

Star Trek: Picard story arc idea:

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*** I have posted this here because it's impossible to get through to the production company and scriptwriters. ***

In a nutshell: Picard and his new-found crew liberate the Borg held in captivity by the Romulans.

How does it work? [these are notes and an outline, not a script]:

1] Romulan Empire is now fragmented after the destruction of Romulus. The Star Empire and Republic are the main factions but there are also smaller factions. The Star Empire retains the Tal Shiar and is militaristic and expansionist. The Republic is more interested in consolidating its territories and maintaining its' status quo and has made tentative steps towards a non-aggression pact with the Federation. Some of the more obscure factions have even adopted the teachings and philosophies of Surak.

2] The Borg are also fragmented into five main factions centered around the five remaining transwarp hubs and their controller Queens as a result of Janeway uploading the neurolytic pathogen developed by Echeb's parents. The various fragments are still hive-mind collectives but, because of the neurolytic pathogen, can no longer merge into a single hive mind and are prone to turf wars when they compete over resources to assimilate. And, for the first time in a very long time, the Borg find themselves on the defensive as the existing civilizations in the Delta Quadrant are able to slowly push back against the now-weakened Borg.

3] Many Borg on the galactic peripheries of the five collectives became completely disconnected from the hive-mind and have begun the slow, chaotic and often traumatic journey back to their previous pre-assimilation identities. Many fail and die.

4] The Romulan Star Empire has taken advantage of the Borg's disarray and have been able to capture Borg cubes and outposts in the Alpha Quadrant and further afield, putting them to work as slave labour and expendable soldiers. Not all Romulans are happy about this... not so much from a moral perspective but more from a safety PoV: can they really be certain that their captive Borg drones won't turn on them and start assimilating Romulans?

5] Star Fleet Command [and Section 31] know about this and have their agents embedded within the Romulan program. Star Fleet wants to shut down the Romulan program but Section 31 want to steal the Romulan technology used to enslave and control their captive Borg drones. It turns out that everyone knows about the Romulan's program [aka: the worst-kept secret in the Alpha Quadrant]. The Cardassians, Xindi, Ferengi and Breen also have agents in the Romulan Borg program. The Klingons and Andorians also know about it but will have nothing to do with it as they prefer to fight their own battles rather than to use proxy slaves.

6] During one of Annika/Seven's weekly counselling session with Troi, Annika/Seven mentions that she has begun hearing voices from the collective again. Troi remarks that this happened frequently in the past and asks if Annika/Seven has had any PTSD episodes relating back to her assimilation and life as a Borg drone recently as the voices tended to be an opening harbinger of Annika/Seven's PTSD episodes. Annika/Seven tells Troi that it's completely different this time and that it's more like a chaotic rabble of Borg voices all talking across each other. Sometimes she can almost make out fragments of it but she's not sure if she's really hearing intelligible voices or merely projecting what she wants or expects to hear.

7] Picard has been unable to settle down into a quiet retirement on his family vineyard. But doesn't know why.... It's just a never-ending uneasy itch at the back of his mind that he can't quite define. What it really is, is one of the five main Borg Queens trying to reach out to him via the remnants of Borg

technology left in his body after his stint as Locutus of Borg. It isn't until Seven/Annika visits Picard that the connection is made via her cortical node and the Queen makes her pitch through Annika/Seven begging Picard to free the enslaved Borg drones starting with a Borg version of Shylock's words "If you prick me, do I not bleed? ... If you poison me, do I not die?"

8] Picard is not keen on the idea. The last thing he wants is for the Borg to return to their former all-conquering state. He reminds the Queen that the Borg have been genocidal in their time, annihilating whole civilizations through assimilation destroying the diverse tapestry of life and culture throughout the galaxy and refuses to help her. The Queen counters that Admiral Janeway of Starfleet was equally genocidal when she destroyed one of the Transwarp hubs and its Queen.

9] One of the smaller Romulan factions that are now followers of Surak know about the slave drone program and want to liberate them and give the drones sanctuary on their modest colony planet. They also reach out to Picard and he agrees to help them. Picard decides to bring along the EMH for his wealth of experience and knowledge of all things Borg.

10] The drone liberation program is started but doesn't get very far before the Romulan Star Empire finds the sanctuary colony and attacks it to reclaim their slave drones. However, the Romulan attack is foiled by a Borg cube led by Hugh and his rag-tag collective of 'free-thinking' Borg who retain most of their augmentation but have the ability to operate independently as well as collectively. For reasons they have been unable to fathom, they are immune to the ravages of the neurolytic pathogen that ripped through the Borg. They beam Picard his crew aboard just as Picard's ship is destroyed by the Romulans.

11] Hugh offers to take the liberated drones from the Romulan-Surak colony in order to spare them and the colony from the wrath of the Romulan Star Empire. Hugh's offer is accepted but life aboard their cube is harsh. They are desperately low on supplies, fuel, materials and weaponry. They are literally running on fumes and hope, reduced to scavenging abandoned Borg vessels and outposts for parts and supplies. In spite of their hardship, they eschew assimilating other ships and colonies preferring to keep a low profile while they come to terms with their new-found lives.

12] Hugh and his drones are loath to show their faces wherever they go because everyone is still afraid of the Borg, so they are unable to trade for supplies. Picard offers to go down to a colony they are passing to trade for supplies and replicators. It's a routine and successful mission except for one incident where a shadowy figure approaches Picard in the market, gives him the bridge plaque from the USS Raven and then disappears into the crowd before Picard can question them. Back aboard the cube, he gives the plaque to Annika/Seven.

13] Side note: there are many Borg Queens. The females of species 125 were able to retain a modicum of their individuality after assimilation and became the living information mitochondria to the Borg Collective's cells [as opposed to the purely electro-crystalline Vincula]. Each transwarp hub has its own Queen and there is a hierarchy of Queens with lesser Queens on cubes and on colony planets / moons / stations / etc.

14] Hugh's 'collective' of drones are slowly reverting back to the characteristics of their original species but not as quickly or profoundly as the Unimatrix Zero drones. Hugh asks Annika/Seven if she would be his cube's Queen and guide his drones back to their pre-assimilation selves seeing how she successfully made the transition. Though tempted, she makes it clear that she will only help Hugh and his drones for a while and intends to return to her family and life on the Tendara Colony. Hugh is disappointed but gratefully accepts her limited offer. Annika/Seven confides to Picard that she doubts she even has the ability to function as a Borg Queen as all Borg Queens were drawn from the Species 125 genetic pool and that she is very much human, Species 5618. Nevertheless, she takes up her temporary position and jacks in to the collectives' matrix during her next regeneration cycle.

15] Annika/Seven is torn. Annika, grateful for the time spent with her now-deceased aunt, Irene Hansen, who helped her regain her full humanity, is uncomfortable aboard the cube as it brings back memories of her life as the drone Seven of Nine and starts experiencing flashbacks and has periodic repeated hallucinations where she is a drone assimilating Picard and the crew they set out with. New Borg augmentations begin to grow on her and she can't tell if they're real or a hallucination and she blames Hugh and Picard for what is happening.

16] A group of free-thinking female drones aboard Hugh's cube see Annika/Seven one day and give her 'the look'. Annika's experiences as a lover and mother was shared across the cube as soon as she agreed to become their temporary Queen and jacked into its matrix and they want what Annika had. Annika/Seven as their Queen recognizes their desires but admonishes them: "This collective does not have the resources to support infants, there are more urgent matters at hand." Crestfallen, they return to their duties, eyeing Seven enviously.

17] A hand is seen attaching a device similar to that used by the Romulans to control their slave drones to one of Hugh's free-thinking drones and also to Annika/Seven during their regeneration cycle. The device integrates itself into their Borg augmentations until it becomes indistinguishable.

18] Annika/Seven's physical changes are the result of her connection with the collectives' cube. The hallucinations are actually the work of a Queen currently at an outpost and transwarp gateway deep in a gas nebula near the Typhon Expanse who is intermittently able to take over Annika/Seven and force Hugh's cube to rendezvous at her transwarp gateway and then back to her transwarp hub in the Delta Quadrant.

19] The Queen greets Picard graciously upon arrival at the transwarp hub: "Welcome home, Locutus." Picard replies defiantly that he is no longer Locutus, that the transwarp hub is most certainly not his home and that he and his crew [except Annika/Seven because it might kill her] have infected themselves with the neurolytic pathogen and that any attempt to assimilate them would kill the Queen and all the drones at the transwarp hub. The Queen is unfazed, smiles enigmatically and replies "I expected nothing less of you."

20] The Queen gives them the Potemkin Village tour of the transwarp hub but it isn't long before they see how bad things really are. Life at the transwarp hub is dire. The few drones that haven't yet succumbed to the neurolytic pathogen are literally dying of starvation on their feet and cannibalism of dead drones has become a desperate necessity of life. The once-mighty anti-matter power generators that sustained the transwarp hub and its conduits are barely even functional. The only conduit left working is the one that took them from the Alpha Quadrant.

21] Picard confronts the Queen with the true nature of their circumstances but the Queen, in the manner of Monty Python's Black Knight, blithely assures Picard that it's only a temporary setback until they assimilate more drones. The EMH drily counters that even if the Queen and her remaining drones went on the attack assimilating all the planets and colonies near the Alpha Quadrant end of the transwarp conduit, they would all be dead from the neurolytic pathogen within a year.

22] Annika/Seven suddenly collapses and the Romulan slave-drones overpower the Queens' drones, taking the Queen, Picard, his crew, most of the Surak-Romulans that accompanied them, Hugh, the EMH and Seven into captivity. Picard, the Queen, Hugh, the EMH and Seven are taken away and placed in a separate cell to await their fate. Seven is unconscious and twitching spasmodically as if she's fighting an unconscious battle or a long, drawn-out epileptic fit. The EMH and Hugh examine Seven and are able to locate an alien processor that has integrated itself into her Borg processors and implants but cannot remove it.

23] Harry Mudd [he has acquired another time crystal which he now uses in his criminal pursuits and has manipulated and exploited the Surak-Romulans to liberate the Romulan slave-drones] walks up to the force field at the cell door and demands that the Queen turn over control of the transwarp hub to him. She refuses. Harry Mudd laughs as he twirls his moustache saying that they'll all be dead soon and it'll be his for the taking and leaves them in their cell.

24] The Queen offers to help Seven. Picard, Hugh and the EMH are sceptical at first but eventually agree. The Queen extrudes a probe to connect with one of Seven's augments humming distractedly to herself for a few minutes and it seems that she's making progress before she, too, is incapacitated.

25] Hugh might be a free-thinking Borg, but loyalty to his own kind kicks in and he attempts to revive the Borg Queen. He extrudes probes into her main augment ports and remains hunched over her motionless body for what feels like hours. Picard asks the EMH if they're even alive and the EMH assures him that they are but appear to be in some sort of trance state, jokingly referring to it as a Borg

Mind Meld. At first her fingers twitch faintly and eventually she slowly opens her eyes to see Hugh leaning over her. Seeing that she's revived, Hugh turns his attention to Seven whose fits have since subsided.

26] The Queen looks around and complains that she can't hear her drones. "One thing at a time, your majesty." The EMH glibly reassures her. "Your knight in shining armour, well... cyborg leather fetish gear, has just saved your life." Hugh, still connected to Seven, looks over and tells her: "It is as I explained when we were one: your connection with the collective is now a voluntary choice. Our default state is disconnected. That appears to be our defence against the neurolytic pathogen."

27] The Queen sits up and gripes that she doesn't like the silence. Hugh agrees that it can be disorientating at first but that he can reconnect whenever he wants to and encourages her to consciously reconnect as soon as they can escape from their cell's dampening field. The Queen angrily punches the cell's walls out of frustration but is unable to even make a dent. Hugh shrugs his shoulders and turns his attention back to Seven.

28] While they are held captive Picard attempts to engage the Queen in conversation about the Borg.

Picard: What happens to the culture of civilisations the Borg assimilate?

Queen: We add them to our own and catalogue them for reference.

Picard: Where is the Borg literature, art, music and culture?

Queen: We have no use for it.

Picard: I've noticed. You capture people in the billions, strip them of their identity and turn them into mindless drones. Why?

Queen: We give them perfection.

Picard: I think you'll find that everyone else in the galaxy disagrees with you. Maybe you should step outside of yourself and see yourselves as others see you: a predatory mindless plague consuming and destroying everything in its path.

Queen: That is merely their fear of the unknown. They wish to hold on to that which is familiar. We give them perfection.

Picard: It looks like we'll be here for a while. Tell me a Borg legend, sing me a Borg song. Tell me what you do for recreation, pleasure and fun. And don't just change the lyrics of a Klingon drinking song. I know most of them by now.

Queen: We have no use for such things.

Picard: More's the shame. You're missing the whole point of being alive. In that case the Doctor and I will entertain you with a two-part rendition of Homer's Odyssey or Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Doctor, which one would you prefer?

Doctor: I was thinking we could do some opera buffon to lighten the mood a bit. Maybe the Barber of Seville, Die Fledermaus or Don Pasquale.

Picard: Anything for an excuse to do a bit of singing, eh?

Doctor: You know me, Picard. I can't resist the opportunity.

As they reach the closing lines of the last act, Picard glances over at the Queen who is looking distinctly bored so he encourages the Doctor to launch into another operetta.

29] Annika eventually regains consciousness after Hugh and the EMH disable and remove the alien control processor and says that she feels as if she was hit by a truck but is glad to be her human self again. The Queen, visibly disappointed, confirms Annika's feelings: "I know."

30] Hugh recognises the device removed from Seven as the override control unit the Romulans used to enslave their captive Borg drones. The Queen takes it from Hugh and extrudes a probe to diagnose and examine the device. She then fries its circuitry and throws it on the floor.

31] The EMH informs the Queen that she is now infected with the neurolytic pathogen but immune to its effects thanks to Hugh's intervention and recommends that she distributes her new-found autonomy throughout her collective at the transwarp hub if she wants to protect them from its ravages. The Queen is suspicious and accuses Picard, Hugh, Annika and the EMH of tricking her and depriving her of her perfection.

32] Picard replies that perfection, though a laudable goal, is ultimately unattainable and that she should consider the welfare of her collective first. "What good is perfection if you're all dead?" Hugh offers to share his experience with her collective but the Queen refuses.

33] "Then you and your collective will die because of your pride." Picard points out to the Queen. "Life is continuous change, evolution and adaptation to new circumstances. You, of all people should know that. The Borg are masters of adaptation. Isn't that what your assimilation is all about? This time your circumstances have changed. Will you adapt and survive or stay as you are and die out?"

34] "Impressive sophistry." The Queen smirks. "How do we know you don't want to enslave us like the way the Romulans enslaved the other drones?" Picard admits that he has no way of convincing her and then changes the subject to the transwarp conduits pointing out that the Borg are sitting on a goldmine and that if they opened up their transwarp conduits to commerce and travel, the Borg could become wealthy and prosperous beyond their wildest imaginings provided they could refrain from assimilating their customers.

35] The Queen is unimpressed: "Materialistic concerns, we are only interested in perfection. You talk like a Ferengi." Picard retorts that the Borg have assimilated plenty of Ferengi in their time and that she would do well to listen to their voices. "You are at war with everyone in the galaxy. You consider yourselves superior to all other species, yet you have no allies, no supporters. No one joins your ranks of their own free will. You are so hated and feared that people like the Brunali, in their desperation, developed a genocidal weapon to defend themselves from you. Is that how you wish to be remembered? The scourge of the galaxy that was so loathed that you managed to unite an entire galaxy to exterminate you? Even The Dominion know the value of cultivating allies. Prosperity would allow you the luxury of pursuing your goal of perfection without being in a state of perpetual warfare. You might even make some allies or encounter kindred spirits along the way." He also points out that knowledge can be acquired in less destructive ways than assimilation.

36] "You'll be asking us to join the Federation next." The Queen snorts sarcastically. Picard concedes that would be unlikely to happen but reminds her that it was Captain Janeway, a Federation Starfleet officer, who helped the Borg repel Species 8472.

37] The Queen picks up the dead Romulan control processor off the floor and asks the EMH to reattach it to Annika/Seven who protests. The Queen insists, pointing out that the control processor is now dead. Annika/Seven asks why. The Queen taps the side of her head as she explains her plan to Annika/Seven and Hugh via their shared Borg neural interlink. She then steps up to the force field and calls out: "You win, Mr Mudd. Take me and the transwarp hub but spare my drones."

38] Harry Mudd takes his time to respond. He eventually turns up accompanied by a squad of Romulan slave-drones who seize the Queen, Annika/Seven, Hugh, Picard, the EMH and march them out of the cell. Harry Mudd then attaches control processors to the Queen and Hugh before leading the way to a vast hangar full of drones standing motionless staring vacantly ahead.

39] Harry Mudd activates a holographic communication link and holograms of interested buyers and bidders materialise. He brags about the merchandise he has for sale: thousands of drones ready to do your bidding, a genuine Borg Queen, fully functional Borg cubes and spheres for your own private militia and even a working transwarp hub with access points all over the galaxy. He then starts the bidding war, talking up his merchandise while the bidders greedily try to outbid each other.

40] At one point Harry Mudd walks past Annika/Seven who reaches out from behind, assimilates him, pushes his metamorphosing body to the floor and coldly announces: "The bidding is over. There will be no sales today." She then breaks the holographic communication link, retrieves the control unit from the now-Borgified Harry Mudd and switches it off, freeing the Queen, Hugh and all the drones.

41] The Queen finally accepts Picard's suggestion of opening up the Borg transwarp hub as a commercial venture to support the Borg collective and understands that in order for it to work they will have to desist from assimilating their new customers. It was hard at first. No-one trusted the Borg and it wasn't until Quark stepped in to be their business frontman that things started to take off.

42] It's now several years later. The transwarp hub is now a hive of activity and gradually being rebuilt. There are multiple transwarp gates active and traffic can be seen coming and going. There's a busy shipyard with all manner of commercial space shipping docked as well as a brace of Borg cubes parked nearby. Inside, it's like a Borg version of DS9 / Babylon 5. A group of Borg drones including an assimilated Harry Mudd can be seen marching down the concourse below a sign which reads: "You will comply with all local regulations. Offenders will be assimilated." The camera pans around showing humans and aliens of all species milling around and going in and out of various shops including Garak's Clothiers and Holosuite 5 featuring 'The Further Adventures of Captain Proton!'

43] The Queen, who now goes by her pre-assimilation name of Panaseravitillyn [or Pana for short], Hugh, Annika, the EMH [now going by his chosen name, Joe] and Troi are sitting at a table chatting and sipping drinks [Jippers?] in a vast 'Silent Running' style parkland with a view of the nebula gas cloud through its glassine roof. A cloud of butterflies flutter past behind them chased by a gaggle of Borg and non-Borg children. It's Troi's last day at the transwarp hub before she goes back to Earth. Pana thanks Troi for the work she and Joe have done setting up their recovery program for rehabilitating lost and disconnected drones into her Borg collective. Pana laughs as she shares a titbit of inside info with Troi and Annika "We even get people travelling all the way here who want to be assimilated!"

"And?" Troi prompts Pana.

"We just send them back." Pana admits. "We have more than enough drones to rebuild this hub. And, thanks to Locutus, we're able to do it."

"He hates that name." Troi pointed out.

"I know." Pana winked as she confided. "I do it just to tease him."

"How's Teratyll?" Annika asked Pana.

"She promised me that she'd stop assimilating her tribbles." Hugh made air quotes around the word 'promised'. Hugh and Teratyll had been through this several times before. "What are we supposed to do with assimilated tribbles?"

Pana rolled her eyes. "Children... they're so chaotic!"

"Any news from the other Queens?" Picard enquired.

"Kamamatella is interested but the others who weren't so affected by the neurolytic pathogen insist on sticking to the old ways." Pana sighed. "Change isn't easy. But we can give them the cure for the neurolytic pathogen as an act of good faith."

"Give it time." Picard suggests genially as he raises his glass for a toast. "Here's to the collective."

They clink glasses. "The collective!"

“Harry” Harcourt Fenton Mudd is possible in this story / timeline. He had a time crystal in ST: Disco “Magic to Make the Sanest Man Go Mad” so could easily be a time-travelling criminal. Yes, that time crystal was destroyed. But, Mudd being Mudd, he could easily get another one.

Pana and Hugh are still partially Borgified at the end of the story. That’s how they like it.

Pana and Hugh’s child, Teratyll, was grown in a maturation chamber because Pana’s body is still mostly mechanical.

Fracturing the old canon Borg Collective into five ‘faction’ collectives based around the five remaining transwarp hubs allows for stories set in the future with Borg ‘bad guys’, ‘neutrals’ and even ‘good guys’.

Garak’s Clothiers is run by Elim Garak in his capacity as a Cardassian Obsidian Order operative.

Holosuite 5 is a front for a Federation / Section 31 agent.

Pana’s Borg collective now have a small vineyard grown from vines gifted to them by Picard.

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