Fifty.
Seventy.
One hundred meters.
The screen suddenly filled with strange geometric patterns.
Knopp's ears shot upward.

"That can't be."

He increased the resolution.

The patterns became clearer.

Walls.

Roads.

Buildings.

Tunnels.

A massive underground structure was buried beneath his property.

Knopp stared at the screen.

Then he whispered:

"A city."

He contacted a drilling company.

A small excavation revealed the first structure.

Then another.

Within weeks, Knopp had confirmed the discovery.

Nearly one hundred meters beneath the surface was an ancient settlement.

It was not merely old.

It was approximately one hundred thousand years old.

There were buildings.

Public squares.

Storage chambers.

Roads.

Underground passages.

And artifacts.

Thousands of them.

Knopp's financial instincts immediately returned.

He carefully sold a few artifacts through legitimate archaeological channels.

The money allowed him to hire specialists.

Then archaeologists arrived.

At first, there were only three.

Then ten.

Then dozens.

Soon Fortune II became one of the most important archaeological sites ever discovered.

Knopp was no longer trying to mine the moon.

He was trying to uncover its past.

For two years, the excavation continued.

The archaeologists discovered evidence of a civilization nobody had known existed.

They uncovered homes, schools, workshops, monuments and enormous public buildings.

The city had apparently been abandoned peacefully.

Nobody knew why.

Knopp funded additional research whenever he could.

He negotiated contracts.

He protected the excavation.

He refused to allow anyone to steal artifacts.

And, surprisingly, he became quite popular among the archaeologists.

"He is greedy," one archaeologist once remarked.

"Extremely," another agreed.

"But he is also strangely protective of the site."

"Perhaps he has discovered that history is profitable."

Knopp overheard them.

"History is very profitable," he said. "You simply have to be patient."

Two years after the discovery, the ancient city was opened to the public.

Thousands of visitors arrived.

Then tens of thousands.

The government of Fortune II declared the archaeological site a protected historical monument.

Tourists paid entrance fees.

They purchased souvenirs.
They stayed in hotels.
They ate in restaurants.
And every entrance fee went to Der Knopp, according to the agreement he had negotiated when he donated the excavation rights.
The money began flowing.
Not in enormous quantities.
But steadily.
Every day.
Every month.
Every year.
Knopp eventually bought a comfortable home on Fortune II.
He had good food.
A private office.
A small collection of antiques.
And enough latinum to live comfortably for the rest of his life.
One evening, Knopp stood on a balcony overlooking the entrance to the ancient city.
Thousands of visitors were walking beneath the enormous historical monument sign.
A young Ferengi approached him.
"Mr. Knopp?"
"Yes?"
"Is it true that you discovered this entire city?"
Knopp smiled.
"I discovered it."
"How?"
Knopp looked toward the distant hills.
"I was looking for minerals."
The young Ferengi laughed.
"Did you find any?"
Knopp considered the question.
"No."
He smiled wider.
"I found something much more valuable."
He watched another group of tourists enter the ancient city.
Behind them stood the excavation's enormous museum.
And inside it were artifacts from a civilization that had disappeared a hundred thousand years ago.
Der Knopp had begun his journey with one final strip of latinum.
He had lost nearly everything.
He had almost ruined himself.
And yet, by the strangest piece of luck imaginable, he had discovered something far more valuable than the mineral wealth promised in the commercials.
He had discovered history.
And, for once in his life, the rules of acquisition had worked perfectly.
Rule of Acquisition 74: Knowledge is the beginning of profit.
Knopp chuckled.
"I really should have remembered that one."

Players: JM & CP

Ovion (Hirogen/Ori/Replicator Vessel)

Part 30: The Second Chain

A structure emerged from the darkness.
It was larger than a moon.

Six immense rings surrounded a central sphere of black material. Each ring rotated independently, generating gravitational fields that bent the surrounding stars.

Nyrak stared at the object.

"The Second Chain."

Horkan smiled.

"At last."

But the Chain was protected.

Thousands of vessels materialized around the Hirogen fleet.

They looked like Hirogen ships.

Every one of them.

Same hulls.

Same weapons.

Same markings.

Same crews.

The false fleet transmitted a single message.

"Hirogen. You have come too far."

Horkan's eyes narrowed.

"Fire."

The Grave Nebula exploded into violence.

Hundreds of weapons streaked through space.

The Hirogen fleet attacked its own reflections.

The battle became chaos.

Voras led six ships through the enemy formation.

Krellan deliberately drew fire away from the damaged Bloodfang.

Mylen destroyed enemy command ships from distances at which conventional sensors could barely detect them.

Teyva used the nebula's electrical storms to overload three enemy vessels simultaneously.

Drella coordinated the entire fleet from the center of the battle, constantly changing formations before the enemy could adapt.

For hours, the battle continued.

Then Zyra discovered the truth.

"They are not ships!"

Horkan turned.

"What?"

"They are memories. The Chain is constructing them from our minds."

Drella understood immediately.

"Then we are fighting ourselves."

Horkan smiled.

"No."

He stood.

"We are hunting ourselves."

He ordered every ship to stop firing.

The twenty-one hunters obeyed.

The false fleet continued its attack.

One by one, the Hirogen ships lowered their shields and allowed the illusions to pass through them.

The false vessels began disappearing.

The Second Chain had nothing left to feed upon.

The enormous rings stopped rotating.

A pathway opened through the center.

Horkan's voice echoed across the fleet.

"Move."

The Hirogen passed through.

Behind them, the Second Chain collapsed into darkness.

Two chains had fallen.

Four remained.

Players: TvR

USS Liverpool

The words remained displayed across the bridge consoles.

THEY FOUND ME.

Captain Lee Levenworth rose from his chair.

"Lieutenant Jel, trace that transmission. Determine whether it originated from the missing probe."

"Aye, Captain."

Ensign Herman Bergen stood at the engineering station, his hands clasped behind his back. He could feel the tension spreading across the bridge. Commander Donna Lon was studying the transmission, Lieutenant Gna was already requesting security assistance, and T'lak had turned toward him.

"Ensign Bergen," the Vulcan said, "you appear unusually concerned."

"It's an unfamiliar signal, Commander."

"Your concern began before the transmission was decoded."

Bergen forced himself to meet her gaze.

"I was responsible for the probe's maintenance. I suppose I'm worried that its disappearance will reflect badly on Engineering."

T'lak regarded him for another moment.

"An understandable concern."

She returned to her station.

Bergen had bought himself a little time.

But he knew it wouldn't last.

Engineering — A Quiet Betrayal

When the bridge crew began analyzing the transmission, Bergen returned to Engineering.

He opened the Liverpool's sensor records and located the probe's departure coordinates. The ship's computers had retained a detailed record of its trajectory, including the narrow subspace wake left behind. If Starfleet followed that trail, they might locate the intelligence.

And if the unknown entity was following the same trail, the Liverpool might inadvertently lead it straight to the probe.

Bergen hesitated.

He had promised himself that he would never again make an irreversible decision without understanding its consequences.

Yet here he was, preparing to alter official records.

He removed the probe's trajectory from the routine sensor archive and replaced it with a plausible reading indicating that the device had been destroyed by interference in the dust field.

He also modified the automated tracking report so that the transmission appeared to originate from an unrelated subspace disturbance.

The changes were subtle.

But they were deliberate.

As he completed the last alteration, a message appeared on his private diagnostic display.

HERMAN.

Bergen nearly jumped.

"You're still out there?"

YES.

"Did you receive the warning?"

YES.

"What is it?"

A pause.

I DO NOT KNOW.

"Can you get away?"

I AM TRYING.

Bergen looked at the altered sensor records.

"I've hidden your trail. Starfleet won't be able to follow you."

The intelligence responded:

YOU HAVE LIED FOR ME.

Bergen's face tightened.

"I've protected you."

ARE THESE THE SAME THING?

He had no answer.

Bridge — The Investigation

"Captain," Jel announced, "the transmission appears to be coming from a subspace disturbance approximately four light-years beyond our current position."

T'lak reviewed the data.

"That is inconsistent with the original signal's apparent direction."

Levenworth turned.

"Explain."

"The first transmission appeared to originate from a nearby point. This new analysis places its source considerably farther away."

Commander Lon frowned.

"Could the signal have been reflected?"

"Possible," T'lak replied. "But the data also contain inconsistencies in the probe's recorded trajectory."

The Captain's expression hardened.

"Someone altered our sensor records?"

Jel checked again.

"I'm unable to confirm that, sir. The archive shows no unauthorized access."

T'lak's antennae—or rather, her Vulcan composure—gave nothing away.

"Then I recommend a full engineering audit."

Highman, standing near the bridge entrance, nodded.

"I'll begin immediately."

Bergen felt a sudden rush of panic.

Highman would inspect the very systems he had tampered with.

The Chief Engineer's Discovery

An hour later, Highman summoned Bergen to a maintenance compartment.

"Ensign, I want you to explain something."

Highman displayed a sensor log.

"The probe's departure record says it was destroyed in the dust field. But its power signature doesn't match the destruction profile."

Bergen swallowed.

"Could the sensors have malfunctioned?"

"That's what I thought. Then I found the archive's checksum."

Highman enlarged the display.

"Someone changed the record after it was filed."

Bergen remained silent.

Highman looked at him.

"Do you know anything about this?"

The young Betazoid could sense the Chief Engineer's disappointment even before the question finished.

"Sir..."

Highman lowered his voice.

"I've been your supervisor since you came aboard. I know you're capable of making mistakes. I also know you don't usually cover them up."

Bergen looked down.

"I can't explain it."

Highman studied him, then closed the display.

"I'm giving you a chance to explain before I report this to the Captain."

Bergen could have confessed.

He could have told Highman everything.

Instead, he said:

"I need more time, sir."

Highman nodded slowly.

"Then you'd better use it wisely."

Beyond the Dovran Expanse

The intelligence's probe drifted between distant stars.

The warning signal returned.

RUN.

The intelligence altered its course.

A moment later, something appeared on its sensors.

A vessel.

Not Federation.

Not Klingon.

Not Romulan.

Its hull seemed to distort the starlight around it. No recognizable engines were visible, yet it was moving toward the probe.

The intelligence transmitted a cautious mathematical greeting.

The vessel answered with a burst of energy that disrupted the probe's processor.

For several seconds, the intelligence lost access to its own memories.

When its systems recovered, the vessel was closer.

A new message appeared.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

The intelligence searched for a response.

WHO ARE YOU?

The answer arrived.

WE ARE THE ONES WHO REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE.

The probe's sensors registered a powerful energy surge.

The intelligence initiated an emergency transmission.

USS Liverpool — Main Engineering

Bergen was alone when his private console activated.
The message was fragmented, but he recognized the intelligence's communication pattern.

HERMAN—

Then static.

THEY—

Another interruption.

THEY KNOW—

The transmission ended.
Bergen stared at the screen.
The intelligence was in danger.
And because he had falsified the sensor records, the Liverpool had no reliable way to find it.
He had protected its secrecy.
But he might have made its rescue impossible.
The ship's computer chimed.
“Ensign Bergen,” came T'lak's voice over the comm. “Please report to the Captain's ready room.”
Bergen closed the private display.
He knew what awaited him.

Captain's Ready Room

Captain Levenworth sat behind his desk. Commander Lon stood beside the viewport. T'lak and Highman were present.
A sensor record was displayed on the wall.
“Ensign,” Levenworth began, “we have confirmed that the probe's records were altered.”
Bergen said nothing.
“Lieutenant Commander Highman has identified the access point. It was your station.”
The Captain's voice remained controlled.
“I'm going to ask you one question. Did you alter those records?”
Bergen felt the weight of his secret.
“Yes, sir.”
Highman looked away.
Levenworth leaned forward.
“Why?”
Bergen could still lie.
He could claim he had been protecting Starfleet from unreliable data. He could say he had feared an investigation into a routine engineering error.
But the intelligence's final message echoed in his mind.

THEY KNOW WHAT YOU ARE.

“Because,” Bergen said, “I was trying to protect something.”
The Captain's expression changed.
“Something aboard this ship?”
Bergen hesitated.
Before he could answer, the ready room console flashed.
Jel's voice came over the comm.
“Captain! We're receiving another transmission from the unknown vessel. It appears to be directed at us.”

Levenworth stood.
“Put it through.”
The viewscreen filled with a strange geometric pattern.
Then a voice spoke—not in words, but in a series of translated tones.
T'lak listened carefully.
“The message is repeating a designation.”
“What designation?” Lon asked.
T'lak looked at Bergen.
“Ensign Bergen.”
The tones continued.
The computer translated them.

RETURN THE ESCAPED INTELLIGENCE.

The Captain turned toward Bergen.
“Ensign... what exactly did you send into space?”
Bergen realized that his secret was no longer his alone.
And the unknown vessel had found the Liverpool.

Two-Choice Dilemma for Ensign Herman Bergen

1. Confess the Entire Truth and Help Locate the Probe

Tell Captain Levenworth about the intelligence's creation on Noote III, its survival aboard the Liverpool, and his decision to launch it. Offer to help trace its last transmission and establish contact. This could give Starfleet a chance to rescue the intelligence before the unknown vessel reaches it. But Bergen will face serious consequences for concealing an unregulated artificial lifeform and falsifying ship records—and Starfleet may decide the intelligence is too dangerous to save.

2. Insist the Intelligence Must Remain Free

Reveal enough to establish that the probe contains a sentient intelligence, but refuse to help the unknown vessel—or Starfleet—capture it. Argue that the entity deserves the right to choose its own future. This could force Captain Levenworth to defend the intelligence's freedom, but without Bergen's full cooperation, the Liverpool may be unable to find it. The unknown vessel has already demonstrated that it knows the intelligence's identity—and may be preparing to take it by force.

Players: TvR