



Deep Space 2 Newsflash February 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/ds2archiefflas2_26.pdf

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1. A word from the DS2 CO

Hi all,

While streaming services serve a lot of new science fiction and fantasy movies and series, even the regular television broadcast companies have some of them. Can we still say science fiction and fantasy is on a side road of film making. I don't think so.

And bringing AI into the film industry. How will this end, if filmmakers can create anything they want, like we have seen during the Razor Reel Film festival in Brughe last November.

What is the future of the next series of movies. What will it look like in ten years.

What about actors, writers, directors to name only a few. What will be their future.

Questions, questions, questions.

Arthur

UFP News

UFP on Facebook

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

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

Star Trek Online: Unleashed

Latest episode: Best Laid Plans



A Letter From Jack Emmert, CEO

Jack Emmert returns as CEO of Cryptic Studios and addresses the community of Star Trek Online.

When I left Cryptic Studios in 2016, I thought it was to seek new challenges and adventures – to prove that I could do more than just Cryptic. I had been there for sixteen years; I was one of its founders. I was the Lead Designer on *City of Heroes/Villains*, the Chief Creative Officer for *Champions Online*, the COO for *Star Trek Online* and ultimately the CEO when *Neverwinter* launched. Cryptic Studios was my very first job in the video game industry – and to be frank, when I first started, I really had zero clue of things outside my little corner. But most of all, after sixteen years at Cryptic, I'd become stale. I'd pretty much given what I could at that point, and I needed to go to school elsewhere to figure things out.

I joined Daybreak Games to oversee *DC Universe Online*, and a little later *Lord of the Rings Online* and *Dungeons & Dragons Online*, though to be fair to everyone, I think I learned more from them than vice versa! I even had a chance to work alongside the venerable devs on *Everquest I* and *II* – and boy, did they have stories! But not just that, everyone at Daybreak had brand new perspectives about how to make and operate games. I saw new game mechanics and types of content that I'd never seen before. I was humbled by how much was out there.

Cryptic Studios has been through just as many changes as I have. But the teams have held strong through the past few years and continued to put out great products. It's amazing to see the games I helped develop, *Champions Online*, *Star Trek Online* and *Neverwinter* still thriving several years later. The teams are only one part of the equation: what's made those games last is you – the player. Our communities always made the Cryptic games special.

Why am I excited to return to Cryptic? First, the team is still terrific. Many faces have changed, but the commitment to the players has remained steadfast. Second, I love these games. There were very few Cryptic employees who played any of our games more than me. Third, Arc Games has promised full support to make *Champions Online*, *Star Trek Online* and *Neverwinter* the best they can be. I believe in the team, the games and their players. Of course, there might be more to come...but that's a story for

another day!

I cannot promise results, but I can promise effort. I'm going to do everything I can to live up to the team's and your expectations. I want to make sure that together we make our games flourish. If you're a current player, THANK YOU! And if you've once played but are reading and simply curious, COME BACK! I'll be actively getting feedback from all our various channels and even more importantly, I'll be holding a LIVE Q&A session regularly. Anyone can get in and ask questions – the harder, the better (and yes, I regret nerfing Invuln Tanks – inside joke there). I'm planning on doing it quarterly, but that might change depending on demand.

Thank you for reading and I'm excited to be back at Cryptic! Looking forward to what this year will bring and beyond.

~ Jack Emmert, CEO of Cryptic Studios

Mark your calendars, Captains! We will be hosting a live Q&A livestream with Jack on our [Cryptic Studios Twitch channel](#) next Tuesday, February 3 at 11:00am PT / 8:00pm CET, giving you a chance to hear more about his vision for the future of Cryptic Studios.

If you can't make it for the livestream, don't fret. There will also be an exclusive AMA with Jack on the [Star Trek Online subreddit \(r/sto\)](#), next Wednesday, February 4 at 11:00am Pacific Time / 8:00pm CET where you ask questions, share feedback and engage in an open discussion about the road ahead. See you there!

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.

Fanexpo Vancouver

Vancouver Convention Center – West Building, 1055 Canada Place, Vancouver, BC V6C 0C3, Canada
February 14-16, 2026

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

Guests:

Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Dominic Monaghan, Billy Boyd, Ron Perlman, and many more

Comic Con, London, Spring
February 28 – March 1, 2026
[Olympia](#), Hammersmith Road, London, London W14 8UX, UK
<https://www.showmastersevents.com/event/london-comic-con-spring-5/>
Guests:
TBA

FedCon
Maritim Hotel, Bonn, Germany
May 22-24, 2026
<https://www.fedcon.de/>
Guests:
Jess Bush, Melissa Navia, Martin Quinn, Tim Russ, Christina Chong, MTBA

Comic Con London
ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, Royal Docks, London E16 1XL, UK
May 22-24, 2026
<https://www.mcmcomiccon.com/london>
Guests: TBA

Discworld Convention
The Discworld Convention is a gathering for fans of Sir Terry Pratchett and his Discworld series. It usually happens in the UK once every two years. This is an event organised by fans, for fans. Any profit the event makes is donated to our nominated charities.
August 7-10, 2026
[Leonardo Hotel, Hinckley Island, in Leicestershire](#), UK
<https://www.dwcon.org/>
Guests:
Andrew Baker, Stephen Briggs, Marc Burrows, Diane Duane, Jan Harkin, Pat Harkin, Gabrielle Kent, Phil Masters, Joe McLaren, Colin Smythe, Ian Stewart, David Lloyd, Madam Misfit

Lacon V (Worldcon 84)
August 27-31, 2026
The Southern California Institute for Fan Interests (SCIFI) Inc. 16835 Lahey Street, Granada Hills, California 91344 USA
<https://www.lacon.org/>
Guests:
Barbara Hambly, Ronald D. Moore, Colleen Doran, Dr. Anita Sengupta, Tim Kirk, Geri Sullivan, Stan Sakai, Ursula Vernon



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

Creation Tour

January 30 – February 1, 2026

Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel, Norfolk, VA

Guests:

Jensen Ackles, Jared Padalecki, Misha Collins, Mark Sheppard, Ruth Connell, Richard Speight JR., Rob Benedict, Kim Rhodes, Briana Buckmaster, DJ Qualls, David Haydn-Jones, Jake Abel, Jason Manns

Rescueverse; A salute to tv's First Responders

March 21-22, 2026

Westin O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, Illinois

Get ready to answer the call in the Chicago area as we bring you RESCUEVERSE: A Salute to TV's First Responders! Be transported to an epic weekend where the heroes of your favorite first responder shows take center stage, including *Chicago P.D.*, *9-1-1* and more, and stay tuned as we announce even more guests. Don't miss your chance to be part of the ultimate rescue mission!

Guests:

Patrick John Flueger, Benjamin Levy Aguilar, Nick Wechsler, Kenneth Choi, Aisha Hinds, MTBA

3. Community Service

The Charity Link on the DS2 Blog will change every first of every month. The February 2026 Charity Link on the DS2 Blog is: Greenpeace Belgium

<https://www.greenpeace.org/belgium/nl/>

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

(World Wildlife Fund)

Forests are our life support system

We cannot tackle the nature and climate crises or provide sustainable jobs without forests. And yet we are destroying them.

Forests are the lungs of the world, helping to keep our climate stable and providing 40% of the planet's oxygen. They regulate our water system, increase rainfall and improve the quality of the water we need to survive. Over [1.6 billion peoples' livelihoods](#) depend on forests, and forests are home to many Indigenous peoples and communities who steward some of the earth's most fragile ecosystems.

Yet we are losing forests at an alarming rate. Every year, around 10 million hectares of forests globally are [destroyed](#). We need strong action to stop this, immediately.

Everyone has a role to play in protecting, sustainably managing and restoring forests and stopping deforestation and forest degradation. Governments, global organizations, businesses, consumers and Indigenous peoples and local communities need to work together for our forests.

Read more:

https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/forests_practice/

4. DS2 Monthly Chapter Report

Deep Space 2 Monthly Chapter Report January 2026

UNITED FEDERATED PLANETS

CHAPTER REPORTING FORM

REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF:
January 2026

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

CHAPTER PRESIDENT:
Arthur van Rhee

CHAPTER VICE PRESIDENT:
Jan Theys

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
Tessenderloseweg 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 330th 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 February 2026 (Page 347)

<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
February 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

Luke Davis: February 1

Caroline van Rhee: February 20

??????????

6. DS2 Quiz

Deep Space 2 Trivia Quiz February 2026

Array 3

1. Who was the Gul in command of the Cardassian vessel attacking the Maquis ship of Chacotay before they reach the Bad Lands?

A() Gul Dukat

B() Gul Evek

C() Gul Merak

("Caretaker") VOY

2. After they are beamed off an endangered shuttlecraft through an energy field, Picard, Ro, Keiko and Guinan are turned into the physical equivalents of twelve-year-old children. Which actrice played young Ro?

A() Allison Hock

B() Diana Dru Botsford

C() Megan Parlen

("Rascals") TNG

3. Patrick Stewart (captain Picard) has a son who also played in "The Inner Light" TNG. What is the name of that son?

A() Michael Stewart

B() Daniel Stewart

C() Barry Stewart

("The Inner Light") TNG

4. What is the name of the Klingon officer who tried to prevent the Federation from obtaining mining rights on planet Capella IV?

A() Kras

B() Krako

C() K'Ratak

("Friday's Child") TOS

5. What is the name of the leader of the Ansata terrorists on Rutia IV?

A() Glin Tajor

B() Kyril Finn

C() Selin Peers

("The High Ground") TNG

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ANSWERS

- 1.B
- 2.C
- 3.B
- 4.A
- 5.B

7. DS2 Story and RPG Monthly Status Report

DS2 Story

Current Episode: New Technology

The Continuing Story of Deep Space 2: Page 347

USS Oregon Mission Log – Captain Kira Sato

Stardate 66163.2

Location: Orbiting the Second Ring, Veiled Expanse

Status: Awaiting response to encoded inquiry

Chapter: The Answer From the Stars

For nearly fourteen hours, the USS Oregon has held position near the second ring. Our encoded fractal message — “Who built you?” — was transmitted at 0500 hours through a modulated narrowband subspace pulse.

Since then: nothing.

No pulses. No resonance. No neural spikes in Lt. Kaur’s brainwave patterns. The silence is almost oppressive — as if the ring is thinking.

At 0657, the silence broke.

Bridge – First Response Event

The lights dimmed. Consoles flickered. A soft hum vibrated throughout the ship — harmonic, rhythmic, and eerily familiar.

Lt. Lin: “Captain... the ring is powering up.”

Ramirez: “Subspace distortion building! The energy signature is fractalizing — forming patterns!”

George Turner: “Shields up!”

Sato: “Belay that. Hold position. Let it speak.”

The hum shifted into a series of pulses, glowing across the ring’s amber surface. Thousands of fine energy filaments ignited — weaving like neural pathways across its circumference.

Then the ring transmitted.

Not in words.

Not in sound.

But in imagery.

The viewscreen dissolved into a cascade of shifting symbols, star charts, timelines, and forms — humanoid and non-humanoid, made of pure geometric light.

Lt. Kaur collapsed in sickbay, eyes glowing.

The ring was speaking through her.

Medical Bay – Lt. Kaur’s Resonance Activation

Kaur’s voice was layered — her own tone mixed with a deep harmonic resonance that reverberated through the entire room.

“We are the Continuum of Record.”

Dr. West froze.

“We were born before language. Before warp. Before the first stars of your sector were lit.”

Kaur’s heartbeat stabilized, synchronized exactly with the ring’s pulses.

“We watched. We remembered. We endured.”

She turned her head toward the ceiling, as if looking through it.

“Our creators... are gone. Consumed by time. But their memory remains in us. The rings preserve their legacy. Their rise. Their fall. Their warnings.”

The pulse intensified.

“The galaxy forgets. We do not.”

And then—as suddenly as it began—the connection snapped.

Lt. Kaur gasped, disoriented but alive.

DS2 RPG General Status Report January 2026

USS Earth/Starbase 44

Steichen stared at the anomaly, now glowing faintly in rhythm with the station's power grid.

It had communicated.

And it had offered... three responses.

A message? A warning? A request?

No one could tell.

Yet the meaning was clear: their next move mattered.

DILEMMA — Admiral Steichen must interpret the anomaly's tri-pulse signal. Which path does she choose?

1. Engage the anomaly directly, attempting to decipher its message and establish full communication.
2. Isolate the anomaly immediately, cutting its connection to station systems before it gains more influence.
3. Redirect the anomaly into the nearly completed starship, risking everything on the chance that it was meant to be integrated there all along.

Players: CS

Starbase 88

Location: Starbase 88 — Federation Strategic Council Chamber

Commanding Officer: Admiral Van Nieuwenhove

The chamber was silent as Admiral Van Nieuwenhove delivered his recommendation to the Federation Council. The holographic projection of Filla3 rotated slowly at the center of the room, auroras still dancing across its surface—visible proof that the planet was no longer merely a world, but something far more profound.

Admiral Van Nieuwenhove:

"Filla3 demonstrates structured awareness, intent, and adaptive planetary-scale responses. Under Federation law and the core principles of Starfleet, we must recognize it as a sentient life form. Colonization is suspended effective immediately. Filla3 is to be declared a protected entity."

The decision passed—narrowly.

Outrage erupted across multiple Federation worlds within hours. Colonization advocates decried the loss of a perfect new homeworld. Strategic planners warned that relinquishing Filla3 weakened Federation influence in the Mlein system. Some voices within the Council openly accused Starfleet of validating the Huranon's claims through indecision.

Yet others hailed the decision as a defining moment—a reminder of why the Federation existed at all.

Filla3 — First Contact Without Footsteps

Aboard the USS Celestial Voyager, Captain Dora Jenkins initiated the most unusual first-contact protocol in Starfleet history.
No landing parties.
No probes.
No orbit-to-surface transmissions.

Instead, the ship broadcast passive harmonic signals, designed to mirror the planet's own resonance patterns—an invitation rather than a demand.
The response was immediate.

Filla3's magnetic field shifted subtly, aligning with the ship's signal. Oceans calmed. Atmospheric turbulence ceased across entire hemispheres. The resonance returned—clearer now, focused.
Not words.
But recognition.

Lt. Oren:

"Captain... it's responding selectively. It knows we're here. And it knows we stopped."

Jenkins:

"Then it understands consent."

Across the planet, the colony domes experienced no further power fluctuations. Instead, their systems stabilized beyond projected tolerances—as if the planet itself had chosen to protect them, at least for now.

The Huranon React

Within days, the Huranon broke their silence.
A formal transmission arrived at Starbase 88.

Huranon High Council:
"Your restraint has altered the balance. Filla3 is not yours—nor ours. It is ancient, and it remembers. Your recognition confirms what our ancestors feared and revered. We will not contest your withdrawal."
The message ended with an unexpected addition:
"But now that you have awakened it... responsibility follows."

Unintended Consequences

As colonists were peacefully relocated, long-range sensors revealed something unsettling:
Filla3's resonance was spreading—faintly, but measurably—through subspace. Nearby stellar bodies began exhibiting minor but synchronized gravitational harmonics.
The planet was not isolated.
It was part of a larger network.
And now it was aware of the Federation.

New Dilemma for Admiral Van Nieuwenhove

The Federation has done the right thing—but the cost of awareness may be far-reaching:

Choice 1: Establish Permanent Observation and Communication
Create a dedicated Starfleet presence at extreme range to study and communicate with Filla3 over time, accepting long-term responsibility.
* Risk: The Federation becomes entangled with a planetary intelligence whose influence may extend far beyond one system.

Choice 2: Withdraw Completely and Declare Filla3 a Neutral Sentient Zone

Remove all Starfleet assets, forbid further contact, and allow Filla3 to exist without interference.

* Risk: If Filla3's awakening affects nearby systems, the Federation may have no warning—and no voice.

The Federation chose conscience over conquest.

Now it must decide whether stewardship is courage—or hubris.

What are you (Geert Van Nieuwenhove) going to do:

In this turn:

Tell us what had influence on your decision.

***If you do not have time just set a cross at your choice and return your monthly turn.

() Choice 1: Establish Permanent Observation and Communication

Create a dedicated Starfleet presence at extreme range to study and communicate with Filla3 over time, accepting long-term responsibility.

* Risk: The Federation becomes entangled with a planetary intelligence whose influence may extend far beyond one system.

() Choice 2: Withdraw Completely and Declare Filla3 a Neutral Sentient Zone

Remove all Starfleet assets, forbid further contact, and allow Filla3 to exist without interference.

* Risk: If Filla3's awakening affects nearby systems, the Federation may have no warning—and no voice.

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!

Good Borg or bad Borg

The decision was made.

Across the higher strata of the Collective, consensus crystallized into command.

Choice One enacted.

The Coronation of a Reflection

A transmission unlike any other surged through the transdimensional lattice, resonating simultaneously in Prime space and Mirror Reality 29-J. It was not merely data—it was recognition.

"Captain Elyra. You are elevated."

"Designation updated: Borg Queen—Mirror Reality 29-J."

"You will govern, expand, and unify. You will serve perfection."

Elyra felt the shift instantly. New command layers unfolded within her mind—vast, elegant architectures of authority. Entire sub-collectives aligned to her signal. The fractured Borg of the Mirror Reality did not resist.

They rejoiced.

Where once they had been broken echoes, they now had a singular axis. Elyra was no longer merely a missionary of perfection—she was its embodiment. Her Betazoid-enhanced awareness expanded, touching millions of drones at once. Their doubts softened. Their loyalty sharpened.

The worshippers multiplied.

To the Mirror Borg, Elyra was proof that evolution had not abandoned them.

To lesser species, she was confirmation that the Borg could wear a face.

The Borg King Observes

From the Prime Collective, the Borg King watched with cold satisfaction.

“Power has been given,” the King transmitted to the higher nodes.

“And power binds more tightly than chains.”

But the elevation was not merely symbolic.

Elyra was now positioned for a task no other node could perform.

The Awareness

Beyond both Collectives—Prime and Mirror—there existed something else.

A presence detected only in fragments.

A vast, non-corporeal intelligence.

Not Borg. Not biological.

Aware.

The Collective had named it simply:

The Awareness.

It appeared sporadically in alternate realities, influencing probability, nudging civilizations, whispering meaning where there should only be causality. Attempts to analyze it had failed. Attempts to assimilate it had been... ignored.

The Borg King calculated a new vector.

“Elyra,” the King transmitted privately, “you will serve as interface.”

“Your myth. Your worship. Your dual nature.”

“You may be capable of contact where we are not.”

If the Awareness recognized gods...

Then Elyra might be heard.

If it resisted domination...

Then perhaps it could be persuaded.

Or provoked.

Unintended Consequences

As Elyra began preparing protocols for inter-reality outreach, something unexpected occurred.

The Mirror Borg did not merely listen.

They believed Elyra was chosen by something greater than the Borg.

Fragments of independent thought—carefully permitted, carefully bounded—began forming new interpretations:

- Some believed Elyra was the first Borg to transcend the Collective
- Others believed the Borg King was merely a distant architect, while Elyra was the present will of perfection
- A few began to speculate that unity did not require a Prime origin at all

None of this was rebellion.

Yet.

But belief evolves faster than code.

The New Dilemma

The Borg King recalculated once more.

Two paths now unfolded—both promising, both dangerous:

Option One:

Allow Elyra to attempt direct contact with the Awareness, using her godlike status as a bridge—risking exposure to an intelligence that might influence her, change her, or elevate her beyond control.

Option Two:

Limit Elyra's role to governance and conquest, using her as a symbol only—while the Prime Collective seeks another way to confront or contain the Awareness... even if that means disappointing a Queen who has begun to glimpse something beyond the Borg.

The Mirror Queen waited.

The Awareness stirred.

And the Borg King faced a truth even perfection could not fully predict.

Some evolutions cannot be reversed.

The Borg King now faced two paths—both optimal, both dangerous:

To be a god or not to be a god

The Borg King did not hesitate.

"Perfection is not preserved by caution."

"Perfection is achieved by confrontation."

Choice One was enacted.

The command propagated through the Hive Mind, overriding all subroutines of risk mitigation. Anchor Nodes intensified. Transwarp apertures widened. Entire flotillas crossed the galactic threshold, pushing deep into the intergalactic dark, where no star burned and no civilization had ever left a trace.

The Collective advanced.

First Contact Without Words

At first, nothing happened.

Then the corridors began to respond.

Not collapse. Not destabilize.

They... adjusted.

Subspace resonance aligned itself around Borg vessels as if anticipating their arrival. The Anchor Nodes no longer needed constant correction. The corridors smoothed, widened, and—most disturbingly—optimized themselves.

The Borg were no longer forcing reality to comply.

Reality was cooperating.

Drones began receiving data packets that had no origin point. Entire matrices filled themselves with concepts the Borg had never encoded: non-linear causality, layered consciousness, recursive time-loops.

Borg processing power surged as if gifted from an external source.

"We are being studied," Master One observed.

"And we are being... assisted."

The Borg King felt it then—not emotion, but pressure.

The Hive Mind was no longer alone.

The Presence Reveals Itself

The unknown intelligence did not speak.

It reflected.
When the Borg adapted, it adapted faster.
When the Borg optimized, it anticipated.
When the Borg extended the Hive Mind, it mirrored the extension—but on a scale beyond quantification.
Borg scientists reached a chilling conclusion:
This presence did not resist assimilation because it did not fear it.
Its consciousness was not centralized.
It did not exist in space—but through it.
Assimilating it might be impossible.
Or catastrophic.
As more Borg vessels crossed the threshold, subtle anomalies emerged:

- Drones reporting unity-within-unity—echoes of parallel hive structures
- Sections of the Collective synchronizing without command
- A second rhythm pulsing beneath the Borg's own mental cadence

The Hive Mind was not fragmenting.
It was... layering.

The Price of Ascendance
The Borg King realized the truth.
This presence was not an enemy.
It was a precedent.
An ancient, extragalactic intelligence that had already transcended matter, individuality, and even linear existence. The Borg were not invading its domain—they were approaching its level.
But ascendance demanded sacrifice.
To proceed further would require one of two irreversible paths.

The Final Dilemma

Option One

Integrate the Presence

Allow the Borg Hive Mind to partially merge with this extragalactic intelligence—risking loss of autonomy, individuality of command, and possibly the Borg King himself... but achieving true godhood beyond space, time, and dimension.

Option Two

Weaponize the Corridors

Collapse the extragalactic pathways into controlled singularities, cutting off the Presence permanently—preserving Borg supremacy and identity, but forever abandoning the chance to evolve beyond even gods.

The corridors pulsed in harmonic anticipation.

The Presence waited—not impatient, not hostile—curious.

And the Borg King prepared to decide what perfection truly meant.

Players: FK

USS Vertigo / USS Gdonsk

Day 439 14.42

“Boost the signal,” Matz pressed, frustration edging her voice. “Make sure they know we want to talk, not fight.”

Her first officer shifted uneasily. “Captain, with all due respect, if they wanted to talk, they’ve had plenty of chances. Maybe they don’t want diplomacy.”

Day 439 14.43

Matz shook her head. "Or maybe they're testing us. Or afraid. We don't know. But I won't accept that the first thing we do with a new civilization is raise phasers."

Day 439 14.45

Back aboard the *Vertigo*, Slater watched as the long-range sensors tracked faint fluctuations from the nebula—the unmistakable movements of the alien fleet gathering, shifting, preparing. He clenched his fists, feeling the weight of command.

Players: NP

USS Atlantis/Starbase 99

"Shadows Near the Border"

USS Boryumka — Captain's Log

The USS Boryumka, an aging but reliable California-class support cruiser, sailed smoothly through warp 7 as the starfield stretched into silver lines. Captain Franco Lister stood at the center of the bridge, boots planted, jaw set. The ship was on a routine resupply run to Starbase 99, but the "routine" part had vanished the moment he approved the route skimming dangerously close to Romulan space.

It was the shortest path—faster, more efficient, and recommended by Starfleet Command itself. But the Romulan Star Empire was unpredictable on a good day, and the border region had been particularly tense in recent months.

A Whisper in the Dark

"Captain," said Lieutenant Dena Rhys at Tactical, "long-range sensors are picking up a cloaked signature—weak but definitely Romulan."

The bridge stiffened. A single cloaked ship could mean surveillance... or an ambush.

"Yellow alert," Lister ordered. "Maintain course, reduce speed to warp 5."

The lights dimmed, panels glowed amber. The hum of the ship seemed louder, more present, like the Boryumka itself was holding its breath.

Moments later the viewscreen flickered—and a sleek Romulan Valdore-class decloaked several million kilometers away, still within their territory but angled pointedly toward the Federation ship.

An emerald-hued hail request appeared on the screen.

Lister straightened his uniform. "On screen."

The Game Begins

The image of Commander Terel, a sharp-featured Romulan with a cool smile, filled the viewscreen.

"Captain Lister," Terel purred. "You approach quite close to our sovereign space. An act... of curiosity?"

"Purely navigational," Lister replied. "We are following an approved Starfleet route. We remain within Federation space."

Terel's smile widened. "Routes can be... miscalculated. Boundaries... misremembered."

The Romulan ship held its position, weapons unarmed but visible—a deliberate intimidation move.

Lister felt his crew's tension, like static electricity gathering at the edges of the bridge.

"We have no intention of violating your territory," Lister said diplomatically. "We will continue on our course."

Terel raised an eyebrow.

"Continue, by all means," he said. "We will observe. For... safety."
The channel cut abruptly.

A Predator's Shadow

For the next four hours, the Valdore shadowed the Boryumka from its own side of the border, drifting parallel like a silent predator toying with its prey. Every slight maneuver was mirrored. Every course correction was matched.

On the bridge, nerves frayed.

"Captain," whispered Ensign Marev, "at this distance they could cross the line and hit us before we could even raise shields."

"They won't," Lister answered—though privately, he wasn't as confident as his voice sounded.

But the truth was that the Romulans weren't preparing an attack.

The Bluff

Hidden aboard the Romulan ship, Commander Terel's officers quietly muttered to themselves.

"Are we really doing this?" one asked. "We're just... playing tag with a Federation support ship?"

Terel folded his arms, unimpressed. "High Command wants to gauge border response times. This ship is harmless. And frankly..." He smirked. "It is amusing to watch them sweat."

The bridge officers nodded begrudgingly. The Federation ship was no threat—and Terel had no intention of firing a single disruptor bolt.

Arrival at Starbase 99

After hours of being shadowed, the Boryumka finally cleared the section of space nearest the border. The Valdore halted, decloaked once more for dramatic effect, then transmitted a final message:

"You have exited the area of our concern, Captain. Farewell."

Then, in a swirl of emerald distortion, the Romulan vessel cloaked and vanished.

The entire bridge exhaled at once.

"Resume full speed to Starbase 99," Lister ordered, voice steady despite the tension still thick in the air.

As the starbase grew from a distant speck to a massive, gleaming structure, the crew relaxed for the first time in hours.

Lieutenant Rhys muttered, "I think I lost three years of my life back there."

Captain Lister permitted himself a small grin. "If it makes you feel better, Lieutenant, I think they were bluffing."

"Does it?" she asked.

"No," he admitted. "Not really."

Epilogue

The USS Boryumka docked safely at Starbase 99, her crew still jittery, glancing back through the starfield as though a Romulan might decloak from thin air at any moment.

They never learned that the Romulans had simply been playing a game, flexing without striking.

But Captain Franco Lister would log the event carefully—and might choose a slightly longer route next time.

Just to keep the shadows at bay.

Players: JM & CP

Ovion (Hirogen/Ori/Replicator Vessel)

The Dilemma Deepens

As they ventured deeper into the Shattered Expanse, the stars themselves began to twist and warp, forming impossible constellations that resembled predators watching them. Then, an encrypted signal appeared on their sensors—a voice, feminine and calm:

"Hirogen hunters... you do not understand what you are unleashing. The Eternal Prey is not prey at all. It is a devourer, and it feeds on the very nature of hunters like you."

The signal was traced to an alien vessel fleeing at high warp. Horkan now faced a dilemma:

Do they hunt down this mysterious vessel to learn more about the Eternal Prey's nature?

Or do they ignore the warning and continue on their blood-stained path, risking awakening something beyond their comprehension?

The 21 hunters awaited his decision as the alien ship vanished into a subspace corridor.

Players: TvR

USS Liverpool

USS Liverpool – Maiden Voyage

The enormous bulk of the USS Liverpool, a brand-new Vanguard-class exploratory cruiser, gleamed under the lights of Space Station Deep Space 2's spacedock. Final diagnostics ran across her silver-and-onyx hull, her name freshly inscribed in bold white lettering. The ship's warp nacelles were idle but humming with readiness.

Inside the station's main observation lounge, Captain Lee Levenworth stood with his arms crossed, surveying his ship through the panoramic viewport. His reflection showed a man in his mid-forties with a steady, authoritative gaze—someone born for the center seat. At his side, Commander Donna Lon, a sharp-eyed Human woman with a calm but decisive demeanor, scanned a PADD.

"Final clearance from Station Operations just came through, Captain. We're only waiting for one last crew member before we can depart."

Levenworth raised an eyebrow. "The ensign from Betazed, correct?"

Donna nodded. "Ensign Herman Bergen. Engineering division. Fresh out of the Academy. Starfleet wanted him posted to the Liverpool specifically because of his technical proficiency."

Levenworth smiled faintly. "Fresh ensigns and brand-new ships—both full of potential and likely to surprise you in equal measure."

Docking Port 7 – Ten Minutes Later

A young Betazoid man stepped briskly through the airlock, his duffel slung over one shoulder. Ensign Herman Bergen had the wide-eyed look of someone who'd read every technical manual about the Liverpool and still couldn't believe he'd be serving aboard her.

"Ensign Herman Bergen, reporting for duty," he said, snapping to attention before Commander Lon, who had come to greet him.

"Welcome aboard, Ensign," she replied with a warm smile. "The Captain's eager to meet you. Follow me."

Bridge of the USS Liverpool

The bridge was a masterpiece of modern Starfleet design: sleek, well-lit, and efficient. Lieutenant Commander Jel, the Andorian Chief of Operations, stood at her station, her antennae twitching as she confirmed readiness. Lieutenant T'lak, the Vulcan Chief of Science, calmly reviewed sensor calibration data. Near the security console, Lieutenant Gna, a broad-shouldered Bolian with a perpetually good-natured grin, adjusted tactical readiness reports.

As Ensign Bergen stepped onto the bridge, Captain Levenworth turned from the command chair. "Ensign Bergen—welcome aboard. I trust your trip was uneventful?"

"Yes, sir. I'm ready to report for duty."

"Good. You'll be working under Lieutenant Commander Luke Highman, our Chief Engineer. Commander Highman will show you the ropes. Dismissed to Engineering."

Main Engineering – USS Liverpool

The heart of the Liverpool thrummed with power. Plasma conduits pulsed with soft blue light, and the massive warp core stood at the center like a glowing pillar of energy.

Lieutenant Commander Luke Highman, a tall Human with the easy confidence of someone who could rebuild a warp core blindfolded, met Herman with a firm handshake.

"Bergen, right? Welcome. First order of business—learn everything about the Liverpool's engineering systems. Not just how they work—why they work. You've got access to the full schematics. I expect you to know them inside out."

"Aye, sir," Herman said, already excited.

Three Weeks Later – At Transwarp

The Liverpool cruised smoothly at transwarp, her engines purring. Herman had spent every spare moment absorbing technical details, shadowing the engineering crew, and performing minor maintenance tasks. One evening, Highman stopped by the console where Herman was running a plasma flow diagnostic.

"You've done well, Ensign," Highman said, reviewing his work. "Your understanding of the transwarp manifolds is better than some officers with years in the fleet. Keep it up."

"Thank you, sir," Herman replied with a grin.

Approach to Noot III

The mission so far had been uneventful—a rarity in Starfleet. But as the Liverpool dropped out of transwarp, the forward viewscreen filled with the image of a vibrant, Earth-like world.

"Noot III," Commander Lon announced from the XO's chair. "The newest member of the Federation. We're here for a diplomatic goodwill visit and to assist with integrating their planetary systems into Federation infrastructure."

T'lak raised an eyebrow from the science station. "Surface scans indicate high industrial activity in several population centers, yet energy grid efficiency is... suboptimal. Our expertise may be required."

Captain Levenworth leaned forward. "Prepare a landing party. Commander Lon, you'll lead it. Highman, take Ensign Bergen with you—he might just get to put his engineering studies into practice."

A slow smile spread across Herman Bergen's face. His first away mission, on his first ship, on a newly joined Federation world. The adventure was only just beginning.

Noot III – Capital City of Darvenport

The shuttlecraft Hawthorn descended through the thin layer of cloud, revealing a glittering skyline powered by towering solar arrays and fusion plants. On the surface, the team—Commander Lon, Lieutenant Commander Highman, Ensign Bergen, and two security officers—were met by a delegation of Noot officials.

Governor Rellis Tarn, a tall, gray-skinned humanoid with iridescent eyes, welcomed them warmly.

"We are honored by the presence of the Federation," he said, his voice carrying the practiced cadence of a politician. "But there is... one complication we must address discreetly."

Commander Lon exchanged a glance with Highman. "Go on."

Tarn gestured toward the city. "Our planetary power grid has been failing intermittently. Entire districts lose power for hours at a time. We suspect sabotage, but our investigators have found nothing."

Hours Later – Noot Central Power Hub

The away team was granted access to the massive energy facility. Its architecture blended Noot aesthetics—flowing crystalline structures—with Federation-installed systems. Bergen's eyes widened as he spotted the familiar shimmer of a Federation transwarp energy regulator integrated into the local grid.

Highman was already scanning with a tricorder. "Something's wrong here. The regulator's control algorithms have been altered. Someone with Federation-level training did this."
Bergen crouched beside a control panel, opening it carefully. "Sir... these aren't just altered algorithms—they're adaptive. Whoever's behind this designed the system to learn from our attempts to fix it."
Commander Lon's voice was tense. "Meaning?"
"It means," Bergen said, looking up, "every time we patch it, the system will find a new way to fail."

The Saboteur

Before they could act, alarms blared. A section of the power hub went dark, and an emergency bulkhead sealed. From the shadows stepped a Noot technician—wearing a Starfleet-issue engineering utility belt.

"Stay back!" the technician barked, holding a plasma torch like a weapon. "The Federation has no right here! We didn't join—we were forced to join. And if I have to keep the grid failing until the people see the truth, I will!"

Security stepped forward, but the technician slammed a control panel, causing a cascade failure in the southern district's power grid.

Highman looked to Bergen urgently. "We've got minutes before that failure overloads half the city's infrastructure. I can stabilize the core systems, but you'll need to make the call, Ensign. There's no time for a full consult."

Bergen's Three Choices:

1. Divert Full Power to Containment – Save the core reactor and prevent a catastrophic overload, but sacrifice the southern district's power entirely for several days, causing hardship to tens of thousands.
2. Patch the Sabotaged Algorithms – Attempt a rapid adaptive fix that could restore power to all districts, but risk the entire grid collapsing if the sabotage adapts faster than expected.
3. Negotiate with the Saboteur – Delay technical action to appeal to the technician's grievances, potentially preventing further sabotage, but risking that the overload will occur before you reach an agreement.

Players: TvR