

Listen up, Traks fans! Paramount (Global) owns and operates the official Star Trek franchise, as well as several modest alternate realities. Star Traks was dreamt by Decker, who has since been writing to rid himself of the nightmare. Drawn into the Traks realm was Meneks, writer of BorgSpace. Visitors to the Traks zoo are discouraged from feeding the authors, by order of The Management.

The Dark were originally mentioned in the three-part, Season 2 story, "Let Sleeping Borg Lie." Other than that, the events herein are completely original (more or less). The use of the future version Secondprize and crew have been given the big thumb's up of approval by Decker.

Dark Rising

Prologue

Year: 2413 (three years before present)

Delta Quadrant -

Call her Mottle, for the irregular patches of light gray which discolored her otherwise black skin. It was not her true name - a bright buzz of heavily modulated radio static conveying information from lineage to current emotional state - but it was as close as could be translated to verbal languages. She was an intelligent being, and perfectly proportioned, which was a more important standard of beauty among her kind than her odd coloration because her species did not rely upon traditional visual frequencies to "see." Graceful, space was her natural environment, her species once planetbound, but now monarchs of the realms beyond mudball atmosphere. Her racial memory recounted the epic feat of genetic engineering and melding of organic and mechanical technologies to breed/build a body able to leave behind a dying world. In a universe which was dark, without stars, except for a smudge of light representing a galaxy of plenty, the course of her race's migration was self-evident. A cornucopia awaited, a place to eat, to breed, to spread.

Mottle enjoyed the feeling of vacuum against her skin, the tickle of dust and the occasional micrometeorite. Unfortunately, from her point of view, she could not revel in the celestial scouring of her hide, deflectors and force fields necessary as she and her pod of brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, advanced upon their target - a giant gas planet surrounded by a tasty swarm of moons. Creatures of metal, parasitized by organic /things/, orbited the gas planet; and from prior knowledge Sung across subspace from other pods, Mottle knew the metal beasts would not share their bounty. Of course, she wouldn't share the bounty either if it belonged to herself and her pod. Selfishness for pod and individual and race, in that order, was a natural product of evolution. Mottle could envision no other way, and in fact would have been surprised that altruism and sharing could exist between species. Resources belonged solely to the strong, to those who could take and hold bounty.

The odd philosopher Sung that it was the parasites which controlled the metal creatures, who actually built the inorganic beasts. They Sung that the parasites were intelligent, thinking, caring. Of course, it was the role of philosophers to Sing fantasy dreams, to construct odes to the improbable. In reality, the parasites, had they intelligence at all, were likely similar to distantly

remembered poppinjays or fretos, animals which built hives and dams and had complex relationships, even language of sorts, but in the end were merely tools placed in the universe to further the race to which Mottle belonged.

Predictably, the metal creatures (or the parasites, depending on one's point of view and sanity of mind), began spitting plasma- and electromagnetic-based attacks interspersed with torpedoes. The pod scattered, individuals instantly transforming from compact travel formation to a diffuse globular attack formation. Song linked each to the next; and Mottle trilled her affirmative response to a sub-strikeleader as he called for pod members to join him in assault upon the nearest of the cube-shaped defenders. Screaming threat, the pod readied weapons and stooped to the attack.

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Alpha Quadrant -

Many observing as One; many speaking as One. Yet, insidiously, not quite One. Individual thoughts, individual opinions, individual consciousness fluidly flowed within the Whole, merging and disincorporating as necessary. Many working as One, yes, but not truly One. Not truly One in the classic sense of the Perfection Borg had been striving to obtain for millennia.

It was a great day, a historic day, a celebration reflected in the scene beheld by a lone(!) point-of-view. The wary stance of unobtrusive guards in unusual, yet recognizable, Starfleet uniform gave evidence all was not as trusting as it could be. However, after decades of animosity, the attitude was understandable. The Hive Collective was not offended. Offense was an attitude for small beings.

A human (<<Species #5618,>> whispered from the depths automatically) female stepped to the table. The individual - a drone - standing prepared was openly curious about the pomp and circumstance of the occasion. Why was this ceremony necessary? Why the finery and protocol? The Collective was not impressed, could not be impressed by shiny weapons and neatly pressed clothes. None of the questions were vocalized, and no inquisitiveness was reflected in the drone's deadpan expression. Perhaps the whole eye darted back and forth a bit more than proscribed, but that was all. Most oddly, for one unknowing of the fundamental changes in the core Greater Consciousness, the lone drone was not forcefully reabsorbed into the One for his individualistic-inclined transgressions. As long as he did not actively oppose the goals of the Whole, small mental aberrations could be overlooked, deemed irrelevant.

But why should he resist the Will of the Hive? After all, he was among the first generation of willing volunteers for assimilation.

"You are ready to sign the Commonwealth Treaty?" inquired the medal-bedecked woman, ornate lapel rank denoting her a high-ranking admiral. (<<Martina McCallister,>> hissed the ever-present Voice, accompanied by an extensive dossier containing everything from official Starfleet accomplishments to current familial difficulties to sexual/species orientation.) "Are you the total representation?" Martina asked, questioning tone one of mild disbelief. She had obviously expected something more grandiose than a single drone on the ground and a very inoffensive pre-Dark Exploratory-class cube in Earth orbit.

Answered the drone: "A single unit is sufficient for this irrelevant ceremony. We are prepared. We are Hive."

After visibly overcoming the reminder that trillions of Hivers, not one, attended the

ceremony, the woman picked up an old-fashioned ink pen. The drone did likewise. A word-filled sheet of pressed and dried vegetative pulp material was signed under the watchful lenses of dozens of unobtrusive cambots broadcasting to the multitudes of individuals tuning in on one of the most important treaties in Federation history.

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Beta Quadrant -

"Sir," said a young ensign, too smart for his own good, freshly pipped, "I don't think this is what Command meant..."

A hand slashed the air, quieting the squeaky voice of reason. The blond haired captain standing in the middle of the bridge was intently staring at the viewscreen. "You are an ensign. Even if you are a certified ultra-mega-genius, you are not supposed to think. This is /my/ ship, my first command and my first mission. If someone thought you were supposed to think, then you would be in my place captaining the Secondprize. Helm, orbit the object three more times, then set course to that planet to which we are supposed to be delivering vaccines. Comm, contact the gift shop. I want postcards."

"Aye, Captain," replied the relevant voices.

The captain sighed, her eyes plastered on the galaxy's Largest Planetoid Abstract, a work of art (critics debated if such a dignified title should be given to what was essentially a lose sphere of rubble) created by smashing asteroids onto a rocky planet until said target disintegrated under the impacts. How she loved these little side-trips! And now, as captain, she could order her ship to visit them, instead of stealing runabouts or reprogramming the navigational computers when no one was watching.

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Gamma Quadrant -

Several Qs had managed to field teams of sufficient size for a little game of solar system baseball. The exact rules were only known to the Qs, but by the end of the game one could guarantee the host system would not be the same. The bronze-age beings on the second planet would be traumatized for several millennia, convinced they had angered their god. The stars, the earth beneath, should just not move in such a way! Many turnip-like root vegetables were sacrificed for the next three thousand years, eventually mutating into a civic holiday which included application of technology to purposefully spin the home planet like a demented whirling dervish.

Other than that, nothing much was happening in the gamma quadrant, as usual.