

## Episode 1.23

### Muse In Fear Haven

"Come on, let's go in!" Kiara complained as she tugged on her sister's hand with all her might. She wasn't alone either. Naomi had tried too and had resorted to running around to behind Morgan to push her.

Morgan wasn't budging. She stood outside the Holodeck doors with one arm across her chest as if she was trying to fold both of them. A huffy expression on her face. "I'm not going into that Fair Hell crap. You're not making me."

"Why would we want to go in there?" Naomi asked sweetly.

"Hmm, you've got a point," Morgan said, her grimace quickly fading. It didn't last, she was suspicious once more. "If you drag me into Flobber and Treeass I'm going to turn it into a desert."

Naomi pouted. Kiara though thought about it until Naomi elbowed her in the arm.

"No way. I like you, I'm not mean," Kiara said.

"Hey," Naomi complained.

Morgan rolled her eyes, "all right, fine."

She walked through the doors reluctantly, hoping for another Tom program to play around with. Even though she got her wish, she still groaned at the sight of the old streets and old fashioned clothes. "Oh for crying out loud! I thought you liked me, what did I do?"

Kiara batted her eyes and held her hands behind her back. It didn't work on Morgan like it would on anyone else, it just made her scowl at her. "Everyone's here. Mummy, Jamesy and Jessie..."

"Did they collectively bump their heads on something?" Morgan asked, genuinely concerned.

Kiara mumbled a *I dunno* without opening her mouth and shrugged. "I want sweets."

"Oh ration begging, I gotcha," Morgan smiled. She walked part way into the program willingly this time, looking around with distaste. "Where would they go though?"

Kathryn slammed her hand onto the bar, startling the bartender. "Coffee, black!"

"I'm sorry. I was told not to serve you anymore," she stuttered, gesturing behind her to a poster of Kathryn scowling with the text *do not serve coffee* in all caps.

"Well I'm not," Kathryn huffed, confusing her instead. "Sorry I mean. Computer, delete the ponce at the bar and get me someone who will serve me coffee."

The computer responded with a couple of beeps, then the hologram fizzling out of existence. In her place a man appeared already polishing glasses. "Hello pet, welcome to Sullivan's, I'm Michael and..."

"Coffee, black," Kathryn repeated her order with a do not dare defy me look in her eyes.

Unlike any normal person this new bartender didn't melt at the sight of it. Instead he smiled at her with a twinkle in his own. "Aye love. Anything for a beautiful rose such as yourself."

"Oh keep it in your pants you dirty piece of sh..." Kathryn snarled.

"Mummy?" Kiara's sweet voice interrupted her.

Kathryn immediately softened up to look down beside her. "Oh sweetie. You're not allowed in here, this is a grownup building."

Kiara held her hands out all while smiling cutely and batting her eyes. "Chocolate rations? Please."

Kathryn put up her cute resistance shields, which were already at 20%. "Have you cleaned up your toys from this morning?" Kiara nodded. "Finished your lunch, your dad will tell me if you didn't." Kiara nodded once more. "You still gotta earn your keep. Did you remember to get a little thank you present for Seven?"

### **Meanwhile:**

After another rough day of everyone making conspiracy joke comments about everything she did, Seven was feeling a little frazzled and was looking forward to her off hours more than she usually did. Not that anyone could tell from looking at her, she still looked her composed self.

Seven hurried into Holodeck 1 to activate her secret holonovel, ready to relax. What she got instead was anything but relaxing.

"But I know you're pissing me off right now," Kathryn sang completely keyless to some pop music, all while shaking her hips and shoulders. To make matters worse she was also wearing one of the Fair Haven style dresses with her hair tied up in a bun. "Being a perfect snowflake no doubt."

"So it's one!" she screamed the one part while pointing to the ceiling, "more coffee. Give me two," one finger changed into two as she pointed at her own mouth and stroked downward from her chin to her chest, "to me. Right now."

Seven screamed and ran out, hoping that would be the end of it. Little did she know that someone had stolen something which belonged to the Doctor, and so the hologram was able to follow her to continue the performance.

### **Holodeck 2:**

"Yes, I got Jamesy to do it," Kiara said cutely.

Kathryn smiled down at her and ruffled her hair. "Good girl." A few taps to her own PADD made something in the little bag Kiara hung over her shoulder bleep. "Same time tomorrow."

"Yay!" Kiara squealed and ran off, completely forgetting that she didn't come alone.

Morgan pouted, "hey?"

"Don't tell me you've already spent your smacking Seven around rations?" Kathryn asked her.

"Mum that was a month ago," Morgan whined.

Kathryn laughed nervously, "oops. I only told Neelix to give her enough food for a week. My bad."

"That's so mean," Naomi piped up.

Kathryn sighed, the girl brought the guilt to the surface. "I know. I'll tell him to bring a months worth buffet right now to make up for it." She hurried off, not without grabbing her mug of coffee beforehand.

"What a fine lass," Sullivan said dreamily in an over the top Northern Irish accent.

Morgan looked at him in disgust. "Eew, that's my mum you sicko."

"Clearly..." Sullivan said without batting an eye. "Beauty runs in the family."

"Whaa?" Morgan barely had time to splutter, or clench her fists, when a nearby microphone was tapped, making it squeal around the room.

Everyone turned to the source, which appeared to be a tiny stage with a karaoke box coupled with a microphone stand plugged into it. It looked really out of place in a primitive bar, especially a one that didn't have plug outlets. Somebody stood on it, waiting for the courage that brought him there to refill.

"Hey ok um... I want to dedicate this to some special people, um of mine," Craig said with near fluorescent red cheeks, and also a drink of something fizzy in one hand. He took a sip out of it which did the trick, he looked a little more confident. "Okay, hit it."

Despite the command he was the one that had to set the music to play. "A one woman's man is what I want to be. Stay by her side, so faithfully," he spoke instead of sang, which the entire tavern were relieved by. "I would if I could but it's just no good." Only then he started to sing, prompting groans, "cos there's two perfect girls for me-hee."

The music picked up and so he did some arm gestures. "Jessie, oh Jessie." Jessie meanwhile was about to take a shot at the pool table, a one she completely missed as the name singing made her and the cue jump leaving a white ball hurtling into a nearby pint glass.

Its owner didn't look too impressed as it had spilled most of the contents all over his hand.

"Morgan, oh Morgan," Craig continued to destroy everyone's eardrums. Morgan looked ready to explode, not helped by Sullivan passing her a wink.

"A one woman's man is what I want to be..." Craig still warbled on until something white and spherical flew into the microphone stand. It bounced backwards, knocking its user into a heap on the floor.

What looked like a pool ball rolled away from the incident, catching mostly everyone's eyes. They immediately knew to look towards the pool table for the culprit. Since Jessie was still slumped over the table cursing about her missed shot, that left only James absentmindedly sloshing what remained of his drink on his way to the bar.

Jessie noticed this and not very discreetly batted one of the striped balls into a pocket.

"So, now that the dweeb's out for the night. How about you and I get acquainted. Lemme pour you a scotch," Sullivan said in a snakey tone once they were alone again.

Morgan felt a cold shiver run through her torso, making her shudder. "I'd rather drown myself in Neelix's stew."

"Okay, how about a glass of Chardonnay to cool you down, pet," Sullivan smiled, bringing out a bottle of wine and a corkscrew from under the bar.

"Okay, how about a sharp thingy to hurt you, pervert," Morgan grumbled, grabbing the corkscrew straight off him.

"Hmm, sounds kinky..." Sullivan sleazily said before he found a corkscrew punched into his hand. His squeals silenced the whole room, everyone got a good laugh at him running backwards and forwards behind his bar like a headless chicken, still with the weapon stuck in his hand.

Morgan smirked for a moment until she was rudely interrupted by Craig staggering over to collapse on one of the bar stools, with a microphone imprint in his cheek.

"Is this trouble causing you a jerk," he slurred.

"What?" Morgan obviously asked.

Sullivan leaned on the bar as if nothing happened, still corkscrewed in the hand and bleeding. "Don't tell me this ninny's your boyfriend."

"If I say yes, will you piss off?" Morgan asked while trying not to grind her teeth into paste.

Craig's eyes widened, a smile spread across his face. Suddenly he didn't feel quite so dazed anymore.

"Hmph fine. Maybe I'll introduce myself to the babe at the pool table instead," Sullivan said, still casually as if he wasn't bleeding all over the bar.

Morgan glanced over toward the pool table. She was just in time to see Jessie wait till James was sipping on his refilled drink to take a second shot by poking one of the striped balls directly. James grabbed the cue without even looking, causing her to huff and elbow him mid drink, making him splutter.

"Yeah go for it," Morgan said a little too enthusiastically, with the image of Sullivan cradling his nose and crying playing in her head.

Sullivan waltzed off like he had won something leaving Morgan a little flummoxed. It was James' turn when the bartender arrived in full suave mode, still bleeding from his hand with a corkscrew stuck in it.

"Ya all right love?" he purred toward Jessie.

If looks could kill Sullivan would've been on fire. Jessie's grip on her cue left her knuckles white and it ready to crack. "Are you making fun of me?"

Sullivan was taken aback for once, "excuse me pet?"

"Oh there it is again. You think my accent is stupid, do you?" Jessie snapped.

"I think that's what Tom calls an Irish accent, Jess," James mumbled as he slouched over the table to take the shot.

"No no. I just wanted to say hello and rescue you from this blond prat here," Sullivan said.

James was about to shoot the cue when he stopped and straightened up, eyebrow twitching slightly. "I'm sorry, I didn't hear that over the sound of stupid."

"I'm just saying, I know how to treat a lady unlike some," Sullivan said.

"Are you calling me old?" Jessie snapped, smoke rising from her. Most of the pub evacuated on seeing this.

Sullivan was more than confused, "what?"

James couldn't resist sniggering, "rookie mistake. You never call her a lady." Jessie snatched the cue he left on the table. "Um, why?"

"Obviously, one for each eye," Jessie answered, gesturing both cues forward one at a time.

Sullivan chuckled, "you English girls are so feisty. I like it."

Jessie blinked furiously, staring blankly at the weirdo for a little too long in shock. "What?" she asked when he began to stroke the closest of the cues with his unpunctured hand, moving slowly toward her even though James was standing in between them. Jessie then raised her eyebrow and whacked the bartender on the head with the other cue.

James couldn't help but laugh at the few seconds Sullivan moaned and rubbed his head, but then he continued like nothing happened and it wasn't quite so funny.

"How about you delete my wife, that'd be so romantic," Sullivan said, halfway up the cue. It left Jessie a little speechless and because of that, frozen. "Then we can get it..."

James sighed as he grabbed him by the ear, slammed him face first onto the pool table, and held him there with his hand pressed hard into his cheek. "Do you mind, I'm trying to take a shot here."

"But you..." Sullivan's muffled voice said before he was once more walloped in the face by Jessie with a cue, busting his nose enough to make it bleed. James let go and he slid off to the ground, landing in a heap.

"I much prefer team games anyway," Jessie smiled, dropping one cue and holding her hand up in the air.

James laughed and did the same, she then high fived him. "Definitely." They then made a haste exit before Sullivan could recover.

Someone looking on from afar chuckled over his pint glass. "Don't I know it." He looked beside him for a comment, then remembered his best friend was busy elsewhere and so he was talking to himself. For some reason that made Tom smirk. "Oh yeah, Harry's date. Can't miss that." He dashed outside, just in time to miss the holograms in the bar flicker as their faces were changed.

Kathryn chose that moment to walk back in for a coffee refill, only to be greeted by a sea of Seven's faces looking at her. Fighting the need to throw up she managed to growl, "Tom Paris!" before she stomped straight back outside, which she regretted immediately. The bizarre colours of the sky, the sight of a cow wearing a dress standing in front of Harry with his eyes closed and his lips pursed, until it moo'd in his face.

Tom clutched his sides, laughing so much tears were streaming down his face. That didn't last when he spotted Kathryn stomping towards him, he looked around aimlessly and started to sweat.

"You, what's the matter with you?" Kathryn shouted at him whilst pointing at nothing in particular, assuming that something was wrong in every inch of the program.

"Um. It's broken?" Tom whimpered.

Kathryn was inches from slapping him when she heard her own voice singing behind her. Tom was torn between crapping himself and laughing. The choice was taken from him when Kathryn finished what she was doing and he was left lying in the mud with a red handprint in his cheek.

## **Two Months Later - Present Day**

It had been a relatively peaceful day on the Bridge, which everyone had thought was a little weird, until at the end of his shift Tom stood up on his chair and clapped his hands.

"Tom, get down! You might fall," Chakotay barked at him.

Tom looked a little too touched, "oh, I didn't know you cared so much."

Chakotay eyed him in disgust, "yeah, that carpet is a bitch to clean. I don't want anymore blood stains on it." Tom's face fell instantly.

Morgan looked around at the floor curiously from her stolen spot on her mother's chair. "I don't see any blood stains."

"Why would you? Harry saw to that," Chakotay smiled at her while pointing back over his shoulder.

Morgan followed his gesture to find Harry on his hands and knees behind her, battling valiantly with what looked like an oversized shoe polish brush and some bubbly water in one of Neelix's pans.

"Oh hey, can you do my bedroom next? There's this patch that's definitely not..." Morgan asked sweetly.

Harry relaxed his clenched jaw for a moment to grunt back, "not now!"

Morgan widened her eyes mockingly, rolling them back when she turned back to sit straight. "Touchy."

Tom cleared his throat impatiently. "I have an announcement, you know. I didn't do this for the good of my health."

"No one cares. It's our health we're all worried about," Chakotay groaned.

"Good one," Tom laughed genuinely despite the Commander's straight face. "I have something you're all going to love."

"A gag?" Morgan said.

Tom spluttered for a few seconds. "No, I..."

"Is it a sequel to Worse Cats Scenario? That cliffhanger's been killing me," Harry asked.

Everyone but Chakotay looked at him with a confused expression on their faces, the Commander merely looked over his shoulder with a sigh. "I told you, wear the damn mask."

"No, it smells funny," Harry whined.

"And the carpet bleach mixed into Neelix's broth pan, which he never cleans, doesn't?" Chakotay said in bemusement.

"No, no. For the last time, that wasn't my program," Tom grumbled impatiently, then brightened his face up. "Now, I am though wanting to announce my latest project since Upendi was a bit of a one hit wonder. Drumroll please."

The Bridge fell silent, except for Harry's frantic scrubbing of what he figured was another coffee stain.

Tom kept his showman smile on anyhow. "As of this Monday, Fair Haven will be open for business."

Nobody looked impressed whatsoever. The only real show of emotion was disgust. All except Harry who leapt to his feet, taking the soapy pan with him. The Doctor chose exactly the wrong time to step off the turbolift as it managed to land upside down over his head, spilling water everywhere.

"Oh I love Fair Haven. I'll finish this and go pick out some new costumes," Harry said in a giddy voice. His excitement faded away when he went to pick up his water and found it gone. "Hey, where's my bucket?"

"I believe it is on my head," the Doctor said in deadpan, his voice echoed. The Bridge all burst into hysterics at the sight of him. "It's not funny."

"How did it get there?" Harry asked.

Kathryn strode out of her Ready Room with serious purpose. Chakotay wondered what was wrong, at least until her straight face cracked into a big smile. "It's my birthday tomorrow. What are you getting me?"

Chakotay stared blankly at her. "It's only January."

For some reason Kathryn looked at her wrist as if there was a watch there. "But it said this one was based in May."

"Um. *This one* isn't. It's January," Chakotay muttered painfully.

Morgan shrunk in her chair with an awkward look on her blushing red face. "One day they'll tell me that Kiara and I are adopted."

"Oh you're no fun. Nominate two schmucks for birthday shopping duty, that's an order," Kathryn tried to say seriously, but her lips kept curling.

"I can't. Apart from Tom making another holodeck abomination, no one's done anything wrong. Unless you want Seven to go," Chakotay said, smiling mischievously.

"Eew, no," Kathryn cringed and then huffed. Feet squelching against a soggy carpet caught her attention and she swung around to catch Harry sheepishly trying to escape with his empty bucket. The Doctor still stood in the same spot, unimpressed. "Harrykins. Don't think I've forgotten your little trip last year. It's you and B'Elanna's turn."

"But..." Harry stuttered. "I had to deal with puzzles and dead guys in tutus. I've been punished enough." Morgan almost gagged at the memory, instead she turned very pale.

Kathryn sniffed the air, suddenly her good mood was missed by everyone. "What the hell did you do to my carpet!" she screeched.

"On second thoughts, I need some fresh air," Harry said quickly. He then escaped.

Chakotay laughed nervously, it took him a while to store up some bravery to speak. "I told him to clean up, but he had a little accident."

"For god's sake, I know I joke on but he's in his twenties," Kathryn snapped.

"No, no. The bucket, he spilled it. Accident," Chakotay stuttered.

Kathryn's eyes still narrowed suspiciously. "Wait, what exactly was he cleaning?"

"The er..." Chakotay's nerves got the better of him, his voice turned into a squeak. "The blood splatter behind the command chairs. I assume Jessie and..."

Steam shot out of the Captain's ears. Chakotay backed off. "That wasn't blood!"

"Okay, well whatever it was, no harm done," Chakotay pretty much whispered.

Kathryn gasped before slapping him, "I was saving that for later, you prat!" She stomped off to the spot Harry was previously cleaning, stared at it for a few seconds while Morgan used the backrest of her chair to hide and pulled some worried faces. Once Kathryn had finished staring she burst into tears.

"Seriously. Adopted, right?" Morgan asked.

Chakotay sighed. "Perhaps save that question for another day. Mother's Day maybe."

"Really? Cos I can see the family resemblance," Tom blurted out, earning him glares. "Everywhere," he whispered fearfully.

*"I'm going to clock your face in a minute. Evasive maneuvers!"* Kathryn screamed at everyone. Only it wasn't the true Kathryn Janeway. An alien woman stood on top of a rocky podium with her hands on her hips and impossibly neat bobbed hair, holding a fierce deathglare mask to cover her face. If it wasn't for the white hooded robe nobody would really tell the difference.

Scattered before her were numerous similarly dressed aliens arming themselves with spears on the slightly elevated stone ledge with one arm, while the other held up the masks placed on long sticks. They were all being keenly watched by an audience sitting mere feet away.

Two more robed aliens ran in from the side, each holding a cardboard cutout of monsters. They themselves wore masks with the same design. The original group gasped in order, so did some of the audience.

"Four Byoships," one man stammered.

Everyone poised their weapons ready for battle. All except one who instead sang a battle theme obnoxiously. The audience laughed.

"How many times did you hit him Jessie?" the one who spoke asked a woman.

"Only once per act," she replied innocently, prompting further audience sniggers.

The woman on the podium wasn't amused. "Tom, go throw yourself into a rock. Jessie, take the lead."

The fake monsters looked sick at the thought while the singing actor gulped the air. Fake Janeway gestured for the fellow white robes to attack, so they charged with her only vocal instructions being, "go around, upside down, inside out!"

"What about the weapons we spent the whole play building?" one man asked her, dumping his spear for a rock. A few chuckles echoed around.

"No!" Fake Janeway shouted. "Wait what, you used my special stones!"

The entire troupe as well as the monsters sighed as if thinking the same thing; *not again*. Soon all of the spears were swapped for fake looking stones that looked more like sponges from their pockets, which they promptly started throwing at the monsters.

Another person entered the stage in the background carrying a pot while this was going on. One stray sponge knocked him and it flying to the floor. "My snot soup!" he screeched, which didn't amuse the audience until he started using his finger to lick it up. "Ooh chewy."

The monsters meanwhile were driven off stage by the sponges, prompting cheers from the white robes. Fake Jessie switched her mask for a serious faced one with a mark on her eyebrow and changed her voice to droll, "the Byoships have been driven away. The Borg have won."

"That's odd, I thought we were called the Voyagers," Fake Tom said.

"With a little help from us you have. What of our reward?" Fake Janeway hissed.

The fake previously playing Jessie, now Seven scoffed, "our alliance is over. You will be enslaved. Resistance is few." She began to march forward.

Fake-Tom's eyes widened, "that's my cue to start dinner." He ran off stage, trampling on the dropped pot contents.

The rest of the stage urgently tried to stop Fake Seven from walking to the opposite side of the stage she started from. Fake Janeway turned behind her to address something or one out of the audience's sight. "Go. Mother has spoken."

One by one the robed actors were overdramatically pushed over with flare, leaving only the two women left standing. Fake Seven eyed the carnage left behind with pride, unaware that one last actor stepped out from behind Fake Janeway's podium and stood behind the fake Borg. He flipped his mask over, only unlike Seven and Jessie's actress his was the same face but with a different expression.

Fake Seven didn't see him, but the audience's murmurs startled her into looking around everywhere but behind her.

Finally he pushed the fake forward, she ended up face down on the floor. She immediately pushed herself up though and brandished a new mask from her robe, "I'm cured!"

"Oh shoot, does that mean we have to keep her?" Fake Janeway asked. Half of the audience snorted into laughter.

The rest of the robes got up, mumbling in confusion. "I don't get it, what happened?" Fake Tom whimpered. The rest of the actors all did a half hearted shrug as a man dressed in old fashioned clothing entered the stage from the right side.

"And so the Borg kept their distance from the Voyagers, but as a mark of respect for their alliance or a deep seated fear? Only time will tell as The Aggressive Scorpion is one but many stories of the Voyagers of which I have been told, as they lay re-cooperating on our shores. What adventures lead them here to our humble island? That I hope to tell you too someday."

The audience broke into applause, they even got a standing ovation from a few. One of the few a large built man sitting at the front, his clothes gave him an air of authority. "Well done Kelis, I enjoyed that far more than your original attempt."

The rest of the audience filed out, the actors waited until all but the man and his female companion had all gone before leaving as well.

"Thank you sir, although it wasn't that bad if you didn't take it seriously," the narrator said.

"I didn't and I still want that five minutes of my life back," the audience member said sternly.

Kelis quickly composed himself, mumbling an apology. "I was young and stupid sir, forgive me."

"It was last week, but no matter," the man said. "I want another Voyager play, Kelis. You have my full attention."

"Really, wonderful. I will..." Kelis said gratefully.

"Only I have a few criticisms you must take to heart if you want to keep it. The jumps to the past were really off putting. Maybe next time have it in the right order," the man said.

Kelis inwardly sighed, "I'm so glad I didn't pick *Not Hunters Day Again* for the premiere."

"Secondly fix that James character. I don't understand what his deal is," the man said.

"Um, you're not supposed to..." Kelis stuttered stubbornly. Eyes were narrowed toward him. "Yet. Um I promise."

"Excellent. I shall take my leave. Make sure the next one is ready same time next week," the man said cheerfully.

He was about to leave with the rest of the audience. Kelis hurried forward nervously, "next week? It will take roughly a month to get one ready. The work you called poor was because they had only a week, sometimes they were written over a weekend."

"I want to know if the Borg will return to harass the Voyagers and get their Seven of Nine back. I cannot wait a month, that's ludicrous. One week," the man snapped.

"But..." Kelis objected until the man tossed him a coin. Kelis' eyes nearly bugged out of their sockets. "One week, yes sir."

Once he was alone he hurried excitedly backstage to join the actors. "Good news. He wants another Voyager play." He showed off the coin, "and we're fine dining tonight."

His actors chatted between themselves happily. The actress who had portrayed Jessie as well as Seven slinked over to Kelis to wrap her arms around him, "should we celebrate between us?" she purred.

He looked a little uncomfortable, "I can't rest, not just yet. If we are going to make this into a long running series the second play must be great, it's crucial."

The woman's shoulders slumped in disappointment. "Your muse again, Kelis? I'm curious as to what it is."

Kelis faked a re-assuring smile, "nothing more than a stroll through the quiet of the woods. I won't be long."

He walked off, leaving her to sulk suspiciously.

The walk through the woods was true at least, until he began to walk uphill into the wooded hills. He passed through fallen trees, scorched earth, pieces of metal to get to a shuttlecraft lying half buried in the soil. Without his torch of fire he wouldn't have seen it even if he was in front of it.

Carefully he climbed through a tear in the door at the back. Inside the shuttlecraft candles had been left dotted around, giving the shuttle a hazy light. He quickly found that if he was looking for quiet, he'd have to go look elsewhere.

"Oh what the hell, again!?" B'Elanna's voice complained from one of the seats. "Janeway's going to make me Seven's babysitter if she finds out... wait, what?" The chair rocked, putting Kelis off on his approach. "Damn it Tom, I said no, how did you convince Harry to do this? Sick fu..."

Kelis accidentally stepped on a piece of metal whilst backing away. The chair rocked further, only this time it pushed it into a little spin. He could see the angry face of the woman he tied to the chair clearly, staring daggers into him.

"Who are you? Did you do this?" she asked furiously, her chin dipping as a gesture to her arm covered in bloody slashes.

"Um er... yes, but it's not what you think," Kelis stammered. "You had a fever, bleeding brings it out."

"And the restraints?" B'Elanna asked, still enraged.

"I couldn't risk you running off, I need you," Kelis replied. Wrong answer, her eyes narrowed dangerously. "For my work. I'm a writer. You've given me much material to work with."

B'Elanna's face seemed to soften to a more neutral expression, her eyes though still spoke deadly volumes. "Is that so? Perhaps I'd have some ideas for you if I wasn't your prisoner."

"You will run if I let you go," Kelis stuttered.

B'Elanna looked around the shuttle and back at Kelis. "No I won't."

"You swear?" Kelis said.

"Yes, set me free," B'Elanna answered sincerely.

Kelis believed her but still was cautious. He stepped slowly closer, pulling a little pocket knife from his raggy waistcoat. He hesitated at the last minute. "You will tell me about your ship and its travels?"

"Set me free," B'Elanna said plainly. Kelis nodded, he leaned over to cut the twine from her wrists, then her ankles. B'Elanna gave her wrists a little caress. "Does anyone else know about this place?"

"No, that would compromise my..." Kelis only had time to reply before he was introduced to the back of her hand.

B'Elanna sighed at the dazed man now lying at her feet. "Then you're the one who should run. Go, don't come back."

Kelis whimpered and crawled away, back out of the shuttle.

B'Elanna looked around the shuttle for where to start. Her arm seemed like the simplest fix.

"What video?" Morgan wondered after she sipped on her Cherry Coke. Then she put down two cards on top of the pile in front of her.

Tani peeped at them bewilderedly. "Nice try." One of the cards was pushed back, then Tani chucked down one of her own. Morgan grumbled to herself as she reshuffled the cards in her hands.

Tom brandished a larger than normal tricorder at her and her tablemates, his thumb hovering over a particular button. Tani and Craig didn't look that impressed, not that Tom could ever tell.

"Well do you remember the Upendi party a couple of months ago?" he asked.

"Yeah, what about it?" Morgan answered with disinterest.

"Oh not more flashbacks," Tani groaned.

*While everyone were drinking themselves into unconsciousness or dancing wildly around the Upendi resort, Morgan sat at a table with an angel ring around her head.*

*"Come on Morgan, let's make all the waiters' faces look like Tom," Tani said in a slurry voice.*

*"No thanks, that's horrible," Morgan said politely and sweetly.*

*"Okay then," Tani said and she walked away.*

"Er Morgan, that story was not accurate," Tani groaned.

"In what way was it not accurate?" Morgan asked.

"In all the ways," Tani snapped.

Tom snickered, "yes you're an angel... wait, that was you!?"

"She's my angel," Craig said in a dreamy voice.

Morgan shuddered for a good few seconds. "Bleurgh, he's still drunk."

"I don't see any difference," Tani said flatly.

Tom bit his tongue all while trying to keep a smile planted on his face. "Anyway, I had a camera setup to capture the party, and I..."

"That's bloody creepy," Morgan scowled.

"Yeah," Tani did as well.

Tom jumped instantly into defensive mode, "well I wouldn't have to if people didn't keep messing with my work!"

Morgan's scowl turned into a giggle, "is that what you call it?"

"Why would you tell us this?" Craig asked before Tom could throw another tantrum.

It seemed to work, Tom's voice didn't seem quite as hysterical, "well, I thought it would be nice to tell you before our good friends James and Jessie get here."

"Tell them what?" James asked.

Tom was about to answer, then he spotted him and Jessie standing beside him. Tom jumped nearly a foot in the air with a yelp, giving the table and the new arrivals a good laugh. He side stepped away from them all while patting his chest to settle his heart down. "Stop doing that!"

"Why, it never gets old," Jessie sniggered.

Tom huffed, "whatever. Thanks to Morgan I've got a little time on my hands while Fair Haven version 2.5 debugs itself and changes are implemented, again!" Morgan smirked to herself. "So I thought I'd share something I found with you guys while I wait." He once more gestured to his oversized tricorder.

"I thought it was Upendi..." Tani said, confused.

Tom jumped on that before she could finish. "Yes well, there's no CCTV in Fair Haven, yet. Upendi though has plenty and because of that I got some interesting footage," he said, eyeing James and Jessie.

"I'm getting the creep vibe again," Morgan said.

Jessie pulled a disgusted face, "mmhmm."

James though looked annoyed at it, "you film what you call a love themed resort with a roller coaster that only allows couples on it?"

Tom looked a tad shifty after that. "Not those parts," he quickly shook it off and looked confident, "why the 'tude? You didn't get pissed in there did you, oh."

"I wouldn't be surprised. Five minutes in Upendi and I was throttling the waiter who was trying to forcefeed me a melon," Tani said.

"No I..." Tom looked a little pained.

James chuckled, "best leave the English slang to the professionals."

"Wait a minute. If Upendi has cameras all over the less icky areas, surely you would've seen Tani messing with it," Morgan said suspiciously. Tani frowned toward her. Everyone else pointed theirs at Tom.

"If I didn't have cameras in there, I wouldn't have a clip of these two drunks getting into the spirit of the program, would I?" Tom snapped and waved the tricorder around.

"Um. What?" Jessie said icily, freezing the whole room.

**The Bridge, ten minutes later:**

"Where's Tom?" Kathryn asked.

"Do you care?" Chakotay smiled.

"Of course. I don't want to get my hopes raised and then have the moron walk in with that punchable face, do I?" Kathryn replied. "Never again," she whispered overdramatically.

The turbolift opened. Kathryn flinched, expecting the worst. No bad jokes or comments followed but her guard was still up. Jessie stomped past her to take the Engineering station, leaving behind a trail of

smoke. Footsteps behind her told the Captain she didn't come alone, she glanced over her shoulder to see Morgan, James and Craig hanging around.

"Don't you boys have jobs to g..." Kathryn asked, then scoffed, "what am I thinking? Of course not."

Chakotay's smile threatened to turn into a laugh. "Did any of you pass Tom on the way here, by any chance?"

"We... bumped into him yes," James replied a *tad* bitterly.

Morgan and Craig sniggered between the two of them. James wasn't amused and stared at them blankly.

"Yes, a few, few times," Jessie said through gritted teeth. "Although he was stopping by Sickbay first."

Chakotay groaned and shook his head. "Don't tell me you've been smacking him around again, Jessie?"

"It's gone public," Morgan sniggered.

"What does that mean?" Kathryn asked curiously, glancing up at her again.

Morgan smiled slyly, "it looked like fun. I'm a team player."

"What did I tell you..." Kathryn started to snap.

Craig brandished the supposed camera Tom had been swinging around, "don't worry, I recorded it."

Kathryn calmed down instantly and smiled in a motherly fashion, "good boy."

Tuvok was about to say something but he internally talked himself out of it before he lost his eyebrows again. He tried to concentrate on his work.

"What did he do this time?" Chakotay groaned.

"Apparently he likes to spy on the Upendi guests," Craig said as he started to tap on the camera. James snatched it off him so fast he was tapping thin air for a few seconds before he noticed. "Aaaw."

James looked at him in disgust, "aaaw? Did you want to watch this?"

"The thing that didn't happen, nope," Craig said, shaking his head timidly. "I didn't find anything. Not that I tried or that it happened. Nope!"

Kathryn shuddered uncontrollably, "enough of this crap. Give me that." James hesitated for a second before handing it over to her. "I'm assuming it's the most recent one?"

"Uh nope, search for Tomfest 76," Craig quickly said. Most of the Bridge stared at him, making him sweat and stammer. "Filmed the floor, heh."

Kathryn rolled her eyes as she typed in the search words. It wasn't long before she was smiling and snickering. "What a chump."

"Okay, now that you've delivered the Captain's entertainment for the day, maybe you two can go patrol somewhere that isn't the Mess Hall," Chakotay said.

"Commander," Tuvok thought to interrupt while Kathryn was still distracted. "The Delta Flyer has missed another check in window. My scans aren't picking it up anywhere on its flight path."

"Great, maybe we should've done this out of earshot," Chakotay mumbled. Kathryn was still snickering at the video so he thought he was in the clear. "We'd better reroute our course and find them before she finds out."

Kathryn sighed contently as the video finished. Even still she slapped Chakotay on the arm, "I'm not deaf."

The Delta Flyer computer spat back what felt like the fiftieth *insufficient power* error message in an hour. Frustrated B'Elanna quickly ducked under the console she was working on, but it was nowhere near quick enough, she still saw the panels give up completely.

"Great, now there's no power," was her response as she collapsed onto the closest seat.

"Are you hungry?" Kelis asked from seemingly out of nowhere.

B'Elanna's attention darted to the broken window to find him not only peeping his head inside, he was climbing through the gap with a little satchel in his hands.

"I told you not to come back," B'Elanna hissed at him.

Kelis wasn't put off. He turned over the flap on the bag to open it, then dug his hand into it to retrieve a handful of what looked like a mixture of nuts and seeds. "You haven't eaten in a while." He offered it to her.

Even though it looked like rabbit food her stomach growled, so B'Elanna reached out to take what was offered and started to munch on it.

"What did you mean by I gave you material for your work?" she asked in between bites.

Kelis got his hopes up. "Tales about the Eternals are a popular distraction among my people, especially my patron. Fortunately for me, no other poet has sung about your clan. I am the first."

"My clan?" B'Elanna said.

"The lonely Voyager Eternals, far from home," Kelis answered with some flare.

B'Elanna flinched at the thought of Kathryn finding out about this. The very little food seemed to knot in her stomach. "How did you find out about that?"

Kelis was about to answer, but decided to show her instead. He wandered over to one of the computers. She noticed it had a smidgen of power and he was barely a second away from pressing a panel on it. There was little time to even make a sound let alone a stop command.

Her voice rang out of the computer instead, "*Delta Flyer's Log Supplemental: Harry and I have found dilithium deposits on our trip to pacify the Janeway monster. We'll pick her up a rock or something on the way back.*"

"Um..." B'Elanna was rendered speechless for a few minutes. "You wrote a story about that?" she asked in disbelief once she recovered.

"A play, and oh no," Kelis scoffed. "It didn't have any mountain hanging moments in it. Too dull. So I asked the lady Eternal in the wall for a more interesting tale."

B'Elanna groaned at the mess she was in. "No wonder I don't have any power left."

Kelis seemed to ignore that. "Of course there were gaps, I pieced bits together," he said proudly. B'Elanna though didn't look impressed in the slightest. Once again he went for flare, "the Aggressive

Scorpion. The Voyagers, trapped in the dangerous waters of the Borg Eternals, must team up with them to defeat the invading Byoships, but treachery, secrets plague their every step..."

B'Elanna stared at him, her eyes tearfully wide. "The Flyer wasn't even built back then."

Kelis wandered back over, clutching the bag of food in front of him. "My patron loved it. He wants more. I need more." He gingerly offered the bag to her.

"Oh I see. Sing for my supper, is that it?" B'Elanna muttered.

"Don't we all?" Kelis said sadly. He gestured the bag further, allowing her to reach into it. "Voyager?"

No was her instinctual answer, but her stomach felt like it was eating itself, the Flyer was completely in darkness. There wasn't really much of a choice, at least for the moment. "What exactly do you want to know?"

"The voices stop for a while and restart. What happens after a Borg clan member defects to your side?" Kelis asked.

B'Elanna thought about it for a moment, "which? We have three, in a way."

Kelis' face lit up. "Three? The first then."

"Seven of Nine?" B'Elanna said, prompting a nod from Kelis. She tried to think of a way to explain it in a vague way, "Voyager sailed through a deadly storm, casting us adrift for a while. It took us a while to repair it. Not play material."

"Hmm," Kelis still looked interested though. "And Seven? Did she truly join your clan, is she still one of you?"

"That's... a tough one," B'Elanna hesitated with a wry smile. "She tends to clash with some people, including one of the other *defectors*."

"And your leader too," Kelis said. B'Elanna laughed about it, logs telling him that would be plentiful. "Tom Paris. Are you in love with him?"

Meanwhile unaware that his ears were burning, Tom typed away on his computer in his quarters. The smug smirk planted on his face managed to grow even further.

"Think you can embarrass me with your tamperings. I'll show you embarrassment, with a sprinkle of Tom's book of *love*, or should I say Upendi," he laughed, looking beside him. Once he remembered he was alone his mood changed to glum in a flash. "I really need a third friend."

B'Elanna stared at Kelis, pained slightly. "Great, now there's two of them."

"What?" Kelis looked confused.

"Forget it," B'Elanna sniped, tempted to throw the playwright out of the shuttle again. He looked at her curiously, naively unaware or not bothered by her reaction. Fortunately it didn't last, inspiration had struck her. "You want more stories about Voyager?"

"Of course," Kelis replied eagerly.

"Then you're going to have to go shopping for me," B'Elanna said.

Kelis' face fell, "Janeway's rock?"

"What?" B'Elanna said with a blank face, then she remembered the earlier log. "No. The other thing."

"Oh of course, the dilithium. But I don't have any money," Kelis whimpered.

"That shouldn't be a problem. We detect..." B'Elanna trailed off quickly, "we sensed the dilithium were in pockets of natural deposits. Maybe get a little pick axe or something."

Kelis nodded, understanding. B'Elanna felt some relief seeing that until he spoke up again, "what is dilithium anyway?"

Hopes quickly dashed, B'Elanna sank back into her chair.

"Good, it's still debugging," Morgan giggled. A few taps on the Holodeck panel opened the doors to an empty grid.

"Don't you think we're beating a dead horse here? Tom'll get bored of Fair Haven and move onto something else within a week, I'm sure," James asked.

Morgan frowned toward the floor, miming some of his words.

"Maybe we can just delete the pervert bartender. I bet Tom only put him there to give girls the creeps," Jessie suggested.

Craig seemed a little too enthusiastic despite the conversation. "Ooh, maybe we can swap the Upendi and Fair Haven holograms. Irish stereotypes in a water park..."

"Girls in bikinis getting drunk in the bar?" Jessie said with narrowing eyes.

"No, no that's not... wait there were girls in bikinis?" Craig stuttered.

Morgan looked up still frowning a little and sighed. "What's a horse and why is it bad that I beat it?"

Craig and Jessie glanced at her, she snickered briefly, "I thought she was going to ask what bikinis are."

"So we're giving it a miss today?" Craig smiled.

Jessie shook her head stubbornly, "hell no. Tom's using these programs to spy on people, or at the very least pretending he is..."

"What did you guys do in Upendi anyway?" Craig asked. Jessie answered that with an elbow to the stomach.

"Probably rid that stupid coaster or something after too many drinks, I do get a bit silly after a few," James said with certainty.

Jessie didn't look as convinced as him. "Doesn't matter, it's not the point. He's a creep and he's still not learned his lesson. We're not his playthings. He needs further humiliation until he stops screwing around with everyone."

Morgan smirked mischievously, "now we're talking. I've already got the best idea for the church." She hurried inside, Jessie followed her with a curious look on her face.

"We've unleashed a monster," James commented.

Craig chuckled, "speak for yourself. You're the one that started this with the mutiny program."

"Yeah," James said with a shrug.

The two men walked in and the doors shut behind them. As soon as it did the hologrid disappeared and in their perspective the girls did too. They found themselves in a scarce grey room decorated with only a sofa and chair. The room was also missing a door.

"Um, this isn't good," Craig gulped.

*"Welcome to Fair Haven 2 boys,"* Tom's voice echoed around them. *"The show will start soon, so for now make yourselves comfortable."*

Unknown to the pair the girls were in a similar situation, only they were alone and a large monitor took up half of one of the walls.

"Tom. I'm going to kill him," Jessie grumbled as a similar message played for her.

No one on the bridge could concentrate, and for once it wasn't because of Tom making comments and the reactions to them. It came from the Captain's chair.

Tom snickered, glancing behind him at the offender. "Psst!" No change. "Tuvok!"

All he got were a few mumbles before the snoring continued. Tom swore he saw drool, though he was impressed that the Commander could do this sitting bolt upright, with barely any mouth movement. If it weren't for the noise he was making, no one would have noticed.

Tom decided to leave him be, nothing really was going on. His console flashed an alert at him which made him smirk. He still had another hour and a bit to go until his shift was over, but he figured he could leave early. Tuvok was still doing it, only his head had slouched back and so the snoring's volume had increased. No one really complained when he left his post early.

The next shift weren't very impressed when they arrived.

"He'd better not have slobbered all over my chair," Kathryn sniped.

Chakotay smirked, "he's been on multiple shifts in a row looking for the Flyer. Can't we let him have this one?"

"Um, Captain?" a timid man at Opps whimpered.

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "I've only been here one flipping minute. What is it Harry?"

"Uh," the man looked confused. Chakotay meanwhile looked amused.

"Oh. Can't tell the difference," Kathryn laughed dismissively. "What's the matter?" She was about to sit down in her chair despite Tuvok still being there, Chakotay quickly put an arm out to stop her.

"A ship is off our starboard. They claim they've been trying to hail us for hours," the man replied.

Kathryn side eyed Tuvok, "oh really!?"

"Open a channel," Chakotay ordered.

"I can't..." the opps man stuttered. He raised his shaking hand up.

Kathryn's morning ten coffees were beginning to wear off. "Can you count to ten? Spell cat?"

The man pointed at the viewscreen. Chakotay looked first, then grew puzzled. Kathryn didn't react with any interest whatsoever to the image of space that was almost always there.

"Where's the ship?" Chakotay asked.

"It's the erm... the screensaver," the opps man answered.

Chakotay groaned into both of his hands. "Since when do we have a screensaver? Just shut it off."

"It's passworded," the opps man mumbled.

Tuvok added onto that with a prolonged throaty snore, a one so loud it woke him up. "As you were." He looked confused at the pair standing in front of him.

"Who put a password on a screensaver?" Chakotay snapped.

"Who put a screensaver on the viewscreen?" someone else asked.

Kathryn pressed her chin into her fist, looking thoughtful. "If I have a coffee now, will it put me off my ten hundred hours cup?"

"Did someone clear up the rabbit infestation already?" Tuvok asked.

Kathryn laughed to herself, "no, as if that would happen." Then she scowled at the worried Commander. "What's that about a rabbit screensaver?"

"I'm going back to bed," Chakotay groaned again. Kathryn passed him a look of bemusement. "Someone's been messing with the viewscreen."

"And opps," the man at opps said.

"Helm too," another crewmember added on.

Chakotay nodded, "of course, why wouldn't they?" The bridge shook three times, setting off the red alert. "Oh so that works."

"I shouldn't have to say it but it's Voyager; shields," Kathryn ordered.

The crewmember at Tactical thought about slipping into the turbolift. "Um er, there's a password prompt here too, but at least my screensaver's the bubbles one."

"What the, why is this happening? Who'd install something so stupid?" Chakotay asked irritably.

Kathryn's eyes shifted nervously. Chakotay noticed and stared in disbelief. "It's not stupid. It's so when people leave their stations for too long, some nobody can't walk over and use it."

"Okay," Chakotay said warily. "So what's the password?"

"Hmm I dunno, I think it was cappuccino," Kathryn replied.

"That was very likely your drink order," Chakotay muttered, losing the will to live.

The woman at Tactical meanwhile spotted a few screens on the back part of the station were working. Her relief soon melted away when she noticed something.

"Who do you think I am?" Kathryn snapped.

Most of the bridge typed the word in and not one of them were surprised to find it was wrong.

"Um Captain, Commander," the woman at Tactical interrupted in a worried voice. They turned to her. "The shields were up but there's a weakening in them around Engineering, that ship's got some tractor beam there. We have intruders."

"Great. Tuvok, take a team down there and secure the deck," Kathryn ordered.

Tuvok tried to stifle a yawn, "of course Captain." He wandered off to the turbolift, but instead he walked into the Conference Room.

"We're in trouble," Chakotay sighed.

Kelis returned looking a little worse for wear; his clothes roughed up, patches of dirt all over his face, he wheezed instead of breathed. B'Elanna rushed toward him but only to take the tiny sheet of metal from his hands.

"Beautiful. Now, I'm going to need a gold plated..." she spoke with a straight face until Kelis whimpered like a sad puppy. "I'm kidding. I've got an idea for your next play."

Suddenly the scabs on Kelis' feet were a distant memory, for the moment. Kelis' face brightened up. "Oh? Thank you. The Unforgettables was going nowhere. I had romance, mistaken identity, intrigue but then there was flying yoghurts, talking trees and then I fell over and the sky changed, and I forgot most of it." B'Elanna stared at him judgementally. He laughed nervously. "There's a chance I'm dehydrated."

"Probably," B'Elanna said flatly. She shook it off. "You said you didn't want to skip too far ahead, but your patron wanted more of the Borg stuff. I've got the perfect solution. Conspiracy in the Dark Timeline; three stories in one."

Kelis' face fell in disappointment, "that sounds like a lot more work and I only have a week."

"No that's the beauty of it, all three are condensed to make room for each other. You get further into the story with a lot less work and time," B'Elanna said. Kelis still didn't look too eager about it, it soured B'Elanna's mood a little. "What's the problem?"

"No, no. I'm just wondering that with a story like this, if there's any time for the good stuff?" Kelis said.

B'Elanna noticed the twinkle in his eye when he said it, it reminded her of a certain someone and it made her very wary. Still she asked, "what's the good stuff?"

One of the actors off stage clapped his hands at the same as the Seven actor pretended to slap a new and younger female actress. "Tramp," she sneered smugly, "go play somewhere else, you bother me."

The new actress huffed, "bitch," then delivered a one of her own. This one didn't need an offstage clap from another actor, it left the other actress's cheek stinging and her jaw agape. They glared at each other for a while before they leapt towards one another and started to pull hair and scratch at each other.

Kelis smiled and clapped at them, "wonderful, that was very believable." He waited but they didn't stop, only it escalated to the younger girl trapping the Seven actress in a headlock. "Um. Okay, it's time to rehearse the next scene. Can we get Janeway and Chakotay in for the love scene?"

B'Elanna's jaw had already dropped as far as it was physically capable. Then while the Seven actress stamped on the other actress' foot to get her off of her, Fake Janeway and Chakotay entered the stage and started to recite their lines as if the fight wasn't happening.

"How is Tom dealing with Harry and B'Elanna being missing?" Fake Janeway asked.

Fake Chakotay smiled warmly, "a little too well. I saw him with Seven on a bridge."

"Eat dirt, you mooch!" the Seven actress shouted as she pushed her opponent face first into the floor.

"It seems love is in the air. Who are we to resist?" Fake Janeway purred.

"Oh lord," B'Elanna groaned as the two actors lowered their masks and leaned in for a kiss. She glanced toward Kelis who looked a little too proud of what he was seeing.

The Engineering staff had been herded into the wall of consoles by the main door by a large group of tall aliens, all armed with rifles. Another paced in front of them, eying each of his captures with contempt, all while he had a device producing static placed close to his lips.

*"Commander Xan, status,"* a deep, commanding male voice barked from it.

"We have their engine room, Commandant. Twelve prisoners," he replied, smiling darkly. "It was far too easy."

*"Excellent. We have entered the tenth deck. Our scans tell us there is a large room, possibly a cargo area. Once we've secured that, you will bring your prisoners to it. We'll use this engine room as a command post."*

"Yes. In the meantime I will search their database. I can't foresee any difficulty," Xan sneered back to his female teammate standing in the corner. She smirked back at him.

A couple of the engineers' eyes drifted to a station close by whose monitors showed what they were doing before the intruders arrived, only with multicoloured bubbles bouncing around in front of it. "I can," one whispered.

### **The Bridge:**

Tuvok stepped out of the turbolift with half of Security Team One behind him. "Captain, Engineering has been taken. They have hostages."

"Are you sure you didn't just walk into one of the Doctor's lectures?" Kathryn asked seriously.

Tuvok was about to say no, but after the morning he had he thought it was logical to think twice. "Yes. The amount of intruders though does not match what I detected inside. I have mobilised other teams to search for them, but we are being hindered by internal sensors not being available. They are relying on tricorders."

Kathryn studied him carefully, making him rethink what had happened a third time. "Where the hell is James and Craig?"

"I tried to contact them but there was no response," Tuvok said.

Chakotay glanced over toward the Engineering station, which was being manned by Triah for the time being. "Jessie as well. It's not a stretch to think that the aliens are taking hostages elsewhere other than Engineering."

"But why, why are they doing this? What do they want? We haven't had any form of communications with them," Tani said. A few groans and stares made her a little embarrassed, "I know, I know, screensavers and passwords. They don't need computers to make a point."

"I swear, if this is another take over your ship lot, the leader going over a cliff won't be an accident this time," Kathryn grumbled.

Chakotay resisted a smile for the time being since the situation was a little worrisome. "Tani's not entirely wrong. The aliens might run into the same problems whatever they're here for. We need to find out what it is before they take their frustrations out on their hostages."

"So we go down and talk to them," Kathryn said. Chakotay cleared his throat, hinting at something. Kathryn had a good idea what he was doing it for. "I don't think so. This requires a little... diplomacy."

The entire bridge crew grew a little worried at the way she said the last word.

"Captain. We have no clues as to this species' temperament. I would recommend against a close range diplomacy mission involving the Captain," Tuvok said.

"Ugh. Fine, Chakotay take Sleeping Beauty and his fairies with you," Kathryn sighed, a little disappointed.

"Hey," Thompson objected, earning himself a glare and a shove back into the turbolift by Foster. Both Commanders followed them inside.

Kathryn shook her head as she sat down in her chair and draped her arms over the rests. "Why do I get the feeling we'll need a plan B?" She racked her brains for a second idea. Eventually she gave up and went for the replicator in her Ready Room.

Most of the bridge sighed a little in relief once she had gone. It was short lived though. "What the hell, how does a replicator have a screensaver!?" Kathryn's voice screamed bloody murder.

### **Cargo Bay Two:**

Dozens of crewmembers were forced to sit on the floor in full view of their captors. One of which seemed more interested in the alcoves lining the opposite wall than them.

The woman from Engineering strolled inside, flanked by the Engineering staff and their guards. "Makinan," she barked towards him, frustrated. All of the aliens but who she referred to shuddered fearfully, he on the overhand didn't even react. "Xan is having trouble getting through their passcode system."

"And that angers you Tiff, why?" the man by the alcoves said in a drroll but deep tone. He turned to look her in the eye.

"These cronies from the engine room are claiming ignorance of it. It's likely new," the woman answered.

Makinan approached her with a dry smile. "Or they could be lying. Only you can determine that."

The woman, Tiff, smiled maliciously for a moment. "No. It seemed genuine. It would be fun of course, but a waste of time..."

Makinan's face hardened. "What is a waste of time is after years of tracking the Y'Jeti; dodging the Borg, manipulating the void pockets, you tell me that a measly password will stop us from obtaining the information we need to stop them."

Tiff brushed off his words and harsh tone with an eye roll. "Relax. I will handle it, I always do," she said with a twinkle in her eye. "I just need to be more selective, that's all."

"Fine. Just remember, the future of our people are counting on this mission," Makinan said.

"You worry too much. Now, who should I take first?" Tiff said, scanning the crowd of Voyager crewmembers with her finger. Her eyes closed as if she were dipping.

"I don't know Tiff, perhaps someone in a leader role, a hacker or a..." Makinan suggested.

"I pick a blonde with short hair," Tiff said.

Makinan scanned the room and came up zero. "Uh... where?"

Tiff looked disappointed, "what, that's what I fancied. Okay then maybe..."

"Lookie what I found already locked up," a lackey shouted whilst walking through the doors. Tiff and Makinan turned to see, the former's face lit up at the sight of the blonde struggling in his arms.

"What is this? Voyager's been taken over again? Is that little girl in charge?" Seven grumbled.

"Oh score," Tiff giggled fiendishly.

Makinan took over from the lackey to drag Seven to a little section of the cargo bay that was out of sight. Tiff followed. He brought the exdrone over to a crate and forced her to lie on it. Next to it were a few large suitcases with alien markings on them. Tiff opened them while Makinan strapped Seven to the makeshift bed with rope he found in a nearby barrel.

"Enjoy, and quickly," Makinan said, walking off.

Seven turned her head to see what Tiff was doing, she got a glimpse of the contents of the suitcase; hundreds of medical tools and tubes of liquid. She struggled to break free as Tiff picked a large needle to bring over to her.

"Here you go cutie," she said as she injected the needle into Seven's arm. She screamed in pain. "That acid will hurt for a little while. Now what should I use?"

Tiff looked at her equipment. Next she picked up a jagged scalpel the size of a dagger. She stared at it for a couple of seconds and pretended to drop it. Its point landed in Seven's hand.

"Ooops," Tiff giggled. She picked the scalpel back up to press it against Seven's cheek. "Sorry about that sweet cheeks. Speaking of cheeks." The scalpel was pressed further in, then pulled forward. Blood pooled around the blade.

"Now we've properly been introduced, maybe you will tell me the password for this screensaver of yours," Tiff whispered into her ear.

Seven struggled once more, a determined look on her face. She had no idea what a screensaver was but she didn't want to let her tormenter know even that. "Or better yet. Tell me about the Y'Jeti. Where are you keeping them?" Tiff asked.

The name widened her eyes more than usual, she regretted it immediately as Tiff smiled knowingly. "Oh, so you do know what I'm here for. I'm hurt you didn't tell me before," she said, faking a pout. The next needle she picked out was twice as large as the last. "My people, we're all about sharing. I'll show you."

Screams echoed around the Cargo Bay.

Night had fallen at the theatre. Only one actor remained with Kelis on the stage. B'Elanna watched from afar in the seats with a bored expression and posture.

"The last James scene didn't make any sense to me, and we still don't have an ending, or a middle for that matter. It keeps going on, maybe we should split the story into two," the actor said.

Kelis hand waved the criticism away, "you let me worry about that. Get some rest, you've got many scenes to rehearse tomorrow."

The actor sighed and walked off, "I knew I should've auditioned for Tuvok."

Kelis didn't hear him as he approached B'Elanna, eager for her opinion. "Well?"

At first B'Elanna didn't know where to start. Then a particular scene popped into her head first. "Janeway kissing Chakotay. Tom kissing Seven of Nine. The love triangle with Morgan, James and..."

"It's more of a love square actually," Kelis beamed, not put off by or noticing the criticisms so far.

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, "I don't think Craig's imaginary friend really counts, but then again I wouldn't have Craig in a love line let alone a triangle."

"That was meant to be Jessie. Her actress was a little... *pre-occupied* elsewhere," Kelis said sheepishly.

"Oh," B'Elanna smiled, making a mental note to tell the real Jessie that she was played by someone who was also playing Seven. "Still creepy. Morgan's sixteen, and James believe it or not is an adult ten years older than her. Craig's a Craig. And Jessie..."

Kelis chuckled, "oh I know. When *Jessie* comes back tomorrow, I'll show you the scene and it'll clear your points up. Spoiler alert, Morgan and Jessie weren't fighting over boys. No, they're fighting because of their differences. It's a powerful moment for women everywhere."

"Um... right?" B'Elanna twitched at the memory of this so called feminist fight which wasn't much different to the Seven and Morgan *epic battle* scene earlier, before it turned into the real thing anyway. "So there's no more kissing? I thought it was odd that you didn't do a James and Jessie scene, to be honest."

"Oh there's kissing. Plenty," Kelis said.

"Of course!" B'Elanna groaned. "Don't you think you're spending too much of your time with this fanfiction crap?"

Kelis was obviously confused, she assumed at the word she used. "But... Anger is like fire. Love can be the rain that extinguishes it. My patron is filled with hatred for his rival. So our play should be filled with love!"

"And women catfighting over their *differences*," B'Elanna grumbled.

"So you don't agree?" Kelis said sadly.

B'Elanna thought about the answer carefully. "I do but..." she hesitated, sighing. "There's no real plot. People are just making out in every other scene. Despite what Tom thinks, that doesn't happen. If we're in a battle with the Borg or when our ship's being taken over for the hundredth time, the last thing on our minds is romance."

### **Meanwhile:**

A holographic audience roared in anticipation, clapping their hands in sync with some annoying repetitive music. Spotlights shone on the stage and its comfy chairs in front of them, setting them off into a more excitable frenzy than before.

"Welcome to the greatest chat show of all time!" a man's voice boomed from the speakers placed in between each column of seats. "Much better than Jerry Springer, it's Michael Sullivan!"

The audience started to chant, "Mikey, Mikey, Mikey!" as Sullivan walked onto the stage in a black suit, with a microphone in his hand. He raised his hand and smiled, eventually the crowd settled down.

"Hello and welcome to today's The Michael Sullivan Show. Today's first segment is Will They and Why Won't They?" Sullivan announced with a cheeky grin and wink. It set the audience off briefly into another Mikey chant. "Now lets bring out our first guest, Tom Paris!"

Everyone cheered again as Tom walked up onto the stage. He sat down in the furthest right chair.

"Now then Tom, will you tell our viewers why you are here," Sullivan said.

"Thanks Michael, I will. I know two girls who are always edgy, vicious. I think I know why though; they'd like nothing more than to be swept off their feet by a certain someone," Tom answered.

The audience hooted and continued their Mikey chants, they were loving it and so was Tom, he grinned from ear to ear.

### **The Bridge:**

Everyone looked at Kathryn like she was crazy, but that wasn't anything new.

"There's one small problem with that plan," Triah pointed out.

Kathryn chuckled, then sipped on her drink which for once wasn't coffee. It looked cold, and a little fizzy. "And what's that Tani?"

"I'm Tani," Tani grunted, then pointed at Triah, "she's Triah."

"I'm sorry," Kathryn said genuinely. Everything was okay for a second until she ruffled Tani's hair, then went for Triah but she backed off in time. "I always get twins mixed up. What are the odds, huh!?"

"We're not twins," Tani groaned as she fixed her hair.

Triah shook her head, "just leave it. The problem is that the screensaver starts after five minutes of inactivity. A transporter room isn't going to be bustling enough for the stations to still be working."

"Of course not, silly," Kathryn laughed and finished her drink.

"Um, it's your plan, we just..." Tani said, but she was interrupted by a burp. "Um, can't use transporter rooms."

"Any station can be rerouted to something, you know why?" Kathryn said. She gestured for the two to come closer. Both shook their heads. Still Kathryn leaned forward and whispered, "because I'm the Captain. Shh."

"Okay?" Tani looked very worried. "So we find a station someone's still using. Then we've got the problem of finding these aliens, Tuvok said the internal sensors had trouble doing it."

Kathryn waved her hand about, "not a problem, we..." she stared at the hand, waving it again and again. "We are plan B'ing here. Chakotay and Tuvok will sort this out."

Tiff's eyes danced with delight at the two unconscious gifts her lackeys had dropped off for her. Makinan looked on impatiently.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"They introduced themselves as Commanders. They wanted to negotiate," the lackey answered.

Tiff giggled, "did they now, how thoughtful. I wonder which one has the most authority."

"So much for your seventh sense. Can't you tell?" Makinan grunted.

"Oh Maki, if you wanna round, you just have to ask," Tiff teased, brandishing one of the needles at him.

He wasn't intimidated though, unlike the lackey who hurried off. "Just hurry. I'll setup the command post in the engine room. Contact me when you can extract the information."

Inspiration had kicked in. Kelis paced around, quickly voicing his ideas before he could forget them. For the first time B'Elanna looked a little interested. "Then when she has the Queen by the throat, Janeway doesn't kill her, but instead convinces her to put an end to the conflict with a passionate speech that everyone will understand."

"It's missing something, the hook that says this is a Voyager story," B'Elanna mumbled.

Kelis agreed, "perhaps Neelix runs in with a disgusting pie and..." B'Elanna shook her head. Then another light bulb moment came to him. "After Janeway finishes her speech, she tells the Queen to piss off, her coffee's getting cold."

B'Elanna smirked, "perfect." Kelis broke into a smile himself, more out of relief than anything. "That's much better than the kissing."

Kelis looked more than disappointed, "can I at least keep the Janeway and Chakotay scene?"

B'Elanna couldn't help but smile in sympathy, "if it fits, sure." She began to walk away to return to the shuttle.

"I still need an ending," Kelis said.

"If all else fails, use a cliffhanger," B'Elanna suggested not seriously.

Sullivan managed to settle the audience down. Content they were quiet he gestured for Tom to continue.

"They'll deny until the cows come home and that's caused some casualties amongst us men folk, let me tell you," Tom said with a dramatic sigh.

"Now that's a pickle," Sullivan pretended to be overwhelmed, he even tried to fan himself from the imaginary tension. "Let's meet the first girl, shall we?"

The audience agreed so Sullivan gestured to one of the side doors where security guards stood. They opened the door, Jessie stumbled out of it and looked behind her as if she were pushed. It closed securely behind her, locking her onto the stage.

"Piece of sh..." she muttered as the guard gestured for her to sit down.

"Hello Jessie," Sullivan interrupted, immediately plying on the same charm he used on her before. "We've met before, haven't we?"

"Piss off!" Jessie snapped, but to her dismay the first word was drowned out by a high pitched beep. "Oh what the hell?"

Sullivan gestured for her to take a seat, Tom hoped the far left so he was way out of arms reach.

"Good idea," Jessie said, strangely brightening up. Instead of sitting she picked it up. Tom quickly ducked to the floor to the audience's amusement. The security guards quickly put a stop to it by getting in the way, one grasped the chair. "Ugh, spoil sports." She dumped it to the ground roughly and plonked herself down.

"You have quite the temper, don't you?" Sullivan sneered. Jessie's glare almost deleted him. "Now, do you know why you're here?"

"Yeah, that BEEPhole changed the program while I was in it. He's a bloody creep," Jessie said, pausing for a moment, "oh I can say bloody?"

"Actually you're here because Mr Tom believes that you're in need for companionship. The recent episode in the bar before proves that," Sullivan said.

Jessie's scowl intensified, Sullivan quickly turned away and scurried off. "Laugh it up prick, you're leaving in a body bag," she hissed.

Tom laughed nervously, "see what I mean?" he asked the audience. The audience roared into laughter and clapped at him, leaving Jessie not only confused but having uncomfortable flashbacks of school.

"Let's bring out our second girl. Everybody meet Morgan Janeway," Sullivan said.

Cheers and claps rang out as a few more security guards escorted Morgan out of the right side door. One made the mistake of gently touching her arm to navigate her around Tom and to a chair in the middle. He was left crying on the floor, clutching his ribs a second later.

"I don't need your BEEPing help you jerk!" Morgan snapped at the remaining ones, she pushed one aside to sit in the chair she wanted; the one next to Jessie. Tom was a little relieved that the girls would be the furthest from him.

"So, welcome," Sullivan said sheepishly, prompting a few sniggers in the audience. Morgan rolled her eyes and huffed. "Now, Mr Tom here has invited you here because he thinks..."

"Invited?" Morgan blurted out so loudly it was like a shout. "We were all hanging out and stuff, next thing I know I'm in this stupid room on my own watching this crap on a TV. Then these chumps came in..."

"So you know why you're here then, that saves us some time," Sullivan chuckled.

Morgan glared at Tom, he had to look away to avoid the Janeway flames. "Yeah, this guy's a creepy BEEPhole who thinks his crappy programs are a work of art, opens them up to everyone and throws a tantrum when he finds out they're BEEP. Somebody changes them so they're more fun and..."

"Yes, *somebody*," Tom said pointedly toward her.

"Yeah well, James taught me and did most of it," Morgan said while huffily folding her arms.

Sullivan cleared his throat, "actually, you're here because Tom thinks you need a nice guy in your life."

"Two of my friends are guys, I have a dad. There's boys everywhere, I've got enough thanks," Morgan said. She started to get up, "can I go now?"

"He means a guy you want to kiss," Jessie muttered in disgust.

"Eew!" Morgan complained. "I don't want that, I'm not a sad little prat like Tom."

Tom dared to scowl at her, "hey, I'm perfectly happy. What's sad is your reaction to kissing is ew. That or its coated in denial. Still sad."

"Yeah so happy that you've got to trick women into your fake chat show with the fake audience so you can get some validation once in your life," Jessie grumbled.

The audience responded with a catty, "oooooh!"

Sullivan quickly thought to deflect the attention away from Tom, so he approached the girls carefully but still kept far enough away so he wouldn't be hit. "Now ladies, if you were to pick any man you wanted, what would he be like?"

"What, I actually get a choice in the matter?" Jessie hissed.

Tom started to sweat bullets. He discreetly shifted his chair away from them a couple of inches.

"Non existent," Morgan answered icily.

"Uh huh," Sullivan said uncomfortably. "Jessie?"

"I'll say what I wouldn't want; overcompensating prat who films people without consent and makes them take part in his games like I'm his doll or something," Jessie replied. "And he wonders why and whines that nobody respects or likes him. Now there's a twist."

Tom was about to move again but he nearly tumbled off the stage, instead he had to move a couple of inches back the way he came.

"Oookay?" Sullivan said with an awkward smile. "Mr Tom has already figured out who you'd pick, and he's invited them here so we can chat it out."

"Gross, I don't think so," Morgan grumbled, stomping off to the closest side door only to find it locked. She tried to pull it but it wouldn't budge so she headed towards the right door. The audience booed at her all the while, until the guards blocked her path which made them cheer. "Fine," Morgan huffed but she didn't return to her seat, she went to Tom's and pushed it and him off the stage.

Jessie laughed as the girl did retake her seat after that, but the audience's boos soured her mood once more.

"Mikey, Mikey!" some chanted obnoxiously.

Sullivan clapped at them, shutting them all up. "Let's meet them, please welcome Craig Anderson and James Taylor," he announced like nothing happened.

Everyone expected the new guests to appear via the side doors, instead the screen span slowly around like a revolving door, revealing James and Craig to be on the other side. They were as confused as anyone else. James looked like he had been in the middle of tampering with something when it happened, he slid something metallic down into his sleeve.

"What the hell... what's going on?" Craig asked.

"Hell's going on," Jessie replied.

It took a good hour for B'Elanna to get back to the Delta Flyer. As soon as she did the heavy robe came off and she was able to breathe again. However as soon as she did she noticed the shuttle wasn't empty.

"I thought if I followed you I'd find a love nest," the Seven actress said from the shadows.

B'Elanna swung around, startled and a little confused. "You followed me? So how did you get here first?"

The Seven actress stepped forward into the moonlight so B'Elanna could see her. "We were happy, I was his star actress." Her face hardened, "then you come along."

"What are you talking about?" B'Elanna said.

"If I ever get a chance to be with him it's Voyager this, and my muse that. He hires some little bimbo to take my place. He doesn't even notice me," the Seven actress said.

B'Elanna laughed, if not a little nervously. "On the bright side he picked the perfect person to play Seven of Nine."

"I know who you really are. Come near us again and I'll expose you," the Seven actress's voice shook, tears were in her eyes. She then ran off sobbing into the woods.

"Great, Janeway's definitely going to have my head," B'Elanna muttered.

"Better you than me," a familiar voice said from the front of the shuttle.

B'Elanna's face lit up, "Harry?" She turned to find him clambering in through the gaps in the cracked window. "Where have you been?"

Harry stumbled down to join her. "Birthday shopping, obviously," he smirked. "My escape pod ended up in some river, so not only did I have to swim, I had to drift along until there was a person-less shore. And then..."

B'Elanna spotted something metallic in his hands which she grabbed, cutting him off. "Best present ever."

Harry was left dumbfounded, pouting a little as she hurried off to climb into one of the open panels. "It's okay, my suffering's not top priority, I can wait."

Tom struggled with the chair lying on top of him before he could get up. "What the hell? This is just a bit of fun, lighten up."

Morgan smiled dangerously, "well that was my fun, maybe you should shut the hell up."

Tom kept quiet for now. He dragged his chair back onto the stage to sit down.

"Now unlike the girls, there was no monitor in the boys waiting room. So we get the reactions live everyone," Sullivan said. The audience loved that, shouting his name and clapping. "Now then, Tom has brought you here for an awesome reason..."

"We get to take turns?" James asked, pointing at Tom who was busy trying to straighten his ruffled uniform. His words widened his eyes. "I'm game."

"Hey, I was here first," Jessie protested.

Tom rolled his eyes, resisting a smirk, "all I heard was I'm gay."

"Aaw, poor Tommy's hearing what he wants to hear again," Jessie teased.

"No, no that's..." Tom protested, turning red.

"Now come on, that's not very nice," James said with a straight face so the girls looked on in dismay. "Even I deserve better than him."

Craig nodded, "true, so true."

"You're right, I'm sorry," Jessie said, sounding genuinely apologetic.

Tom glared at them all, "I'm not gay for James, shut up."

"It's just a bit of fun, lighten up," Morgan giggled.

"It's so offensive that your reaction to gay is eww. That or its coated in denial. Still offensive," Jessie smirked.

Tom quickly got up to march over to where Sullivan stood, he said something quietly to him and gestured for the microphone. Sullivan wouldn't give it up, still he nodded.

"So, Tom here tells me that you boys haven't made any moves toward these lovely girls. Why is that?" Sullivan asked.

It was Craig's turn to turn a bright red, he started to splutter, "well um..."

"Hmm let's see. Maybe because we're not entitled Neanderthals like you and Tom. Next question," James replied bitterly.

Tom snatched the microphone from Sullivan, his eyebrow twitching a little in anger. "Oh so the high and mighty James has a patronising answer, what a surprise."

"Yeah, you look surprised," Jessie commented.

Tom shook her remark off, "you think you're better than me, no all men, including your new best bud Craig here?"

"No," James replied flippantly. "Just you."

Craig though still looked a little offended, "there's nothing wrong with having feelings for other people, and telling them that, asking them out."

"You're putting words in my mouth," James said.

"Oooh, it's getting interesting folks," Sullivan said whilst leaning in to use the mic while Tom still held it.

Craig wasn't convinced, "your answer to why haven't you made a move was calling everyone who does cavemen."

"No, I called Sullivan who practically drooled over Jessie and didn't take a no, and Tom the guy who kidnapped us into taking part in this freak dating show, cavemen. You're projecting," James sighed. "Also it's more because Tom's brought us here because we're both friends with women and his tiny brain can't fathom that. He probably thinks he's doing us a favour with this stupid Escape The Friendzone show."

Sullivan looked thoughtful, "hmm, that's a much better title."

"Fine, if that's what you meant, fine," Craig mumbled.

Tom waited a moment to make sure the argument was over before speaking again, "don't be ashamed, Craig. James has a hard time understanding these things since he's still not learned our Human ways."

"What?" James said, a little shook at the insult.

"It's okay, the rest of us won't make fun of you. Don't hold back, what do you think about Morgan or Jessie?" Tom asked in a soft and friendly voice.

Morgan pulled a face that looked like she was torn between gagging, and pushing Tom down the stairs. Jessie meanwhile wasn't conflicted at all, she looked ready to pounce.

"Well, they're both very beautiful and funny, and um..." Craig stammered. "It'd be nice if they liked me back but I know, I know they don't."

"Aaaaaaw," the audience sighed sympathetically.

"I'm going to start butting heads," Morgan growled in their direction.

"I'm with you," Jessie said.

Tom nodded toward Craig in understanding. "You shouldn't be so hard on yourself. You never know." He turned to focus on the girls, but instantly was frozen from the looks they were pointing in his general direction. Still he soldiered on. "What do you think, Craig's a nice guy right?"

"Are you serious? I'm not jumping through your hoops, you prat," Jessie snapped.

Morgan scowled, "of course he's a good guy, unlike you, that's why he's my friend and you're my new punching bag."

"Anyway," Tom laughed nervously. "So Morgan's a maybe..."

"That's it, I'm gonna..." Morgan grumbled before launching herself out of the seat, only the guards held her back. "Hey! That's so not fair, cheaters!"

Jessie, James and Craig were all about to go to her aid when she pushed the guards off her and sat back down in a huff.

"Right," Tom continued like nothing happened. "Jessie's a no, but that's okay because we know where her one track mind lies."

"Oh god, speaking of one track mind," Jessie groaned and rolled her eyes.

"But the question is, is the object of her affection capable of such emotions or do we need to program them in?" Tom sneered toward James.

James clenched one fist behind his back, the other hand was busy squeezing the object he had hidden in his sleeve.

"But, oh... that's weird," Tom said in mock surprise. "Our shining example of an evolved Human, isn't as perfect as he thinks he is. Let's see, there was the damsel in distressing he couldn't resist during the Q incident, which he was rewarded a little peck on the cheek for."

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaw," the audience cooed.

Jessie looked around, a little embarrassed but mostly angry. Once more she felt like she was back at school, it made her fidget in her seat. She wasn't the only one, Morgan and Craig were feeling the second hand embarrassment floating towards them. James though reacted to the flashback to his childhood years the same way he did then, he was seething.

"Who can forget the hand holding, arm bumping, meaningful looks. Then the confession in Sickbay, what was it, that Jessie is still prettier than other girls even when she was a Borg," Tom continued in spite of all that.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaw," the audience cooed for even longer than before.

Jessie snapped. "Oh shut the BEEP up you stupid BEEPing audience!"

"And I'm not even going to mention the episode Unforgettable cos everyone was supposed to have forgotten that one," Tom said.

Meanwhile Kathryn's eyebrow twitched, everyone around her looked on nervously.

Back in the Holodeck, Tom was on a roll and the tension in the air was so sharp it'd cut through Voyager's hull. "Finally my favourite. The drunken makeout session in Upendi."

James and Jessie were more than caught off guard, they looked horrified. "What?" they both stuttered.

"I knew it, that was what was in the security footage," Craig said in realisation. He was glared at so much he shrunk a few inches, and subconsciously slinked over to hide behind Morgan and her security guards.

"That didn't happen, you're making it up," James stammered.

Tom snorted briefly into laughter, "you were drunk, you fool, so you've sadly forgotten it. I did offer to help you relive it..."

"You son of a..." Jessie growled and charged forward. The guards hurried to stop her, one was held up a second since Craig was in the way.

Tom instinctively stumbled back, forgetting the stairs were behind him, he ended up on his butt immediately. Fortunately for him the guards got to her before she got to the stairs.

"Okay, maybe we should go to commercial break," Sullivan suggested.

"I've got a better idea," James said. "Computer arch, authorisation code Paris Beta 2447."

Tom's face drained completely white, "how, I just changed that this morning. I mean, that's not my..."

The Holodeck arch appeared in front of the stage. James walked over to it while the guards were busy getting elbowed and back of the knee kicked by Jessie.

"Why didn't you do that before?" Morgan complained.

James shrugged and frowned as he went to tap on the computer there, "why isn't the door opening?"

Tom smiled smugly, "ah ha, not such a master hacker now are you, perfect boy." He didn't realise Jessie had not only left the guards crumpled on the floor behind her, she was within arm's reach of him. When he did he screamed and scrambled away from her.

Craig was a little torn between watching that and getting out of the program so he could crawl into a hole after his comments earlier, so he remained on the stage. Morgan though kept glancing over her shoulder as she stepped down to join James at the arch.

"Does he have another password on the door itself?" she asked.

James shook his head, "no, it's not him." He pointed at the screen which had the screensaver showing on it and a password prompt. "None of his passwords are working."

"So we're stuck?" Morgan asked.

"For now, I'll get through," James replied.

Morgan sighed despondently, "okay." She brightened up instantly and ran off up the stairs just as Tom was about to run down them. He yelped and tried to stop, only to find Jessie behind him. There was no escape, unless he wanted to climb over the cheering audience still fixed in their seats.

"Um... oh crap," Tom stuttered.

The play was in full swing, no seat was left empty. A lot of the audience's eyes were glued to the stage, while they stuffed themselves with bowls of sweetcorn.

"I have bad news, Captain," the Seven actress said, bowing briefly at the Janeway one. "I've decided that I will not be going with you to Earth."

Nothing happened for a minute. There were a few chuckles from the audience. "I'm still waiting for the bad news," Fake Janeway said, prompting some more laughter and also some *aaaaws*.

"Aren't you going to talk me out of it?" Fake Seven stammered.

Fake Janeway scoffed, "no."

Fake Seven walked around to the front of the stage. "You don't care about me." She lowered her mask to show her face to the audience, smirking. "She thinks I'm irrelevant. How naive. The day will come when she will regret her neglect, for I am the Queen of the Borg. Surprised?"

"No," Fake Janeway scoffed again.

Fake Seven ran over to her, "you're not supposed to hear that, it's fourth wall."

Fake Janeway responded to that by bopping Seven over the head with her mask.

### **Deck Eleven:**

Kathryn stared at the door at the end of the corridor, determined, focused. "Right. This is it, let's sort this once and for all. Ready team?" She swung around to rally her troops.

Only her troops was only the Doctor and he wasn't amused. "I'm a Doctor, not a distraction... person."

"Well I can't do it you silly bint," Kathryn snapped.

"Why not? You don't even remember the password anyway," the Doctor said grumpily.

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "god, it's like pulling teeth. I did this screensaver thing in Engineering, going back there will jog my memory."

"And this isn't just a ruse so you can go in there and smack aliens around?" the Doctor said, narrowing his eyes.

Kathryn fidgeted slightly, answering his question. "No! Do you really think I'd risk having the last remaining senior staff taken hostage for something so..."

"Yes," the Doctor bluntly replied.

He regretted it though. Kathryn walked up dangerously close and stared into his eyes. He was surprised he hadn't been decompiled on the spot. A finger poked into his chest roughly. "I can swap your personality subroutines with one of those dopes in Upendi or Fair Haven, so don't... tempt... me," every word was synced with a harder poke.

The Doctor swallowed hard and whimpered, "okeydoke. So how do I distract them?"

"Well I was thinking you distract them," Kathryn said lightly with a smile as if nothing happened.

Determined not to be serving drinks for eternity the Doctor kept his thoughts to himself, "great plan," he tried to sound sincere.

"I go in. Get the password, disable the screensaver, then transport those schmucks back to their ship. Maybe the one who took my daughter can miss it by a metre or so..." Kathryn said. The Doctor looked horrified but at the same time he wasn't surprised.

"Mum! Where is everyone? What's going on?" Morgan shouted from afar.

Kathryn didn't react immediately, "though I should really find out where they put the hostages first. Okay, change of pla..." Then she noticed someone shouting and running toward her. "Morgan good, please tell me you left them unconscious and bleeding."

"Huh, them? You want me to go back and punch out the audience?" Morgan looked confused.

"Well you did spare Sullivan," Craig pointed out.

Jessie smirked, "speak for yourself."

Kathryn stared at the four blankly, "you were in the Holodeck this whole time? Remind me to give you all spankings when this is over."

"Yeah, no problem," James said flatly, clearly sarcastic.

Kathryn though didn't notice, smiled and went to pat his head, "good boy." He backed off in time. "Great, now we need somebody or two to go in with *just a doctor* here to distract the aliens. I guess the rest could watch my back. Morgan."

Morgan's face lit up, "oh, do I get to deliver the butt kickings?"

"I ran out," Kathryn replied, shoving an empty bottle of coke in her daughter's hands. "Can you get mummy some more?"

"Did you... did you drink my entire stash?" Morgan squeaked.

James and Jessie shared a worried glance. Jessie nodded and gestured her eyes to one side. James understood and nodded. "So, distract the aliens. That sounds dangerous, leave it to..." he said, already leaving for Engineering.

Jessie hurried after him, "us." The Doctor wasn't sure what happened, but he followed anyway.

Craig's jaw dropped, a look of utter betrayal appeared on his face. "Hey! Don't leave me with Janeway. Stop..."

Lucky for him Kathryn was a little distracted with her daughter. "Now sweetie, you couldn't possibly have drank a hundred bottles of this *horrible* Cherry Coke junk. Oh, Cherry Coke, that's it!" She ran over to the wall panel and typed that in, only to get another error message. "Shoot."

Morgan muttered a few swear words to herself. "But you managed just fine, whatever. Let's get this over with." She wandered off in another direction.

Kathryn pouted, "but, mummy needs a drink." She rushed after her, leaving Craig discreetly walking backwards. It wasn't enough, Kathryn ran back to drag him with her by the arm.

"This ending is terrible, it'll ruin everything we've done so far," one of the actors complained.

"But the play's already twice the length of the last one, we can't, it's too late..." Kelis protested.

B'Elanna appeared in the doorway, "you know what to do, Kelis. It's not too late."

Kelis' face brightened into a huge relieved smile. "You got my message, thank you!"

Fake Seven stomped in her direction, "I warned you to leave us alone!"

"No," Fake Janeway intervened with another mask smack.

Kelis sighed and quickly took it off her, "you're really getting too into this character." He turned to B'Elanna, "what did you mean?"

B'Elanna smiled knowingly. "Sometimes if the ending isn't working, all you really need is a cheap hook. Luckily you rehearsed plenty of those."

Morgan crawled down a Jeffries tube, closely followed by Kathryn and Craig, as quietly as she could. They could hear muffled voices coming from the room ahead. Once she got to the door, Morgan reached for the handle.

"Shh," Kathryn hissed, stopping her in her tracks. "Not yet, we must be quiet as mice. Once our distractors are in..." she whispered.

"Fine fine," Morgan whispered back.

The trio waited in silence, at least until a burp echoed down the entirety of the Jeffries tube system. Morgan and Craig both froze in horror, especially when the voices stopped. They expected the door to fly open at any second.

Unknown to them the reason the aliens occupying Engineering had abruptly shut up was because Tiff had walked in and she didn't look happy.

Makinan dared to ask, "what's wrong?"

"Everyone says the same thing. Only one person knows the password," Tiff snapped. "Some whack job who was probably drunk when she did it."

"That sounds ludicrous. Only a fool would believe it," Xan said.

"No one lies to me," Tiff spat back. "Furthermore, only one person knew about the Y'Jeti, and she just had to die on me a little when I pressed her about it."

"So not full on dying?" Xan muttered.

Tiff narrowed her eyes, "I don't think I like your attitude. These people, they're messing with me."

Makinan struggled to keep his temper in check. "So you got nothing?"

"May as well be nothing," Tiff sighed. "Holograms in the computer. Stupid."

The information lightened up Makinan's features though. "Not stupid, it's certainly possible. If we get control of the creatures, we'll be able to turn their *great power* against them."

"We still need the password to do that," Xan reminded him.

*"Yushi to Commandant Makinan, sir."*

Makinan grumbled as he brought his communications device to his mouth. "What?"

*"Three people are outside, they're unarmed and demanding to talk."*

"So? Fools have been trying that all day. Shoot them and chuck them in the Cargo Bay," Makinan ordered.

*"One claims he's a hacker, sir."*

The mood lightened. Makinan glanced toward Tiff, catching her licking her lips for some reason. He shook it off. "Very well. Let them in."

"This sounds like a trick," Xan warned them both.

"Oh I hope so," Tiff giggled.

The doors to Engineering opened for two guards, they stepped to one side to let the Doctor, James and Jessie inside first. They got halfway inside when Makinan raised his hand, the signal for the guards to point their rifles at the trio. They got the hint and stopped where they were.

Makinan and Tiff stepped forward, leaving a couple of feet gap between them.

"I hope you are not under the illusion that we're on even ground here. I only let you come in to remove this password from your computers," Makinan said.

"So no introductions. Rude," the Doctor commented.

James scoffed, "it doesn't look like we're the delusional ones here."

Makinan gave Tiff a nod, she moved forward with a dangerous glint in her eye directed toward James and then the Doctor. "Which game should I play? Ladies first equals gallant place taking, or start at the top and work my way down?"

The Doctor looked puzzled, "what or who's the top here?"

Tiff was momentarily put off as she stared at him. She turned her nose up in disgust, "this one's not real."

Makinan's smile grew while the Doctor looked very offended. "A hologram? I'll take care of it. I'm sure with some twiggling, it'll tell us everything," Makinan said, stepping forward.

"That's not a good idea," Jessie blurted out, hoping to stop both of the aliens approach. It did for the moment. "He's er, rigged to explode."

The Doctor groaned, but deep down he was very grateful. "I wouldn't put that past Janeway."

Meanwhile a Jeffries tube door at the back of Engineering opened slowly and quietly. Morgan climbed out first.

"Oh, you people are far more intelligent than I thought. Tell me cutie, how do I disable the bomb?" Tiff directed at James in a cute voice.

He looked more than uncomfortable, "um, it's only if you touch his program. Leave him and he won't."

Kathryn, Morgan and Craig tiptoed to the closest station, the one by the warp core but to get to it they needed to walk around, and they'd definitely be seen by the guards at least. Morgan decided to climb over whilst they were still out of sight instead. Kathryn followed suit, while Craig imagined many disasters if he tried it so decided to remain where he was.

"Shame, for him," Tiff purred and continued her approach. "Looks like it's you and me then. Leave me with him," she said to her teammates.

Jessie lurched forward, the Doctor quickly put an arm out to at the very least tell her to stop. "He's not going to help you, don't even bother with that flirty crap!" she instead yelled at her.

Tiff giggled maliciously, "so just violence then? Whatever you say darling."

"What, no I..." Jessie stammered, she pushed the Doctor's arm out of the way. Makinan grabbed her arm before she could go anywhere, and pulled her to one side.

"You haven't brought your tools," Xan reminded his teammate.

Tiff was getting close, James started to step back when she was within hand's reach. To avoid bumping into the guards behind him he steered to his right, Tiff followed. "He looks harmless enough, you wouldn't hurt me, cutie?"

Kathryn meanwhile was denied a tenth time and it was starting to really grate on her. "God damn it, if I see one more bubble..." she whispered.

"Shh," Morgan hushed, panicked.

"I'm not... I didn't come here to hand you control of the ship," James tried not to sound nervous, but it didn't work.

Tiff batted her eyes as her hand reached up as if to caress his cheek, but instead she dug her nails in and leaned in. "Why else would you tell us who you were?" she asked.

"That's it, I remember it now!" Kathryn blurted out, startling Craig and Morgan. It did more than that, it got everyone's attention and they looked over at her.

"Oh mum," Morgan groaned.

Kathryn looked a little sheepish, not helped by the buzz from the Cherry Coke dying down. "So butt kickings?"

"Um I'd love to but..." Morgan said, eyeing the two aliens with a hold of two of their own. The two guards with rifles and Xan headed for them. "Don't think it'd end well."

"Kill all of them but the loud woman," Makinan barked, gesturing to the guards. He heard a woman yelp, then something large was thrown by his feet. Both he and Jessie jumped at the loud thud it made. "What!?"

The guards and Xan stalled as they heard it to, they looked around to find Tiff lying by Makinan's feet. They looked to him first for an explanation. He though was looking toward James holding a phaser in his hands.

Jessie took the opportunity to slip her arm away, shimmy the object in her sleeve down so she could hold it. Makinan though recovered and pointed a small phaser of his own at James. "You, you murdered her. You're a monster."

James internally flinched, but didn't show it. He smiled, "no, I'm a distraction."

"What?" Makinan grunted. He was about to fire when he felt a blade poke into his back.

"Don't even think about it," Jessie hissed from behind him, then dared the guards to do anything with a withering glare.

Xan's shoulders slouched, "lower your weapons." The guards did as they were told, or they tried to but he slapped one of them back up. "Not you! For our world, no for all worlds, we cannot let these parasite carriers continue. I'll do what we should've done in the first place." He grabbed the other guard's rifle away to point it at the warp core.

Kathryn typed something into the password prompt. This time the screensaver disappeared, allowing her to use the station. A few more commands made her smirk, "setting transporters to piss off."

"Jessie!" Craig shouted as a warning.

Jessie pushed Makinan away from her just in time for him to dematerialise, along with the rest of the aliens.

"Shields should be fine," Kathryn smiled as she straightened up to a stand. "Let's get back to the Bridge and get back to shuttle hunting."

"It'd be quicker if you told us the password," the Doctor said.

"It was Janeway," Kathryn said happily. The resulting groans could be heard all over the ship.

***Captain's Log Supplemental: We managed to defeat our alien captives and were free to continue our search for the Flyer. It didn't take long to find it in bits on some pre-warp planet. B'Elanna promised she didn't break the Prime Directive, she was adamant about it. I didn't even have to ask, bless her, what a good girl.***

***Paris doesn't know about the state of the Flyer yet. I'm saving that news for his birthday.***

***The reason for the aliens attack remains a mystery. We are left with only vague clues from what they were saying. I have asked Tuvok to look into it.***

"So how long were you in Sickbay for?" Harry asked.

Tom glowered at his friend, "half an hour." Harry quickly turned to the neighbouring table, the people there grumbled as they handed him rations. "I can't believe it, betting on your friend's pain."

"Face it Tom," Harry said, returning to face him. "You do this to yourself."

"I don't appreciate the victim blaming," Tom huffed.

Harry smirked and pointed at the new camera in Tom's hand. "What's that for then?"

"Evidence," Tom muttered.

"Of what?" Harry asked.

Tom's sorry for himself persona dissolved into his usual mischievous one at the sound of drunken laughter coming from another table. He aligned his camera in that direction.

Harry looked over to the target table. He wasn't surprised that it was James and Jessie's. He was surprised that they were so out of it they were struggling to remain seated. Jessie seemed to make a point out of falling not on the floor but onto James' lap.

"Um, it's only nine hundred hours," Harry said.

"They wanna mess with my Irish program, they get some Irish coffee," Tom chuckled.

Harry's jaw dropped, "you... you didn't?"

"No," Tom said to his relief. "Jessie doesn't drink coffee." Harry's face fell. "I have to admit, it's tricky to make Irish Orange Juice."

"You can't do that!" Harry whispered harshly.

"Jessie chased me around, hit me and then threw me at Morgan when she got bored, who by the way left me trapped in one of those folding cinema seats. James, well he called me a caveman and changed my password so it was a hundred random letters, numbers and symbols. So you're wrong, I can," Tom said.

"Ohno," Harry said. A few people in the Mess Hall were sniggering.

Tom peered around to get a good look himself. The drunken giggling and almost falling had turned into a second round of kissing. "Oh yes, gotcha."

Harry looked at him pitifully, "I need better friends."

**THE END**