

Episode 1.13

The Seven of Nine Show

"The safeties are on, right?" Tom asked nervously.

Chakotay bit his lip, "of course."

Instantly relieved Tom swung around with his fists meekly raised, boxing gloves on crookedly. Dressed in a scraggly tank top and Lycra shorts, he looked more like he was ready for a bike ride, not about to step into a boxing match.

A few people crowded around the ring, eagerly waiting for the very little action.

"Nine rations on Tom falling on his face," Craig whispered to his neighbour.

"I'm not paying for your dinner, Craig," James scoffed.

The bell rang. Tom looked around confused for a second until he remembered its meaning. He jogged on forward, treading on his laces on the second step. He fell face first onto the floor. "My nose!"

"Could've been nine rations richer," Craig sighed.

"No one's stupid enough to bet against it," James said. He noticed two people begrudgingly handing Jessie some rations nearby. "It's like betting on the sun rise."

"True," Craig said.

Jessie pushed her way back to them grinning. "Idiots thought he'd last five whole seconds."

Chakotay nudged Tom away with his foot, he got a groan for his lack of trouble. "Who's next?" Jessie started to raise her hand. "No!"

"Spoil sport," she sighed.

"Why not? You keep picking the losers, it's getting a bit boring," Craig said.

"Kicking's not allowed. It's boxing," Chakotay quickly answered.

"Yeah that does sound dull," Jessie said. Chakotay seemed relieved that she bought it.

"Oh, Commander, pick me!" someone shouted. Everyone completely blanked him, even when he started to jump around with his hand up, over and over again.

"Craig?" Chakotay asked.

Craig laughed, "not a chance."

Chakotay expected as much. He moved along. "James?"

He got another laugh, but this one was less nervous and more *don't be stupid* disbelief. Jessie meanwhile pulled a face. "Ok, I'm starting to think this is a sexist thing," she said.

"Commander, ooh ooh!" the eager man shouted again.

"Shut up Sid," someone muttered.

Chakotay shook his head, "no, why would you think that?"

Jessie's eyes rolled toward James who was still laughing, "really? I'll fight every single guy here regardless. But ohno Jessie, you can't play, girls are *scawy*..."

"I don't get it," Craig pouted.

"Patronising ass," Jessie whispered dangerously.

Chakotay was momentarily speechless. "I wasn't. Why must you make a fuss over everything?"

"I like boxing," Sid tried again mid jump.

"It wouldn't kill either of you Security types to learn some sort of fighting skill," Chakotay said.

James shook his head, "really? I've been getting by on sarcastic quips all this time. Ain't broke."

Tom stumbled up to exit the ring. Chakotay was about to warn him, but didn't have time to before he walked into the rope. He fell head first over the top of it, his feet caught the rope and left him hanging upside down.

"That's good too," Craig sniggered.

Chakotay sighed, "I'm not going to keep sparring with the hologram for your amusement. Why show up if you're not going to join in?"

Everyone pointed at Tom still dangling. "Seriously guys, help!" he cried out.

"Safeties are on. It's not a real fight. It's fun and a great way to unwind," Chakotay argued.

"I'll say," Jessie giggled.

"I can't feel my head," Tom whimpered.

"When can you?" James asked.

"Oh very funny Jess," Tom huffed, his face now turning a dark shade of red.

Jessie narrowed her eyes, "that was James."

"Oh, then er... another round Chak?" Tom stammered.

"We haven't had one yet," Chakotay reminded him.

Sid's head popped up from the crowd like bread in a toaster. "Hellloooo?"

"Most of you only came to watch people like Tom humiliate themselves. I get that. I'll admit to inviting him myself for that reason," Chakotay said, smirking slightly.

"Hey!" a purple faced Tom groaned.

"But if no one volunteers, show's over," Chakotay said.

"Oh god, fine. Should be a laugh," James said, he stepped forward.

Jessie winced while Sid made a pathetic aaaw sound from the back. Most of the audience placed their bets on Chakotay once more.

James ducked down through the gaps in the ropes, pushing Tom on route. He made a yelp before banging into the floor.

"All right, gloves," Chakotay said, gesturing to a few remaining pairs of boxing gloves in the corner of the ring. "They're aligned with the safety protocols to soften the blow."

"Sounds like fun," James said with disinterest.

Chakotay waited for him to put the gloves on. "Have you ever boxed before?"

James looked at his gloved hands with a grimace, "really not." The answer prompted a few more bets amongst the crowd not in his favour.

"Uh huh," Chakotay sighed. At least his last miss-match showed enthusiasm. "Okay, no hits below waist. Keep your elbows low, avoid straight hits, you can't let me see you coming."

"I got it, punch and dodge," James said.

Chakotay clicked his tongue and smirked, shaking his head. "It isn't as easy as it looks. I'm not easy to hit." He gestured to the hologram with the bell. "Ready?"

"Oh we're really doing this," Jessie sighed.

"What, does he suck?" Craig asked, secretly hoping so since he'd already made his bet for Chakotay to win.

"Hmm," Jessie hesitated.

The bell rang. Chakotay made the first move with two light left handed jabs to his opponent's right. James dodged him in time. Chakotay though knew he would, and went in for a right handed but light punch, no harder than a tap. He had a teaching comment in mind ready to say, when James' left hand raised to deflect it all together.

"Good move. You've done this before?" Chakotay said, before he noticed something was off. James' eyes seemed a lot wider than normal. His face was tense, he was taking a step back. "What?" Chakotay said with some concern. He looked over his shoulder to see if what he was reacting to was behind him.

Only it wasn't. James couldn't see the Commander anymore. In his perspective he had vanished. Another man stood in his place. Tall, dark and imposing eyes stared back at him. The stranger's head shook as if judging him.

James bumped into the ropes as he backed away, startling him so much he gasped. Jessie meanwhile pushed through the crowd to reach him. She didn't make it in time, as he climbed through the gap before she was even half way and darted for the exit.

Malicious laughter followed him out. One of them belonging to the tall man no one else could see.

Chakotay froze the moment he had turned around. The ring twisted, folded over itself. The people behind it were blurry at first until their shapes faded away into the background. Voices echoed all around him. A lone one penetrated the rest, slow but urgent. He swung back around in time to see a fist fly towards his face.

The darkness overtook his fall, he did not feel a thing as he slammed face first into the ground.

"Is this, does this count as a draw?" Craig stuttered.

Daily Log, Seven of Nine, Stardate 52584.4: As per the Doctor's instruction, I'm working on improving my social skills. The first chapter titled 'The World Smiles With You' has proven rather challenging. The varied amount of reactions I've had has not helped.

Seven turned the corner. There she saw the two children of the ship playing tag a short way forward. As soon as she approached she let loose a forced toothy grin. Kiara promptly burst into tears and ran away shouting for her mother.

Children are irrational. The Captain has likely spoken rudely about me to the child. I am not concerned...

"Maybe you should start small," Naomi suggested.

...About her subunit's extreme reaction. I will continue my efforts.

"Ookay?" Naomi said while pulling a face. "At least stop talking and grinning at the same time. It's creepy."

Another crewmember joined them from around the corner. Seven pointed her smile toward him. He screamed hysterically as he ran back the way he came.

"You have the biggest mouth I've ever seen," Naomi said helpfully.

Seven finally looked down at the child to address her. Her smile vanished completely leaving only her usual blank expression when she did. "I'm practicing my social skills. I tested many smiles in the mirror first."

Naomi smiled awkwardly, "gee, and that's the winner? Were you looking at a photo of a sane smile?"

"What?" Seven frowned.

"You're not supposed to grin on cue. You smile when you're happy, or if you're being nice, or when you want something and mom won't listen," Naomi explained. She smiled sweetly to prove her point. "Seriously, you've never smiled naturally before?"

Seven knew the answer, but she still stopped to think about it.

The Doctor briefly glanced in his direction, he looked a little offended. "Of course, who do you think you're talking to?" Both of them swore they saw a tiny smirk appear for a second on Seven's lips.

"No. I am in complete control of my emotions. I have not suffered such a malfunction," Seven replied.

Naomi fidgeted slightly, clearly unnerved. "Um, excuse me. I think I hear my factory recalling me." She ran in the direction everyone else had.

It was as I thought. Children are even more baffling than adult Humans. I should focus my attention on the astronomical survey of a proto nebula formation. No doubt the Doctor will ask for my 'homework' as he calls it.

"How many?" the Doctor grunted. He held up what looked like twelve, then three, and finally six fingers in his face.

"Uh three," Chakotay answered with the only possible answer. It looked like a blurred web to him anyway.

The Doctor helped him sit up. "Good guess." He angrily waved a regenerator over his swollen eye and gashed eyebrow. "I suppose you'll want to keep this scar as some manly trophy," he said bitterly.

Chakotay laughed briefly, "I wouldn't want to blemish your perfect record, Doc."

"If it weren't bad enough, you invited the entire crew over for your fun blood letting," the Doctor huffed. He roughly cupped the Commander's chin to hold him still, and finish the treatment.

"You've got the wrong idea. Besides the safeties should have lessened or eliminated any risk," Chakotay protested once he was done.

"How reassuring from the man with a hairline fracture of the septum, edema beneath the anterior fossa of the cranium..." the Doctor muttered whilst hovering the tricorder next to his head.

"I saw something strange," Chakotay cut in.

"That doesn't surprise me," the Doctor said.

Chakotay slid off the biobed, "no, it happened before I was hurt. I think James saw it too."

The Doctor looked on curiously, "really?"

"He was reacting to something, so I looked behind me. The ring churned, distorted," Chakotay tried to explain.

"Hmm, no one else reported this so we can rule out Holodeck malfunction. It could've been an hallucination brought on by the pressure building on the optic nerves," the Doctor said. Just in case he did yet another scan.

"No. I was keeping away from everyone the entire time. No one touched me," Chakotay said.

The Doctor's brow furrowed, eyebrow raised. "Hmm, a number of the ganglia in your visual cortex are hyperactive."

Chakotay's chin shot up so the pair made eye contact. "What?"

"Did Mr Taylor bring an energy weapon into the ring, or..." the Doctor stuttered.

"No, just his usual sunny attitude," Chakotay smiled slightly.

The doors opened swiftly, Seven strode inside. "Doctor, you are late. We were scheduled for an away mission at 1800 hours," she said.

"I'm afraid something came up," the Doctor said, gesturing to the now treated Commander in his boxing attire.

The ground beneath them trembled. The Red Alert siren soon followed.

"Chakotay to the Bridge," Kathryn's voice said over the comm.

Chakotay rushed for the exit, the Doctor quickly stepped after him. "I want you back in here later for some tests, unless you want to be seeing things on a regular basis."

On hearing that, Chakotay's shoulders tensed visibly. The Doctor didn't have time to dwell on it, he had already gone.

"We may have to reschedule," the Doctor smiled awkwardly. Seven's eyebrow flickered upwards.

The Bridge:

The turbolift opened to allow Chakotay into the Bridge, now in uniform but still straightening his sleeves in a hurry. The viewscreen showed a strange anomaly ahead of them, it reminded him of water bubbling.

"Ion storm?" he asked as the ship trembled again.

"I wanted to call it the washing machine, but apparently wibbly wobbly thing is funnier," Jessie replied. Tom mimed her words badly while pulling a face.

Kathryn inhaled deeply through her nose while clenching her jaw. "Apparently I took command of the USS Nursery by mistake."

"The anomaly spans two light years. Energy emissions exceed that of an average star by twelve. It doesn't match anything in our database," Tuvok reported.

Kathryn's scientific side took over for a moment, she stared curiously at the strange phenomenon on the screen.

"It's moving again," Tom reported. He didn't wait for the order, he told Voyager to reverse out of its way.

"And of course it won't sit still," Kathryn said. She exhaled sharply, she almost laughed at the absurdity of it. "We just don't do normal, do we?"

Tom panicked at the console readouts he was getting. "It's following us, and faster too." The ship rumbled once more, and far more violently to prove what he was saying.

"Tuvok, if we don't already have shields up..." Kathryn warned.

"That we do," Tuvok said, hiding any relief he had deep within.

Chakotay rushed over to claim his chair in between shakes. "Don't just back us off, get us out of here."

"No time," Tom stuttered. Still he tried to follow his orders.

The trembling was continuous for a minute until it finally stopped. Chakotay glanced up at the viewscreen. He noted the strange blurry and pulsing starfield on the viewscreen seemed to be moving. He assumed the movement was only his hyper cortex and left it as that.

"Oh, what fresh hell is this?" Kathryn snarled.

Silence took over as everyone tried to get her an answer. Chakotay gave Tom the order to stop in the meantime.

"I... don't know," Jessie said, getting a little frustrated with Opps. "Sensors are garbled. Things keep moving. It makes no sense."

Kathryn sighed. Watching the space in front of them churning, she wasn't surprised. Her curiosity was once again piqued, which helped ease her irritation for the moment. "Hmm, we could be the first Starfleet crew to investigate something like this. First we should look for a way out. Then for as long as we can stay here undamaged, we can coll..."

"Seven of Nine to the Bridge."

"Learn everything about it from our Borg who already knows about it," Kathryn muttered in deadpan. Everyone in earshot winced as she slammed her hand into her commbadge. "What?"

"Please report to Astrometrics at once."

Kathryn bit her tongue until she tapped the commbadge again. "Translation. Do as I say, now! Please."

"Looking on the bright side, she's half polite," Chakotay smiled at her. Kathryn managed to smirk back at him.

The Mess Hall was buzzing. Most of the people there hung around the windows, staring at this strange area of space.

A new arrival walked in. He stared briefly at the crowd, which blocked a lot of the outside view for him, before joining one of the few occupied tables.

"Duty calls," Craig said as he sat down.

James kept his stare fixed to the table and the drink in his hand. "Mmm," was the only noise he made.

"Two hours ago," Craig said meekly. "I told Tuvok you were in Sickbay, but I didn't think you'd make a liar out of me."

James slowly looked toward him. His face was mostly buried in his hand, so Craig couldn't really tell if he was mad, tired, or indifferent. "What?"

Craig sighed a little louder than he intended. "Red Alert. All teams report to duty. You've been doing this longer."

"Hey!" Neelix cried from the kitchen.

He saw a hint of a frown in his eyes, then finally James moved his hand down which confirmed that. His eyes drifted up to where the red lights were flashing. "Oh. Sorry."

"Don't be. What you should be sorry about is costing me three rations," Craig smirked at him. That faded as James stared at him blankly. He broke into a stutter, "I didn't bet against you. No... everyone's talking about it though. Not me. I lost rations on a whole other bet. I don't even remember anything weird happening. Man, Tom looked pathetic..."

"Stop," James said.

Craig sighed in relief, "thank you." He still laughed a little nervously though. It made James shake his head and turn it away from him. "You know, you always seemed like the type that didn't care what people thought. Why...?"

"Why what? I missed the Red Alert klaxon, that's all," James said bitterly.

"Yep, wrong," Craig said, instantly regretting it.

Fortunately though James didn't take it the way he meant it, or he simply didn't care if he did. Either way, he didn't look too bothered about his comment. "Let everyone gossip. I don't care. I'm used to it," he said tiredly.

Craig looked on with a frown of his own.

Neelix scampered out of his kitchen, tears were in his eyes. "Who's been helping themselves to the food?" The few that looked over to see what he was talking about, cringed at the plate of raw meat he was holding.

Kathryn turned up her nose as she looked around Astrometrics. "Why does it smell like metal in here?"

"Metal?" Chakotay said with a raised eyebrow.

Seven paid no attention to either of them. Her thumb raised to rub beside her lip, then she inspected it. "Curious."

"No it's not, just mildly annoying," Kathryn said. "The anomaly?"

"The Borg have observed this phenomenon several times," Seven said while placing her hand back down in front of her by the console. "When the anomaly appears, the laws of physics in that region are in a state of flux..."

"I hated that one," Kathryn muttered.

Chakotay briefly glanced at her with an amused expression. "I don't think we need to worry about replicators turning the hull into stone just yet."

Seven was naturally confused. Kathryn meanwhile scowled lightly, like she couldn't be bothered to do it properly. "Simpler times."

"So, I'm going to assume if the Borg know about this, they'll know a way out," Chakotay said, still smiling.

"Of course," Seven said. The rest of the room stared, waiting for her to go on. "Only one cube escaped."

Kathryn waited a few more seconds before forcing a slight gasp. "Oh, I'm sorry. I dozed off. I had this funky dream where Seven of Nine didn't have all the answers to the problem and we had to solve it the old fashioned way. It was interesting, kept me guessing and in the end the experience bettered, or worsened the people involved. It was almost like a story."

Both Seven and Tuvok raised their eyebrows at the same time. Chakotay struggled to keep his laughter silent.

"But back to real life. You were saying about a Borg cube encountering this thing and relaying its experience back to the collective," Kathryn said humourlessly.

Seven stared blankly, blinking once. "I... do not know. The cube did not enter it."

Kathryn stared back with her eyes wider than normal. After blinking her face returned to her normal one. She turned on her heel to pass a sly smile. "Nobody pinch me."

"If the usual constants such as stars and planets are shifting, our sensors will not be able to function correctly," Tuvok said to get back on track.

Seven didn't notice that her head and shoulders had lowered until she needed to look up at the big screen. The three continued discussing the situation without her.

I do not understand why the Captain continues to exclude me with anecdotes from the past I was not here for. Or strange comments, jokes that I do not understand. She clearly does not want me to be a member of her crew.

"What kind of name is Chaotic Space? Did you hit your head..." Kathryn said. "Oh."

No. She treats everyone with equal scorn. It's her way.

Chakotay laughed with the Captain, "it runs in the family, clearly."

"Seems so," Kathryn smirked.

If she did not want me here, I imagine she wouldn't put the effort in to make fun of me. I would be alone, ignored and underappreciated. End Log.

Kathryn looked at the drone with wide eyes pointed to the right. "She's doing it again." Her finger pointed to the door. Chakotay nodded and followed her there. Tuvok frowned at the drone as he eventually did the same.

Seven seemed puzzled to find herself alone.

It didn't last for long.

He had at least twenty minutes of peace remaining before the day truly began. Chakotay relaxed in his chair, tapping away at the computer sitting on the armrest. A cup of tea in his hand, ready to sip. He was about to do just that when he was interrupted by thunderous footsteps coming towards him.

"Daddy!" Kiara whined when she reached him. She wasted no time climbing up his legs to get to his lap. He noticed the tears in her eyes so he quickly leaned over to help her up with his only spare arm. "There's pervs in my room."

Chakotay sighed, "where did you learn that word?" He knew the answer, he just wanted to make sure.

"They won't shut up. Can't you hear them?" Kiara whimpered.

Chakotay internally flinched. He forced himself to look in the direction of her room. It seemed normal, and it was more than likely his daughter still hadn't fully waken up from a nightmare. However he couldn't shake off the dread he was feeling.

Carefully he raised from the chair and placed her down into it. A smile painted on to reassure her. "It's okay, daddy will check it out." The little girl still seemed afraid despite his efforts. He kept the smile there until he began to make his way towards the door.

"Begin round one," the computer said very faintly.

It stopped him mid step. He wondered if he misheard or fallen asleep himself. He didn't want to alarm Kiara any further, so he carried on towards the door. With every step he made, a low rumbling sound grew in volume. The path ahead of him seemed to sway, edges blurred gently into each other.

Once he reached the door, allowing it to open, the rumbling increased sharply. They sounded more like voices, hundreds of them mumbling over the top of each other.

The bedroom itself appeared to be normal at first glance. No one was there. The bed sheets were upturned, most of the duvet crumpled up at the foot of the crib. A teddy bear peeping out from underneath the pile. As he moved his head away toward the wardrobes, a slight movement in the corner of his eye got him to look back.

A pair of patterned boxing gloves were now sitting on the dead centre of the bed.

"Begin round one," he heard the computer say again, still faintly.

He hesitantly walked over to the gloves, his hands slowly reached for them.

"Daddy?" Kiara's voice said quizzically behind him. It cut through the other sounds he was hearing, killing them off with one slice. He looked over his shoulder to see his daughter standing at the door. "Nessy's not a perv."

"Huh?" Chakotay mumbled. He looked forward again to find his hands were clutching the teddy bear, and not the gloves he originally saw.

Naomi jumped into the dead end leading to the Jeffries Tube. She then peered around the corner, all while keeping her back against the wall.

Footsteps approached, then a blur streamed passed. Naomi waited a little while before stepping out and following that blur and its fading footsteps.

A smile spread across her face, she resisted a giggle when she reached the bend in the corridor. She walked slowly on her tip toes to go around it. Her hand raised, ready to point or prod whatever was on the other side.

She gasped in horror when the object on the other side was much larger and blue-er than she expected.

"Naomi Wildman. State your intentions," Seven barked down at her.

Naomi's eyes widened, jaw dropped. "Um... I..." she stammered.

They both heard further footsteps approach, they stopped as quickly as they appeared. "Eew. Boob Lady," Kiara's voice complained. Naomi glanced down in time to see her not far behind Seven, scampering off in the other direction.

Seven's Borg eyebrow flickered upwards as she looked over her shoulder. Naomi thought it was the perfect opportunity to escape, only she wasn't quick enough. Seven stared back at her, Naomi grinned nervously in response.

"We're only playing," she said.

"Playing what?" Seven seemed puzzled.

Naomi's nervous smile turned upside down, her bottom lip stuck out. "You've never played Hide and Seek either?"

"No," Seven answered while raising her eyebrow.

"That's sad," Naomi said.

"Boring," she heard Kiara huff from wherever she was hiding.

"Irrelevant. Playing is a waste of time," Seven said.

Naomi smiled politely at her. "That's kinda the point. It's fun as well, and we learn things too. Kiara learned to count higher so she could play."

Seven seemed interested by what she said. "Intriguing, but inefficient. You would benefit from several months inside a Borg maturation chamber, which would accelerate your neo-cortical development."

Naomi stared at her, blinking rapidly. "Or, we could just play Hide and Seek."

"It is hardly a challenging test. There are a limited amount of areas two children can and are allowed to hide in. For example, the Jeffries Tube inlay will only hide subunit Kiara temporarily until you walked by," Seven said.

"Hey," Kiara's voice whined.

Naomi giggled at the sound of her friend's hurried footsteps fading away. "You're missing the point again. As a Borg all you did was be perfect all the time. Now you don't have to, you can relax, have fun..."

Seven clearly didn't agree, "subunit Kiara is at a lower development age than you, which will delay your own development. Your infantile game for example. Perhaps you would benefit more from..." She thankfully trailed off, her eyes drifted away.

"Who else am I supposed to play with?" Naomi wondered before she noticed this. She stared at the ex drone with concern. "Seven?"

That got her attention, a lot more than she intended. The ex Borg greeted her with a warm genuine smile. This one didn't look terrifying, but it still made Naomi feel a little freaked out like last time. It didn't help when the Borg poked her shoulder with her finger.

"Tag!" she shouted, then Seven of Nine skipped off down the corridor giggling like a school girl.

Naomi stared after her, trying her hardest to find a word that fit what she was feeling. None came to mind. The ex Borg had ran in the same direction Kiara did, so Naomi hurried after her.

Chakotay entered the Bridge and immediately regretted it.

"Why can't we just turn around and fly back the way we came?" Tom argued.

"Due to the nature of this anomaly, we run the risk of a collision from a small asteroid to a star," Tuvok countered.

Tom scoffed, "oh fine. We do that anyway by sitting here, so yeah let's do that."

"God, if stars are even *moving around*, the exit won't still be sitting in the same place," Jessie snapped.

Chakotay's head was throbbing before he walked into this. He quickly thought to interrupt, "report."

"Shields are holding Commander. However the gravitational coefficient shear stress on the hull is rising," Tuvok said.

Tom gestured his arms outward, "here's an idea, let's move the ship."

"Perhaps we can release a beacon in intervals. That way we can map the anomaly as we advance," Tuvok suggested.

"Finally," Tom whispered to himself, while returning to face his station.

Their conversation were gradually drowned out by the sea of voices swarming around Chakotay. As he looked around he knew for certain he was the only one hearing them.

"*Begin round two,*" the computer voice echoed.

"We'll take it slow, all right. What do you think, Chakotay?" Tom asked him, but he still couldn't hear him.

The viewscreen was beginning to sway side to side, and yet the viewscreen contents remained perfectly still.

"*The challenger, Chakotay!*" another voice joined the mix.

Chakotay jerked his head around, desperate to see if anyone heard that as it was so clear. No one seemed to. "Don't you hear that?" he stuttered.

Tom swung his chair around, "hear what?"

Everyone were staring at the freaked out Commander now. They all saw him fixate on Opps with a desperate expression, which he then pointed at. "Look!" The person manning it sighed impatiently as if he were being pranked. That changed when Chakotay rushed over to him, thankfully staying on the other side of the station, and started to cradle something invisible on top of it.

"Commander, are you all right?" Tuvok asked whilst on approach.

"Oh yeah, he's super fine," James commented as he slowly edged sideways away from Opps.

In Chakotay's perspective the gloves were back, he grasped them tightly. The volume of the voices had raised to almost shouting.

The computer's voice rang sharply in his ears. "*Begin round two.*" Hearing it triggered him to lurch towards the nearest person with two quick left handed punches. James hadn't kept his eyes off him during his escape, so he managed to dodge backwards in time.

His eye fell to his right arm, and as he expected, Chakotay was going for a deadlier right handed hit like last time. James thought he would be expecting him to do the same thing too. Instead he ducked under his arm and maneuvered himself to behind him, avoiding it all together.

He then quickly grabbed his left arm to pull it back and hopefully restrain him. Chakotay responded with a swift right swing over his own left shoulder. Unlike the others, this hit landed. James let go and stumbled back.

Tuvok arrived on the scene in the same moment and took the opportunity to do a neck pinch before he could do anymore damage.

Chakotay collapsed, still hearing the roaring voices. Tuvok managed to catch him, and gently lowered him to the floor. "Ensign. Help me get him to Sickbay," he instructed, meaning James. He didn't get an answer and no one came to his side, so he glanced upward. "Mr Taylor?"

James was too busy running for the turbolift to listen to him. The speed he did it, it was if his life was in danger.

Jessie had to look twice, she stared at the turbolift door in shock. At least until Tom sniggered, igniting her fury. "Mummy's gonna kiss it better, aaw," he said in a cutesy, patronising voice.

"Seriously? You cried when you pressed the helm too hard," Jessie grumbled.

Tom seemed surprised as he glanced over at her. "Oh, mummy's here. Wait, what?" His face flushed bright red, "I chipped my nail down to the bed. Who wouldn't complain and it wasn't crying."

Tuvok actually rolled his eyes as he kept his arm underneath the Commander's shoulders. "Sickbay," he said, knowing he was on his own here.

"Bawling and finger sucking," Jessie corrected the helmsman. Her eyes dangerously narrowed, "wait, I'm James' mummy in your little joke?"

Tom panicked. He dashed over towards Tuvok and Chakotay. "Let me take him Tuvok, we should stay put or bump into harpy... er a star, so no helmsman needed." Of course he got an eyebrow raise, and to his credit an unusually high one. "You're right as always. Go, go, I got him."

"Indeed," Tuvok said.

"Damn, why did I program myself to experience headaches?" the Doctor muttered.

Kiara tugged on his trouser leg, bawling very loudly. "Doccie, make the voices stop!"

"Voices? What are you..." the Doctor said curiously. Kiara's crying overpowered him, even his program couldn't hear itself think. "Please, calm down. I'll take a look, but you have to... shhh!" Her cries turned into sniffing. He knew it was a temporary fix, he gently picked her up as quick as possible so he could diagnose her.

Naomi ran into Sickbay giggling, the Doctor sighed impatiently. "I really need a childproof lock on that door."

"Shhh, I'm not here," Naomi laughed. She ran off into his office. The Doctor was about to protest but Kiara's sniffing was beginning to sound more like squeaky moans. He knew what that meant.

A quick check in his program gave him an idea, so he pointed a smile at the girl. "Would you like a lollipop?"

Kiara's squeaks turned into an interested hmmm sound as she looked up at him. He took that as a yes. He made a dash for the nearest replicator. On route he spotted Naomi's feet sticking out from under his desk.

As the Doctor made his way back with the jar of sweets, the doors to Sickbay opened again. To his relief it was Seven who walked through this time. "Please state the nature of the medical emergency."

Seven followed him to Kiara's biobed with a determined look on her face. "The wormhole is not what it appears to be. I believe that..."

"Hold on, wormhole?" the Doctor said, obviously confused. He picked out a lollipop to hopefully keep Kiara quiet for the time being.

"You weren't informed?" Seven asked.

"Not a peep," the Doctor replied bitterly.

Seven looked at him suspiciously, he had no idea why. "Considering everyone's recent behaviour that's not surprising. They are not willing to see that they are being deceived. Perhaps there is a medical factor."

The Doctor focused on little Kiara as she happily stuck the treat into her mouth. She winced and held her head, he worried she'd start crying again. "I'll run a few diagnostics."

"Carey to Seven of Nine. Can you report to Engineering please," a man called over Seven's commbadge.

"Very well," Seven said. She briskly turned on her heel and walked straight out.

The Doctor and Kiara heard Naomi snigger mischievously from the office. "She sucks at Hide and Seek."

"Uh huh?" the Doctor mumbled before shrugging it off for now. One weird thing at a time.

At least that was the plan until Chakotay was transported in. He barely had time to carry Kiara into his office, so she wouldn't see him. No sooner had he done that, she began to sob loudly once more.

All of that for nothing he thought as his headache thumped furiously. The doors opened again. He was about to snap at whoever it was until he realised who they were.

"Ah, thank goodness," he said instead. "You know your way around holo programs. Delete this headache subroutine."

Jessie stared with a puzzled look on her face. "I do? Since when?" She overheard the toddler screaming in the next room. "What's wrong with her?"

"Oh rumour has it that you were the co-writer of The Mutineers," the Doctor said.

"Hmm, no, I'd call myself more of a director," Jessie said with a wry smile.

"Never mind then," the Doctor huffed. "As for Kiara, she claims to be hearing things. The Commander, it's a little early to tell. First, what's troubling you?"

"Me, nothing big. I assumed James had come here," Jessie replied.

"Shame," the Doctor said, prompting an accusing stare from her. "If it wasn't you, it was him, so curing my migraine would be a simple task." He continued with his scans.

Jessie unsteadily made her way over to one of the spare biobeds, grimacing as she took a seat. The Doctor glanced over his shoulder. "They could be linked. Kiara, Chakotay... you."

"Nothing. I mean Janeway told us to report to you if anyone was feeling dodgy," Jessie answered.

"Dodgy?" the Doctor mumbled.

"Space sick," Jessie said reluctantly.

The Doctor nodded, "is that anyone you, by any chance?"

"Good guess," Jessie replied with a tiny hint of a smirk.

With her feet up on the sofa and gentle piano music playing, Kathryn was losing the battle with her tiredness. Her eyes drooping, the words in her book blurred. Not even her morning cup of coffee sitting on her desk was helping.

The door chime did the trick instead. Kathryn forced herself to her feet so she could walk over to the door. She chose the wrong one, the usual door everyone used as it led to the Bridge. No one was there, so she tried the other. Seven waited on the other side.

"What? Are you lost?" Kathryn asked mid yawn.

"No, that would be an impossibility. I am having trouble with the nature of individuality," Seven replied while folding her arms behind her back.

"Hmm, that's a doozy," Kathryn said as she tapped the door panel. The door 'slammed' in the drone's face. Kathryn made her way back to the sofa.

"But... I need to discuss this with you before you rewrite the Doctor's program," Seven's voice bellowed through the closed door.

Kathryn re-opened it with a confused scowl on her face. "Oh he's not who I'm planning to *rewrite*."

"Are you trying to erase this incident from my memory as well? It will not work," Seven said coldly.

"What incident?" Kathryn asked with little interest.

"You are stalling. The incident on stardate 50979," Seven said aggressively.

She hadn't yet finished her first coffee of the day, so Kathryn struggled to think back to it. "Hmm, I'm surprised you care about dates that occurred before you joined the ship. Not important enough."

"You will not silence me on this," Seven said.

"Oh," Kathryn said once she remembered. "The Chute. Hmm, that was a bitch. You're right, thanks for the reminder." Once again she tried to slam the door, only this time Seven had took a step inside, blocking it from shutting.

"No. The incident with the shuttle mission," Seven said.

Kathryn decided instead to walk over to get a fresh cup of coffee. "Shuttle, shuttle. Coffee black." As soon as it materialised she snatched it away and began to sip. To Seven's surprised she grimaced in

disgust. "Oh god, thanks a lot. I had forgotten all about Collectives Are Super Awesome Riley. Mission accomplished, now get out."

"None of these incidents involved the Doctor. You've tampered with his program without his knowledge. He is quite rightly upset for a reason," Seven said.

"Okay, time for some fine tuning," the Doctor said. With barely a moment's pause in between he started with a low, "laah!"

Jessie scrambled back upright, startled by the sudden noise.

"Laah!" the Doctor sang in a much higher pitch.

Jessie cringed as she placed a hand over her mouth. "Oh crap. I came here to get better, not worse."

"Crap, crap, crap, crap!" Kiara chanted as she clapped her hands.

"Laaaaaa!" he sang again in a much higher pitch. Jessie pulled a face in disgust. Kiara started to pout. Chakotay firmly ground his teeth together.

"Laaaaaaaa!" the Doctor sang in his lower register, but for longer. Kiara's bottom lip started to tremble. Kathryn chose to walk into the room then.

"Laaaaaaaa!" the pitch was getting higher and unbearable. Kathryn turned on her heel and walked straight back out.

"Waaaah!" Kiara forcibly cried at the hologram.

"Laaaaah," the Doctor did another low key sound while she did. He frowned afterwards.

"Waaaah!" Kiara cried back, intentionally at double the volume.

Chakotay thought he should sit up, "Doc, seriously my hearing's fine. Or it was!"

Kathryn marched in with a ferocious, eyebrow high glare. "Oh... my god! It's starting to sound like a Rihanna duet in here. I'm surprised no one's stripping off and shoving their ass into a camera."

Jessie laughed quietly, at least until she noticed Kathryn had looked at her immediately afterwards. "Hey. I'm ill enough, thanks."

"I'm still waiting for an explanation, but I suppose around here there never is one," Kathryn said.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "I was testing the Commander's senses after his hallucination on the Bridge. Since they're fine, I believe the problem is a little more complicated than that."

"The family curse," Chakotay said quietly.

"Chakotay has the genetic marker for a cognitive disorder. The usual symptoms are visual and auditory hallucinations," the Doctor explained.

"The gene was suppressed before I was born, so I wouldn't have to suffer like my grandfather did," Chakotay added.

"Hmm, for some reason the gene's been switched on," the Doctor said with a puzzled expression. "I'm afraid he'll have to remain here until I figure out why, and how to treat it."

Kathryn frowned at the pair, then cast a glance back at the little girl sitting with Jessie. Chakotay winced visibly, he knew exactly what she was thinking.

"Kiara doesn't have it," the Doctor said to ease any brewing tension. "Which raises further questions."

"Yes, that's what today needs, more questions. I imagine this Chaotic Space has something to do with all of this. It better," Kathryn said.

"Chaotic Space? What a funny name for a wormhole," the Doctor said while scrunching his face.

Kathryn made a similar face back at him. "What a funny way to change the subject. What's wrong with Kiara?"

Chakotay dragged his body up to sit on the edge of the bed. "She was hearing voices too," he answered with regret.

Kathryn's eyes flickered, her jaw clenched. The Doctor quickly decided to be the hero of the piece and speak up, "but no hallucinations, or odd behaviour."

"Oh," Kathryn's demeanour softened. The Doctor bought it, but Chakotay's internal red alert was flashing wildly. "Then I suppose I should take her home, tuck her in with a bowl of soup. You piece of shi..." she said in a frighteningly cheerful tone.

"Oh Jessie, space sickness was it?" the Doctor stuttered. He scampered off before anything happened to him.

Chakotay laughed nervously, and silently. Kathryn still noticed it, she stared at him with her nice facade. He missed the death glare. "I'm sure it's nothing, a bad dream. She didn't inherit the gene. Once we're out of Chaotic Space, it all should fade."

"Hmm." Kathryn stared at him intently, her lips curling slightly. "Tuvok tells me you've got a mean right jab."

Chakotay laughed mostly out of relief. "Never spar with a Vulcan."

"No, picking on the sarcastic blonde kid is far less risky," Kathryn said. Her eyes sharpened, confusing the Commander even more.

"Wait, you're mad that I attacked Tom? Am I hallucinating again?" Chakotay stammered.

Kathryn sighed into her right hand.

A couple engineers hurried by Seven as she entered Engineering. She walked around them while scanning for someone in particular. Nowhere to be found, she decided to make her way towards the stations to the left of the core, mostly hidden out of the way.

To her annoyance she discovered James leaning over one of them. Chin in one hand, that elbow resting on the side, while his right hand lightly tapped the console occasionally.

"Ensign," she said reluctantly.

James barely glanced over his shoulder. "What?"

"I was looking for Lieutenant Carey," Seven said.

"He's on a repair job on Deck Three. He said to keep an eye on things while he was gone," James replied with little care in his voice.

Seven resisted a sigh for the time being. "He reported a signal in Chaotic Space, he assumed it was..."

"Borg yeah," James interrupted. Seven's eyebrow twitched a couple of times in frustration. "It's a neural interlink frequency."

"Your connection with the collective was not complete. How would you know that?" Seven asked as neutrally as possible.

James turned slightly to look at her, she assumed her attempt at not showing any distaste had failed. "That's interesting. I apparently knew enough about interlink frequencies to send the wrong phase corrections to you. Whatever suits your agenda, I suppose," he said.

"I was mistaken," Seven said but didn't mean. She hovered over to his right to look at the screen. He followed her every move, his eyebrow raised. "You assumed correctly. It's the frequency that integrates..."

"Connects the Borg together, I know," James said. He budged slightly to the left as the ex-drone was too far into his comfort zone, but not too much as he knew she was doing it on purpose for that effect. "Assumed is a nice word for guessed right, cos only you can know this crap right?"

Her patience was waning slightly. She couldn't let him know that. "I will try to determine its origin." She began to work, even while James' hand was still in the way, she just went around him.

"In Chaotic Space, it could be off the bow of our hull and it'll look light years away. That's the problem," James said.

Seven's shoulders tensed slightly. This was an opportunity to prove her usefulness to the crew, and make up for the mistake she was sure he made but she was blamed for.

James watched her with a slight frown before moving his attention back to the console. "You know, when you're acting ruder than me you've gone wrong somewhere."

"I am... not well," Seven said reluctantly.

"Oh?" James said, a little curiously. Seven instantly stared at him suspiciously for it. He didn't notice now as he was looking away. "Must be the Chaotic Flu going around."

Seven decided to use another station to investigate, she had a feeling he wasn't going to leave anytime soon. "No. This interlink frequency could explain my disorientation, lapses in memory," she said.

"Maybe," James mumbled while deep in thought. He shrugged it off and continued what he was doing, without somebody criticising over his shoulder. "Whatever it's doing, it looks jumbled. But that could be Chaotic Space's glitchy nature getting in the way."

Seven wasn't listening to him, she couldn't. All she could hear were a vast amount of voices shouting, talking, none of them in synch. When they faded away, her face turned into a slight grimace. She seemed annoyed by the console and turned away from it. This time when she saw James, she wasn't annoyed, she smiled.

"Chovnatlh rup," she growled, turning her whole body in his direction.

James was barely listening, he still pulled a confused face. "Tripping who up?" When he looked around, her smile turned into a scowl.

"You're nothing but a weak Human, bih-nuch. You could not handle me," Seven snarled on her approach.

James turned around completely, fully on guard and a little freaked out to say the least. "Ookay, are you still whining about that punch? Get over it."

Seven stepped closer, her eyes scanning him thoroughly, the smile was back which made it creepier. "You claim to be a warrior worthy of me?"

James laughed uncomfortably, "no, I claim that you're a nut case worthy of a trip to Sickbay. If you don't stop..."

"Or you'll what, hurt me?" Seven fiendishly giggled. "Let me look at you."

"I... hope that doesn't mean something else," James stuttered.

Seven followed him eagerly, eyeing him up and down. She closed the gap between them, or attempted to. James side stepped out of the way, his eyes now wide. She was once again in his personal space, only now she was sniffing the air, something he was keen to get away from.

Before he could, she lunged for him screaming, "your blood is sweet!" Her hand grabbed his arm, while she bared her teeth. She appeared to be going for his face. James didn't give her the chance to, he hurriedly pushed her away from him. The drone stumbled backwards into the wall with a loud thud.

If the shouting didn't already, that got everyone's attention. People started to gather around, but none dared to approach.

Seven recovered quickly, her smile had spread further. "You are strong. you'll make an excellent mate."

"I only have one thing to say to that. Eeew," James groaned while repressing a gag.

Seven thumped her chest aggressively, "you wish to prove yourself in battle." She didn't give him the option, she lunged again, even drooling slightly. James responded to this one with a panicked punch to the face. This time she stayed down.

"Oh," James immediately regretted that, he cringed. He wasn't the only one, everyone was reacting in a similar way. "She's going to like that when she wakes up, right?"

"Well..." someone said sheepishly.

"You hit a woman," one man said.

"So? She attacked him first. Self defence," another man said.

"You hit Seven, dude," one guy stuttered.

Another crewmember sniggered, "that was kinda hot." Everyone stared at her judgmentally. She laughed it off as if she didn't mean it.

James groaned in disgust, "ugh, I'm going to go crawl into a hole somewhere."

"Report," Kathryn sighed tiredly as she stepped out of the turbolift.

"Seven of Nine attacked Ensign Taylor in Engineering," Tuvok answered.

Kathryn didn't look surprised at first. "This is getting old." Her eyebrows wiggled curiously. "Did he win?"

Tom snorted a little, his laughter temporarily held back for now. "Well they're both Borg, this one's evenly matched baby."

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "that's it Tom. Tomorrow I'm taking you to the vets to get them off." To make matters worse, she cupped air with her hand and tugged. Tom knew what that meant. His eyes widened in horror.

"No one transported her to Sickbay, Taylor left to I assume gather his team. She simply got up and walked out of Engineering after he did," Tuvok finished his report.

"Not to worry, I'm sure she'll stick her nose in somewhere once she realises no one's looking for her," Kathryn said. "Now, what was the other problem?"

"Not a problem, Captain. We have partial sensors with a million kilometre range. We should be able to navigate," Tuvok said.

Kathryn made her way over to the Captain's chair. "Plot the safest course, short full impulse bursts and re-scan. Slow down and alter course if needed."

Tom was relieved for more reasons than one. He keyed in the course and engaged. After a few seconds he had to change his heading to avoid a rock floating in their way. Two more bursts of impulse were uneventful.

"Captain," Tuvok broke the silence. "Sensors are detecting Borg signatures."

"All stop," Kathryn barked towards helm. Tom didn't need the order, he was already doing so.

"It's coming from a debris field, five hundred thousand kilometres off our stern," Tuvok said. "Curious. A signal is emanating from it."

"What kind of signal?" Kathryn asked as the turbolift opened.

"There's a Borg ship nearby, or at least parts of one," the occupant said as he hurried over to re-take Ops. Kathryn and Tuvok stared after him, she with a light smile on their face. He noticed it and stared similarly back. "You already know."

"Well if it makes you feel any better, we only just found out," Kathryn said.

Tom sniggered to himself, the rest of the Bridge still heard him though. "Yes, congratulations. When's the wedding?" He could feel someone glaring at him, his back felt like it was on fire. He assumed it was Kathryn so he remained still, unaware that he was getting it from two different sides.

"The largest piece of the debris field appears to be where the signal is emanating from," Tuvok said. He put the object straight on screen. All anyone could make out amongst the blurry, moving mass was a twisting diamond shaped object.

"It's supposed to keep Borg drones connected," James said whilst trying to shrug off what the helmsman said. "Not, that..." he mumbled quietly.

Tom turned his chair around so he could look his way. He instantly winced at the deadly look Kathryn was still giving him. Thankfully James' had eased slightly in the mean time. "Um, er... should we be worried?"

James hesitated with his answer. Kathryn cut in without realising he was going to, "I'm more concerned about how this Borg ship ended up in bits. It doesn't bode well for us."

"Speak for yourself. I'm not ready for round two of Crazy Borg Jessie," Tom said. "Though James may be counting on it, or he would if he had any straightness. Ohno a girl likes me, help..." he laughed.

"The only thing I'm counting on is for the one track minded idiot to shut up for two bloody seconds. Though if he does that, he's got nothing left to contribute. We can't have that, Janeway will have to find another entitled and unfunny prat to beat on," James said. As soon as he finished the room fell

silent and a little awkward. He meanwhile clenched his jaw and stared directly down at his console to ignore it.

Tom's jaw dropped. He turned his chair around to respond, "*you* are telling *me* to shut up? It was just a joke. Get a sense of humour, and a Y chromosome while you're at it." A hard swipe across the back of his head shut him up for the time being.

"We won't be going anywhere for a while. Why don't you take that sexist prattle somewhere not here," Kathryn hissed.

"He started it!" Tom protested. Kathryn's eyes widened, death glare on full blast. He ran off quickly.

"Captain, I suggest we transport some of the Borg corpses on board for an autopsy. We may be able to determine if the exposure to Chaotic Space or this signal is the cause of the Commander and Seven of Nine's conditions, and if their illnesses are related to each other," Tuvok said.

Kathryn nodded to show her agreement. "Do it. Inform the Doctor and beam them straight to the morgue. Inform Engineering to concentrate their efforts on this signal. I don't fancy our Borg crewmembers getting a personality transplant." She focused her attention towards Opps with a firm stare as she slowly approached it, "can I have a quick word?"

James didn't notice she was talking to him immediately, she was merely background noise. When he noticed her looking at him the words hit him and made sense. He gave her a nod and began to follow her into the Ready Room.

"Seriously James, you need a filter or everyone's going to want to take a pop at you," Kathryn said, surprisingly gentle and with a smile. He flinched in response, wiping the smile from her face instantly. "What?"

"I keep..." James said. He hesitated, sighing impatiently. With a deep breath he tried again, "I keep seeing him."

"Who?" Kathryn frowned.

James looked annoyed at himself, he shook his head and turned away, "forget it."

"No, you wanted to tell me. I wanted an explanation for your behaviour today. Two birds, one stone," Kathryn said still in a gentle tone.

Silence took over as he stared down towards the floor. Kathryn waited patiently, assuming he was planning what to say for once.

"Dad," he said. Even just saying that made his blood run cold. "I keep seeing my dad. I don't know..."

"How long has this been going on?" Kathryn asked carefully.

James sighed and kept his head down. "The first time was on the Holodeck."

"The same time Chakotay hallucinated," Kathryn said. She took a step forward to place a comforting hand on his shoulder. She stopped, thinking the gesture would be more damaging than helpful. "You know he's not real."

"I know, I know, he can't hurt me," James said as he hurriedly walked away from her. "I... don't know why. What he wants. How?"

"It's all right. You're not alone here. Chaotic Space, the Borg debris. One of them will be the cause, both easily solved as soon as we escape," Kathryn said.

"It feels so real. I run and he's there, he's always there..." James stammered as his whole body trembled. His head turned again to one side so she couldn't see his face, and he squeezed his eyes shut. "I know I'm not what you wanted..."

"James," Kathryn said quickly while on approach.

James turned his head abruptly back. "I don't care!" he snapped desperately at something over her shoulder. His voice caught in his throat as his fear grabbed a hold of him tightly, "I won't go that way. I'm not you."

Kathryn tried again to approach him. This time she didn't hesitate to gently grasp his arm. She felt him flinch, he was still shaking but still he looked directly at her this time.

"Sorry, he was..." he mumbled.

"Don't be sorry. Go to Sickbay. The Doctor will be able to determine how you're being affected and might be able to help ease it," Kathryn said.

"But I should..." James protested quietly.

Kathryn shook her head and sternly looked him in the eye. "Should listen to your Captain for once. That's an order, not a request." She gave him a smile, "besides, someone should be on their way back that can easily replace you at Ops. Space sickness doesn't take that long to treat."

Any sign of his fear faded away, all that was left was concern. "Do you mean Jessie? I was wondering where she was."

"Yes. If she's not suffering from any other ill effects from Chaotic Space, she'll be freed. The last thing we need is further distractions," Kathryn said.

Seven stepped out of the turbolift with a frown planted on her face. Not to mention a nasty black eye as well. She walked down the corridor.

Kathryn waited for a moment for something. When that something didn't happen she glanced around to apparently look for it. "Oh? So we're not doing that, okay."

Despite his low mood James still managed to laugh at her. "What, did you expect Seven to walk in and annoy you?"

"Well it's been five minutes," Kathryn said.

The Doctor raised his eyebrow in her direction while he waved the scanning part of the tricorder near James' forehead. "Perhaps you're being a little unfair," the hologram muttered.

"All right," Kathryn sighed, frustrated. "I'll give her another minute."

James smirked at her as she was checking the door again. When she turned back she returned the smile, only she noticed he had a much smaller and female '*twin*' sitting next to him on the biobed doing the same thing.

"Kiara, how did you get up there?" she playfully scolded her.

Kiara's copied smirk turned into a wide grin, "Jamesy kicked me up. Can I do it again?" she asked, looking up at James.

"Kicked?" Kathryn was instantly confused.

Chakotay laughed from afar, "she was sitting on his feet." He turned his leg to one side, raising his foot up slightly, then pretended to pick something up from it.

"Oh, well okay..." Kathryn said slowly.

James however cringed slightly, "sorry, I never thought... won't happen again." His head dipped down, as well as his mood. The Doctor tutted since he had to shift his scans.

"Aaaw," Kiara pouted.

"I never thought I'd hear myself say this, but I'm baffled," the Doctor said, lowering his tricorder. "I see nothing wrong with him but slightly elevated adrenaline, and even that is settling down. I can't find any reason why he'd be seeing things like Chakotay."

"He doesn't have the annoying perverts talking in his ear?" Kiara asked innocently.

Kathryn looked on sheepishly while Chakotay stared at her. The role reversal amused the hologram and his youngest patient. "I wouldn't care, pervert was the censored insult. Next time I'll just call Tom a P," Kathryn said.

James' head came back up with a disgusted and bemused on his face directed at her. "Do I want to know what you wanted to call him?"

The Doctor cleared his throat, "no, if he does hear them I can't see any proof of it."

"Did you figure out why Kiara was hearing voices?" Kathryn asked.

"Same problem," the Doctor sighed in frustration.

Chakotay walked over to join them. "What did the autopsies tell you?"

"That only added to the mystery," the Doctor sighed, he gestured them over to the console nearby. Kathryn and Chakotay followed him over to it. As soon as they arrived he pointed to what looked like a graph with dozens of lines going in multiple chaotic directions. "One drone seemed to have twenty one neural patterns in his cerebral cortex at time of death. The other had fifteen."

"The Borg must have been on strike at the time. The hours can be a bitch," James commented.

Kathryn's eyebrow raised, the corner of her lips threatened to as well. "That's... one idea. Um."

"Bitch," Kiara giggled.

Both Kathryn and Chakotay face palmed in almost perfect unison. Kiara grinned proudly as if it were a good thing.

"Or, we have another disconnected from collective, but connected to each other Borg ship," Chakotay said after moving his hand. "That signal, I wonder if something similar cut yours and Jessie's cube off."

"No, I..." James said with a head shake.

"I don't think so," the Doctor answered quickly. He brought up some more scans on his computer to prove it. "The signal is designed for exactly this. If something happens to a drone or an errant ship, it links them together. Purges the individuality. This is not what it's doing."

"Chaotic Space though, it has that effect on everything," Kathryn pointed out.

"It is warped, misfiring because of it yes," the Doctor said. "But these seemed to be varying neural patterns. They were not in unison. This is the opposite of what the signal is meant to do."

"Chaos to order," Chakotay mumbled.

Kathryn sighed impatiently, "this isn't happening to James or Jessie, right?" The Doctor frowned and shook his head. "Just Seven?"

"That's conjecture. I haven't examined her yet. It is pointed at us though, so..." the Doctor replied.

"Great. What does this multiple neural patterns mean? She's hearing voices as well like Jessie did?" Kathryn questioned. "I'm sensing a pattern here."

Chakotay's eyes glazed over. The not so gentle hum of voices were trying to break through again. He tried to concentrate on the conversation. "*Begin round three,*" he heard the computer say.

"It was like she was somebody else," James said. Kathryn and the Doctor turned their attention toward him. Kiara was too busy pressing her hands against her ears, tears building in her eyes. "Like a Klingon actually."

"I thought as much. The patterns likely belonged to other people, possibly other members of their ship," the Doctor said. "As for why it only picked Seven, James wasn't affected the last time. And Jessie has very little technology left inside her, in this space it might have struggled to distinguish her from other members of the crew."

"Even when she's not here the woman's taking centre..." Kathryn muttered to herself. Kiara looked up at her, sniffing.

"Anderson to Taylor. James, whatever you've done to my program, it isn't funny!" Craig's shrill panicked voice shouted over James' commbadge.

"Craig, what are you talking about?" he asked.

"Don't play dumb, this is totally your style."

"Seriously I don't know what you mean," James said.

"Anderson Three. Come on, you know the one."

James mouthed the number three while shrugging. "How would I know exactly?"

"My Holodate program! The host and audience have gone loopy!"

James burst into laughter, which put Kiara off her crying and made her giggle too.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Holodate?" Kathryn said.

"Oh crap! James, you could have told me that Janeway was there."

"Nice program, Lieutenant," the Doctor laughed as well. He noted Kiara's earlier discomfort, so headed for his office to reclaim the jar of lollipops.

"Oh now you decide to go to Sickbay," Craig's voice said bitterly. *"Why would you make the audience shout so much?"*

"I don't hear anything but you Craig," James said in between laughs.

"Of course not, the censors are muting everything... Oh god, now the three girls are stuck in a loop, answering the questions over and over and..."

"Here's a wacky idea. Turn the program off and walk out," James suggested.

"Wait, that's a new one. They want to re-align my what?" Craig sounded pretty panicked at this point.

"Oh for god's sake," Kathryn growled as she marched over to grab James' commbadge from him. Her thumb tapped it aggressively to cut the panicked Lieutenant off. "You do this?"

"Where are...?" the Doctor meanwhile complained in his office. He seemed to spot something on the floor, he knelt down to grab it.

James' eyebrow raised, an incredulous smile grew. "I don't even get it."

Chakotay also made his way over to him, only he did it a lot less urgently than Kathryn did. A dazed expression on his face, eyes scanning something in front of him rapidly. It reminded James of the incident on the Bridge. His first instinct was to scoop Kiara up from the biobed first, and then he slid off it himself.

"Chakotay?" Kathryn said warily. She only saw Chakotay's approach, only noticing what James was doing when he tried to hand her daughter over. Kathryn noticed his wide, terrified eyes and quickly grabbed her. He promptly began to stumble backwards towards the door.

The little girl in her arms whined and grabbed her head again. "Again?" Kathryn whispered, while glancing back and forth between the two men. Kiara's cries picked up in volume so she focused on her as well. "All three, at the same time?"

Chakotay mumbled incoherently while still on approach towards James, who had backed himself into the wall.

"It's not real, try to focus," Kathryn said to the Commander, but she directed it at all of them. All while stroking her daughter's back to comfort her. "What are they saying?"

The question stopped Chakotay in his tracks. He groaned, frustrated and terrified. "I don't know, it's too loud. Fast."

"Mummy, head hurts," Kiara cried up at her.

Kathryn heard the doors to Sickbay opened. She didn't have to look, but she glanced towards it anyway in time to see James rushing through them. "Doctor!" she growled.

The hologram straightened back up holding an empty glass jar. He frowned, "Naomi, why, the whole jar?"

"Doctor!" Kathryn shouted, startling the life out of him. Of course he dropped the jar in his shock. He ran back in, unable to make eye contact with her in case doing so would delete him. "All three of them started to hallucinate, hear things."

The Doctor chose Kiara to scan first. By the time he grabbed the tricorder and pointed it at her, she snuggled into her mother, her cries turned into light snuffles. "I... I don't understand. She's fine. Slight adrenaline increase, nothing more." He dared to turn and check on Chakotay as he tightly grasped his head.

Chakotay's knees buckled, he dropped down onto them, his body hunched over as his fingers tightened their hold on his skull. The Doctor quickly knelt down to aid him.

Kathryn made sure to turn herself in such a way so Kiara couldn't see this. All while trying to mask her concern with a slight scowl. "Should I replicate another jar of sweets, Doc, I'm sure that will help." The Doctor responded with a tired sigh.

Cargo Bay 2:

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Seven said plainly, eyebrow raising quizzically.

Naomi giggled, her eyes wider than normal. In her arms were a pile of different kinds of lollipops and sweets. "Slumber party, slumber party fun."

"Slumber? Isn't it lunch period?"

"Oooh, lunch party, lunch party!" Naomi actually jumped up and down. "We can have a picnic. I have sweeties." She gestured to the sweets by lifting her arms up abruptly, dropping some of them. "I bring the sweeties to picnic."

"Ingesting that many sugar products is not good for you."

Naomi's hyper eyes quickly changed to furious. "Picnic sweeties!" she roared.

"Perhaps..." Seven hesitated, the child's behaviour actually making her freaked out for once. "If I replicate some nutritional supplements it will balance that out."

"Boring," Naomi sang, then stuck her tongue out at the ex drone. "Oooh, scavenger hunt. I'll go first." She ran off towards the barrels, leaving a trail of sweets behind. Seven watched her with wide eyes.

The Cargo Bay doors opened before she could pursue and stop the child. The Thompson and Foster half of Team One entered with another team. All of them had phasers holstered in their belts. They stopped, hesitating slightly on seeing her. Thompson elbowed Foster in the ribs, gesturing his eyes in her direction.

"Fine," Foster whispered. He lead the charge toward her, he started to shake terribly. "Seven?" he squeaked.

"Yes?" Seven said curiously.

"You er... are to be taken into custody for the attack in um... Engineering," Foster said.

Seven frowned, she was confused and it wasn't the first time today. Each time made her feel even more unsettled. "Attack? I do not recall any attack."

"It's all right, we've all slapped an apparent hottie's bum when we're drunk and regretted it later because they weren't so. I could tell you some stories," Thompson sniggered. Everyone stared at him in disgust, even Seven did.

"Anyway..." Foster tried to change the subject back.

"Hottie's, bum?" Seven said in her usual tone. Both words sounded funny coming from her, the unknown team tried not to laugh. "I was not drunk."

Foster groaned, "there were no bums, hot or otherwise!" He quickly composed himself, "witnesses claim you did grab someone's arm and threatened them. We have to take that seriously... right guys?"

The team all stopped sniggering. Thompson still smirked away though. "Yes, seriously," one unknown piped up.

"Why is it only funny when it happens to men? It's equally bad, at least," Foster complained.

Thompson tried to put on a serious face, "you're absolutely right. It's only funny when it happens to Taylor."

Seven looked a little unnerved on hearing that. "I do not recall... Very well. How long will I remain inactive?"

"We er, don't know. We were only instructed to take you to Sickbay for examination," Foster replied.

"I see. I believe my regeneration parameters will be informative," Seven said.

"Oh, we're going with the sleep walking defence. I would too," Thompson sneered. Foster gave him a skunk eye for it.

Seven assumed they were letting her proceed, so she walked over to her console opposite her alcove. In the corner of her eye she saw Naomi peeking out from behind a barrel. When she noticed she had been seen the hyper girl ducked back down.

Another tap activated a Borg like forcefield around the Security types. Seven strode away towards one of the Borg pillars, and began to tap on the panel there.

"Security alert," Foster panicked, tapping his commbadge.

"Elaborate," Tuvok's voice said out of it.

"Seven of Nine's resisting arrest, she's put a forcefield around us," Foster reported.

"Standby. I will send another team. Miss Rex, disable the forcefield."

"Okeydoke," Jessie's voice responded.

Seven looked over her shoulder towards the barrel from before. "Naomi Wildman!" she barked.

Naomi hurried over and put her hands on her hips. "Seven of Nine!" she barked back.

Seven ignored her tone for now. "Watch this sequence closely. You will need to enter it exactly."

"Is it a game?" Naomi asked, her eyes narrowing suspiciously. "I'll know if it's not."

"Yes," Seven lied. Naomi's whole face lit up, she then nodded. "Watch carefully," Seven repeated before typing in the commands slowly. "When the light flashes, you begin. Understand?"

"Pfft, that's easy. I bet Thompson can do it," Naomi scoffed.

Thompson took a few seconds to notice his ears were burning, and a few more to realise what she said. "Hey!"

Seven walked away towards another barrel, which she immediately opened. The Security team looked worried when she pulled a phaser rifle out of it.

The light on the console started to flash. Naomi stared at it intently as if it were Neelix trying to serve her the birthday cake he made. Her hand reached out to enter the commands.

The Bridge:

Jessie pulled a face as she worked quickly on the Opps station. "Um, what kind of Borg encryption code is 'more lollipops'?"

Tuvok didn't know where to begin with that. Even his eyebrow had nothing and remained still.

"She's activating the transporters," Jessie said.

Engineering:

Armed with the phaser rifle under her chest, Seven rematerialised near the warp core. She took aim at the first crewmember she saw.

"Um, what the fu..." they had time to say before they were shot.

Bridge:

"Phaser fire in Engineering," Jessie quickly reported.

Tuvok seemed almost annoyed at this. "Bridge to all on duty Security personnel..."

Engineering:

Only the sound of the warp core humming remained once Seven was finished. She coolly headed over to one of the panels surrounding the core, placed the rifle on the banister and began to work.

The silence soon was broken by the doors opening. Her head and the rifle darted in that direction. A frown settled on her face when all she saw was the doors closing again. No one was there.

She didn't hear anyone's footsteps, not even a shadow. Her only clue to an intruder was the brief mirror image cast in her work station. Seven swung around and scowled, "you?"

The Bridge:

Kathryn stomped out of the turbolift, bringing with her an ice cold gust of air. "What the hell has that attention seeker done now?"

Kiara ran out as well and around her. She stopped beside her mother so she could copy her tight arm folding stance. "Yes, what da hell has bimbo done naow," she even copied her mother's infamous hard W'd now.

Tuvok stared blankly down at the girl, while the rest of the Bridge quietly laughed to themselves.

"I couldn't be more proud," Kathryn beamed down at her daughter. When she returned to staring at everyone else her iciness flashed back. "Well? Something about phasers and Engineering."

"I sent a few Security teams to apprehend Seven of Nine to get her to Sickbay," Tuvok began to explain. Kathryn's stare was even making him sweat nervously.

"Team One to Tuvok."

Tuvok slapped his commbadge a little harder, and quicker than normal. "Yes, go ahead Mr Foster."

"We've got her, she's down. We've beamed her to Sickbay. I assume you'll want a forcefield around her there?"

Kathryn grunted, narrowing her eyes at her Security Chief. "Hmm, that's a tough one. Do you want me to..."

"Affirmative. Maximum level," Tuvok answered the first question, then tapped his commbadge. "The threat has been contained Captain. How is the Commander?"

"Hmm," Kathryn said without blinking for a good thirty seconds or so. "Three crewmembers suffering from delusions. It's clear what we're dealing with."

Jessie looked confused, she wasn't the only one. "Chaotic Space, but we already knew that."

"No," Kathryn groaned impatiently. "They all have something in common, something..."

The turbolift doors opened once again. "Third time's a charm," James commented as he stepped out of it. He had to stop to avoid walking into both Kathryn and Kiara.

Kathryn looked over her shoulder, "third, what?"

"What?" James said as his eyes shifted from one side to the other.

"Three. Everything's in three's. It's another message. This proves it. Someone's trying to communicate with us," Kathryn said.

Tuvok's eyebrow finally knew what to do and raised. "I believe in Human terms you have skipped to the last chapter of the book, Captain."

"Think about it," Kathryn sighed angrily. "Kiara's voices. Chakotay's boxing match. James' father visions."

Jessie's eyes widened while James visibly winced again. "James' what?" she asked.

"Wouldn't Seven make four crewmembers?" Tuvok questioned.

"Craig's Holodeck program, Anderson Three, malfunctioning. He mentioned three girls, an audience and a host," Kathryn continued like she wasn't interrupted.

Jessie smiled, "do I want to know?" James nodded.

"Three major incidents involving the three. Holodeck, Bridge and then Sickbay. All at the same time, which is why I think Seven's is a separate issue. James said something about going *that way*. Craig mentioned censors," Kathryn said. "Somebody lives here and they're trying to tell us how to escape. They distorted the Borg's interlink signal, but didn't foresee the damage it would do."

"Sounds like they're trying to destroy people, not help them," Jessie said.

Tuvok thought about it for a moment, "the graviton shear will only keep increasing. Our shields will not hold indefinitely. Our sensors cannot find a way out. Their efforts would merely speed up the process."

"Exactly. Why go to all the trouble?" Kathryn said. "Chakotay agreed as well. The Doctor was against it, but he's fully activating the gene. We should get the full message soon enough."

"I had a feeling this episode was going to end like the original," Jessie muttered.

"Oh, time for some J/C action at last. The shippers are getting hungry," James said sarcastically.

"I'm right here, Ensign," Kathryn said angrily.

James shrugged, "yeah true. Chakotay's not, so who else is going to feed the crew their shippy scrap dinners."

Kathryn's eyes shifted nervously. "How did you... that's disgusting, I wouldn't do that."

"I'm sure as hell not going to volunteer to be the J part either," James said as if she said nothing.

Kathryn gritted her teeth, "yes, that's hilarious James. I'm laughing on the inside."

Jessie tried not to laugh. She realised something, which worked a treat. "Oh, my name begins with J too. Eew."

"All right, someone take the helm before I actually consider bringing Paris back," Kathryn snapped at them both.

James sighed, "okay," he walked around her to head for the helm. "I may need ten minutes to clean it up first."

Kathryn stared at him, one nostril twitching upward, and eyes narrowing. A few people laughed quietly.

James sat down while pulling a face himself. "I meant... something else entirely." He quickly keyed something in to remove what looked like a photo of B'Elanna in the background of the controls. Then he wiped a few crumbs off with his arm. "You guys are terrible."

"Mmm hmm," Kathryn said, not fully believing him. She made her way over to her chair to get ready for the trip out of the anomaly. Kiara hurried over to sit in her dad's. "We're ready. Standby for the instructions."

THE E...

"Oh come on!" Kathryn snarled. "Wasn't this supposed to be The Fight, not the Seven of Bubs Show."

"Um," everyone said awkwardly.

THE END