

Episode 1.15

Spirits

A flash of blue lit up the area for only a second. From it, a small vessel shot forward. Its momentum immediately dwindled to almost nothing while its nose gradually pointed down. By the time it got to a waiting Voyager, it floated adrift upside down with a trail of light smoke behind it.

"Well... that worked," Tom quipped while rolling his eyes.

Chakotay snarled into his back. "Of course. Its emitters are fried, what did you expect? Inform the..." he said, pointing towards Opps.

"I wouldn't if I were you," Jessie laughed from her Engineering station.

"And why not?" Chakotay asked impatiently.

Jessie pointed at the viewscreen, which showed the stricken ship. "Are you stupid? That's not them. Even a Tom can see that."

"Hey, or is that thanks?" Tom whined and then mumbled.

Tuvok's resulting expression looked almost like a smirk. "She's right. It isn't. It is however one of theirs. A shuttlecraft."

Tom squinted at the image on the screen, he started to drool once he got a good look at it. "We don't have any like that. She's a fine piece of as..."

Chakotay sighed partly in disgust, the rest of it was annoyance. "Great, then you can tell him."

"Wha... what?" Tom stammered as his face turned very pale. He swivelled his chair around to see if he was joking. Clearly he wasn't. "How can I ask him, if I'm not here?" He tried to run off.

Chakotay grabbed him by the back of his collar and pulled him back, the poor helmsman coughed and spluttered once he was by his side. "Remind me to get a choke lead on you."

"All right fine, but this isn't my fault. My finger's gonna point straight at you," Tom gloated.

"Mmm hmm," Chakotay said without a care. He slapped the pilot across the back to send him on his way. He scurried off while whispering insults.

"Maybe you should tell him there's two people on this shuttle," Harry suggested. "My console says they're unconscious, so chop chop."

Tom scrunched up his face, "oh I'll chop all right."

As soon as he stepped into the turbolift the Ready Room doors opened.

"Captain on the Bridge," Tuvok announced. That was everyone's cue to quickly put on what looked like overhead earphones.

The Captain strolled over towards Chakotay as he stared at the viewscreen. She took one look at it, then pulled one of the headphones so it'd snap back into his face. "What is that, and why is it bleeding all over my ship?" she snarled.

"Ow, you shrill piece of..." he cried out.

"Shhh, nobody likes a man baby," she hissed back. "Why is that thing here, and not...?"

Chakotay pulled down the headphones to let them hang around his neck. He glared at her maliciously. "Pipe down Phoebe. It was your call to send the airhead, so don't even think of lumping this one on me. If he's such a genius he could've done it himself."

"Can we save the teenage tantrums for another time? Preferably when I'm not extremely bored already," Phoebe faked a yawn. "Reel them in. It's better than nothing. You never know, we may get lucky."

"Tah dah!" Tom shakily shouted while gesturing his hands forward as the doors opened. All that greeted them was a dark room. His escortee slowly turned to stare at him, making him whimper quietly. Fortunately the little light of the corridor combined with his hood hid his face, and his expression. "It's in there. Bye."

He was grabbed once more, luckily this time only by the arm. "The whole ship is sitting in our shuttle bay?" a computerised voice snarled.

"Ye... yes Boss," Tom replied.

"Care to tell me how a ship of equal size to us, can fit in the shuttle bay that can barely squeeze in three shuttles," the Boss said.

"It grew?" Tom said.

"Oh of course. How foolish of me to think otherwise," the Boss groaned as he walked inside.

Tom thought he bought it and followed him. He was a little surprised when the lights petered on. Finally, he'd be the one to see what their mysterious leader looked like. He couldn't wait to start a pool about it. While thinking this the Boss' shadow walked around the captured vessel, out of Tom's sight. He groaned in disappointment before hurrying over to try and catch a glimpse.

The door at the back of the shuttle opened slowly. Tom managed to only see his back, and the hand holding a tricorder like device as it retreated into his pocket. The Boss stepped inside, cackling obnoxiously.

Tom followed which he sensed almost immediately, it stopped him cold and Tom as well. "Wait here."

A little whine from the helmsman followed the Boss into the shuttlecraft. His interest level rose as he entered what appeared to be one of two rooms, with tools and materials scattered everywhere. Ahead a couple of steps lead up to a door, he assumed was the helm.

He climbed up, allowing the door to open automatically. Sure enough straight ahead was a cramped looking bridge. He no sooner had stepped forward when his foot caught on something. He looked down. There lying at his feet, a bruised and scraped Harry. Only a few feet ahead, slumped over the helm controls was B'Elanna.

"Ooph," a woman's voice giggled from behind him.

The Boss maneuvered back into the rear of the shuttle. He didn't have to search for the source for very long. A very obvious humanoid shadow lurked around in a cage near the steps. Sure enough, he heard the giggle again. Then he recognised the voice, he couldn't help but groan.

"Oh, you," he groaned.

"Oh, Bossy," the woman copied. She clutched the bars in front of her, huffing pathetically. Doing so allowed him to see her permanently wide eyed expression, tight blonde hair, catsuit and pieces of Borg

like technology surrounded by painful looking bruises. "Mean boy locked me in here and left me. Do you have a key?"

"Well, that explains why you failed to swap yourself for your Borg bimbo counterpart," the Boss grunted. She nodded furiously. "But there's still one small incy problem."

She giggled, "you sound funny saying incy with that deep voice."

"You failed," the Boss said.

"No," Seven protested. "I swapped their emitter for Arturisy's like you said. We wouldn't be talking otherwise."

"Does this look like Voyager you halfwit?" the Boss snapped.

Seven pouted, "yeah a little bit. I followed the engineers here, like you said they would all be working on the streamslip thingy. You were right, they didn't detect me. I walked right in."

"So when they walked into a shuttlecraft instead of a starship's identical engine room, nothing twigged?" the Boss said. All he got for a reply was a furrowed brow and a tiny squeak. "Ugh, and to think I thought you could replace Seven, that's one whole number too high for you."

"Huh?" she squeaked again.

"Hmph," the Boss grunted. "Forget it, Six. This is the last time I deal with anything Tolg, I tell you. You idiots are obviously all braindead. Paris!?"

Tom peeped his head around the shuttle door. "Yo?"

"You and the bimbo drag these two to the lab. They'll have to entertain for now," the Boss ordered.

"Yes sir!" Tom said far too eagerly. This was how he was going to see his face. Only the shadowed figure turned away from him as he went to leave.

"Yo? Pillock," the pair managed to only just make out from their boss as he left.

Five Months Later

Captains Log Stardate 52669.8: Due to a few reported sightings of another Federation starship, we've changed course to follow their supposed trail. Unfortunately we've already hit a dead end; a world filled with ruins, but no sign of intelligent lifeforms.

I am currently trying to decide on the awayteam who will investigate. I have already chosen Seven, since she's so good at everything. I just need to decide who else I hat... er pick someone who could adapt to whatever's down there. Yes.

Most of the Mess Hall tried different ways to tune the noise out. Hands pressed against their temples, fingers in ears, humming loudly. One crewmember thought they finally found a use for Neelix's Leola Nut buns, until they started to burn his cheeks.

For once it wasn't Neelix singing, or rather loudly muttering the word 'cook' while bopping to a tune that sounded like it belonged in an arcade machine. He learned not to do that the hard way in the morning the Ready Room replicator broke. The grill pan still had an indentation of Neelix's face on the bottom of it.

"Please!" Kiara screeched the last part for as long as she could, before needing to breathe.

Morgan sat in front of her, turning a little red in the cheeks. Her face scrunched in pain. "Oh god, what did I do to deserve this..." then she remembered who she was complaining about was really a younger version of her. The red in her face brightened further. "Oh. No."

"Pretty please," Kiara moaned sweetly, but still loudly.

"No!" Morgan groaned.

"I'll give you some Cherry Coke," Kiara said, batting her eyes cutely.

"What's that? It sounds familiar," Morgan asked.

"It's like what mummy drinks, but not gross and bubbly," Kiara replied. "It has fruit in it. So it's good."

"Well okay, I'll do it... er what was it you wanted me to do again?" Morgan said hesitantly.

Kiara groaned along with everyone else at the table. "She wants you to babysit her today instead of Tuvok," her best friend Tani replied.

"Oh yeah," Morgan said sheepishly. "Wait, why Tuvok?"

At the neighbouring table James overheard and tried his best not to laugh, "he apparently reached his eyebrow quota. Janeway wasn't happy."

"Oh, she didn't tape his eyebrows down again, did she?" Jessie cringed.

The image of it made Morgan and Tani share an amused glance, then they laughed quietly.

James shook his head while clicking his tongue. He stopped to sip on his drink. "It took him months to regrow them."

Jessie absentmindedly reached up to check her own eyebrows were still there, wincing slightly. "Is Craig not the official babysitter anymore?" she asked while still prodding.

"I imagine he'd prefer to babysit Morgan instead," Tani giggled with a glint in her eye.

Morgan stared at her with a slight frown, "but why? I don't need a babysitter, I'm not a kid."

Tani bit her lip and watched her friend sadly. "Oh dear, the naivety. Sometimes I wonder."

Tuvok entered from the furthest entrance of the Mess Hall, he made his way straight over to them. "Miss Kiara, are you ready to go now?"

"Oh please god no!" Kiara moaned as she squeezed her *sister's* leg.

"She means yes," Morgan smiled.

Kiara gasped, she stared up at her accusingly. "Oh c'mon Morgan, you said you would."

"Oh fine," Morgan huffed.

"Very well, now I have more time to meditate in my holodeck program," Tuvok said, he even sounded relieved. As he turned to leave he almost bumped into Tom.

"And which one is that?" he asked. Tuvok responded with a suspicious eyebrow twitch. It made Tom immediately nervous. "With B'Elanna and Harry missing, I've been extra stressy lately. I need to chill in the Holodeck too, a different one."

"I'm not telling you," Tuvok said.

Tom started splutter, "but... I wasn't the one who put those rabbits in the temple."

"I don't believe you Mr Paris," Tuvok said and he walked away.

Tom harrumphed a little too loudly, his eyes rolled. "I'm much more creative than that," he muttered.

Kiara giggled cutely. James and Jessie shared an *uhoh* glance to Morgan's confusion.

"Oh, what did you do?" Tani asked mid groan.

Morgan glanced between the two tables, "he... hey."

"Please, I know that laugh," Tani said to her. "You weren't always so direct about your antics in the old days."

James meanwhile hunched down to whisper to the little girl, "you told me those rabbits were for the latest Captain Proton episode."

Kiara folded her arms behind her back, similarly to how her mother sometimes did, and rocked side to side. All while smiling sweetly. "They were. They escaped."

Jessie narrowed her eyes in James' direction. Even though he was focused on Kiara, he could still see something in the corner of his eye and feel the full effects of it. "You told me they'd be little yappy dogs," she whispered dangerously.

"Escaped?" James said, his voice a tad higher due to nervousness.

Kiara huffed and threw her hands back by her side, pouting as hard as she could. "Tom's fault. They both wanted Holodeck, he made Tuvoky *share*."

Morgan sniggered quietly until she accidentally snorted briefly, getting their full attention. "Sorry. I was just imagining Tuvok sitting cross legged on the floor, humming and haaa'ing, with fluffy things hopping all over him."

Jessie shuddered so much she looked like she was having a seizure to everyone else. "Oh god. No sleep for me tonight," she said on recovering. One little shudder lead to her throwing a slight punch into James' arm. "Thanks a lot!"

He quickly sat up with a sheepish look on his face. "In my defence, you weren't supposed to see it, only Tom was. And she was inspired by the story her mum told her."

"Ugh," Jessie grunted in disgust. "Damien and his stupid little army. Next time I see him, I owe him a broken nose or two."

"Two noses? This ship is a lot more fun than my mum's," Tani giggled.

"How do you know? You were only a baby," Morgan asked.

"Exactly, being a baby is extremely boring. I suppose I at least got free food, the privilege of sleeping all day and best of all, annoying the hell out of everyone just by crying. Oh, I wish I was a baby again," Tani rambled, then sighed while resting her chin in her hand. Everyone stared at her funny, which she laughed off nervously. "I'm kidding. I'm fine with being a woman. I'm sure you are fine with that too," she said in James' direction, giving him a wink.

Jessie's stare turned into disgust while James opted to look elsewhere awkwardly. "I thought James is a guy," Morgan said with genuine confusion.

"No Morgan, she was winking at Jessie," Kiara said.

"What, no," Tani protested. She scoffed, "as if. I like my guys hot and rugged, not scrawny, old, psychotic and shrill."

The temperature in the Mess Hall, and the entirety of Deck Two for that matter, dropped below zero. Anyone who had heard the words froze on the spot. All except Jessie, she ground her teeth, her eyes sharpened so much they'd slice Tani in half given the chance.

"Speaking of fun," Morgan said quickly to hopefully change the subject. "The planet we're orbiting's been abandoned. I wonder why. Maybe a Borg attack, or Tolg even."

"How is that fun?" Kiara asked her.

James was very grateful for the change of subject, he jumped into it sounding a little too eager. "In my experience with these types of places, the cause is infectious and gets us as well. We should know better, but we investigate these things anyway."

"But if it's a Borg thing, I should go down to help. Tolg, we can learn stuff about them," Morgan said.

"I dunno," James said hesitantly. "You'd have to beat out Seven first, and she's a little sensitive when you try to. Sometimes even when you're not."

Jessie was still seething, but still turned her head to join in the conversation. Her voice was ice cold though, "she just doesn't like you."

"Ohno, what a shame," James said in deadpan. "It doesn't help, I'll admit. But I promise you, if you wander into her territory, prepare for the very boring *I'm better than you* claws. They itch like crazy."

Tani laughed for longer than she should've. Jessie rolled her eyes in response. "You're so clever with words. So funny," Tani said.

Morgan and Kiara exchanged similar disgusted faces. Kiara pretended to gag. "I know, me too," Morgan sniggered at her.

"Oh god, we didn't need the yappy dogs after all," Jessie said. James glanced at her with a raised eyebrow, she stared back shaking her head. "We've got one, and it's hanging off your leg. Better kick it off."

"Soooo, do you wanna go?" Morgan asked. Kiara nodded, to which Morgan shook hers. "Not you."

James turned toward her with his puzzled expression, "you mean go to the possibly cursed and or infected with a disease planet? Sure." They both got up at the same time and hurried off.

Tani gasped, "Morgan... hey, get your own." She ran after them shouting, "traitor!"

"Uh, okay?" Jessie stammered. She looked down at Kiara who smiled back at her cutely.

"Don't worry, I'm rooting for you," Kiara said.

Jessie couldn't help but smile at her, "aaw how sw..." Then the sentence replayed in her head, throwing her right off. Most of her face lost a lot of its colour, bringing out her rapidly blushing cheeks. "Wait, what?"

Meanwhile on the Bridge, Tom returned to his station with a forced smile on his face. Once he sat down he allowed himself to give it a rest and frown. Only for a moment as all it did was make him feel even more tense. "So are we nearly there yet?" he asked playfully.

"No, we're orbiting a planet right now," Kathryn said with little interest.

"Oh, shame," Tom muttered. "Chakotay?" he called over his shoulder.

"What?" he snapped.

"I forgot," Tom said.

Chakotay and Kathryn stared at one another with similar annoyed expressions.

"What planet are we on? I suppose we have a good reason for stopping," Tom muttered.

"For god's sake, if you have to talk and whine, open your god damn mouth properly when you do it. All you people do is mutter!" Kathryn snapped.

Chakotay laughed nervously, "better than exclaiming I suppose."

Kathryn growled at him, "not if it's called for."

"I'm just saying. We were supposed to be looking for B'Elanna and..." Tom said, daring to swivel his chair around to say it directly to them both.

"I'm sorry Tom. Are possibly millions of people dead an inconvenience to you? Poor baby," Kathryn said in a sickly sweet voice, with a hint of venom at its core. "You'll just have to make use of the Holodeck for an ickle bit longer. I'm sure you're used to it."

Tom flinched, it felt like she had punched him in the face instead. He turned back around to lick his wounds.

"Captain. The planet is indeed uninhabited but there is a vast amount of building decay and very few food resources," Seven said from Tactical.

Kathryn calmed slightly as she thought about the report. "Hmm, so it's been empty for quite a while. Do a scan for weapon signatures anyway, Commander, and keep our shields up. I don't fancy being caught with our pants down if some bad guy shows up."

"Excuse me?" Seven said.

Kathryn scowled as she looked at her briefly and back again. Then she did a double take. "Oh, I was wondering why Tuvok sounded more droll than usual."

Chakotay tried his best not to smirk or laugh. "I doubt we'll find them or the Flyer here. If this wasn't recent, I suggest we move on."

"First I suggest we scan underground, there may be dilithium or deuterium deposits," Seven said.

"Good idea, do it," Kathryn said.

"Curious, Morgan and Taylor have requested to go to the surface," Seven said, her eyebrow twitching.

Kathryn noticed it, she leaned over towards Chakotay with a scowl on her face, "is there a hook and string or something hanging off that damn station?"

"Why?" Chakotay asked while chuckling.

"For a breath of fresh air, she says," Seven said. Her jaw flexed very visibly, "I suspect Miss Morgan has wrongly assumed the damage has been caused by the Borg. Taylor is likely her accomplice once more."

"Okay, tell her they can go providing that they're careful," Kathryn said. Seven's eyes managed to widen more than usual.

Chakotay looked at her in surprise, "what, really? I can't count how many things are wrong with that decision."

Kathryn stared at him with a straight face for a good minute. Then she burst into hysterical laughter. "Oh of course not really." Seven sneaked in a quiet sigh of relief. "What do you think this is, a bad fanfiction where the rebellious teenaged daughter of the Captain and the Commander can and does anything she wants? Jesus."

"Uh, yes," Chakotay said hesitantly.

Kathryn stopped laughing as abruptly as she started. "Shi..."

"Hmm, it looks simple enough," she said while studying the transporter controls. A few commands was all it took for the console to spring to life. She quickly scurried to the pad, stepping over the transporter officer lying on the floor on route. "You're not going without me."

A strange rumbling noise greeted the Seven of Nine copy known as Six as she approached the dark lab. As the door opened a loud echoing roar frightened her back outside. The doors still remained open since she didn't step far enough away. The same rumbling sound began again, only louder. With the door open she realised it sounded more like someone blowing their nose around a microphone.

Before she could figure out what the noise actually was, she heard the Boss' deep computerised voice mumble, "no, you've had enough today, Fuzzlenuzzle."

Six had a good idea what was happening. It was safe to go inside. She stepped in during a third rumble. Sure enough, there was the Boss with his feet up on the computer. His head tilted back in his chair, once again obscuring his face. The voice modulator remained firmly grasped in his right hand.

She tip toed in, heading straight for the Boss' two prisoners in the next room. The pair lay on the beds, still hooked up to the computers with crude looking wires implanted into their foreheads. Not put off, she headed for Harry, smiling deviously.

Once Six was by his side, she leaned in and pursed her lips, gunning for his unconscious face. Her hand caressed his forehead, around one of the wires. Just as their lips were about to meet, her thumb managed to loosen it. It took no further effort to knock it to the floor with a clatter.

Harry's eyes shot open. The first and only thing he saw was Six's very pale skin, bulging eyes and huge almost blue lips coming for him. "Aaaah!"

"Aaaah!" she screamed too.

Harry reached for anything loose, picked it up and slammed it over her head in a blind panic. Unfortunately all that did was knock her unconscious while she was still leaning over him. She dropped onto his shoulder and started to drool all over it.

"What the hell is going on?" Harry stuttered as he pushed her to the floor. He was about to get up when he noticed the second wire, he reached up to feel around. The previous wire left no obvious mark that he could feel, so he carefully pulled the remaining one out before sitting up. Doing so he noticed B'Elanna lying in a similar predicament beside him.

A loud croaking sound echoed through the open door. Startled he looked across. All he could make out was a darkened window opposite him. Then the Boss' voice mumbled, "capture my intelligencezzzz."

Harry slid off the Six-less side of the bed carefully. His first goal was to free B'Elanna. Like him, the two wires were pulled away with little effort and left no marks afterwards. He was a little curious as to why, but there was no time, he thought.

B'Elanna opened her eyes, but she didn't truly wake up until she got the cold water splash of water in the face that was the Boss' sudden shouting. "No flowers!" His voice returned to a mumble, "they'll eat the soldiers."

"What? How..." B'Elanna said. "Where are we?"

Harry shook his head. "I don't know. It looks like some sort of laboratory."

B'Elanna noticed the two tendril like wires laying beside her on the floor. "Let's go. Figure it out later."

They hurried for the exit only during the Boss' various noises. Harry glanced over his shoulder to see where it was coming from. All he saw from the door was a pair of feet and an arm dangling.

The first detail that hit half of the awayteam was how eerily familiar this alien town looked. They had beamed into what appeared to be a town square, surrounded by buildings of various sizes, style and age. Some of which reminded James most of all of the town he was born in, except in this case everything looked like it had been left to rot for centuries. Nature had attempted to reclaim the land. Moss and weeds lined the streets, covered the cracks in the bricks. Green could even be seen in the upstairs windows, broken by some unknown event.

The sky above them thankfully shattered the illusion of an apocalyptic Earth for Craig and James. A hazy lavender with thick patches of grey clouds. The star little more than a dot overhead in comparison to Earth's. Their moon appeared to be much bigger, which at the moment was mostly a dark shadow in the sky with a tiny patch of it brightened by the star.

Tuvok scanned their surroundings while Seven directed hers in one particular direction.

"Curious, none of the damage here seems to be artificial in anyway," Tuvok said. "The structures here simply succumbed to the ravages of time."

James thought that was far more creepy than an attack from aliens or their own people. It brought a chill to his skin, though the distant star wasn't helping much with that. "How much time?" he asked.

"I would estimate from the decay and the foliage growth, three centuries," Tuvok answered.

Craig shuddered. Suddenly everything around them was a potential threat to the team. Every part of him wanted to leave. "Then... what are we doing here? I dunno if I want to know what killed everyone."

Seven closed her tricorder as she turned on her heel to face them. "It is possible that a civilisation perished here. But it is also possible they simply evacuated this world due to an unavoidable threat. A threat that has since passed."

"They weren't so eager to come home though, were they?" James commented.

"Some people like the warmer climes," Craig chuckled nervously. The more logical members of the party stared at him like he had told them they were wrong. He was a little relieved though that James responded to his joke with a smirk. It helped keep the embarrassment at bay for now.

"Anyway, sensors detected traces of dilithium further into the ruins," Seven said.

Tuvok nodded, hinting to her that she lead the way. They ventured onwards. Craig and James hung back slightly before doing the same.

"At least it doesn't look like a Borg attack. The no crater is a good sign," James said.

Craig sighed, partially relieved but still a little wigged out. "Why did Morgan want to come here? Are you sure she wasn't just making up something to get you and her away from the catfight?"

"No, I thought that too. That's why I went along with it," James replied. He had another gaze around as they walked. A gentle wind brushed passed them. Trees swayed, buildings groaned, lighter rubble tapped the ground it rolled across. "She still seemed disappointed not to be going though."

Craig's eye drifted to a far up window. His heart skipped a beat as he saw brief movement there. It only took a second to realise it only seemed to be a light fixture wafting in the breeze. "Well she's not missing anything."

She pushed a door open. It was extremely dark inside even with the torch in her hand. The most she could make out was blurry outlines of things. A strange breeze emanated from her right, so she pointed the torch that way. The light managed to pierce further, a brief movement to one side told her there was a doorway in that direction.

She followed the strange breeze into this other room. It seemed a little lighter than the last one, there were several windows on the west wall.

The cupboard in the corner of the room creaked. She walked towards it to peer inside.

Seven's scans lead the team into a large, three storey building. The first room they entered looked to be a large factory floor, still filled with large machines rusted through and degrading. The dilithium traces were spread apart within the structure. Tuvok told the team to split up into two teams, one lower ranked Security personnel in each. Seven immediately chose Craig before he had even finished speaking, which James had reacted to with a humoured scoff. They then went their separate ways.

Tuvok and James' path lead them into a narrow warehouse. The shelves alongside both walls remained securely in place despite their degradation. Some of the stock items though hadn't been so lucky. Several spots were empty, with only darkened patches left behind. The majority that were left mostly intact were cubed metal containers labelled in alien writing. Tuvok stepped forward to scan them.

Craig was surprised that they still had dilithium in their path, as they entered an office block. He thought twice about asking her if she was sure. Unlike Tuvok, she'd take offense to this.

The office they entered appeared to be spread across the depth of the building. Many metal desks remained fixed to the floor, lined in two rows in the centre of the room. As he looked around he noticed frustration on the ex-drone's face. She stopped for a moment to do a fresh scan. He waited until she was done.

Seven then kept on walking ahead, leaving him behind. When Craig noticed he panicked a bit and hurried after her.

"Lieutenant," she called moments after entering one of the many doors opposite him.

He made sure to have a phaser ready before he followed her inside. He ran into it, fearing the worst. Instead he saw Seven crouched down beside a body lying on the floor, in front of a huge imposing cupboard. He hurried to her side to help, only to be taken by surprise at who the body was.

"Tani?" he stuttered. "What's she doing here?"

Seven raised her eyebrow curiously at him. "I do not know. But we need to get her back to Voyager."

Craig nodded as he tapped his commbadge. "Anderson to Voyager."

Sickbay:

Kathryn and Morgan hurried inside. The Doctor was hovering near Tani's bio bed with a tricorder in his hand. Seven and Craig stood near by.

"What happened?" Kathryn asked.

"We went into this old factory building, looking for the dilithium. We split up and we found her," Craig stammered.

Seven's eyes and brows flickered in slight frustration. "It appears that this Tani thought she deserved or was needed to be on the awayteam, and transported down without permission. Since she was alone, we did not see what happened to her to affect her in this manner."

Kathryn frowned at her, "at least Craig's explanation had actual information, not conjecture."

"I disagree. I doubt you gave her permission to join us," Seven said flatly.

"She appears to be comatose. I cannot wake her," the Doctor said.

Kathryn sighed and tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Tuvok."

"Yes Captain?"

"Have you found anything down there?" Kathryn asked.

"No Captain, the dilithium we have found has been diluted for the machines in this factory. It would be of little use to us."

"Is the rest of your away team okay?" the Doctor asked.

"No problems so far, Doctor. There does not seem to be any sign of airborne disease," Tuvok's voice answered.

"Or dead people either," James' said. *"It's like they up and left the place. Even after a few hundred years, surely there'd be something left."*

Morgan flinched at his first sentence. It was big enough for Kathryn to notice in the corner of her eye. She glanced at her briefly in concern.

"You are assuming that the civilisation lived and died like humanoids do, or that an attack itself couldn't be designed to kill and not damage buildings. It's still very possible that this was the work of an attack."

"Yeah... er, good thing you were here to keep me optimistic. Now I feel much better."

The commline fell silent, uncomfortable. Everyone knew Tuvok would be raising an eyebrow at the moment. The Doctor thought it was a little amusing at least.

"Indeed."

"Prepare to beam back to the ship," Kathryn shook her head. "Regroup with a bigger team. I want to find out how a member of my crew fell into a coma." Seven took that as cue to return to the Transporter Room, Kathryn only had time to glare at the door.

"Aye Captain."

"Mum, let me go," Morgan said quickly.

Kathryn wasn't laughing this time. She stared at her daughter sternly. "I know she's your friend, but..."

"It's not that," Morgan said defensively. "I've seen this kind of thing before. Colonies abandoned, no sign of anything wrong. Except for the whole no people thing."

"That doesn't mean you should be traipsing off into an obviously dangerous mission," Kathryn said. "If you tell us what to look for..."

"Mum. I've done this plenty of times. I'll not wander too far from the group, and I know what few things to look for. Besides," Morgan said. A sneaky glint in her eye appeared. "If you're really worried, we could ask Seven about it. As a fellow ex Borg she's bound to have heard..."

Kathryn's left shoulder twitched in an attempt to keep her face straight. "I'll pack you a lunch," she grumbled.

B'Elanna and Harry walked down the familiar corridors of Voyager. Their faces a mask of curiosity over their confusion.

"It's Voyager, undamaged, before the crash. But how?" B'Elanna wondered.

Harry gazed around. The sights around him didn't make him feel at ease as they should, quite the opposite. He stopped behind her. "So much for my hologram theory. Maybe we should go back."

B'Elanna stared back at him in disbelief and a little anger.

He wasn't put off, "our snoring prison guard may be *persuaded to...*"

"Are you kidding?" B'Elanna whispered harshly. "He could ask for backup. He may already have. Best case scenario we'll be back in dream land. Besides I..."

"Oooh, that was rude!" Six shouted from behind them both. The pair turned around. Both got a good, not close up first look at the paler and unhinged Seven of Nine copy. Neither knew what to make of her. She crept them both out. "I don't heal you know. This will ruin my face," she cried while pointing at her forehead.

Harry shrugged while B'Elanna scrunched her face looking at it. Neither could see anything wrong with her head.

"What happened to you?" B'Elanna asked.

"Harry got a little frisky. That's not my kinda thing," Six complained.

"Uh no, that wasn't... I don't want to know. God," B'Elanna grumbled impatiently. She leaned in a little closer to Harry so she could whisper, "she's not armed. Go." Despite that, she gave him no choice. His arm was dragged.

"Wait!" Six cried out. Her foot stomped, she huffed, but still she didn't chase them. "Boss is sooo gonna scold me good for this."

"You were saying?" Harry asked once they were clear.

They arrived at a turbolift. They both knew better than to use it, so they back tracked to a Jeffries tube. Doing so Harry noticed something odd. He ran back to the turbolift to B'Elanna's annoyance to get another look at it. The label *Deck 13* froze him solid.

"Oh, what the fu..." he growled. B'Elanna dragged him away again, this time all the way to the Jeffries Tube section. "How come this isn't a fire damaged hovel?" he complained all the while.

B'Elanna opened the hatch as quietly as possible. Harry wasn't pleased that she was not replying. He tapped her on the shoulder.

"Or squished into a new Deck Ten. This isn't right. We're still dreaming. It's a trick," he said.

B'Elanna glared him into silence, then pointed back at the open hatch. He got the message and climbed inside quickly as footsteps approached. She followed.

"This is real, all right," she whispered once the door was closed behind them.

"How do you figure?" Harry whispered back. "You don't get it. We're on..."

"Voyager yes. I noticed. But it's not..." B'Elanna tried to say.

"Real, that's what I said!" Harry hissed back.

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, "I didn't or wasn't going to say that." She looked at him with a deadly gaze, which told him if he interrupted again he'd pay for it painfully. "On the Flyer, in Voyager's remains. I felt like I had done it a dozen times. Here, it feels different. This is real. I think we're on Seven..."

"Thirteen," Harry interrupted anyway. "Don't you get it? This is a new dream. Of course it won't feel familiar."

B'Elanna smiled to his surprise. He expected a beating. "See. Why would our Deck Thirteen be fine in a simulation made to trick us? It wouldn't be convincing in the slightest."

"You called," Six said. Harry and B'Elanna glanced at the hatch, the drone's head peeped through it. "Oh sorry. I haven't been promoted yet. Carry on." As quick as she appeared, she was gone.

"What?" they both said in unison.

Harry's colour had all but faded away, "you're right."

"This has got to be Seventh Voyager," B'Elanna said. "This deck, Seven's behaviour. They kidnapped us and force fed us the delusion we were searching for our Voyager."

"But why?" Harry said. "If it's to lead them to ours, they're not going to get much from it but ice. Unless..." For the first time in what felt like years Harry felt a little hope brewing in his chest. "The slipstream test was part of the illusion. Voyager may be fine, why bother with us if it weren't?"

"They wouldn't have known that, at least at first," B'Elanna said, dashing his hopes already. "You could be right. My head's a little fuzzy already."

"We should head for the shuttle bay. Do you think the other copies of us are as stupid as their Seven?" Harry asked, already crawling away from her.

"I doubt it. I don't think she was even Borg," B'Elanna said as she followed him. He looked over his shoulder with a frown. "Never mind, not important."

They continued to crawl until they reached a door and a ladder. Harry climbed up first.

The door leading to the corridor opened again. Six stuck her head in and pointed at nothing. "Ah ha, you think you can trick me..." she trailed off once she noticed. "Oh."

Tuvok stared blankly at the new arrivals for a moment, both his eyebrows threatened to jump at any moment. "I do not understand," he said finally.

Morgan smiled and shrugged her shoulders, "what's not to get? Mum thought we needed an expert on the team."

Seven's jaw clenched. Unlike Tuvok, she had no concerns over raising an eyebrow. Kathryn hadn't imposed a limit on her yet.

Tuvok said it for her, "an expert on what?"

"Hmm," was all Morgan said as she absentmindedly reached into a medium sized backpack hanging off her other arm. Tuvok and Seven were even more baffled as she pulled a sandwich from it and began to munch on it. They glanced at one another as she began to pace around them while having a good look at the scenery.

Craig and James found their reactions funnier than what she was doing. They laughed quietly. A brief stare from Seven made Craig nervous enough to stop and bite his lip.

"No dead people, buildings left alone," Morgan mumbled with her mouth half full. James cleared his throat as a hint. She laughed before swallowing her food. "Sorry, still new at this." Her gaze drifted up towards the sky as she took another bite. Once she finished with it she continued, "yep, it definitely looks like a typical assimilation. Luckily it was so long ago, so we don't have to worry."

Seven rose to the imagined bait, her shoulders tensed. "You are very much mistaken. Why would you assume yourself to be an expert on the Borg, when you make juvenile mistakes such as this? By your own story, you were only a Borg for a few seconds. Living with a group of children on a Borg ship is not a comparison to a life as an actual drone."

Morgan's brow furrowed as she looked at her, at the same time her lips curled into smirk. She then cast her eye towards James and Craig. "You weren't kidding. Ouch, got a huge prick there."

James sniggered before responding, "in more ways than one."

"I assume the Captain was merely trying to provoke a reaction such as this, by humouring you Miss Morgan. She shouldn't be encouraged," Tuvok said as diplomatically as possible.

"I'm not talking about the Borg though," Morgan said, prompting further blank stares. "This looks like the Tolg's handiwork."

"The Tolg are nothing more than a myth, perpetuated from possible Borg attacks on more limited races," Seven objected.

James nodded, "yeah, except for the pyramid shaped ship that attacked the Borg sphere the other week. Yeah, the Tolg are the Borg bogeymen for sure."

Tuvok looked on curiously. "You stated that the no damage and missing population was a sign of a Tolg assimilation. Care to elaborate?"

"Sometimes they'll fire on the surface, but they tend to avoid doing any damage as it reduces the amount of new drones they'll get. They take and they go, that's their main style," Morgan replied uncomfortably.

"Well yeah, you don't want to kill everyone off and leave with nothing," Craig said.

Morgan laughed nervously, "that's er... not a problem for the Tolg. Quite the opposite. They just prefer to kill, how can I put it? Cleanly."

"Cleanly?" James said slowly, hoping he had the wrong image in his head.

"Yeah," Morgan said as she looked to the sky once more. "Unless they can't stitch you back together because of a missing limb or two, then you're a nice little Tolg slave for afterlife."

"What?" Seven said in bemusement. She didn't believe it one bit, she found the girl ludicrous with a childish imagination. "Are you suggesting the Tolg assimilate even the dead? That's..."

"No," Morgan answered to everyone's relief. "I'm saying they assimilate *only* the dead."

"Ho boy," Craig stammered very nervously. He didn't think he could feel anymore nervous on this planet. He was wrong.

James cleared his throat to hide his own nerves. "Unless they knock people into comas, something else is going on here now. Maybe we should look into that."

"I agree," Tuvok nodded.

Seven seemed sickened at the thought, "I was about to suggest the same. We should return to the factory. I had time for a quick scan of the room we found Tani in. I found nothing unusual. However we didn't explore the whole building."

Morgan sighed and shook her head. "I can't believe she followed me down. I wasn't even allowed to the first time. Maybe she thought the same as me."

"Apart from the vessel, there is no proof of the Tolg's existence or assimilation methods. Children often jump to conclusions. It's foolish to continue this discussion," Seven said. She lead the way without another word.

Tuvok followed as well, pointing a tricorder straight ahead.

"Wow. She needs to pull that catsuit out of her ass crack," Morgan commented. She glanced down at the remaining piece of her sandwich with disgust. "Put me off my dinner."

The rest of the team walked casually after them. Craig tried to keep his laughter to himself, but James heard him and had to comment. "She's sounding more Janeway Lite everyday."

"Don't... ruin it for me," Craig shushed him.

It didn't take them long to return to the factory and the small room next to the office.

Seven pointed towards the spot where she found Tani. Tuvok took the lead, scanning every inch carefully.

"There were no signs of any trauma on her body. No toxins in the air, nothing that would harm her," she said.

As the tricorder reached the door to what looked like a cupboard directly ahead, it flared up. He stopped moving it to study the readings further. "Taylor."

James left Craig's side, by the door they entered through, to go over. "What is it?" he asked as Morgan did so as well. Craig watched on nervously, his grip on the phaser in his belt tightened.

"A mild energy reading. It could be benign. Standby, I'll open it," Tuvok ordered. He lightly frowned when he noticed James didn't come alone. Morgan hovered behind him, looking over his shoulder curiously. James glanced back at her, both his eyebrows raised.

"Ookay, ookay," she huffed as she moved barely a step to the left.

Tuvok's hand hovered over the small metal handle. He waited until James was armed before he pushed it down. The door clicked and groaned, it felt heavier than it looked when he pulled it toward him. Halfway it was more like it was pushing him instead. James quickly pointed his phaser at the door as a huge blur fell in between them and onto the floor. Morgan yelped and backed away, shaking horribly.

"Eeeew, that's gross," she complained, covering her eyes with both hands.

Tuvok glanced down to see what it was. James lowered his weapon back to his side at the same time Seven dashed over, tricorder buzzing away. Craig's eyes widened first before he turned away to pretend to keep a look out.

Seven crouched down beside the object. Humanoid in shape, its skin had mostly melted away, leaving nothing much left besides a brown-grey skeleton. "It's a deceased body," Seven said as if it were nothing. Judgement was in her eyes as she glanced up at the frightened teenager.

"Duh, I know! That's why it's gross," Morgan complained.

Tuvok knelt down and he scanned the body. "I cannot tell how this person died," he frowned.

"Maybe he suffocated in the cupboard," Morgan said. Seven & Tuvok stared blankly at her again. "Well, how do you explain why he was in there?"

"He was probably murdered, maybe the murderer put the body here to hide it," Craig suggested.

"Maybe, but that doesn't explain why Tani's in a coma," Morgan said.

James chuckled quietly, which prompted everyone to frown at him. "The Tolg could be more picky than we thought." Craig was about to ask what was so funny about that but James beat him to it, "oh sorry, forgot the magic word. Maybe."

Seven stood back up, staring directly at him this time. "Why is it when the conversation turns to irrelevancy, it is always Taylor that's responsible?"

"Oh, I figured it out. Seven found her, right? Maybe..." Morgan said, looking briefly at James for that one word. "She passed out from boredom. I'm starting to feel a bit woozy myself." Seven's eyebrow raised in distaste.

"Focus please," Tuvok said sternly. "We need to find the cause so we can cure her. It's entirely possible that whatever did this to Miss Tani, could happen again."

Sickbay:

The Doctor carried an equipment tray over to the occupied biobed. He was about to put it down when his patient's eyes fluttered open. It shocked him into dropping it the rest of the way with a small clatter.

He tapped his commbadge, "Sickbay to Tuvok. Have you done something, because Tani has regained consciousness."

"Already? That's the quickest coma I've ever known," Morgan's voice said.

"Excellent, I'm on my way. Seven, Anderson, Miss Morgan keep investigating down here. I will talk to Tani. Taylor, you're with me," Tuvok's said.

The Doctor sighed at the same time James' voice mumbled something. He missed it completely. "That's a no."

"Chicken," Morgan's voice muttered.

"What do you mean?" Seven's asked.

"Good god... Never mind," Morgan's groaned.

"Let me play with it."

"I don't think you should be playing with it, it's delicate."

"Come on, it'll be fun. You'll like it."

Tom sniggered rudely, but it was the only sound that Kathryn heard when she entered from the Ready Room. She gave his back a disgusted look.

"No, no, maybe I should go first," James said.

"Hey, I could be good at this, you don't know," Jessie huffed.

James made a pained *er* sound before replying, "I don't know. My head's still sore after the last time."

Tom couldn't take it anymore, he climbed out his chair to discreetly walk over to Opps.

"Oh shush, let me just open it. No one will see," Jessie whispered.

"Yes they will, it'll stand out a mile," James protested quickly.

"It's not a XL, it'll be fine," Jessie said.

Tom was so close now and they hadn't noticed him. He was so looking forward to catching the pair in the act, embarrassing them for once instead of the other way around. He lunged forward yelling, "ah ha, what naughty things are you two up to?"

James and Jessie looked at him as if he'd walked onto the Bridge in pink silky pyjamas. When he spotted that the only incriminating thing about them was a 3DS in James' hands, he started to feel like he was too.

"What's the matter with you, Paris?" Kathryn snapped at him on approach.

Tom's face was a bright red, he didn't know where to look as every direction there was someone staring at him. "They're playing games. Ah ha!" he badly improvised.

"What else is new?" Chakotay commented with little care.

Kathryn shoved Tom out of her way so she could stand beside Opps. "Please tell me that isn't what Tuvok sent you to give me," she said.

James shrugged as he put the device on the console, to his right so Jessie wouldn't be able to reach without getting by him first. "He said to tell you about Tani waking up and the dead person we found in a closet."

Tom sniggered rudely once more. "Did you join him in there?"

James stared at him in disgust. Jessie rolled her eyes and replied before he could, "jeez Tom, I know you're lonely, but this obsession with James and who he may or may not be sleeping with is edging on very creepy. All you gotta do is get it over with and ask him out. Enough with the immature gay jokes."

"Whaaa?" Tom said, his face losing all of its blood, leaving him paler than a ghost.

Kathryn shuddered so much she nearly had an out of body experience. James struggled not to laugh at them all. "You're not serious, are you?" he asked, turning in Jessie's direction.

Jessie smiled sweetly, then she quickly leaned across the station to grab the 3DS. "Why not, you're quite the catch." She had barely opened the device a millimetre when Kathryn snatched it from her. "Aaw, it was for break time."

"Yeah right," Kathryn grunted.

"Hmph. Those two are acting more screwier than usual," Tom muttered as he walked off.

Kathryn growled at him, he had no idea why. He quickened his pace to the helm. "More, screwier? I... I, I can't. Stupid is all around. Are the rest of the team still down there?" James nodded. "Fine, I'll be in Sickbay." She waltzed into the nearest turbolift while muttering 'screwier' and 'more' over and over.

"What?" Tom asked while taking his seat. "Did I say something American again?"

"No, you said something moron again," James replied. "Screwier already means it's more. More screwier is redundant."

"Yes, because a Geordie weirdo has the best grasp of the English language," Tom said.

Chakotay rolled his eyes, "spirits, give me strength."

"Ooh, title shout out. Good thing Janeway's gone," Tom commented.

Jessie edged out of the station, leaving James to do any work she had in the queue. "He's right. How can you not know that and yet still know the word Geordie?"

"Oh so it's true," Tom said, spinning his chair around to face them. "You're one of them. So, I got one question for you."

"The answer's two. One," James said, putting up his middle finger and then a particular other one to go with it. "Two."

Tom pretended to laugh. "That's what I get for being interested in other people's stories and trying to lighten the mood. Charming."

"No, that's what you get for being homophobic and random," Jessie said.

"Look Tom, I get that you're worried about B'Elanna and Harry. I am too, but this..." Chakotay said, pointing between Tom and the pair at Opps. "Isn't going to do anything but annoy everyone."

"Going to?" James said with a raised eyebrow.

Chakotay shook his head, "enough!" he snapped. "Ignore him, can't you see he's only picking on the slightest thing to get a reaction. Stop giving him one."

Tom huffed as he turned his chair back around to the helm. "Fine. I'll sit still and shut up till they get back. Wouldn't want to offend the little darlings."

James and Jessie glanced at each other. "Less than five minutes, ten rations?" she asked.

"Three and you're on," James replied.

Tom bit his bottom lip and actually trembled as he fought to resist commenting. The perfect joke, gone to total waste. As he expected no one was clever enough to say it for him.

Sickbay:

"What do you remember?" Tuvok asked.

"Nothing. I walked up to that weird cupboard. I heard a strange noise then everything went blank," Tani replied.

"Perhaps if I do a mind meld on her she will remember a little bit more," Tuvok said.

"That's your answer to everything," the Doctor muttered.

"Yeah, what did I do to you?" Tani pouted.

Tuvok couldn't help it, his eyebrow shot up. The lack of use didn't help matters. "Perhaps we should discuss why you left the ship, and how."

Tani frowned as if she was confused. "I didn't know I was a prisoner. You sound like that transporter dweeb. I always go for a walk, ship air is so stuffy."

"So, you mean you knocked out a transporter officer to get some *fresh air*?" Tuvok questioned, slowly in disbelief.

"I only pushed him, he was fine," Tani protested. "I drop into a coma and it's my fault because I went for a walk? Victim blamey."

"I'm certain someone would have briefed you on some of the Starfleet procedures. You need permission to leave the ship, especially when it's to a dangerous planet we haven't investigated yet. If you do get it, it's not advisable to go alone," Tuvok said.

Tani folded her arms huffily, "permission? Ugh, fine. Lesson learned. Can I go now?"

"I can't find anything wrong that could've caused this," the Doctor said. "I suppose so, but I want you to wear this monitor." He gently placed a circular device on her neck.

"Okeydokey," Tani said. She hurried out of Sickbay like it smelled bad. As soon as she had turned the corner she threw the monitor off her neck.

Engineering, in a close by Jeffries Tube:

"How come I got suckered into doing this?" James groaned as he fiddled with a bio neural gel pack.

"I have a sneaky suspicion that it's what people call a punishment for the bad stuff you did the other week," Jessie said with a cheeky glint in her eye.

James glanced over his shoulder looking genuinely confused. "I didn't break it, it fell."

Jessie struggled not to laugh at him. "Okay, the other bad thing."

"I'm sorry, you'll have to narrow it down," James said as he returned to work.

"Hacking. Borg Sphere. Time implant. Morgan. Does that help?" Jessie said.

"Nope," James replied nonchalantly. "I don't see that as a bad thing."

Jessie's eyes rolled up as she shook her head. "You wouldn't." The door nearby opened and Tani crawled through it. "Oh, Tani. You're still alive?"

"Yeah. What are you doing here?" Tani asked with a strangely straight face.

"Me? Just giving moral support," Jessie fake smiled. James pointed a funny look her way. "Off duty, so waiting for him to finish his community service. You?"

"Oh, I'll help speed it along if you do something for me, Jessie," Tani said.

Jessie narrowed her eyes slightly, a little suspicion washed over her. "No, James is fine. He doesn't need you... your help."

"He doesn't need your moral support either," Tani said plainly despite her words.

James sighed a little impatiently, "what is it? I'll do it, I'm getting claustrophobic in here."

"No it's okay. It's a girl thing," Tani said quickly.

"What do you really want Tani?" Jessie snapped.

"Er... I need someone to fetch my makeup bag. It's still in the Mess Hall," Tani replied sheepishly.

"Why don't you get it yourself?" Jessie asked.

"Yeah and why does a girl have to get it?" James asked.

"I can't get it myself. Neelix is trying to get me into this substance called coffee and a boy would look rather stupid holding a make up bag," Tani said.

"Only insecure boys. I'll get it. I'll do anything to get out of here," James said as he started to crawl away, in the opposite direction to Tani.

"Damn," Tani pouted.

Jessie shook her head at her, "yeah damn. James isn't interested, move along."

"True, you'll just have to do instead," Tani smiled.

"Uh what?" Jessie stuttered, looking worried.

The Mess Hall:

"Could you give this coffee to Tani when you give that bag back to her?" Neelix asked.

"No, I'd better go," James said while avoiding breathing through his nose. The smell still managed to get to him, making him instinctively cough it back out. He hurried away before Neelix could think about chasing him. At the door, he almost ran straight into Tom. They both stopped to avoid collision.

"I didn't know you wore makeup, Jimmy," Tom said a little bitterly, with a forced smile.

James noticed Neelix's form following him in the corner of his eye. "I thought a disguise might work, but obviously not." Tom rolled his eyes. "Grow up Paris. It's Tani's. Touching *girl* stuff won't make your bits fall off or your skin melt."

Tom faked a chuckle, "are you sure about that first part?"

"No, Neelix would still force the coffee on me if I painted convincing Borg implants on my face," James replied.

"Jesus, and I'm stupid? I meant..." Tom grunted.

James rolled his eyes, he continued his escape without changing his path to avoid Tom at all. "I know," he said as their shoulders collided. It didn't bother him, but it knocked Tom enough to make him spin 180 degrees. Once he got his balance back and turned around he found Neelix in his face.

"Hi Tom, do you want some coffee?" he asked cheerfully.

"Oh crap," Tom muttered as he hurried away, nursing his now sore shoulder. "Hmm, now who am I going to annoy?" As he looked around the room he spotted Seven sitting on her own near the replicator. "Bingo."

The Jeffries Tube:

James opened the hatch and he was shocked to see Jessie and Tani lying unconscious.

"Taylor to Transporter Room, three to beam directly to Sickbay."

Sickbay:

The Doctor was scanning Jessie when Kathryn and Chakotay entered.

"Report Doctor," Kathryn said.

"Tani's unconscious but Jessie is now in a coma exactly like hers. I don't understand it," the Doctor said.

"James?" Chakotay questioned.

James shook his head with a bewildered look on his face. "I was only gone five minutes. Tani showed up, she asked if Jess could grab her bag." He raised the bag for emphasis. "And she'd help with the repair in return."

Chakotay smirked while Kathryn stared blankly. "You mean she was trying to get you alone?" Chakotay asked.

"Ugh Chakotay, get your mind out of the gutter before I grab the bleach," Kathryn snapped in his direction.

"No, god. I went instead, she was only trying to avoid Neelix. Don't blame her," James stuttered in response to Chakotay. "I came back and they were lying there. I dunno how."

"Janeway to Tuvok," Kathryn said on tapping her commbadge.

"Tuvok here, Captain."

"How's your investigation going?" Kathryn replied.

Tuvok carefully walked away from his team, all while staring down at the five partially decomposed bodies lying on metal slabs. The team however were doing their best to do the opposite, opting to stare at the ceiling.

"We have found more corpses, all lined up in a hospital of some kind. They seemed to have all died the same way," Tuvok answered.

"A morgue you mean," Craig shuddered. Thompson crept up behind him, his hand approached his shoulder. Morgan spotted it first and shoved him roughly to the floor. Craig only noticed the thud and it startled him enough to make him jump.

"How did they die?" the Doctor's voice asked.

"It seems to be brain damage, Doctor," Tuvok replied.

"I wonder if this was a disease, a plague that wiped these people out," Kathryn's voice said.

"There's no sign of any infection in either of my patients. It hasn't affected the awayteam despite how long they've been there. Besides the transporters would've detected it and filtered it out," the Doctor's said.

"Wait. The first body was little more than bones. How can you see brain damage?" James' asked.

"The bodies here are far more intact than the first body we found. I suspect Mr Anderson is correct, this was very likely a morgue, which is why they are in better shape. Though what I don't understand is why they've been moved," Tuvok answered.

Morgan's eyes shot wide open, "moved? What... when?" She briefly glanced at the corpses, cringed and looked back up at the ceiling.

"The decomposition is recent. Wherever they were before must have preserved them," Tuvok said. He checked his tricorder once more. "Perhaps you were correct about the Tolg being involved. Only they weren't the cause of the disaster."

Craig pulled a face, "they saw a few corpses lying around and scavenged the few bodies left that they could find? I'm liking them less and less."

"I'm more concerned about this brain damage. What could've caused it, if it were not a disease?" Kathryn's voice asked.

"Maybe a mass murderer was on the loose," James' said.

"And they killed everyone on the planet?" Craig said in disbelief.

The team heard a sigh on the other end of the commline. *"No, I just mean the people we found were dead before the disaster. That's why they're the only ones we found. I dunno,"* James' voice said.

"No, that wasn't it. There is no physical damage to the skull," Tuvok said.

"Of course there is. Their whole bodies are melting, eww gross," Morgan complained, fidgeting as her skin crawled.

"Morgan, they are decomposing, it is normal," Tuvok said to her.

Morgan stuck her tongue out briefly, "I knew that."

"Return to the ship. We have an even bigger mystery on our hands and I'd prefer not to add further bodies to this case," Kathryn said.

"Aye Captain," Tuvok nodded.

Morgan looked on worried. "Mum, what else happened?"

Kathryn sighed. "The good news is Tani woke up, albeit briefly. The bad..." she stalled, hesitant about tell her still young daughter everything. "Let's just say that I'm hoping this was only a love triangle gone cat fighty, and nothing to do with this planet. Janeway out."

James scrunched up his face in disgust, all while boring his eyes into the Captain. She shrugged casually in response which made him tut and roll his eyes.

"Captain," the Doctor thankfully cut in. "I think it is far more likely that whatever happened on this planet, is starting to happen here."

"Why doesn't that surprise me one bit," Kathryn rolled her eyes.

"Between Tani throwing away her monitor and the discovery of her and Jessie in the tube, there's been some minor damage to her brain. Pathways look like they were in the process of being rewritten, thankfully none were complete and can be fixed," the Doctor replied.

Kathryn stared at him, blinking rapidly. "You said there was no sign of anything."

"I said there was no sign of any disease that could cause this," the Doctor said.

"The same thing will happen to Jess?" James questioned in a low voice.

The Doctor gently shook his head, "it's possible. The best thing to do is to keep them both here so I can monitor them."

"Keep me posted," Kathryn said while turning to leave.

Seventh Voyager:

"Tuvok, the console is telling me that the super fancy shuttle is taking off," Harry reported. "Oh and it told me you're a jerk."

Tuvok approached him with a quizzical eyebrow raise. "Good work Harry, you deserve a mind meld for that."

Harry shook his head, "yeah, no thanks. The console says that I shouldn't."

"God, you and that console should get a room already," Tom complained.

Phoebe rolled her eyes to one side and back again. "A padded room perhaps."

Everyone gasped and stared at her in disgust. She looked around with a screwed up face.

"You can't say things like that. It's offensive to people with mental illnesses," Harry explained.

Phoebe's eyes shifted from one side to another. "Yeah? And? I was trying to offend you. Good god, all of you people sound like a bunch of mental loonies. We're meant to be evil. Not stupid and crazy."

"You can't say mental or loonies either," Tom pointed out with glee. "Or crazy for that matter."

"I can't even have crazy? What words can I use to describe the idiot that thinks his console is a person?" Phoebe stammered.

"The console's telling me to let the shuttle out. So I will," Harry said.

Phoebe jumped out of her chair to run over him. Tuvok was closer to him, but all he did was scold him like a child, "no, Harry. Naughty. You deserve a mind meld for that."

"What? The console says that I was taking the shuttle out for a ride. It would never lie to me," Harry pouted.

Phoebe stalled midway to look confused. "But, what? You're not on the shuttle."

"Of course I am. I'm having a wonderful time," Harry grinned.

Tom sniggered obnoxiously, "I'm surprised you'd cheat on Opps right in front of it. Shame."

"It's okay. Cheating is bad, we're bad. She understands," Harry smiled.

Phoebe groaned and covered her face with both hands. While she did that Tuvok squeezed the Opps officer's shoulder. Harry slapped his hand off before he could sneak in a neck pinch afterwards.

"I need to ask the Boss if the *evil juice* has fruitloop side effects," Phoebe muttered. Before anyone could comment on that she did her own Janeway glare. It wasn't as bad as Kathryn's, yet still pretty much effective. The Bridge was silenced. "Next you'll be telling me that I can't call him an idiot."

"That was easy," the real Harry remarked from the helm of the Delta Flyer.

B'Elanna looked at him smugly. "Why wouldn't it be? They fell for the copy swap the last time."

"Well that answers my question, they're clearly not that bright," Harry said.

"The real question is, which way do we go? It seems like all we can do is retrace our slipstream path," B'Elanna said.

Harry's eyes hardened. The word still triggered the feeling of shame and self-hatred, even with the memories already fading from his mind. B'Elanna's comment though brought it all back. "So, we did make the trip after all. Voyager might not even be... Where can we go...?"

"Relax. I don't think the course I've found in the data banks is the doomed test flight," B'Elanna said as gently as possible. Harry frowned and glanced over his shoulder toward her. "I faintly remember the Dauntless, us following it, being dragged along with it. I..." Her face drained in colour. "I remember it being my fault."

"B'Elanna," Harry mumbled with sympathy.

That angered her though. Her fierce eyes drilled into his own. "No. When my daily excursions to Deck Thirteen, or daredevil stunts on the Holodeck didn't wake me up, I took a not yet finished shuttle out for a test ride, hoping it would give me the kick I needed. All I did instead was make you suffer what I was; guilt, bitterness, self-hatred, while I was off playing happy families with my fake daughter. It's not... it's not right."

Harry glumly looked down towards the floor. He wanted to say something, but he couldn't think of the right words. All he could do was as she suggested earlier, follow the Delta Flyer's *footsteps* and hope they stumble into Voyager on the way. As he brought the data from her station to his, he felt the same despair he did before. They had travelled so far in their brief slipstream trip. They had plenty of time to air out their ghosts of the past, real or otherwise.

His old self before this mess began tried to be optimistic, telling him that Voyager wouldn't abandon them. They were working on their own version of the drive when they disappeared. At least, that's what he thought. The fake memories were still clashing, it was possible that was a fictional detail designed to help make the slipstream flight nightmare make more sense. Harry tried to cling onto his slipping optimism. It felt real enough and it was all they had left.

The Doctor had hurried into his office, muttering something about neural patterns and rewiring, leaving James standing more or less alone, looking flummoxed. He gazed across to see him sit down and rapidly tap on his computer.

One of the occupied biobeds began to bleep rapidly. James glanced over to see which one it was. It seemed to be the one Jessie was lying on. Panic rushed over him, he was about to call for help when her eyes fluttered and she started to move slightly.

"Jess, are you okay?" James asked.

"Yeah," Jessie answered groggily as she sat up. "Are you on your own?"

"Sort of, the Doc's in his office," James replied. He frowned as he noticed a relieved glint in her eye after hearing his answer. The rest of her face was blank, unreadable. It unnerved him greatly. "Why, what's wrong?"

"Nothing, everything's fine. Now," Jessie said, she climbed off the bio bed.

A few minutes later Tani started to wake up as well. She sat up with a confused look on her face. "Huh? How did I get here?" She scanned the room, expecting an answer. No one seemed to be around to do so. It took some coaxing, but she managed to move her legs over the side of the bed so she could stand up. That was when she noticed something odd on the floor not far from her feet. "Hey, why are those two lying dead on the floor? Doctor!" she shouted.

The Doctor hurried in. He nearly tripped over the same thing she was looking at. He glanced down to see James and Jessie lying unconscious by his feet.

"Oh, this is getting annoying," the Doctor could only groan. He knelt down to scan them, staring with James first. The results he got didn't surprise him. He stood back up. "Sickbay to Janeway."

"Janeway here."

"Tani has regained consciousness but I've just found Ensign Taylor and Crewman Rex unconscious on the floor," the Doctor said.

"Let me guess, James is in a coma now."

"Lucky guess, Captain," the Doctor quipped. "He is already starting to show signs of brain damage."

"What brain?"

"Tom, can you get back to sitting still and shutting up. That was nice," Chakotay's voice snapped.

"Pffft, fine!"

"I am on my way, Doctor," Kathryn's voice said icily. The last thing anyone heard before the comm cut off was Tom grunting in pain.

When they arrived, Kathryn and Tom were surprised to see the latest coma patient already awake. He stood behind a forcefield, his head up, looking around slowly for no reason they could see. Kathryn noted that Jessie was still unconscious on another biobed.

The Doctor glanced back at her briefly, "it seems the coma patient is always the first to wake up."

"We need to re-define the word, Doc," Tom uttered.

"Are we safe like this?" Kathryn said, gesturing to the forcefield.

"I believe the condition is passed through touch. I noticed an abnormality in the blood vessels of Jessie's arm. There's now no sign of it, it's moved on," the Doctor said. "I believe I understand what we're dealing with, and what happened to the people on the planet. At least the ones we found."

"He never ceases to amaze me," Tom said plainly.

"I believe that an alien parasite is involved," the Doctor continued anyway.

"Is this explanation going to include technobabble?" Tani asked from afar.

"Lots of it," the Doctor replied.

"Pass," everyone said.

The Doctor sighed. "From the information I have collected so far, the organism enters its new host through one of the veins in the left wrist, which is immediately pumped into the brain. From there it tries to rewire certain pathways, allowing it to take control."

"So is it like a shorter person adjusting the seat to reach the controls easier?" Tom asked.

"You could compare it to that yes," the Doctor said

"It's making itself at home and rearranging the furniture," Kathryn mumbled to herself while resting her chin against her fist.

Tom huffed quietly, "mine was better."

"Then why is it hopping from person to person? It's not like we had any idea," Kathryn said.

"I can only theorise until I autopsy the alien remains, that their brains were more compatible with its own structure. It may be having difficulty adjusting to an unfamiliar Human one," the Doctor answered.

"Hang on a sec, Doc. How can you be so sure it's an alien?" Tani asked.

Tom chuckled in her direction, "what else would it be, ghosts? Oooh spooky."

Tani pulled a face right back at him. "No, it could be a disease that we haven't heard of before. That's why you can't detect it. It makes no sense for an alien to hop into different bodies all willy nilly. It was barely in Jessie for five seconds, and... well, I can't really blame it I suppose."

"Ooph, jealousy's an ugly thing," Tom teased her.

Kathryn felt like she rolled her eyes more than once. She was tempted to anyway. "I can't believe I'm siding with Tom here, but zip it. No one cares about your gross prepubescent fantasies about a man ten years older than you. It's making me ill."

"I'm sixteen," Tani protested.

"Fine, nine!" Kathryn groaned, rolling her eyes once more.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "It's not a disease. Tell me, do you remember waking up in Sickbay, throwing away the monitor, meeting James and Jessie in the Jeffries tube?"

Tani gasped, "what was that old hag doing with him in the Jeffries tube?"

Tom snorted into laughter, "probably playing a mean old one on one battle of Pokémon. Gotta respect the classics."

"Anyway, that proves my point. You don't remember anything from when the so called illness was infecting your brain. Furthermore, as soon as it infected Jessie you were no longer under its effects, and you were yourself again," the Doctor replied.

"Oh joy," Kathryn mumbled.

"This is beginning to make sense," Tom said.

"Wait, if twenty five year old Jessie's an old hag, then what am I to you?" Kathryn snapped, her eyebrow twitching.

Even though she had only been on the ship for a few weeks, Tani knew better than to answer that. "So, this alien went about possessing people till they croaked right?"

"It's a theory. It doesn't explain why we've only found a few bodies though," the Doctor said.

"Morgan's zombie-Borg theory doesn't seem so crazy now," Tom commented.

"Perhaps we should focus on the current problem first. If we're right about it being incompatible with us, James doesn't have much time," Kathryn said.

"Oh, oh," Tom stammered, a light bulb switched on his head. "What if we infect him with a virus. It'll have no choice but to leave him. Then somebody nearby goes up to him, also infected, gets infected too and as it's still moving the chairs around, dies before it can find someone else."

Everyone conscious and not possessed stared at him blankly, making him a little self conscious. He laughed to pass off his idea as a joke. Kathryn didn't buy it though, "idiot. Though, no, be my guest. Pick a one that shuts you up for five minutes."

"James'll have to stay behind the forcefield, or else the alien will try to move on again," the Doctor said quickly to change the subject.

Kathryn shook her head, one of her hands flew to her hip. Tom looked on, worried, that was always a warning. "I realise that, but we can't risk letting it kill him."

"Yes, that's why I have to work quickly. I'll need assistance, Mr Paris," the Doctor said.

"Sure Doc," Tom nodded.

"I don't think the cure will be annoy the alien out of him with gay jokes. But whatever, keep me posted," Kathryn grumbled. She stomped off, leaving Tom to imitate her while pulling a face.

The Doctor made a point to closely maneuver around him, all while tutting. "Monitor him, there's something I want to try." He ended up at the little work benches beside the entrance.

Tom watched him over his shoulder while walking over towards the forcefield. He turned his head back ahead of him, in time for a near collision with Tani. "Can I help?" she asked.

"You should go home and rest. The least amount of people here for the alien to possess, the better," the Doctor replied without even looking back.

"Fine," Tani huffed. She turned to leave too.

Tom laughed and looked over his shoulder once again. "You just don't want her scrapping with Jessie when she wakes up. You're no fun." The Doctor gave him the silent treatment, something Tom took as confirmation. He turned back to find James standing in front of him, staring at him with paler eyes than he usually did. They gave him the creeps. Internally he jumped, he hoped no one saw it. "God, you still walk on air even when possessed. Sneaky bastard."

"You're not afraid of me are you?" James asked in a soft voice, which creeped Tom out even further. "Can't imagine why."

"No me neither," Tom forced a smirk onto his face. "All sarcastic bark and no bite. Throwing yourself around like you're better than everyone. Pissing people off, laughing at their reaction and claiming innocence. Newsflash; you're nothing special. You're me, but a few inches shorter with a bad haircut."

James smiled and laughed briefly. "Is that what you think?" The chill factor increased even more, Tom tried not to show it. "Or are you just projecting your crap onto me?"

"What does that mean?" Tom grunted.

James looked up at the ceiling and circled around slowly back to straight ahead, his eyes still seemed to be scanning for something when he did. "You hope there's someone out there more pathetic than you are. Then you swoop in to show how you're the better man. It must be tough, being so insecure that you gotta bring people down to big up the Paris ego."

"Oh sure. Because the guy with the beautiful fiancée, doing the job that he loves is sooo pathetic. He has to pick on the poor ickle English boy with no girlfriend, stuck in a deadend lackey job, blindly batting away any girl who's stupid enough to fancy him," Tom said, fighting off the tremors he couldn't explain. "You know what, I take it back. You're not me. You only wish you were me."

James leaned forward as much as the forcefield allowed so he could laugh in his face. Once he was done, his eyes continued to drill into him, mocking the helmsman and freaking him out further. "You mean the job where no one respects you and your boss smacks you around for existing. Or the fiancée that stole your new toy you made because she wasn't giving you attention, just so she could get away from you?" Tom felt like he had been punched in the face, repeatedly. It would have been preferable. His throat throbbed from the insults. "Oh yeah," James said, straightening back up to smirk at him, "I want me some of that."

Tom clenched both of his fists behind his back, it did nothing to deter the trembling. He wasn't sure if it was anger or the creep factor that was the main contributor to it. "Keep talking. I know who you are. Your words mean nothing."

"Hmm," James said as if he were disappointed. It was obviously faked though. "Where do they come from, I wonder? How would some stranger know about your best friend running off with your girl, in your new hotrod no less?"

"The same way we both know that you're shooting his mouth off because you're trapped in there. Useless," Tom smiled. "You're using the only thing he's good at. It's not going to get you anywhere and you know that too. Maybe you think I'll lower the forcefield in anger, and..."

"Nope," James interrupted quickly and obnoxiously. Tom flinched at his tone, then his almost dark laughter afterwards. "I'm good here, thanks."

Tom wouldn't admit it, but the rejection stung him a little. "What? There's no way out. You can't talk yourself through the forcefield. James knows his way around a computer panel sure, but there aren't any handy. He can't help you. You'll only kill him and yourself."

"And you're kind enough to warn me?" James said, twisting his head to one side, all while making direct unblinking eye contact. He stepped backwards toward the biobed, his hand absentmindedly brushed against the edge. "You really can't decide whether you like him or hate him. Who's the pathetic one? Besides..."

"Blah blah, keep wasting your time. We can revive him, but you are..." Tom pretended to snicker.

James' smile returned, he gripped the edge of the biobed. "Already dead." Metal groaned behind him. Tom wasn't sure what it was until he noticed the bed trembling. He backed away as it was flung toward him. Even though the forcefield sprung up, Tom tried to shield himself with his arms. As sparks flew and smoke filled the confined area, he heard further laughter mixed in with loud crashes and bangs.

The Doctor rushed toward him in a panic, only armed with a hypospray. Tom almost stumbled backwards into him. "Lower the forcefield," the hologram barked at him urgently.

Tom stared at him in disbelief. "No... no way. Are you mad?"

"Trust me, I know what I'm doing," the Doctor said.

"Like hell. The guy's Popeye on steroids. You're not getting close enough to him to inject that," Tom spluttered. The Doctor's brow raised. Despite the situation he struggled to hold back a smirk. Tom cringed and raised his shoulders meekly, "or an ex-Borg possessed by an alien ghost thing, whatever. Give me a break... and that." He snatched the hypo from the hologram and hurried to the nearby station.

"What makes you think you can get close?" the Doctor said in a baffled tone. He followed to stop him.

The forcefield flickered off, allowing the fading smoke to drift into the rest of Sickbay. They both saw a figure crouched down, straightening up to stand. Tom meanwhile moved the hypospray to his own left arm, the Doctor's eyes widened. "Cause he has no choice," he mumbled.

The Doctor snatched it back angrily, "you don't even know..." James approached them, grimacing slightly. He sighed melodramatically. The Doctor mumbled the rest of his words, "what it was."

"What's the saying, correct me if I'm wrong," James said.

"What saying?" the Doctor questioned while he discreetly moved the hypospray toward him.

James sighed and shrugged his shoulders. Before it could get anywhere close, he shoved the EMH to one side and onto the floor. Doing so seemed to give him an epiphany. He clicked his fingers and pointed a pained stare toward Tom. "Beggars can't be choosers."

"Hey, I resent..." Tom complained just as his left arm was grabbed. Within seconds the pair collapsed on the spot.

The Doctor immediately crawled to Tom's position, tutting loudly as the helmsman writhed in pain even while unconscious. Quickly he got up to retrieve a few tools from the equipment tray and returned to him, pointing a tricorder at a bruise like mark on his wrist.

"Well, at least he was paying attention." He gently waved a small pen shaped device there, his eyes glanced to the tricorder. Even though Tom still looked to be in pain and the tricorder fluctuated, he smiled in relief and tapped his commbadge. "Doctor to Janeway."

"Go ahead."

"I believe I've exorcised our guest," the Doctor smiled.

As he expected all he got were very quiet and yet hostile grumbling on the other side that was unintelligible. He had a good idea anyway. Finally Kathryn responded over the top of Chakotay's light laughter, *"excuse me? Say that again. I couldn't hear it over the sound of ridiculous twaddle clogging the line."*

"My apologies, Captain. It won't happen again," the Doctor said dryly as he changed patients. A quick scan of James and he nodded. Doing so he noticed his right knuckles bleeding. He quickly tended to that. "While in the brain, the alien entity was shielded since we couldn't harm it without hurting the host. I determined that it would need to move to the arm when moving on. Since its mode of transportation is blood vessels, a simple *blood thinner* would trap it there, allowing me to extract it."

"I don't like how he said blood thinner," Chakotay's voice said.

"I dunno, it depends whose arm it was," Kathryn's said in distaste. *"How is everyone? Wait, extract?"*

The Doctor finished treating James' hand. His eye drifted to his trashed Sickbay just ahead, mainly at the new hole in the floor once the smoke cleared, all while his fingers encircled the pen device in his left hand. "Mr Paris will be fine, his arm may feel a little numb for a few days. I recommend light duties away from the helm until he's recovered. Taylor has suffered acute brain damage, which I'm confident I can treat."

"What the hell?" he heard Jessie stutter from the not trashed part of Sickbay.

"Jessie wasn't possessed for very long, so she's fine," the Doctor said flippantly.

"Yes, yes. Extract?" Kathryn's irritated voice rang over the comm.

The Doctor sighed. "From what I can gather now it's a single cell organism, likely a parasite, which only seemed sentient thanks to it using its host's brain. I have to be very careful in my methods, not to be rash. For now, it's not going anywhere."

"Oh just throw it out the bloody air lock. Sheesh," Kathryn's voice grunted, then she must've cut him off as his commbadge beeped.

"Seriously?" Jessie said while dragging herself off the biobed, eyes wide in shock pointed towards the mess. "Did someone hide Janeway's coffee supplies in here, or something?"

The Doctor frowned in her direction.

Captains Log Supplemental: Tom is still in Sickbay recovering from his injuries...

"Uh he had no injuries, plural, until you put him onto *light duty*," Chakotay intervened. "Getting your coffee order isn't what the Doctor recommended for someone recovering from a bad arm."

Excuse me, I'm doing my log. Don't make me spank you.

Anyway, James, Jessie and Tani have recovered from their ordeal and they're back on duty. Wait a minute, Tani doesn't have a job, I'll have to do something about that, heh heh.

"What was it like being possessed?" Morgan asked.

"I don't remember," James replied.

"Me neither," Jessie and Tani said.

"Fine. Lets talk about something else," Morgan groaned in disappointment.

Triah approached the table holding a PADD. "Um, which one of you is Tani?" Tani raised her hand meekly, so the PADD was given to her. "Apparently you've been drafted. Dunno what for."

"Oh god, what?" Tani stuttered in a panic.

Jessie snickered to herself before answering her, "it's what we call serving under General Janeway sometimes. Relax. She's probably picked out a part time job so you can earn your pocket money."

Tani laughed mockingly in her direction. Morgan did so genuinely, "well yeah. You don't get paid for drooling over older boys."

"Hmph, you'd know all about drooling being Craig's eye candy," Tani chuckled.

"You what?" Morgan muttered.

Triah stared between them, she smiled in realisation. "Oh, you're Morgan. I thought he ran out of girls to harass."

Morgan scrunched up her nose, "what does that mean?"

"Besides, I prefer men," Tani said, turning her head to bat her eyelids James' way. He promptly picked up his plate and moved two tables away. "I don't mind watching him leave, right girls?" she giggled towards who was left.

Jessie was about to bite into her dinner, but the comment put her off it. "Ugh, two more weeks and she'll be breaking into our quarters to sniff his clothes and watch him sleep."

"She's sixteen, she'll grow out of it," Triah laughed uncomfortably.

"I must have skipped that part, 'cause eww," Jessie shuddered.

"Nope, you see, some of us have standards. So are you going to finish that?" Morgan asked, pointing at Jessie's plate. She slid it across while still grimacing.

"The main question is, what job did you get? You've been here nearly two years now," Jessie asked in Triah's direction.

"Er... I don't know," Triah answered sheepishly.

"We may never find out," Tani said ominously. Dramatic music suddenly flared up from seemingly nowhere, cueing everyone to look around to find the source.

Neelix chuckled nervously, "oh sorry." The music stopped, "that's my new alarm to tell me the roast is ready."

The room emptied in a flash.

THE END