

The bedroom doors to Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester's quarters parted and the commodore himself stepped through them and into the living room, followed closely by Q, the Sovereign-class starship's chief medical officer and Koester's close companion, both wearing robes.

"I'll get the holoovid ready, Poe," Koester said to Q as he started digging through a drawer in the display cabinet behind his desk. "Could you grab some popcorn?"

"Sure, Pooh. No problem," Q answered, heading toward the replicator before stopping in front of one of personal decorations Koester displayed on the bulkhead of his quarters.

Koester emerged with the holoovid chip to find Q gently running her fingers over the letters of the plaque attached to his wall. His mood changed slightly as he moved up behind Q, putting his arms around the petite woman, his cheek softly against hers.

"Do you miss her?" Q asked, sounding solemn.

"Sometimes," Koester admitted. "Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and think I'm still there." Koester now reached out, his hand touching the Starfleet emblem on the top of the *Dauntless-74658*'s dedication plaque, the only piece of the Intrepid-class vessel that still existed. The two looked at the plaque for another moment, then moved to the couch, Q picking up a large tub of buttered popcorn from the replicator along the way.

"So why didn't you attend the festivities in 10-Forward?" she asked Koester as the movie he chose started on the wall-mounted viewer and the two snuggled closer.

"Wasn't in a party mood," the young starship commander answered, placing an arm around Q's shoulders. "And with the lull in the fighting, I wanted to spend some quality time with you."

* * * *

In the 10-Forward lounge, the party was in full swing. Many of the off-duty bridge crew, the entire compliment of Marine *Special Contingent 41*, and many other crewmen were taking the time to celebrate. The celebration was not for anything in particular, just the fact that the *Dauntless* had managed to survive its battles against Dominion forces, and that at the moment things were quiet. But no one knew how long that quiet would last.

* * * *

On Holodeck 3, Ensign Alasdair Wallace adjusted his leine - a long saffron yellow shirt - and the hauberk he wore, pulled the longsword out of the dark moist earth, and joined the army that stood still and silent before him.

"Computer, start program."

A musical chime preceded the loud raucous noise of the army as it suddenly came to life. Wallace looked up and down the ranks of soldiers, actually simple peasants and farmers mostly, then across the broad field at their enemy, the large, well equipped, well trained army of England.

Ensign Wallace had taken months researching the background and history of ancient Scotland to program this interactive holodeck adventure as realistically as possible. But the time spent would all be worth it.

Hefting a wooden shield with one arm and the longsword in the other, he glanced down to his left at the man on horseback. History recorded Robert the Bruce and his Scottish army the victors at Bannockburn, but holodeck programs were on occasion not quite so historically accurate, and so he looked forward to the battle ahead.

Wallace saw the representatives of the English army start to move forward in what was expected to be brief negotiations that would avoid the battle. Little did they suspect...

The program suddenly froze again as the red alert klaxons sounded throughout the starship.

"Bloody hell!" Wallace snarled as he thrust the longsword back into the dirt. "Computer, end program and exit." The scene faded away around Wallace as the holodeck doors parted and he hurried off to his battlestation, still wearing the leine and little else.

* * * *

Crew members rushed out of the turbolifts and onto the bridge, including Fleet Captain Koester, who took his place in the center seat, flanked on his left by Ship's Counselor Kethry Sutherland and on his right by first officer Virgil Dylan Kane.

"What's the situation, Exec? Cardassians? Jem'Hadar? Breen?"

"No, Skipper," said Kane, grimly. "Worse. The Borg."

Space, The Final Frontier...
These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

Star Trek: *Dauntless*

“Family Ties” By PJK

Captain’s log, stardate 52735.8:

*In the midst of war, we have encountered our only greater horror. A Borg Cube.
Koester, commanding *Dauntless*, out.*

“*We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ship,*” announced the hive voice of the Borg over the bridge speakers. Commodore Peter Koester watched with concern mixed with mild fear as the huge, square vessel moved closer.

No place to run... The Borg vessel was much faster than the Federation starship.

No place to hide... In the open depths of space, there was nary a star, planet, or moon around which to maneuver.

“*Resistance is futile.*”

“Resist this!” Koester said defiantly, then leaned forward in his command chair. “Mister Ga’gh, lock all phaser banks onto the Cube. Load and arm all photon and quantum torpedo tubes. Fire at will.”

Immediately, beams of phased energy shot out from the phaser strips all over the hull of the *Dauntless*, followed quickly by scores of both photon and quantum torpedoes. The weapons struck the exterior of the Borg vessel, tearing huge chunks out of its surface.

The Borg ship continued to move closer as if the *Dauntless* were merely adrift and powerless. As it neared the Federation starship, a tractor beam lashed out at it, attempting to lock onto the resisting vessel.

“Shield nutations are resisting the Borg tractor beam,” Lt Ga’gh announced.

“Indicating twenty percent damage to the Borg vessel,” reported Lt Commander Phillip Winters at ops.

“Mister Fry,” Koester ordered to his helmsman. “Get us out of here!”

“Aye, sir,” Fry responded as he kicked the *Dauntless* into full impulse and prepared to jump to warp.

“Borg vessel in pursuit,” Winters added.

“Skipper, we’re being scanned by the Borg vessel,” Chief Pono Kyman announced, his voice sounding strained. Koester looked over at the mission ops station, concerned, and noticed Kyman sweating profusely.

“Are you okay, Chief? You’re not looking well.”

“I’m... I’m fine, Skipper,” Kyman replied, hesitation in his voice.

“If you need to get relieved and go down to sickbay, Chief...,” Koester suggested, remembering the Master Chief Petty Officer’s El’Aurian heritage and their history with the Borg.

“NO,” Kyman answered a little too forcefully. “I’d much rather stay here at my post.”

“Very well,” Koester said, returning his attention to the viewscreen as Counselor Sutherland glanced over at Kyman. The chief noticed her gaze and quickly returned to studying his console’s readouts.

“Status?” asked Koester.

“Borg cube, 50,000 kilometers and closing,” reported Winters in his typical British accent.

“Shields down to seventy eight percent,” added Ga’gh.

“Evasive pattern Delta, Mister Fry. Now!”

Fry tapped the commands into his console, and the *Dauntless* nose-dived relative to the cube, turning back on its own course. The maneuver took the Borg hive mind by surprise, and it took the Cube a moment to reverse course and pursue.

“Warp speed now, Mister Fry!”

“The Borg vessel is firing!” Ga’gh exclaimed.

Before the *Dauntless* could jump to warp, the bolt from the Borg ship struck the starship, sending sparks flashing from a number of the bridge stations.

“Commodore, we’ve lost shields!” Ga’gh reported, his normally deep voice sounding two octaves higher with stress.

“Borg vessel has us locked in its tractor beam,” Winters announced, remarkably calm, like he was announcing the time of day.

“Ga’gh, get those shield nutations back on-line!” Koester ordered, even as green swirls of light appeared in his peripheral vision. The *Dauntless* was being boarded.

“Mister Kane, call away ‘repel boarders,’” Koester ordered as the first Borg drone fell in a hail of hand-held phaser fire, to quickly be replaced by two new drones.

The Starfleet Marines, who had abandoned the party in 10-Forward when the red alert had first been called, now fanned out around the Sovereign-class starship, their compression rifles and hand phasers automatically rotating beam frequency to overcome as many of the invading Borg as possible. But it was a losing battle as more and more drones beamed aboard, and the Borg eventually adapted to the phaser frequencies. Members of the *Dauntless* crew found themselves at the mercy of their worst nightmares as drones captured them and injected nanoprobes into their bloodstream, the first step toward assimilation.

“Get those shields back up!” Koester shouted as he held off a drone hand to hand.

“I’m trying, sir,” Ga’gh yelled back, dividing his attention between trying to restore the nutational shield program and defending himself from a Borg who relentlessly moved forward toward him.

“Ahhhhrrrrrr!”

Everyone on the bridge heard the shout as the turbolift doors opened and Ensign Jason O’Brien Blackfoot T’Vet Korsal – or O’B as the crew called him - came charging onto the bridge, bat’leth in hand, and swung into the chest armor of the drone attacking Ga’gh.

The chief tactical officer nodded thanks to his part-Klingon assistant, then quickly resumed his work trying to raise the shields again while O’B moved on to attack the other three drones on the bridge.

“Chief, look out!” Commodore Koester shouted at Chief Kyman as the El’Aurian man attempted to lock out the bridge computer functions through his mission ops station. Kyman swung around, ready to confront the Borg attacking him when he encountered his own greatest nightmare.

The Borg was a typical drone. Black armor covered most of the body. What skin was exposed was deathly white and mottled. Tubes and wires connected parts of its skull to other areas of the neck, shoulders, and torso. But Kyman could see though all that to the being that had been assimilated underneath.

The being was El’Aurian. But not simply any El’Aurian assimilated by the Borg when they attacked El’Auria over a century before.

Tears welled in Kyman’s eyes.

“Mother?”

This being, this drone, this Borg... had been Morra Kyman.

The chief hesitated, conflicting emotions overwhelming him. The Borg - his mother - moved closer, her right arm outstretched and the nanoprobe injectors emerging from her knuckles, yet Kyman remained motionless.

“Chief!” yelled out Koester, who bolted toward the upper bridge deck, knocking into the Borg drone and throwing it off balance, but not before the injectors briefly pierced Kyman’s neck. Both beings fell to the deck, unconscious, and the commodore reacted with horror as dark veins began to spread across the COB’s face.

“Get him down to sickbay!” Koester screamed. “Now!”

“Commodore, the shield nutation has been restored!” Ga’gh exclaimed as crew members picked up both Chief Kyman and the Borg drone and started carrying them toward the turbolift. “Borg tractor beam has lost its hold on us.”

Koester rushed back to his command chair as the last two remaining Borg on the bridge were disabled. He sat down in the seat, pressing the intercom button as he did.

“Engineering, do we still have warp?”

“Aye, sir,” answered the voice of Lt Nate Johnson, the ship’s chief engineer. “Standing by for your command.”

“Status of the Cube?” Koester inquired.

“Borg vessel has ceased fire,” Ga’gh reported.

“Damage to Borg vessel is seventy eight percent, Commodore,” added Commander Bloom. “The Borg appear to have gone into a regenerative state.”

“Now’s the time, Skipper,” Kane said.

“I agree. Helm, heading 025 mark 2. Warp 8. Kick it!”

Fry, blood oozing down the side of his face from an injury sustained in the Borg attack, nodded in acknowledgement and sent the starship into high warp very quickly.

“Pursuit?” Koester asked a moment later.

“It appears the Borg vessel is not pursuing, Commodore,” Bloom answered, letting go of the breath he had been holding as he did.

“Very well. Mister Fry, maintain speed until we reach *Starbase 12*. Mister Kane, you have the conn. I’ll be down in sickbay.”

* * * *

The doors to sickbay parted, and Commodore Peter J. Koester slowly entered, looking around in dismay. Every biobed was filled, with other less serious injuries lining the walls and CMO’s office. However, it was the activity in the main operating ward that had brought Koester down here.

Around the main operating bed, both **Q** and the Emergency Medical Hologram huddled over the prone form of the *Dauntless*’ Chief of the Boat. On one of the closest biobeds Koester noticed the Borg who had been brought down from the bridge with Kyman. The biomonitors indicated the drone was still alive, though in an induced coma. The young commodore’s first instinct was to shut off the life support unit. Kill the creature that had done this to his close friend and trusted subordinate. But intellect quickly took over, knowing the ship’s medical staff was keeping the Borg alive for a reason, either research, or a reference point to help Kyman recover.

“How is he?” Koester asked as he stood just outside the quarantine forcefield. **Q** glanced over her shoulder at Koester.

“Too early to tell,” she explained. “I think we may have gotten him down here quick enough, but I’m having trouble flushing the nanoprobes from his system. It’s almost as if his body is simply giving in to the assimilation. We’ve already removed two implants they generated and are trying to head off another.”

“Keep me updated,” Koester said as he turned to leave, then suddenly turned back. “One other thing. What are you planning on doing with that?” He gestured toward the Borg asleep on the first biobed.

“That’s the next one under the scanners here,” **Q** answered as she manipulated a tool into Kyman’s arm. The device emitted a high pitched hum when it was activated. “We’re hoping to learn more about how the implants interact as we remove them from her. That way we’ll know more how to help victims like Chief Kyman in the future.”

It seemed against his better judgment, after all the years of training summed up as ‘The only good Borg is a dead Borg.’ But Koester knew his chief medical officer understood what she was doing, and was well equipped to handle any emergency that might arise in sickbay. Deciding to get out from under people’s feet, Koester left sickbay and headed directly for his ready room.

* * * *

Captain’s log, stardate 52736.0:

With no sign of pursuit, we are now within a day of arriving at Starbase 12, where our injured will be cared for in the base infirmary.

Still no word on Chief Kyman’s recovery. However, I have been notified that the majority of the Borg drone’s implants have been removed or shut down, including its interplexing beacon. The drone, if it survives, is no longer a member of the Collective.

Koester, commanding Dauntless, out.

* * * *

Commodore Koester was still sitting at the desk in his ready room, reviewing damage and casualty reports, when the door chime sounded. He looked at the doors with a mixture of hope and dread.

“Come.”

The doors swished aside and **Q** entered. She looked particularly unkempt, her long brown hair, normally pulled back tightly in a ponytail, hung loosely around her head, some strands covering her face. Blood, a mixture of red, green, and dark brown, stained her medical tunic.

“How is he?” Koester asked with concern as he offered Q a seat on the couch and then sped to the replicator to bring her a cup of herb tea with a cinnamon stick in it.

Q gratefully accepted the cup, taking a long sip from it before answering, “He’ll survive. But I won’t know exactly how much damage the implants did to his brain until he wakes up.”

Koester nodded, taking a seat next to Q, who closed her eyes and leaned her head against Koester’s shoulder. “What about our... uh... guest?”

“Well, the EMH and I managed to stabilize her. It will be some time though before we find out if any of her humanity... or in her case, El’Aurity? Well, whatever... If she reverts to becoming an individual again.”

“It’s... I mean, she’s El’Aurian?” Koester asked, suddenly jolting upright. “Do you think the Chief was aware of that?”

“I don’t know. Why?”

“Because when that Borg attacked him, he froze. And it wasn’t fear I saw in his face. More like... concern. ...A deep sadness.”

This information started Q thinking. She put the teacup down on an end table and quickly rushed to the door, Koester following.

“What is it?” he asked as they both darted across the bridge and into the turbolift.

“I want to test a hypothesis,” Q answered as the doors swished shut.

* * * *

“It’s just as I suspected,” Q said as both she and Koester stared at the medical monitor. Koester recognized some of the information displayed, but did not have the medical knowledge to fully understand it.

“What are we looking at here?”

Q looked up at Koester, a smirk on her lips, and answered, “I took DNA samples from both Chief Kyman and the El’Aurian Borg, and the results were as I expected. They’re family.”

“What?!?”

Q pointed out half a dozen spikes displayed on the monitor.

“Here, here, and here... There can be no doubt. Chief Kyman and that Borg are closely related. And by closely I mean within two generations.”

A moan from one of the nearby biobeds drew both their attentions. By the time they moved over to where Chief Kyman lay, the EMH had responded as well.

“How do you feel?” Koester asked Kyman as he gripped the El’Aurian man’s un-bandaged arm.

“Like hell,” Kyman croaked. “What happened to me? I had some of the strangest dreams.”

“You were attacked by the Borg,” Q explained as she passed the scanner of a medical tricorder over Kyman’s prone figure. “The drone managed to inject you with nanoprobes, but we managed to remove the implants in time.”

Kyman’s face took on a deathly pallor.

“Then it wasn’t a dream this time?” he said, his voice little more than a whisper. Concern etched the faces of those around him.

“What did you experience, Chief?” the EMH asked Kyman. The Chief seemed for a moment to lose himself in the memories.

“I heard their voice... in my head. All the time. Never a quiet moment.” Kyman paused for a moment, accepting a cup of water from Q to quench his parched throat before continuing. “I was compelled to listen, compelled to obey, fighting against it the whole time until... until...”

“Until what, COB?” Koester asked.

“Until she told me to relax... That everything would be alright. That we were together again.”

“Who?” asked Q, glancing up at Koester to see if he shared her suspicions.

“My... my mother.” He looked at the faces of those around him, growing concern replacing the weariness. Trying to sit up, gentle hands held him back down. “But it was just a dream, right? I mean, she was killed over a hundred years ago. She couldn’t possibly be...”

“COB, I want you to relax, you’ve been through a tremendous ordeal,” ordered Koester.

Kyman’s breathing returned more to normal. He lay back again, shutting his eyes for a moment. When he opened them again, Q was holding a padd.

"I'm sorry to do this to you right now, Chief," Q said, holding the padd forward where Kyman could see the screen. "Do you recognize this person?"

The image on the screen showed a woman, strangely scarred, yet not at all like the Borg she had been mere hours earlier. Her skin color was much closer to normal, though still pale by either human or El'Aurian standards. She remained bald, but the tubes and circuits were no longer present. It would just be a matter of time before hair and other natural features would grow and fill in.

"Mother!" Kyman shouted, again bolting upright on the bed. "Where is she? Is she alive?"

"She was the Borg that attacked you on the bridge," Q answered. "Pete managed to disable her without killing her. She was brought down here to sickbay so we could study her. We had no idea until just a few moments ago that she was in any way related to you. You just confirmed our suspicions."

"Where is she? When can I see her?" Kyman asked, trying to climb out of bed. His progress was blocked by the EMH, who scolded him sternly.

"If you don't get back into that bed, I will tie you down, Chief."

Kyman seemed poised to disobey the holographic doctor until he looked at the faces of Koester and Q.

"Oh, fine," he mumbled.

"You need rest, Chief. Your body was invaded by foreign biotechnology. You need a chance to regain your strength. If you follow my directions, three days in sickbay and two weeks in quarters and you'll be fit for duty. If you don't..." Q's expression grew stern. "Three WEEKS in sickbay and a month recuperating at *Starbase 12*."

Kyman huffed, then laid back down on the bed.

"As for your mother," the EMH added. "Her vital signs are improving. Her biological functions are responding to treatment. However, she is still in a coma. There's no way of knowing when she may come out of it. If she comes out of it."

"I'm sure she'll be fine," Q said, throwing an acid look at the holodoc. "I'm sure both of you will."

* * * *

Captain's log, stardate 52737.2:

We've been in orbit around Starbase 12 for two days now and repairs to the Dauntless have commenced. We are also awaiting replacements for the twelve members of my crew killed in the Borg attack.

Chief Kyman seems to be well on his way to recovery. And to our surprise, his mother – Morra - formerly a Borg drone, is responding well to treatment and is on her own road toward recovery.

Our only question now... What do we do with her?

Koester, out.

Koester watched from within the CMO's office. At the desk beside him, Q monitored the vital statistics of both her patients out in the main ward of sickbay.

"So far they're both doing alright," Q told her more than just commanding officer. "In fact, I would have to say she's making a miraculous recovery, considering she was a part of the Collective for over a century."

"So, what do we do with her?" Koester asked, obviously confused. "I don't think we can keep her aboard, but where do we send a former Borg?"

"Who says we have to send her away somewhere, Pooh?" Q asked, looking up at Koester as she spoke. "I read a report sent out by the *Prometheus* that the crew of *Voyager* lost in the Delta Quadrant has managed to bring a human back from the Collective successfully."

"And *Voyager* isn't exactly in a position to just drop that former Borg off at a starbase or Federation member world, are they?"

A bleeping alarm on her panel drew back Q's attention. The monitor indicted that Chief Kyman's biobed no longer registered life signs.

"Oh no," the Doctor said, quickly glancing out the clear, round wall of her office. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw Kyman standing alongside his mother's bed, holding the unconscious El'Aurian woman's hand. Q and Koester quietly moved out into the ward to join him.

“She doesn’t quite look like I remember,” Kyman said without turning to acknowledge Q and Koester’s presence as he softly stroked his mother’s scarred face. His hand paused over a small implant that protruded from her right cheek.

“We had to leave some of the implants attached or else she would have died,” Q explained, taking a medical tricorder from a nearby tray and passing the scanner over Morra’s still form, then nodded to herself with a slight smile. “She’s recovering slowly, but given time, she’ll be back to normal real soon. Someday she may not even need any of the implants.”

Kyman nodded, then looked at Koester, deep sadness in his eyes.

“That Borg ship. Were there others of my family on it?”

“We have no way of knowing, COB,” Koester answered. “Your family, if they survived the Borg attack on El’Auria to be assimilated...” Koester shivered at the thought. “If they are Borg, who knows how many times they’ve been moved around from cube to cube over the last century. However, the Borg Cube that attacked us repaired itself and is headed out of Federation space. If you really feel the need, perhaps we could find it again and board it...”

“No, Skipper. Be better if they had been killed anyway,” Kyman said, shaking his head and looking sadly at his mother. “What are we going to do with Morra?”

Q looked up at Koester, concerned, when the commodore answered, “We were really hoping you might have some input into that dilemma, COB. Do you think it would be better for her to recover here, with you, or at a planet-side facility where specialists can monitor and aid her?”

Kyman chuckled unpleasantly, then looked at Koester as he continued to hold Morra’s hand.

“Skipper, I would not want my mother here while we’re at war any more than you wanted your daughter Gem aboard.” He sighed, then returned Morra’s hand comfortably to her chest as he started walking back to his own biobed. “Please, make arrangements for her to be sent to Earth. I’m sure they can help her better there.”

Koester nodded, then gave a brief goodbye kiss to Q before he left to make arrangements for the former Borg’s transfer to Earth. Meanwhile, Q moved over to Kyman’s bed and started scanning the chief with her tricorder.

“If you don’t mind, Commander,” Kyman said, turning to face Q, “could you please take your noisy machinery away. I would like a chance to meditate.”

Q smiled awkwardly, then excused herself and returned to her office.

Kyman turned back over, facing the bed where his mother still lay unconscious, and closed his eyes.

“Welcome home, mother. I love you,” he whispered.

‘*I love you too, my son,*’ he heard in his mind.

The End