

Episode 2.02

The Love Spell

Captain's Log Stardate 54032.0.....36: After weeks of plodding along at low warp thanks to the damage the Borg left us with, we've finally found a habited system who have welcomed and allowed us to stay in orbit and visit their planet for as long as we need. As it's been a while, I've granted shoreleave to any crewmember who requests it under the condition they each show up for one shift a week so we at least have a skeletal crew at all times. So far it's proving to be a headache, but that's mainly due to newly christened pain in my ass Annika of Nine volunteering for every shift when she isn't regenerating.

Speaking of which, I haven't finished finalising the paperwork for her name change request. Hmm.

The door chimed, startling Kathryn out of her malicious snickering to herself. Her uniform was quickly splattered by coffee rain. She huffily called out, "come in," while pressing the stains with her thumb, which she then quickly licked.

Chakotay walked in and immediately looked bemused as he moved his head and shoulders side to side. "Captain?"

Kathryn could barely see him either. Stacks of PADDs cluttering her desk had gotten so high she had to almost stand up to get a glimpse of him. "Oh. What can I do for you, Commander?" she asked politely.

Chakotay hid his surprise at her tone well. He stepped forward clutching a PADD close to his side. "Maybe I should bring this later. You look busy."

"Unless it's urgent, I'd add it to the pile," Kathryn said.

"It's not," Chakotay said, warily moving the PADD towards the piles. "Is there something I should be aware of, or...?"

"No," Kathryn replied instinctively, then she thought it through and regretted her answer. She sighed, disappointed. "Just people with far too much time on their hands, complaining about every little thing."

Chakotay curiously stepped forward to pick up one of the PADDs, swapping his own for it. "What gives, who shrank the size of the Cherry Coke bottles?" Kathryn nodded. Chakotay couldn't help but smirk and read another, "seriously, there's like one kid on this ship. Why should we have to pay for it just cos Janeway can't get off her scrawny ass and parent her br..." his eyes widened in horror and he quickly put it back.

Kathryn glared in the PADD towers direction with smoke coming off her, "what!? Who wrote that one?"

"I... er didn't get that far," Chakotay laughed nervously. "Is this because of the black coffee being erased from the database, or the Unimatrix Zero incident? Now that I think about it, the replicator didn't used to warn us about sugar content."

"What did the rest of it say?" Kathryn snarled, she snatched the top PADD from the wrong pile. "Captain, it's been three weeks, please change my name to Annika Hansen. Oh for..." She tossed it over her shoulder.

"Maybe we can ask B'Elanna to bring the original sized bottles back, as an extra choice, with an age rating on..." Chakotay suggested helpfully.

Kathryn growled him into silence. "This isn't retaliation, or because Kiara finished off Morgan's last big bottle and didn't sleep for two nights." Chakotay sighed tiredly at the memory. "I can say no, I do it all the time. No, see. I didn't just do this to Cherry Coke, I've done it to all drinks that can intoxicate. This is because I'm sick to death of having a crew of incompetent crazies. And yes, maybe Unimatrix Zero did open my eyes to the problem."

"Perhaps you could've done this after shoreleave. I wouldn't be surprised if..." Chakotay pulled a face as he pointed at the piles of PADDs, "that is why."

Kathryn smiled and sat back down, obscuring her view of him again so she peered around them. "That is why shoreleave is the perfect time."

"Hmm," Chakotay didn't sound convinced. He grabbed the PADD he dropped off earlier to read it aloud. "Jokes on you. Making them smaller means it's easier to walk around and chug them. Those 2 and 1.75 litre bottles hurt my arm after too long. Cheers."

Kathryn's face froze in a straight, almost neutral expression, only betrayed by a killer look in her eyes. Chakotay smiled at her back. Eventually for the first time in history, Kathryn crumbled first into a defeated groan. "Tell B'Elanna to bring the old size bottles back."

"Yes Captain," Chakotay said without breaking his expression, not until he turned to leave anyway.

As soon as he was gone, Kathryn stomped over to the replicator to make her order. When nothing happened other than one beep and the display flashing some text, her face twisted as if in agony. "What the hell does flat white mean?"

Meanwhile, a couple hundred miles beneath the Captain cursing about her disappointing *just a coffee with milk*, the majority of the Voyager crew were making themselves at home at an alien beach resort.

Brightly coloured hotels of all shapes and sizes lined the bright white beach, fronted by outdoor pubs and restaurants. Music overlapped from the many bars, and yet on the beach itself it was oddly quiet and peaceful. It wasn't to last though, as a dozen aliens carrying paper leaflets descended on the beach and spread out to bug the people relaxing there.

A few sun loungers away Jessie sat with her bare legs curled up, covered by a blue slightly see through sarong, completely engrossed in a book. She sighed contently until she noticed fidgeting in the corner of her eye, so she looked across at her fully dressed neighbour faffing about with the headrest, only for a second before huffily pushing it down completely so the bed was completely horizontal.

"Maybe you'd be better off lying down," she said.

Morgan grimaced at her, "but it's like 1200 hours. And outdoors. I'm not even tired."

Jessie quietly laughed. "The point is to do nothing and relax, takes the stress off."

"Takes the boring on, you mean," Morgan huffed as she shuffled into a folded legs sitting position.

"You honestly can't sit still for five minutes?" Jessie laughed again, this time it earned her a narrowed eye scowl.

"Yeah I can, I just don't get it. Everyone sitting on these stupid plastic things in their knickers..." Morgan grumbled. Jessie suddenly felt a little uncomfortable and pulled the sarong up to her chest, but that exposed her legs so she immediately dropped it.

Morgan didn't notice and continued to ramble, "maybe I should've followed James. He had the right idea, skedaddling towards the promenade as soon as we beamed down. The food smelled great, and it looked like there was a games area that looked okay." She sulked like a child, "but mum only gave me enough *money* to get some dinner and a few drinks. That's gone."

Jessie sighed, "I remember," she said, gesturing to the four empty glasses between their loungers. "Okay, maybe you'd enjoy making a sandcastle instead, or..."

"A sand what?" Morgan asked, her quizzical eyes widened.

"Or a swim," Jessie suggested while pointing to the crystal blue ocean. "If you can. Personally, I only go ankle deep and sit there to cool off."

Morgan moved her gaze to straight ahead, watching many people splashing about, having fun. She cheered up slightly. "Okay, I'll do that."

The girl was off the lounge and a few metres away by the time Jessie could object, "wait!"

"What?" Morgan groaned and turned back around.

"You can't go in the ocean dressed like that," Jessie said, gesturing toward the teen, then at the closest people in the water.

Morgan looked down at her t-shirt, jeans and trainers, then at the people in swimwear. She looked back at Jessie pulling a face. "No," she said, shaking her head.

Jessie smiled sympathetically, "I know, I'm not a big fan of them either, hence..." she pointed at her sarong. "But you'll be soaked, uncomfortable all day if you go like that. Maybe get some of the short styles ones, or... oooh." Morgan looked worried as Jessie's eyes started to sparkle. "I saw some crop top types in the shops next to the steps down here, I'll show you. I don't mind lending the money."

"Oh god no, not with that look in your eye. We'd be there all day, and I'd have to carry it all," Morgan quickly said. She still held her hand out though, "but if you're offering."

"If I do that, you'll come back with a plate full of food," Jessie muttered.

"Nuh uh," Morgan protested innocently, "I'll be in the first buffet place I can find."

Jessie wasn't surprised. She smirked and sat back in her lounge. Morgan groaned as she looked around, unsure what to do.

Two of the leaflet distributors reached their loungers, armed with ridiculously friendly painted on smiles. "Good afternoon ladies. Might I interest you..." the male of the pair started to say.

"No," Morgan replied bluntly.

That didn't put the duo off, they concentrated their smiley efforts on Jessie instead of in the general direction of both. "As one of our honoured guests, you are invited to the summer festival in the Garden Plaza. It's so much fun; music, games, food..." the woman said over enthusiastically.

Jessie knew that would get Morgan's attention. "Free food?" the girl asked.

"But of course!" the man laughed politely. "Better yet, we hold the super fun Matchmade game, where even if you lose, you still earn fabulous prizes. Why someone last time walked out with a handful of cash, even though they were the first kicked out. It's so much..."

"Fun," Jessie guessed in a droll voice. She got a few grins in response. "I dunno, I just came here to relax and get some sun, after far too many years stuck on a starship."

"Oh of course, we understand. Still take this," the woman said, handing over a leaflet to her. "it has all the information. Might change your mind," she finished with a wink.

"To find the plaza, go up the stairs exiting the beach and follow the road to the left," the man said. He handed Morgan a leaflet before they walked away to pester the next lot of people.

"Finally, something free to do," Morgan said.

Jessie pulled a few unsure faces as she unfolded the leaflet, skimming a few parts. "I dunno, looks a little sad to me." The last part of the leaflet had two pages devoted to the game the advertisers mentioned, she looked it over with a disinterested expression. "I mean what part of this is

fun; volunteers from the audience guess what the player is thinking with the one clue they give you, or be the player who creates the most elaborate clue yet. Whoever is the closest wins the grand prize. It's like a drunk circus version of Family Fortunes."

"Looks like it'd be a laugh to watch, at least. What's the grand prize if cash is the loser's?" Morgan smirked.

Jessie's face softened quite a bit, her eyes widened with a little interest. "A two day stay at the isolated spa resort." Disappointment quickly fell over her, "there's four rounds of this, so there'd be three other people staying if you win."

The tiniest of snorts got her head out of the leaflet and staring towards a quietly snickering Morgan. "So much for it being a sad circus gameshow, huh? Now I'm definitely going to watch it."

"The third place runners up prize is a free buffet pass that is valid for a week," Jessie said with a straight face.

"So you're going to put some clothes on before we go, or what?" Morgan asked, already with her bag packed up.

Jessie meekly reached for her own bag while absentmindedly re-covering herself up with the other hand.

At one of the less busy pubs, Annika sat bolt upright at one of the few remaining shaded tables. PADDs and a computer she was tapping on littered the entirety of the table surface. In one hand she held a flask containing one of her nutritional supplements.

"Miss," the tired sounding barman said in her direction. She ignored him. "You can't use up one of my tables without buying anything."

He waited and sighed when she once more ignored him. His mood lifted momentarily as a potential customer stepped into his pub, but a little wary since he looked to be the same species as the woman who had hogged one out of ten tables the entire time he'd been open. He was more than relieved when this new arrival headed straight for his bar, passing Annika on the way. Her eyes flickered up, then right to follow him while slightly narrowing.

"Hi. I'd like a chilled drink with a bitter kick to it, so whatever you recommend please," James said with a friendly smile.

The barman responded similarly. "Ah, I know just the thing." He reached down to collect a bottle from a fridge under the bar. "We call it Black Ice, it's one of my personal favourites. Wakes you up plenty and is refreshing on a hot day like this." He turned to the table behind him to pour the bottle into what looked like a blender up to halfway. Another bottle from a shelf above contributed a couple of drops to a mug shaped glass. The rest was filled with looked like brown shaded ice cubes.

While the device did its job surprisingly quietly, Annika cleared her throat loudly to get someone's attention. After a few tries with no success, she spoke up anyway, "I bet you're wondering what I'm doing here."

James frowned and looked over his shoulder. Once he spotted her, his eyes instinctively rolled. "No." He turned his head back. "Didn't even notice you were here."

Annika recoiled from the offense, luckily no one saw it. He and the barman did hear her harumph though, which the latter enjoyed more than he liked. "Well, I thought that since I am no longer Seven of Nine, that I should open my mind to new experiences. Going to the beach seemed like a big step, so I thought a sit down in a local bar would..."

"I don't care," James said bluntly.

Annika gasped and her jaw dropped. The barman meanwhile laughed as he poured the finished drink into the glass. He brought it over to his customer while Annika angrily packed up her things huffily.

James casually handed him a plastic card as if nothing ever happened. The barman shook his head, "no, for that..." he pointed at Annika storming off, "it's on me."

"For what?" James looked confused as he looked over his shoulder again. Just in time too to see her angry strop make one of her flip flops fly off ahead of her. She cried out in frustration and hopped over to collect it. James bit his lip to stop from laughing as he turned back. "I dunno, if I got free drinks everytime I offended her without even trying, I'd be pissed 24/7."

The barman laughed, "a compromise, half price?" He took the card before he had a chance to argue, it was quickly pressed against a touchscreen till and handed back to him.

"Oh my god, this stuff won't come off, I hate sand!" Annika cried from outside.

The same leaflet distributors from earlier warily approached her as she slapped the nearby wall with her flattened sandal. "Excuse me..."

"I am not interested," she snarled while dropping the sandal on the floor so she could stand again.

"That's too bad. A girl called Morgan said she was going to *beat your ass* at our game, whatever that means," one said.

Annika's eyebrow twitched briefly, still she looked at them calmly. "What game?"

The pair brightened up way too much again. "It's called Matchmade. The game where no one can really lose..."

"But if you do win, you get a free two day trip to the largest astronomical museum in the sector, including a tour and a chance to be a lecturer for our most promising students," the woman continued with a grin plastered on.

Annika couldn't hide her interest well, still she tried to play it off as if she wasn't. "No thank you. I am here to try *fun* different things. Good day." She began to walk off.

The two sighed sadly at the same time. "Oh those poor kids, getting taught by that foul mouthed little girl. They need someone perfect and well educated. Oh well," the man said, with his eyes pointing toward Annika.

"I suppose taking part in a competition is fun and new," Annika tried to say in an annoyed way.

Back inside James tried his half price drink. The barman wasn't surprised at the approving nod, he'd never seen anything less. "Not bad. Tastes a bit like iced coffee."

The glass felt like it brushed against his skin against his will, so he looked down only to find it already empty. Then he realised there was a new presence to his left. He didn't have to look to find out who it was, he knew.

"Ah, there it is," Kathryn sighed contently. The barman looked at her in shock as she flagged him down. "I'll have what he's having."

"Uh," James awkwardly smiled in the same direction, then at the thief. "How did you do that so fast? Even you..."

Kathryn smiled warmly at him as if nothing was wrong. "Maybe keep your mitts out of the replicator database from now on," she said, somehow sweetly and at the same time maliciously. James only reacted with both eyebrows raising, to which she laughed at and leaned across in an attempt to ruffle his hair. She only got a few strands at the front as he backed away. "Aaaw, apology accepted. Don't be so naughty next time."

"I'll er, make you a new one," the barman said in a wigged out tone.

James shook his head, "no, I'm gonna need something stronger now." Kathryn's eyes meanwhile bugged out at the thought. "Not your kind of stronger."

Kathryn pouted at the same time the leaflet people approached the bar. "Spoil sport."

"Excuse me," one of them announced. They barely got a head turn from James but carried on regardless, "might I interest you in the super fun festival we are throwing in honour of our Voyager guests."

"I dunno, the last time I had super fun I pinned a tail on my uncle's fat ass and spent the day grounded," Kathryn said very seriously. James meanwhile quietly laughed behind his hand. The alien's facade started to crack. "I never got to blow out the bloody candles, I'm still bitter. So no, I keep my fun non descriptive these days."

The leafleters were speechless, their cheery faces were merely blank.

James briefly glanced at Kathryn while his next drink and hers was delivered, "you weren't allowed your probably coffee birthday cake?" He focused on the new drink that fortunately didn't have any coffee flavour this time. "That explains so much."

"Who said it was my cake?" Kathryn muttered bitterly when he was midway through his second sip. It took him a while before he was able to swallow without choking on it. Even after he did, he continued to laugh to her confusion. "What?"

"We'll just..." one leafleter said nervously while placing a couple of leaflets on the bar between them, "leave these here."

Kathryn stared at them in disgust until they shuffled off. Once they were gone she looked at it with the same expression. "Bloody patronising; a super duper fun festival in your honour, complete with a bouncy castle and face painting." She was too engrossed in reading while scrunching her face to notice James snatch her drink, drink half of it and put it back. "Look at this, everyone's a winner. What kinda idiot would fall for this," she snorted in derision. Seconds later her eyes widened once more and she was gone, leaving behind an empty glass and a shaking bar stool.

The barman looked at James for an answer to what he had just witnessed. He shrugged meekly whilst picking up the remaining leaflet.

"I knew it," Jessie said. She glanced around at the handful of Voyager crewmembers and aliens wandering around a small park. With a stage plonked at the centre and stalls with cheap games and nasty looking food lining its perimeter, it looked like a cheap funfare on its last day with all the good stuff already packed up and gone. "Sad."

Morgan nodded, "yup."

The two leaflet distributors mulled around the stage holding pen shaped devices but larger with a spherical tip. The woman brought that side to her mouth and began to circle the edge of the stage.

"Afternoon everyone. It's almost time for our main event, gather around everyone!" she shouted, her voice emanating through the speakers next to the stage. Despite her enthusiasm the biggest response she got were people turning to look towards the stage. "Of course our locals all know the rules for Matchmade, but a quick run through for our esteemed guests, please," she said towards the man.

"It's simple. A volunteer hides in this booth, we call them the player," the man explained while pointing to a metallic booth sitting at the centre of the stage. "Then we bring up three contestants from the audience, or they volunteer. The player asks the contestants a few questions, but it's not a matter of being right though, right?"

"Right," the woman agreed cheerfully, "the player's questions are purely subjective. The goal of the contestants is to choose an answer that'll appease the player. The trick is to figure out the player from the only clue being the questions they choose. No one really loses. Everyone who plays get something, the incentive to *win* are the better prizes."

"Now as always we need four players. If you're interested in playing head for the tent, which is first come first serve," the man said, gesturing to a bigger tent next to the stage. "The players automatically win our grand prize, so hurry before somebody beats you to it." The pair jumped down toward the side tent.

Morgan snorted a little. "This is pretty sad," she mumbled between bites of a burger.

Jessie nodded and smiled, "yeah but the hotel spa trip sounds good, and you don't have to do much to get it."

"Don't you think it's a little suspect?" Morgan said. She got no answer, though she had a good idea why. She glanced to the right of her where Jessie once stood but not anymore. "Heh, figured it'd be a free clothes shopping spree that'd get her."

After a few minutes the stage duo returned to talk to the audience. "Wow you guys are so much more fun than our last visitors. Got our four players in record time."

"Okay, our first player is getting transported to the soundproof booth as we speak. There they will type their questions and our computer will speak for them. When you answer, the computer will send them back to the player in a written format. Knowing the player's identity and them yours might give some contestants the edge, and that's not fair," the woman explained. "So who wants to play first?" The two scanned the crowd theatrically.

"Hmm," Harry said, while nose deep in the leaflet, "oh neat. Whoever picks the most *right* answers gets the spa trip as well. Could do with that." He went to raise his hand.

Tom hurriedly grabbed it and snatched the leaflet from him. "That's Jessie's, how did you get that?" He had to laugh as Harry looked at him suspiciously. "Oh don't, it's still sorta true."

"What did you do? Trick crewmembers into coming here. Why?" Harry groaned.

"Nothing malicious, just some fun. Volunteer if you want," Tom said. Harry's suspicions grew though. "I'll even join you."

Harry looked around at the small, uninterested festival. Even the locals weren't that interested in the so called main event. "What's the catch?"

Tom shook the leaflet in front of his face. "None if you read this version," he snickered. "Your loss," he said while raising his own hand.

"We got a contestant, thank you sir. Come on up!" the woman on stage shouted eagerly.

Tom smiled at his friend, "no catch, everyone wins remember."

Harry watched him walk to the stage and hop up. "What are you playing at Tom?" Even still he went to volunteer again. The stage duo excitedly welcomed him too.

A brief alarm sounded. "Ooph," the female host grimaced, "time's up. We need one more. Now who should we select?"

"Hmm, maybe our gentlemen volunteers have a preference," the man said.

"Nuh uh, I'll play fair," Tom said with a wink. The pair smiled and returned to the audience. "This should be good," he whispered to Harry.

"What have I volunteered for?" his friend asked irritably.

The woman approached a couple of people, disinterested in the game and looking at a few of the crummy stalls. "How about you sir?" she said, patting one on a shoulder.

They turned around, startled. "What?" they, James said as a microphone was thrust into his face to his annoyance. "No way, I'm not interested in a trip to coffee world."

"Oh, you must've gotten the misprinted leaflets with prize and a stall mixed up, see," woman said, pointing at another stall called Coffee 4 All. In front of it Kathryn lay laughing, surrounded by empty plastic glasses and holding a half full one.

"Give me a sec, I'll... oooh," she spotted the glass in her hand, which she then threw over her face and sighed contently.

The woman tried to shake that off, but it was impossible not to look. "Oh um, grand prize is a stay in our fabulous hotel with its very own sauna, gym, games, buffet restaurants..." she noticed what little interest James had was waning. "You look a little bored here. Maybe you'd like our second and third place prizes better; coupons for free food and drink, a day trip to our theme park with rides, and for the adventurous type, assault courses, cross country, water sports..."

Tom smiled and nudged Harry with his elbow. "What did I tell you; what a misery, doesn't like anything. He'll crack though."

James meanwhile groaned, "the free stuff, that's the third place prize right?" The woman nodded. "Fine, get you off my back."

"That's the spirit sir," the female host improvised and gestured to the stage.

James reluctantly joined the pair there, rolling his eyes at the smirk Tom was giving him. Harry looked embarrassed to be with him.

"All righty, first question," the male host announced.

Inside the booth, the player didn't look impressed with the lack of any text input, only a preselected list of questions. She figured she was in for the hotel anyway and randomly pressed one.

Outside a computerised voice boomed from the speakers, "what's your idea of the perfect day?"

"Now remember, our computer has to turn your answers into text, and it's a new language to it so please take your time. Stutters and stalls confuse it," the male host said.

Tom smiled, "that's okay, I can answer now. My perfect day would be sailing the seas of some mysterious planet, alone with my girl. Diving for lost treasure, chilling on the deck with drinks. Swimming naked in the moonlight." He laughed, imagining his opponents being disgusted with that last image.

He looked and found he was only right about Harry. James rolled his eyes, whispering, "not gonna beat that."

"Oh," Tom said cockily, "I thought you didn't care about winning. Aiming for third place and all."

"Yeah, you're not making it easy for me," James said.

Harry bit his lip but still snorted into laughter. Tom blushed angrily.

"Now now, try not to chat in between answers. We've got to turn off the interpreter. Ok, number two or three, your answers?" the female host said.

Harry regained his composure, "still thinking."

They looked to James, putting him on the spot. "Okay uh, today was pretty good until I came here so..." A few people in the tiny crowds laughed, agreeing with him.

"Is that all?" the woman host said in an attempt to bite her tongue.

"My days are usually annoying, either completely dull or dramatic. So a perfect one would be walking around a new place, exploring, talking to people, eating, drinking new things. No incidents. Yeah, today without this circus," James answered as it came to mind.

Male host gritted his teeth, still smiling. "Okay technically number two, your answer."

"Honestly," Harry said, looking at Tom, then tried to turn his back on him and lower his voice. "Meeting a woman I know then and there that she's the one. Getting to know her all day."

Tom still heard of course. "Aaaw, that's sweet Harry," he said patronisingly.

"Oh shut it," Harry grunted.

They all waited for the computer voice to speak up again, "what's the best gift you've ever gave someone?"

"Oh tricky!" Tom blurted out. "Once I gave my crush of the time a bunch of her favourite flowers, tied in a ribbon saying *you're my star*. She worked in stellar cartography."

Harry knew who he meant and tried to hide his annoyance at that. "I can do better than flowers, anyone can. A girl, her favourite planet is Mars, and so I made a necklace with a natural stone from the surface not colonised. She cried."

"Number three," the male host said while looking impressed.

James had a raised eyebrow already before then, it went higher once he was asked. "I notice these *best gifts* are to women they wanted to bed. Not surprised but says it all." As he expected he got a couple of glares pointed at him.

"Jealous much, sad bastard," Tom grumbled.

James laughed, "but I don't like flowers or jewelry."

Tom spat feathers while Harry stuttered something no one made out.

"Number three please, some of this has accidentally been fed to our player. Answer please," the female host smirked.

"It's hard to answer it though. The person who gets the gift would know better than me if it were the *best*," James said hesitantly. Tom mouthed something similar while pulling an exaggerated face. "Fine, the best I've probably given was something they asked for."

The hosts glanced at one another, shrugging. "Hmm well fine, non answer but it'll have to do," the male host said.

The computer spoke up once more, "describe your ideal partner in one word."

Inside the booth the player grimaced and tapped the screen frantically. "Eew no, I pressed the one above that."

Outside, no one was any of the wiser. Tom nodded approvingly, "feisty."

Harry struggled to choose the best word, "uh smart."

Tom glanced in James' direction expectantly, hoping to see him struggle with this question too. James looked back with a bemused expression. "I dunno, one word. Um..."

"No stutters," Tom teased. "Let it out, share with us."

James shrugged indifferently. "Multi-layered."

Harry sniggered a little too loudly, "that's got to be cheating. It's two words hyphenated together, and has multiple meanings."

The two hosts weren't too sure, the universal translators hadn't a clue since James' answer was one word in their language and they were ok with it until Harry said something.

Tom nodded at them discreetly, "ah give him a break. He just likes his women modest and demure, covered head to toe so to not tempt him and break his..." He gestured to his straight face, "programming."

"I'm a robot again? You put your few insults on shuffle?" James muttered.

Tom narrowed his eyes back at him.

"Ok it's all in the player's hands," the male host said as the female headed for the booth to go inside. He pointed to an earpiece, "now we wait."

The woman entered to find Jessie looking around aimlessly, then she looked over her shoulder. "We don't just need a winner, we need them rated," the host reminded her.

"Yeah that sounds easy," Jessie said plainly. "Number one sounds like a creep, and a familiar one. He's third. Two is too sappy, still less cringey than one; second."

"Really?" the host said in surprise, then tapped her own earpiece. "Okay fair enough. Exit the booth on the other side, it'll take you downstairs to collect your tickets for your trip."

Outside the male host wandered over to the contestants, grinning broadly. "Third place is... Mr Tom." He fished out coupons from his pocket. "Congratulations, thanks for playing."

Tom seemed more than happy enough, pointing a smug grin in James' direction. "You're welcome bud." He hurried off the stage with his prize.

Harry was once more feeling a bit suspicious but neither was he surprised when the host walked to him next with a different coupon. James watched on looking a little uncomfortable. "Second place, Mr Harry. Enjoy your trip to our awesome park. Something there for everyone."

"Um okay, thanks," Harry said. He quickly hopped off the stage, leaving James to pull all manner of faces.

"Number three, you are our first winner. Please go into the booth and down to our understage to collect your tickets. Congratulations," the male host said.

James didn't look very impressed at all. He hesitantly headed for the booth. Unknown to him Tom was sneering like he'd won instead. "Oh, this is gonna be fun," he snickered as he walked to the volunteer tents.

"And our second round winner is..." the female host shouted enthusiastically. She turned to one of three new contestants. "Mr Chakotay, of course."

Sitting at the edge of the stage casually reading the book he brought, looked up surprised. "What? But I barely said anything." Like James before him, he was directed to the booth.

There he walked down some metal steps to be greeted by a happy squeal, then a girl grasping him tightly into a hug. "What's... happening?"

The male host stood nearby resisting a smile. "Now Emma, save it for the trip."

Nearby Jessie glanced at James beside her, folding his arms tightly and clearly tense. "I'm sorry," she said sincerely, "really, I just didn't want Tom or Craig on this trip. Plus I figured it might be you."

James laughed to her surprise, "Craig?" Jessie frowned, confused. "That was Harry."

"Oh," Jessie turned a little pink in the cheeks. "Still. If I'm going on a relaxing trip, you're still the far better option. Apparently the hotel has a lot to do, so hopefully you'll find something."

"It's fine," James said while shrugging. "We're on shoreleave anyway. Might be fun."

The pair cringed as Emma finally pulled away from the Commander, and his expression was more than a little worried. "Wait, I get not picking Foster but what was the matter with Lee? He literally answered one question with; *with a chainsaw*. You like them, right?" he stuttered.

Emma giggled, "yeah but I knew it was you, and you're a cutey putey."

Chakotay groaned, "and twice your age with a daughter your age." Emma shrugged and smiled, making him give up for the time being.

Round three and the crowd had grown from people in the streets wanting to witness the theatrics. Good thing too as Kathryn had volunteered holding two cups, one in each hand, clearly out of it.

Tani also joined her, dragging Morgan with her. "Just lose, you'll get free food you glutton," Tani teased.

Morgan stuck out her tongue, then huffed. "Yeah like James did. That worked well."

Tani's eyes glazed over, Morgan then knew why she volunteered for the game. At least she knew she wasn't at risk of winning. Then she noticed her friend scowling at her. "Another thing you two have in common. Are you zoning in on my man?" Tani asked harshly.

Morgan was torn, she was disgusted but was laughing helplessly. "Oh god. James'll be swimming the many miles from the hotel to get away from you."

"What?" Tani snapped.

"The hotel, apparently it's on a tiny island," Morgan explained, even showing her the leaflet.

"No! The getting away comment. Why do you make fun of me? You're supposed to be my friend and you never take my side, support me," Tani stuttered. Morgan's face fell, no longer finding it funny, and feeling uncomfortable. The crowd witnessing it wasn't helping. "Screw you, you choose the guy over your childhood friend, you can shove off!"

"Tani, stop making a scene," Morgan said, angering her further. The hosts and audience loved it though. "James is my friend too, and you harass him. I'm not choosing, I don't want to, that's not fair."

She got a huff and an abrupt look away which poked at Morgan's last nerve. "Fine!" she hissed. "If warning you that you're creeping out a guy who's been clear with his disinterest is taking sides, you're right, I'm on his side."

Kathryn's wide eyes looked over at the two. "Gosh, didn't know Craig was a fight over boy."

Morgan looked on in despair, "mum! It's not Craig!"

Tani smirked, "that's what you'll end up with, why fight it."

Morgan growled and pushed her nearly off her feet. "Stop it. He's my friend too."

"And I'm not, I get the hint," Tani sniped back.

"Now now," the female host intervened. "Save that for later girls, we have our first question on standby."

The voice spoke up before any more sparks were ignited, "what object would you swap for another?"

"Coffee," Kathryn answered.

The male host looked bemused, "uh yes and what would you swap it for?"

"More coffee," Kathryn replied.

Morgan covered her face with both hands. "Oh mum," she said, muffled by her hands. "You could've gotten rid of tea," she said a little clearer.

Kathryn giggled, "can I change my answer?"

By the last question the hosts were getting impatient. "There's no such thing as a coffee man!" the female one snapped.

"Pfft, you have no imagination," Kathryn scoffed.

Morgan had since sat down, hiding her embarrassed face with her arm propped up on her leg.

"My perfect man, hmm," Tani smiled knowingly.

"I wonder," Morgan clearly faked a curious tone.

Tani squinted and pursed her lips. "I wasn't gonna say James," she whispered, making Morgan roll her eyes. "He's won already, so it's not him in there. Gotta impress." Her voice raised she answered, "funny, thoughtful and inquisitive, which is the vibe I get from our player."

The hosts looked to Morgan, she shook her head. "Perfect man? Huh, who cares?"

"Really, that's been your answer everytime," the male host said irritably. The female host smiled tiredly as she went for the booth.

"Nuh uh, I said ew gross to the kiss question," Morgan smiled.

"That's my girl," Kathryn said proudly, then downed another glass. Everyone were confused as she had finished the two she brought on stage two questions ago.

"Okay, third place; Janeway!" the male host said. Morgan stood up, expectantly opening her hand. "Captain Janeway."

Morgan stammered, "oh yeah I guess."

Kathryn snatched the tickets while laughing high pitched. Moments later all that was left was a blur. It was no mystery to anyone in the park what she was gonna spend her free food and drink coupons on.

Morgan kept her hand out, even if she wasn't all that keen on the park ticket. The host though passed her to give it to a disappointed Tani. She stomped off in huff, all while glaring at Morgan.

"What, I'll swap you later if..." Morgan tried but stuttered. She got an entire hand flip off, her jaw clenched. "Suit yourself!" She went for the booth before she was told to, leaving the host speechless for a moment.

It wasn't a surprise that Morgan found Craig standing on his own in the understage. "Tani too clingy?" she wondered.

Craig nervously smiled, "what, did she only take part to follow James?" Morgan nodded, but he already knew the answer. James looked over with a relieved face.

For the final round of the game, B'Elanna was wondering why Tom insisted she take part. All she could think of was that he'd rigged it so they'd get a last minute break before the baby arrived. He'd already been up so he wasn't a volunteer. Still she hadn't seen him for a while, so she figured her theory was right and he'd slipped in to volunteer after all. So far she went with that assumption and answered in a way he'd expect.

Nothing to worry about anyway she thought since she was pitted against Annika and a crewmember called Sid, who kept asking things like if the theme park had a poor safety record. B'Elanna smiled, no one would pick either of them.

"Ok then. Lets see who our last winner is," the female host said, grinning. "Third place. Mr Sid!"

Sid pouted, "aaaw." He took his coupons anyway, "are there any restaurants where you catch your own lobster, or one of those that cook at your table with woks? Woosh!" he mimicked fire rising into his face.

The host blinked fearfully, "no. Please go."

"Oh ok," Sid huffed and walked off talking about diving for sharks. The host hoped her translator was glitching and quickly checked.

"I'll er announce first for the finale, end it on a high," she said awkwardly. The cheers she got settled her nerves a tad. "First is..." B'Elanna looked over with a smile. "Annika!"

"What the fu..." B'Elanna said, drowned out by the crowd's shouting and hoots. The Voyager crew were as shell shocked as she was. "Ok maybe the Doc is the player. Who else?"

Annika gleefully turned to go understage, expecting to be carted off to the promised museum already with a speech prepared on the padd she had hidden. She was more than a little put off to find Tom standing at the bottom of the stairs with open arms he dropped on seeing her, his skin turning literally white.

"You're not B'Elanna," he squeaked. The other winners sniggered behind him, he was too shocked to really worry about that.

"Well I am clearly the superior choice," Annika said while eyeing everyone with her usual judgement.

"But, she's not B'Elanna," Tom whimpered.

James' laughter brought him out of his shock and annoyed him greatly. "You mistook Annika for your own wife. What the hell did you ask?" Tom's eyes narrowed.

A few hours later the winners had gone home to pack, then meet at a harbour where an ocean vehicle which hovered slightly over the water waited.

Tom's face hadn't changed from earlier, not helped by B'Elanna insisting on seeing him off.

"Oh come on. It'll be a couple days of peace," she said.

"Peace? With James's whining, Jessie chiming in with venom, Annika's love herself speeches..." Tom complained.

"I meant for me," B'Elanna smiled.

Tom looked wounded, "you have no idea what this is. If you did you wouldn't be so cruel."

B'Elanna glanced across at the group briefly, her smile growing. "Oh I do and that's why I am. You played yourself, it's hilarious to me."

"What, but no you..." Tom stammered.

"Enjoy your karmatic holiday fly boy. Love you for some reason," B'Elanna cheekily said as she waved.

For once he was speechless and not for a short time. He said nothing the entire boat ride.

The hotel spanned the length and depth of the island, apart from a golden beach on its north west corner, and the one dock for the boat. The white brick building itself stood two floors tall, its second floor so much narrower than the ground. It looked nice enough but no one seemed eager to go inside.

Tom though stepped forward, apparently in a hurry so everyone followed. He entered a spacious reception area, aiming straight for the desk standing in between the two staircases leading up to the next floor, manned only by one person. Four others stood aside in a line in front of one of the staircases.

"Change of plans..." Tom said urgently but the others reached hearing distance quicker than he wanted. "Um, do you have another room spare?"

The man at the desk looked more than confused, a little unsettled. "Uh no Mr Paris. As we explained when you booked..." Tom tried to shush him, the others drilled holes into his back. "This is an exclusive couples retreat. There are few rooms, the appeal of the hotel is the many facilities we off..."

"Yes I get the point," Tom squeaked.

"You booked this? So that means you organised the game too?" Chakotay said dangerously.

Tom laughed, daring to turn around but still avoid eye contact by staring down. "I'm sure they're open minded enough to allow a few swapsies. Who'd like to share with me?"

He got glares, except for Emma who raised her hand. Jessie pulled it back down. "Don't, he won Annika. Let him suffer."

Annika huffed so loudly it echoed around the room. "Excuse me!"

"Ok so Emma sure, I'll take the sofa. Annika your turn, who do you want?" Tom stuttered.

"Oh no," Chakotay tutted toward him, "if you got B'Elanna you wouldn't be so eager to change anything. Jessie's right, reap what you sow. We all agree anyway."

"We don't," Annika complained.

Chakotay continued to ignore her. "This is what you wanted. Funny couples sharing rooms at a couples retreat. Can't get any funnier than you two."

James couldn't help but laugh, "you're not wrong."

"Oh yeah?" Tom flushed with rage, "so you're okay with sharing a bed with Jessie here?"

Despite what he said it was Morgan that widened her eyes in worry. "Wait, I want that room with the sofa." Craig looked down, determined not to show anyone his offense.

"They all have sofas, the rooms are identical," the receptionist said.

"Great. So that's the comic relief sorted. We'll sort the other rooms out between us, you better get checked in," Chakotay said with a look in his eye that dared Tom to argue with him. "Morgan, we'll share, I'll take the sofa."

Morgan sighed in relief, "really? Thanks dad." She noticed Craig staring at his feet, "what, it's not creepy."

"Hold on, that's not fair!" Tom stuttered.

Jessie smirked, "now you're getting it. Maybe you should give the unhappy couple their keys."

Tom shook his head but the receptionist sensed further trouble would erupt if he listened to him. He handed two identical keys with a number on its keyring to Tom and Annika. One of the other men collected their bags to carry them up the stairs. They had no choice but to follow them to one of the four doors above reception.

The rest gathered around in a near circle. "So, father and daughter. That leaves James, Jessie, Emma, and me," Craig said, trying not to sound disappointed.

"It's not difficult. The women in one room, men in the other," Chakotay said.

"But it's a couples retreat," Emma said. She winced as she was stared at with a mix of bemusement and shock, the latter from Craig and Jessie. "What, am I the only one weirded out about Morgan and her dad sharing a room at an icky love hotel?"

Jessie shook off her earlier expression, smiling nervously. "I don't think it matters as long as we treat it as a regular hotel."

"Exactly. I trust there are no other objections to this," Chakotay said.

"Well," Craig squeakily blurted out, cueing Chakotay's dark stare in his direction. "No no, not whining about not sharing with Morgan anymore. I just don't... don't want to share a bed with, well..." He heard James laugh and so he looked across with bright red cheeks, "don't say it. I'm not homophobic. It's you I don't want to sleep with, guy or not. Uh next to, sleep next to."

James shrugged while pretending to look offended. "I was going to let you pick what side you wanted, but not now."

Craig somehow managed to get redder.

"Oh grow up, both of you," Chakotay groaned.

Craig made so many different faces and noises as he inspected the bedroom. With only one king size bed, the flowers and bottle of something on the table beside it, he felt his cheeks burning once more. He circled the bed, sizing up the width. Quiet laughter tensed him up further.

"Look, I'd have taken the sofa no problem, but you're really putting a lot of thought into us sharing. I'm impressed you're this open minded," James said, managing to keep a straight face.

Craig gritted his teeth briefly. "Will you stop enjoying this so much."

"I can't," James couldn't help but snigger.

Craig once more clenched his teeth and pressed his lips together, then turned to face his roommate. "Don't pretend this doesn't bother you. You cover your insecurities with passive aggressive sarcasm. Don't think I haven't figured you out yet." To his relief any mirth left James' face. "Yeah, thought so."

"Really?" James scoffed. "Either you're terribly insecure and or in denial, so I should be the wary one here. Or, you think that I'm going to do something if we sleep within six feet of each other. Which I'll say, don't flatter yourself."

"Nuh uh," Craig stammered a bit before snapping back, "you're just upset cos I'm not Jessie."

To his annoyance James laughed at him again, "and I'm not the sixteen year old girl who's dad had to room with to get away from you."

"Hey that's..." Craig said, voice cracking.

James meekly shrugged, "don't throw stones when I have boulders handy." He turned to step into the other room.

"That's not the saying!" Craig shouted after him, immediately cringing as a better comeback popped into his head. The bottle nearby suddenly looked tempting so he grabbed it to take a swig of sickly sweet water. Only after he noticed the little dots floating around in it and the vases.

In the next room James had sat on the sofa, propping some little cushions on the right side. Once done he lay down to test it out.

Craig stomped through the room, aiming straight for the exit. "Take the bed, I'm spending the night at the bar."

"Thanks?" James said while sitting back up, but he was gone. A magazine on the coffee table got his attention. It took many pages to get to one sheet of paper written in English tucked near the back. All it listed were the hotel activities, which didn't take long to scan through. "Sounds like a good plan." He got up and left as well.

A beady pair of eyes watched a screen very closely in his dark, dank office. He seemed too absorbed in it to notice two people enter and stand behind him.

"Captain," a smoky voiced male said, barely getting his attention, no more than a slight head turn. "They're almost in range. Our window of opportunity is small..."

"How long?" the screen watcher asked icily.

The second person answered, "one hour."

"Then we'd best make it two trips. Charge the weapon, make sure the landing party is ready," the Captain ordered.

"Yes sir," both replied in unison and they hurried back out.

Voyager:

The bridge was very quiet with only Tuvok and a couple of crewmembers manning Tactical and the helm. Harry joined them holding a cotton candy, some of it sat above his lip making it look like he had a pink mustache. "Shift change, sir."

"You're five minutes early, Lieutenant," Tuvok reminded him.

"I am?" Harry sounded disappointed. "Oh well I'll finish this first," he said over the top of Tactical beeping. He couldn't help but have a peek since it was nearby.

"Commander, a small unidentified vessel is emerging from the surface of the smallest moon," the Tactical crewmember said. "They're coming straight for us, they're powering up something, could be a weapon."

Tuvok climbed out of the Captain's chair at the same time the viewscreen changed, showing the surface of a light purple-ish moon and a dot steadily increasing in size. "Hail them."

"No response," Tactical responded when the dot looked more like a large shuttlecraft. "Their energy level's increasing still. It doesn't match any weapon I've seen, and it's definitely not one of our host's ships."

"Contact their headquarters, tell them we've encountered an aggressive ship in their orbit. Are our shields up?" Tuvok questioned.

Tactical frowned, Harry noticed the reason why. He instinctively reached to help while the console complained excessively. "They're jamming us. I don't know if the message got through, and our shields aren't responding," Harry said.

"Red alert. Try a lower band frequency to get the shields up," Tuvok ordered.

Tactical hurriedly tapped at the console. Harry's eyes widened in panic, "they're firing."

A prolonged red beam shot out from the nose of the alien ship directly towards them, momentarily blinding them. Despite the direct hit the ship didn't even shudder.

"Huh? No damage," Harry said.

The Tactical officer smiled at him. "Good thing too. You have the most nubile hands I've ever seen. Strong, yet soft as they danced across the station." Harry smiled back while pretending to work on the station.

Tuvok heard the exchange but wasn't bothered at all by it, he made his way across to the helm. "Ensign, this isn't logical I know, but I couldn't help but notice your hair is not following Starfleet protocol."

"Oh?" the officer at the helm blushed, their hands jumped up to check. "I'm sure it is."

"No, it is too perfect," Tuvok said.

They laughed as their right hand lowered to gingerly stroke his arm, "oh, how long have you been practising that one?"

B'Elanna stepped out of the turbolift to head for Engineering. At the door she talked herself out of going through it. "No, day off." It lasted all of ten seconds, a personal best, and she strolled inside to her huge regret.

She'd seen some weird things on Voyager over the years, but nothing quite like what greeted her inside. Two crewmembers very cosily dancing to some soppy pop ballad. Another couple she knew hated each other whispering sweet nothings in the other's ears. Vorik proposing to Carey took the biscuit.

"Um... what the hell are you idiots doing?" was all B'Elanna could say. Nobody took any notice of her.

To make matters worse, Carey tearfully accepted the proposal and the pair embraced. "Wait, you're married already," she said as they pecked each other on the lips. They immediately started to discuss wedding plans. B'Elanna quickly turned away, only to catch the dancers settle down next to a picnic basket. She had to look away from that too when they started to feed each other. "Yes, cos that's the only thing wrong with this picture," she said while hurrying back outside.

"Torres to Bridge," she barked after tapping her commbadge. "Something's really wrong in Engineering. Is there something in the air or... I dunno. What's happening?"

Tuvok's voice responded and strangely nonchalantly too, *"nothing's happening. Everything's more than okay. While you're there though, can I get your advice?"*

"Uh, sure," B'Elanna said more out of curiosity than anything.

"Do you think my wife will agree that it's logical for me to have another mate while we're so far from home?"

B'Elanna's eyes bugged out and quickly tapped her commbadge again. "Oh god, it's everyone." She turned to run back the turbolift despite how uncomfortable her bump made it for her.

"And then they said, where's your partner, and wouldn't let me in," Emma complained as she dumped another spoonful of chips onto her plate. Morgan watched, a little annoyed since that left only scraps for her to have. "What kind of place doesn't let one person into an archery booth?"

Morgan snatched the spoon off her, just in time for a cook to walk over to restock some of the food. "It's a couples retreat, you ninny. You have to do everything in pairs, except the buffet thankfully."

Emma twisted up like she chewed a Leola root. Morgan assumed it was because of the mushy peas replacing the near empty beans tray. "Jessie chose the spa."

"So?" Morgan said.

A blank stare replaced the one of so much disgust, "that's saunas, steam rooms, Jacuzzi's."

"I thought they had English translations on everything, except the food they've replicated for us," Morgan said.

"What?" Emma laughed. It was Morgan's turn to stare blankly. "You're not joking. Okay. It's sitting in stuffy rooms, getting all sweaty and gross, then going in some farty tub of water that others have sat in. Though that one isn't as bad as I thought, until Seven or whatever she's called walked in and I had to go barf."

Morgan turned pale and had to put the spoon down, even contemplating abandoning her entire plate. "You had me at sweaty and gross, why?"

"Oh, if it makes you feel any better I saw Tom in his trunks on the way out of there," Emma said with a smile. Chakotay accidentally chose that moment to pass them so he couldn't help but stall, unsure whether he misheard. Or rather he hoped he did.

Morgan meanwhile put down her plate while shuddering. "Why would that make me feel better?"

"Well it helped me feel better," Emma said. Then she spotted Chakotay and her eyes lit up. "Oh Chakotay, do you want to go to the archery area with me?"

"Uh..." Chakotay hesitated, "surely Morgan would enjoy that more than me."

"Really?" Morgan stuttered in disbelief. She spun around to face him, "but you said I wasn't allowed near anything sharp and metallic for a week because of the wall incident."

Chakotay discreetly eyed the bar to the right of him, where Craig had fallen asleep with a bottle in hand. "Yes, on Voyager. Here, I'm not too fussed if you leave a hole in the wall."

Morgan's entire face lit up, "okay, thanks dad."

The girls left their plates behind and hurried for the exit, which made Chakotay breathe a sigh of relief.

While looking around for the best place to sit he spotted James sitting in the outside section of the restaurant, with his legs draped over the arms of another chair, a drink in hand, reading a PADD through sunglasses.

Chakotay laughed to himself as he walked across. "Despite making the most noise about staying here, you sure look at home. And yet Craig's already sob-rambled to the poor bartender and passed out after one drink. Did you boys have a falling out?"

James peered up over the rim of the glasses, a small tug of a smile on his lips. "I dunno why. It's not like I had a chance to warn him that I'm a cover hogger."

Chakotay smiled and sat down opposite him. "If not even a couples retreat can heal the small things, it's probably time to move on, you deserve better."

"Funny you say that," James said while putting his feet back on the ground, "since you set us up."

Chakotay's face fell, "yes, in all seriousness I'm sorry about that. This is a romantic place and I didn't want him getting any ideas. I figured you'd be secure enough to handle it."

"No I get it, mostly. You're protecting your daughter," James said, his eyes drifted back to the PADD. "I just wonder if you put him with a guy to punish him."

"Not at all," Chakotay answered honestly. "Emma's the same age as Morgan, so inappropriate. Moving in with Jessie would've been disastrous, and I don't know who she'd murder first, him or me."

James tried to stop himself from laughing by pressing both lips together. "And you watching him, while pairing your daughter with a girl her age or a woman she's friends with wasn't an option?" he asked, sounding confused but a little amused as well, so Chakotay didn't know if he should take it seriously. He hesitated, allowing James to continue, "I get it but she's what, sixteen? A bit old to be on daddy's leash."

That part he took seriously and he didn't like it, his face tensed. "Just wait until it's your kid." As he expected James responded with a slight eye narrowing, any smile he had wiped off his face. "Then *you'll* understand."

"Hmm, probably best that it's going to be a long, long wait," James muttered before taking a longer sip of his drink.

Minutes passed by, awkwardly in silence. Chakotay nibbled on his dinner, deep in thought. James had finished his drink and was about to get up to get another.

"Look," Chakotay said when he was halfway up, not realising it. "I chose you because I know you care too."

James looked at him in surprise, then sat back down. "Care, about what? Morgan?" He got a nod as his answer. "I hope you're not asking me to meddle, keep him away from her. If so, you should've said it outright."

"Nothing so," Chakotay said, then cringed, "extreme. If that's what I wanted, I'd have done it myself like you suggested."

"Then what?" James asked slowly, his eyes shifting from one side to another.

Chakotay inhaled sharply. "She doesn't know, she's innocent. She thinks she's his friend. But he's a guy with ulterior motives. You saw how disappointed he was when he was no longer rooming with her. Sobbing at the bar comes to mind."

James shifted uncomfortably in his seat until he ended up leaning against the table. "I don't think so. I tease him about it sometimes because I don't get that vibe off him. If I did... He is her friend genuinely like I am, I'm sure. He's just a little inexperienced, naive. He's pretty much a kid himself."

Chakotay also leaned on the table and lowered his voice to a whisper, "but I trust you with her. That's the difference."

"You're overreacting," James bluntly said, ruffling Chakotay's feathers. "Don't you know her at all? She's far more capable than you think."

Chakotay eyes cast down as he sighed, it seemed to James like he was upset by his comment. "I have noticed. That's why I'm here."

James frowned, "I don't understand."

"Yes you do," Chakotay said.

James shook his head and his eyes widened, "no, no I don't. Craig's my friend too, remember? If you want him followed, scared off, then separated while we're here, do it yourself. Don't expect Morgan to be a big fan of you afterwards."

"Fine, maybe you don't or pretending not to," Chakotay muttered to himself. James rolled his eyes and decided to return to reading. "I know you'd do this if the girl were Jessie, and in my opinion that's so much worse than a dad keeping his underage daughter away from a twenty year old while staying at a *love hotel*. One's being a protective dad, the other's possessive and creepy."

James' eyes quickly returned to staring directly at him, this time colder than usual. "No."

"No?" Chakotay pretended to sound surprised.

"No," James repeated in the same cold tone. "Don't compare something that hasn't happened. Unlike you, I don't treat the women in my life as helpless little girls." He grabbed the empty glass and got up to go refill it, leaving Chakotay looking more than a little insulted.

Voyager:

So far in B'Elanna's search for anyone acting normally, she'd witnessed five proposals, a grossly occupied turbolift, six badly placed candle lit meals, a guy singing his love poetry, and Neelix trying to seduce Samantha with his cooking. Thankfully the last one was the worst she'd seen or heard. B'Elanna figured an illness that'd cause all those things could lead to more than just two crewmembers making out in a turbolift, and that thought made her shudder.

Finally she arrived on the bridge, opting to ignore Harry and the Tactical crewmember play fighting while doing some sickening cutesy banter. Tuvok promising the helmsman that his Ponfarr should be due soon though was a little harder for her to.

She chose Opps as it was empty. There she noticed the alien ship sitting opposite them. "Shields?" She redirected Tactical control to Opps and quickly found they were never on, then spotted there was an

attempt to contact the planet, who were trying to respond. "Yes, this is Voyager. We're under attack by a ship that's er... incapacitated the crew."

Only static responded to her which she tried to clear up, but it cut off before she got anywhere. Frustrated she slammed her hand on the console. Intruder alert chose that time to annoy her further. "Of course."

She remembered most of the crew were vacationing on the planet and once more tried to open a commlink. "Voyager to Chakotay. We have an emergency here, can you hear me?"

This time she didn't get any kind of response but noticed why; the alien ship was generating a deflector field from its bow, and its strength and range was rapidly increasing. "Oh great."

"Perhaps we should put some music on to elevate the mood," Tuvok said.

B'Elanna groaned, "no please no." Sappy music started to blare. She tried to turn it down, each time it was undone until she lowered it only slightly, then it was left alone. "Computer, re-direct all essential systems to the Bridge and seal it and Engineering off with the highest level forcefield. Authorisation code Torres Omega Five Nine Three."

The computer beeped first in response, "Bridge and Engineering sealed. Re-routing all ship's systems require a command code authorisation."

"Worth a try," B'Elanna sighed in frustration. The sound of the forcefield springing up around the bridge was a small relief. "Computer, see if you can transport Commander Chakotay back to the ship."

"Unable to comply, targeting sensors cannot establish a lock," the computer responded.

"Of course," B'Elanna grumbled impatiently. "How many Voyager crewmembers are on board?"

"There are forty registered crewmembers on board Voyager," the computer replied.

B'Elanna looked a little confused, "an even forty. So, maybe there's someone else on board who isn't love sick. Computer, show me a schematic of the ship and display all crewmembers' locations. Scratch that, single out any that are alone."

The screen in front of her responded, showing a map of the ship with many coupled dots all over. They all vanished except for one in what appeared to be a turbolift. It didn't take her long to discover who the signal belonged to and it took all the strength she could muster to not smash Opps to bits. Instead she tapped her commbadge. "Torres to Collie. Sid, are you there?"

A man's disappointed and yet breathless voice responded, *"aaaw, it's way too early to fall off."*

B'Elanna double checked his location, she groaned but wasn't surprised to see he wasn't in an actual turbolift, only the shaft. "Can you save your absailing for later Sid. The rest of the crew are useless, it's just you and me."

"Sure that sounds dangerous," Sid's voice replied gleefully.

"Wait," B'Elanna flinched as a horrible thought jumped into her head. "If we meet, we might get infected. Ugh. Can you get to Sickbay and see if the Doctor is himself, and not with someone."

"Okay," Sid replied sadly.

"In the meantime," B'Elanna mused aloud, "computer, show me the sensor logs of the last half an hour. I want to see what the hell these morons did to us."

On her way back to her room Morgan found a little souvenir and essentials shop. In reception Craig spotted her through the glass doors, he decided to go over to her. "Hey," he said to get her attention, "forget something?"

"Yeah no," Morgan said, "dad did." She grabbed an item from the shelf to show him. "Forgot the thing he uses to cut the hair off his face. This'll do right?"

Craig laughed as he took it from her, "I wouldn't do it with a nail clipper. Might take a while."

"Oh," Morgan shrugged it off but took it anyway. "He needs one of those too."

"You know, I'm going to check out the pool; no one's tried it yet and I've worn out the bar so..." Craig said.

Morgan looked at him suspiciously for no reason he could see. "You don't look drunk."

"Their drinks are like water, but they hit hard and you crash quickly," Craig said reluctantly. "Thought cool water would wake me up. You want to come?"

"I can't. James dared me to beat him at the buffet," Morgan grinned.

Craig's face drained of colour and smiles, "James?"

Morgan didn't notice. "He's going down, hard," she laughed as she walked off.

"Yeah," Craig said to no one.

"Sir!" the smoky voiced alien bellowed on entering his Captain's office with a female alien.

The Captain side eyed him as he paced around the window, most of the view obscured by the moon. "It shouldn't take them long to be in range again. As soon as they do we'll deposit them on the bi-moon. We'll have plenty of time to secure the vessel and..."

"There's a problem," he was interrupted, and fearfully too. A stony glare was pointed at the man.

"Apparently the ship's second in command took off to the surface earlier today. Since their communications are blocked, he may get suspicious," the woman continued for him.

"You fools. How come we are only finding out about this now?" the Captain snapped. "Where is he?"

"It doesn't matter, we can't fire on the planet. We'll be discovered," the woman stammered.

The smoky voiced man managed to get his voice back but it was croaky, "he and five others went to the lovers respite hotel."

The Captain smiled deviously, "that seems appropriate."

Both of his crew looked very worried. "Sir, we can't..." the woman tried to warn him.

"She's right. We can't fire the beam through the atmosphere, it would dilute the effects. To get it through and in a concentrated area, we'd have to increase the yield," the man said.

"So?" the Captain said in a bored tone.

The woman winced, "increasing the yield means it will also fade quicker. Kinda like throwing a bucket of water over them instead of using a shower." The man stared at her bemused, she shrugged with little care about his opinion.

"How long would the effects last?" the Captain asked.

"Three hours roughly. We're still an hour away from range," the woman replied.

The Captain wasn't impressed, "that won't keep them occupied long enough. If they figure out what's happening in that hour, or the time after..."

"They'll be too confused or even disgusted to be a threat then, I assure you," the man chuckled a little nervously. He was stared down into a quivering mess once more.

Jessie joined James at the bar, already with two empty glasses in front of him which she eyed suspiciously. "This place isn't that bad is it?" she asked.

"I wouldn't know," he answered in between finishing the third. "You need someone to go with in everything here, but the restaurant obviously."

Jessie smirked, "don't tell me you've been parked here all day."

The barman walked over to drop off another glass. "Sorry that's the last one. It's the end of my shift, so it's self service for the rest of the night."

"That sounds like a really bad idea," Jessie cringed.

"Why? It's all included in the price. Well everything but the repair bill," the bar man said with a flourished wink. He gestured to the taps, she shook her head so he turned to leave while taking his work apron off.

"It's as if he knows you," Jessie teased in James' direction. He looked at her with a straight face which made her burst into laughter. "Oh I know, you don't need to be drunk to make a mess."

"Normally I'd have a comeback but..." James said, but instead went to dip his head to take a drink without picking it up.

Jessie took the opportunity to steal it away from him so he only drank air. She had a sip herself, and she didn't look impressed afterwards. "Seriously? You're pissed on apple juice?"

James managed a smile, "wait for it."

"What?" Jessie said, looking puzzled. Then as if she ate a pepper whole, the drink's after taste kicked her in the face. She tried to shake it off but couldn't. "Oh god, that's bloody awful."

James took back his drink while she was still shuddering. "I thought you weren't going to drink again," he said. Jessie didn't answer, she was too busy trying to air her mouth of the *fumes*, making some funny groans as she did. He smiled at it until a thought came to him, "I should go."

Jessie wobbled and grasped his closest arm to stop it. "Don't you dare."

"Don't worry, it'll wear off just as quick," James said, despite that he looked worried.

"Oh I get it," Jessie said, faking a scowl in his direction. "You think that after one sip of your drink I'll be all over you. I'm not that much of a lightweight, mister."

"Recent history's not on our side," James said, cringing slightly. The scowl turned legit, he smiled nervously. "Told you it's quick."

"Then what are you worrying about?" Jessie asked. James leaned his elbow on the bar and sat his chin in his palm. She waited for his answer but he said nothing, only swayed a little. Jessie sniggered at him. "Yeah it totally wears off."

"Huh?" James tried to look at her through his fingers so he didn't have to move. "It does, I'm just a bit..." he sighed.

"Drunk?" Jessie laughed while reaching around him for a menu. "I hope you remember mixers from your teenage bar days, cos that tap stuff... eugh."

James straightened up a little, "yeah yeah, there was one. Arseholes mixed with alcohol made a mean kicking out of the pub." Jessie looked at him with a raised eyebrow, bottom right lip curling. "What, didn't I say that right?"

A couple of raised voices approaching the restaurant got their brief attention. So loud they were that the pair recognised them before they even got to the door.

"Okay, you'll know this one. What do you get when you mix a meddling camera perv with a full of herself Borg Queen wannabe?" Jessie asked.

Annika arrived at the restaurant first, screeching behind her, "I'm better than you, so I should get the bed!"

Once she stomped off Tom walked in looking very flustered. "You sleep standing up. Use the shower." Annika gasped, swung around and slapped him.

"Hmm, a headache?" James replied to Jessie's question.

She playfully elbowed him, "no, entertainment."

A few minutes later Tom collected himself up from the floor, checking his sore red cheek. "Hey!" He pursued Annika as she chose a table. "That's not fair. I'd never hit you."

Annika smiled smugly, "I wouldn't recommend it either."

James and Jessie were so engrossed in this, they didn't notice Emma run over to the other side of the bar until she was right in front of them, raiding the fridge underneath the bar. "About time that bar guy clocked out," she mumbled to herself. Then she noticed the pair looking at her with her arms full of bottles. "Prick wouldn't serve me so too bad for him." Then she ran off to a table close to Annika and Tom so she could watch as well as cheer Tom on as if they were in a boxing match.

Jesse meanwhile grabbed one of the empty glasses James had left to fill it up via one of the taps close to her. "First to storm off, get it wrong and you chug this."

"That's easy, Annika," James laughed.

"Oh wait," Jessie sulked, "I was gonna pick her, so if she storms out what then?"

"We both don't drink," James said, shrugging his shoulders. "If you're sure about a drinking game, then..."

Jessie cringed to his confusion. "I'm sure. You weren't in the spa earlier. Besides, we didn't do anything embarrassing last time, did we?"

"No. Ok then. Take turns. You question, I'll bet. Then I ask and you bet," James said, instantly confusing himself. He thought it over and then confidentially nodded.

Jessie bit her lip firmly to stop from laughing at him. "Okay, I'd say that's fair enough but you're way ahead of me."

"First, I'll just..." James said while getting up to go around behind the bar.

"You know, I can still reach you over there," Jessie said.

James looked at her with wide eyes, "what?" Jessie once more tried to restrain herself from laughing. "No, in case Emma comes back."

Jessie let herself laugh to hide her own embarrassment. "Okay, so we'll have to wait for mine. We should write them down," she said, pushing over the PADD he left on the bar to tap on it. "Your turn."

"How long do you think it'll take Tom to take a shot at her name?" James said.

Jessie recoiled a bit, "oh toughie. Her new one or old?" He shrugged in response. "Two minutes max."

"Alright," James agreed. Jessie noted it down and turned on her stool to watch the rowing table.

Two minutes went by and Tom was strutting around on his toes, pushing his chest out. "Oh look at me, I'm Seven of Nine I'm better than everyone."

Annika nodded approvingly, "yes that's right."

Jessie groaned, "oh so unfair." She went to drink the glass she filled, but hesitated at the last second. "Wait, we haven't established how much."

"You kinda did, you said chug," James said.

"No way," Jessie complained, regretting filling the glass up so high. "Oh god, I'm gonna feel this in the morning."

"That's rich coming from Yawnika Hansen!" Tom meanwhile shouted in the background.

Jessie was a quarter way down the glass when she heard it, and she slammed her glass down impatiently. "Oh come on!" James hid his laughter behind his hand. It didn't work, she heard him so gave him a light shove in the arm.

Voyager:

"Excuse me, am I what?" the Doctor exclaimed in offense.

Kiara scowled at him while Naomi giggled down at her much smaller friend. "Doing gross stuff, you know. I'm not feeling well," Kiara snapped.

"Gross stuff? Do you mean medical treatments?" the Doctor said, patiently trying to smile.

"No!" Kiara stomped her feet.

Naomi decided to help her out, "she means smooching or being all lovey dovey."

The Doctor laughed at the two children. "Why would you assume that?"

"Cos everyone else is. I saw mummy sharing coffee icecream with some bloke," Kiara huffed. The Doctor raised his eyebrow in disbelief. Naomi nodding with an equally disturbed expression got him worried. "They were even sharing spoons. Gross."

"That's very strange," the Doctor said. "So you're saying the entire crew are falling in love with each other? Helplessly, without um... restraint?"

"Yep, saw mum eating Neelix's cake, willingly," Naomi shuddered.

Kiara gagged and turned pale. The Doctor looked on sympathetically. He knew why, but thought to scan them anyway just in case they were legitimately sick.

Sid ran into Sickbay and straight to the office. The Doctor spotted him and groaned impatiently. "No, for the last time, I don't do surgery on people for fun, especially not when they're conscious!"

"Maybe later, Doc," Sid said frantically. "I just wanted to see if you were infected and..." he spotted the two children and quickly side stepped many times. "Uhoh. Bad idea."

The Doctor glanced between them all. He put two and two together, "if what the girls have told me is accurate, this anomaly either isn't infectious anymore or it thankfully does not work on children."

"Or both," Kiara said helpfully.

The Doctor smiled and nodded. "I guess. So is that why you're here?" Sid glanced at him nervously. "And holograms."

Sid sighed in relief, "oh good. So do you know what it is?"

"I only just found out about it," the Doctor said irritably. He went to sit down at his desk so he could use his computer. "Who else is unaffected?"

"Lieutenant Torres contacted me about it. Everyone acting weird but us, alien attack," Sid replied. "I guess she didn't think of you kiddies."

The Doctor thought about it. "I wonder if it's because she's pregnant, so that still doesn't help us figure out what it is. Did any of you see anything weird before this started?"

"Mum was talking to the icky guy before, telling him off. Something about flat white not being real coffee," Kiara said.

"That's not really weird, at all. That's normal," the Doctor chided her gently. Still she looked mad at him.

Sid meanwhile had finished revising his day for anything odd. "No, the first turbolift I tried had Thompson and O'Hara inside, that's normal too."

"I told you! In the Mess Hall everyone started to like the person next to them," Kiara said in a whiny voice. "Ship turned red."

"Ah yes, red alert's on," Sid said in an attempt to be helpful.

"No dummy, from the window," Kiara said.

The Doctor stuck out his bottom lip and raised his eyebrows as if he were impressed. "Interesting. I think it's safe to say we can pair up without anything *gross* happening. Where's B'Elanna?"

"Bridge. Apparently there's aliens roaming around, their ship's hanging about," Sid replied. "Can't talk to anyone on the planet, or beam them back."

"Probably a good thing. If these people saw a mass of people boarding the ship, they may infect us again," the Doctor said.

"So what do we do?" Naomi pouted.

The Doctor focused on his computer, "I cure it of course. I need any sensor readings, environmental logs. Knowing how this was distributed can go a long way too. Perhaps we can coax a couple in here for a sample."

Kiara and Naomi both pulled faces. Sid didn't look that impressed either.

"Huh?" the Doctor said, his brow lines appeared. "Environmental systems aren't detecting a virus. It seemed the most likely. Perhaps Mr Sid, you could convince the nearest couple that there is something here that'll interest them."

"Well, there's beds," Sid said. Kiara looked confused, Naomi though was a little amused.

"Okay, maybe that's not the best idea," the Doctor muttered, glancing towards the kids. "I suppose I could look around for a pair and do a quick scan."

Kiara eyed him strangely, "aren't you forgetting about the bad guys? The door's not locked."

The Doctor tapped the computer quickly. They all heard the door click. "Perhaps you should update Lieutenant Torres. She may have an idea. I'll do what I can here."

The majority of the bottles Emma had brought to her tables were already empty. Still she got up to refill her stock. Or attempted to anyway as she walked straight into a chair and ended up on the floor.

Chakotay walked in and saw the aftermath. He looked around at everyone else, groaning. He wasn't surprised but still he was a little irritated, and so went over to the bar. "Where's Morgan and Craig?"

Jessie tried to sit straight as she looked around at him, but struggled and wobbled the stool so she had to grab the bar to stop from falling. "Craig, Craig... um, something about pool. I like pool, we should play."

She nudged James' arm which he had buried his head into, startling him into sitting bolt upright. "What, who died? I'm sorry."

Chakotay raised his eyebrow so high it actually hurt him. "Do you idiots not remember the last time you got drunk together?" He shook his head, "oh why do I care about that, it's your problem. Just tell me if you've seen Morgan."

"That's a good idea, we should do another song," Jessie giggled. "Was it Craig that was in it, you know the band?"

James frowned, "I think so, but we'd have to find Morgan first."

"Yes, Morgan," Chakotay snapped, "and you forming a band wasn't what I meant."

James leaned on the bar in front of him, staring with narrowed eyes. "You said; the last time," he said, pointing an accusing finger at the Commander, "we got drunk." Jessie looked at the Commander all smug.

Chakotay rolled his eyes, "fine, don't blame me when the next VTV Live's exclusive footage is Drunk Makeout Session Part 3."

"Wasn't it part 2?" James wondered, looking at Jessie. She shrugged which made her wobble again. "Oh Morgan, saw her at the buffet. She wanted to go to the pool." Jessie pouted, mouthing *the pool* and went to take another drink. "You know cos Craig wanted to, but I told her she'd sink after all that food."

Jessie spat out the little she did drink, laughing so hard. "Oh, you're so mean sometimes. Jerkface."

James seemed to take it as a compliment with the smile he had. "She went back to her room I think." It didn't last as he looked at Chakotay seriously, "you're welcome."

"Are you sure?" Chakotay grimaced and backed off a bit, the alcohol smell was getting too much.

"Sure as Annika wrongly thinking Tom's hitting on her," James said.

Jessie looked over her shoulder in time to see Annika slapping Tom over and over with her shoe, grunting, "perv, perv, perv!"

"Aaaaw man!" Jessie whined and downed the rest of her drink, which was a half full pint to Chakotay's dismay.

"Okay, just remember you drunkards have separate rooms," he said, heading well away from the pair.

"Why?" Jessie asked.

James shook his head, "maybe the bar's closing."

Jessie made a surprised oh sound of realisation, then smiled and nodded. He smiled back at her.

Chakotay meanwhile decided to tend to Emma as he noticed she was still on the floor. He attempted to lift her up, which made her giggle. "Oh no no, you're too young to be like this."

Emma paid far too much attention to one of the arm's holding her as he got her to her feet.

"Hwaaaaaugh," she grunted, eyes widening. Chakotay worried she was going to throw up or pass out. Instead her other hand went to stroke the same arm. "Nice."

"Okay!" Chakotay pulled his arm away, leaving her swaying unsteadily on her feet. "I'll get you a nice cup of coffee, hmm?"

No sooner had he turned to return to the bar, the entire room was flooded with a bright red light. At first everyone was confused.

"Huh, red alert here?" Tom said, glancing toward Annika. "Wow, I didn't realise how hot you look tonight, Ten."

Annika looked a little disappointed, "but my name was Seven of Nine, not Ten."

"That can't be right, you're a ten out of ten," Tom purred.

Thankfully elsewhere Chakotay had given up on getting Emma a coffee. Instead he had joined her at the table to finish the drinks, while she sat across his lap. "You're so... beautiful," he said.

"Uh huh," Emma said as if she were bored.

They quickly realised they were out of drinks so Chakotay had to get up. Emma pouted but didn't make any attempt to stop him, only followed him. They soon found themselves blocked by the two kissing over the bar, and in Jessie's case it was literally over as she had climbed up on top of it to get closer.

"I warned them," Chakotay smirked. He stepped forward, "excuse me." He got no response, so opted to trying to push James the slight out of the way he needed to get to the fridge. Only he got a push in return and ended up lying flat on the floor.

"Piss off," James stopped only to say. Jessie laughed and they continued.

Emma looked ready to blow, "hey, how dare you touch my cutey Chaky. I'll..." She looked around the bar for something sharp to use.

Chakotay got up and pulled her into his arms to stop her. And that it did.

Voyager:

Neelix grinned and pushed the spoonful of disgusting cake forward, "there you go schnookums. Yum yum."

Two aliens stood nearby looking a little queasy. "You know, just when you think this love spell weapon has reached its ick factor, something beats it," one said.

The other gagged so badly bile burned his throat. "Maybe you shoulda shot him first. Though it's nice you spared her from this."

The first alien looked confused toward him, then down at poor Samantha Wildman passed out on the floor with green cake squished all over her face. Neelix kept trying to feed her as if she were awake. "But I didn't shoot anyone yet."

"Oh," the second blinked.

Suddenly a figure jumped down from a table in front of them, startling the life out of them. One was grabbed and shook very roughly. "Get out of the way of the coffee machine. Coffee machine, out of way!" a very wide eyed Kathryn screamed at him, then shoved him to one side to run for the replicator.

There an unknown, very jittery crewmember yanked out a mug that was the exact same size of the replicator's panel, spilling most of its content. "Look my love, I've done it!"

Kathryn gasped as she joined him. "Oh my god," she drooled, "is that...?" The crewman nodded so quickly his head blurred. "The XXXX espresso. You dirty devil," she cackled.

"After you," the crewman smiled.

"No you," Kathryn smiled flirtily back.

The two aliens glanced at one another fearfully. "Why haven't we shot anyone yet?" the second one asked.

"Beats the hell out of me," the first one stuttered as Kathryn and the crewman dunked their heads in the giant cup. They didn't get to enjoy it for very long, the aliens fired brief phaser type blasts toward them, knocking them and their beloved drink to the ground.

Neelix laughed, "open up for the love express my sweet," he steered further cake into Samantha's face. Seconds later he was down too.

"We'll take these to the transport area, then I'm going to have a break. A long one," the second alien said. The first nodded.

The Bridge:

"Hmm?"

B'Elanna clenched her hands, almost clawing opps in the process. "Would you stop doing that?" she growled.

On the viewscreen, the Doctor sat facing her but staring a little ways off to the left, completely unaware of her mood. "That's interesting."

B'Elanna was ready to explode at him. Fortunately for him Kiara's face popped up from the right, taking up the majority of the screen. The Doctor looked frustrated behind her. Both sights gave B'Elanna a little laugh.

"Kiara please, I'm trying to work," the Doctor scolded her.

"Looks like skiving to me. Squiggly lines on one side," Kiara said, pointing to the left.

B'Elanna's laughter died down to a small smirk, "are you going to tell me what you're humming and interesting about?"

"Excuse me?" the Doctor said while reaching forward. Kiara complained as she was gently placed off screen. "Oh," he said with realisation, "the sensor readings you sent me from the time of the alien's attack." B'Elanna's eyebrows raised expectantly, her impatience returning. "The amass of energy it fired at us, it wasn't a weapon. At least not in a conventional sense."

B'Elanna growl sighed, "yeah, no kidding. I didn't know Tuvok could sing, let alone want to sing about how Ensign Gregory is the wind beneath his wings."

"Uh..." the Doctor said, his eye finally went in her general direction. Only then he noticed B'Elanna wasn't alone. She shared the bridge with four unconscious figures, and from what he could tell one had a bruised eye. "Was that necessary?" he scolded.

"Yes. They'll thank me later," B'Elanna said while her own eye twitched. "What have you found out besides the obvious?"

"Well erm, the energy field directed at the ship worked as some sort of hormone booster, in laymen's terms," the Doctor replied.

B'Elanna still wasn't impressed, "are you calling me a laymen?"

The Doctor looked very nervous, "no uh, that was for Mr Sid's benefit. The beam tricks the brain into increasing pheromones, and..."

"Oh," Sid's voice interrupted to B'Elanna's increasing impatience, "so everyone becomes super attractive, right?"

"Wrong, or I'd have been propositioned twice after I knocked out Harry's girlfriend and Tuvok," B'Elanna said.

The Doctor frowned, "I'd need to delve a little deeper to find out why it only affected pairs. I suppose we should be thankful for that."

"Yes, thankful, until we circle around and end up back in their firing range again," B'Elanna grumbled to the Doctor's confusion.

She sighed impatiently, "they didn't follow us. Look." She keyed in commands at opps, the viewscreen changed to show an astrometric image of the planet and its two moons. The Starfleet symbol representing Voyager followed a circular line around the planet, until it reached the two side by side moons. Then another symbol appeared in between them and pursued.

"Hmm," the Doctor's voice was heard in the background, making her grind her teeth again.

The new symbol fired a red line at Voyager briefly, all the while Voyager's symbol kept following the line. The other symbol retreated back between the moons before disappearing again. B'Elanna froze the image when Voyager had done a quarter of an orbit since leaving the moons. The Doctor returned to the screen.

"They're waiting for us, I assume to fire again and commandeer the bridge when we're distracted," B'Elanna said.

Kiara once again climbed in the way. "But everyone on the bridge you smacked out."

B'Elanna smiled a little proudly, "still think it was unnecessary?"

"Hmph," the Doctor grunted. "It still would infect you in theory, you'd fall for whoever is closest whether they're conscious or not. You explain why these aliens were able to take our people without any resistance."

B'Elanna glanced at Tactical, then at the helm in disgust. She shrugged it off, "I've slowed our orbit as much as safely possible. That still doesn't give us much time. We need a plan before then."

"Shoot them?" Kiara suggested before she was collected off the desk again, "aaaw!"

"I'm in favour," B'Elanna smiled approvingly.

The Doctor looked shocked, "no, no. Not only is that an absolute last resort, they fired their beam in a two minute window. Our weapons would need more than that to weaken their shields. Plus, we don't know where they took our crew. They're just gone."

"Here's a totally *radical* idea. Why don't we not fly by them again. Leave orbit," Sid suggested.

"Normally I'd have done that but until we're in range of the moons we're safe. We know they're there, so why hide instead of following us?" B'Elanna said. The Doctor looked puzzled. "Yeah exactly. They're not hiding from us, they're hiding from our hosts. We don't know if they'll be still invisible to them if we leave orbit. Best stay put and pretend we're all under their spell until we have a plan."

"Are you sure about that?" the Doctor asked to her concern. "Sensors showed that they've fired on the surface at a much higher yield as well."

"What?" B'Elanna snapped, "where, and why didn't you mention it before?"

"Because it happened only moments ago. I'm checking now," the Doctor answered irritably. B'Elanna didn't have time to give him lip for snapping back at her, he quickly turned very nervous. "They fired at the hotel Commander Chakotay and the others are staying. It's on a remote island in the middle of pretty much nowhere, I don't doubt that was their intended target."

B'Elanna looked on in shock, "but why? It's not like we called them for help, or that they can."

"Well not anymore they can't. We're on our own," the Doctor sighed.

Having walked around the empty hotel a second time, Craig was more than bored and sick of the place. He didn't want to go back to his room, he didn't know what to expect if he got there. Worst case scenario he thought he'd have to tiptoe around James sleeping on the sofa. Still despite feeling exhausted he decided to return to the bar to kill another hour.

When he stepped inside the first thing he spotted was Emma passed out on the table, so didn't think anything of it. It was seeing Annika and Tom linking arms to share their wine glasses while staring lovingly at one another that wiggled the poor guy out. Craig hurried back outside trying desperately to keep his dinner down.

"What the hell... my god," he stammered.

Then he spotted Chakotay sitting on one of the staircases, completely engrossed in writing something the old fashioned way. A little relieved that someone was sober, Craig hurried over to talk to him. "Commander, I wouldn't go in there, it's horrible."

Chakotay looked up at him startled, "ohno. Has something happened to my sweet Emma?"

Craig stared at him blankly, wondering if both his eyes and ears needed washing out. "Um, say again?"

Chakotay didn't, he darted off the stairs to run back into the restaurant, leaving his piece of paper floating towards Craig's feet. He knelt down to take a look, something he quickly regretted. It was scrunched up and over his shoulder.

Suddenly he wasn't so eager for a drink anymore.

Frantic knocking got Morgan hurrying from her bedroom wearing her pyjamas and her loose hair frazzled and sticking out all over. She growled at the door, "dad, did you lose your key?" then she opened it to see Craig still looking very pale. "Craig, it's like two am. What are you doing?"

"Something scary is going on," Craig tried to say normally but what he'd seen had raised the pitch in his voice.

"What? Is that why my dad's not back?" Morgan said, looking worried.

Craig pulled a chewed lemon face before answering, "you could say that. He went to tend to Emma."

"Emma? Huh, what's so scary about that?" Morgan asked.

"That's not the worst part. Seven and Tom were being all, coupley," Craig replied all while trying to repress a gag.

Morgan burst into disbelieving laughter. "That's not funny Craig, and definitely not worth waking me up for. Night."

She was about to close the door in his face when he continued, "he was writing a love parable. Not Tom, Chakotay. Something about forbidden love and her zest fueling his youth. Ugh."

"Are you finished?" Morgan said while shrivelling up her nose.

Craig barely squeaked in response. Morgan pushed by him. He panicked and ran after her. "No no, I wouldn't!"

Morgan swirled around halfway down the stairs, "what, why? Cos you're making it up?"

"I'm not," Craig said quietly. "Annika and Tom were acting smitten, your dad and Emma. It's like the Matchmade couples are hooking up for real."

Morgan looked disgusted as she backed down a few steps. Craig had a good idea why, and after what he saw he didn't take it personally. "So, James and Jessie too?" she asked.

Craig's eyes fluttered a little wider, "oh. I dunno. I didn't see them. Maybe I'm wrong, we won and we're okay." He gritted his teeth with his lips parted and looked to one side.

"What?" Morgan said. "Why the weird face?"

"James has been drinking all day. Dunno about Jessie. But you know how they get normally," Craig replied.

"But we're not doing anything, only talking," Morgan said.

Craig quickly shook his head, "I'm telling you. It's happening. The game paired them up, it's no coincidence."

"Right?" Morgan forced a laugh. "Tom set us up, and you think he's done something to make us act weird. Problem is, he's one of them and with Seven for god's sake. It's not him, it makes no sense."

She ran off down the rest of the stairs before he could argue. He followed, however by the time he caught up to her she was already with her back to the restaurant door looking extremely white.

"Why?" she whimpered.

"Maybe it's the booze. It's pretty strong stuff," Craig suggested meekly, "or something in the air?"

Morgan started to stammer half words, all while grimacing. "Yeah," she said finally, "I'm going back to my room. You go to yours."

"Good plan," Craig stuttered as well as she walked back up the stairs. "Dunno how you're going to sleep after seeing that."

He hurried up as well until he got to his door and opened it an inch. That was when he remembered his roommate and that he hadn't seen him in a while. He shuddered, all while frozen on the spot with his hand on the handle. He'd already opened it and couldn't hear anything, so after ten minutes he coaxed himself inside a thankfully empty room.

He still wasn't brave enough to go into the bedroom for many reasons, even though the door was wide open and he was definitely alone. Craig spent the rest of the night lying on the sofa with his eyes wide open.

A few hotel staff members walked into the restaurant not expecting half of their guests snoozing at the tables. They each shared a tired look before going over to Chakotay. One gently shook him awake.

"Commander, sir?"

"Ugh," was all he got at first. Chakotay lifted his heavy head from the table, his groggy eyes pointed at the staff. "Huh, it's morning already? What..."

"Yes sir. Are you okay?" staff member one asked. They made a little gesture to the bottles on the table, "our alcohol is very potent, it can be quite a shock."

Chakotay frowned at the table before him. "I don't remember drinking anything, and I don't feel hungover. What happened?" He noticed the staff getting more confused and worried, so he tried to give them a friendly smile. "I'm fine. Thanks."

"Good sir. You have visitors. They were waiting outside when we arrived for our shifts," staff member two said.

"We do?" Chakotay was again confused. "Maybe give us a minute."

"Of course. They're waiting in the lobby," staff member two said. The pair wandered off to start cleaning the bar area.

Chakotay stumbled over to Tom and Annika stirring from their uncomfortable nap positions; Annika lying sideways on a chair, with her arms and legs slouched and nearly touching the floor. Tom sitting with his back against the same chair, head and shoulders drooped over his knees.

"You two as well?" Chakotay said to them once at least Annika was awake. "You have any idea what happened?"

"No," Tom yawned. "The last I remember was..." his hand wandered to his chest. Cheeks went red as he turned away to discreetly take a couple of small cushions from under his shirt. Not discreet enough as Annika glared at him.

"I doubt you were drunk enough to forget the night," Chakotay said.

"Of course not!" Annika snapped.

Chakotay chuckled, "not you. I'd believe that."

Annika stared blankly as if confused. "Then why did we lose consciousness? I don't recall seeing anyone doing so," she said.

"Me neither, so it must have been at the same time," Chakotay said. He first looked over to the table he woke up at, spotting Emma immediately lying underneath the table with a bottle in her hand. Then

his attention drifted to the bar as the two workers split up, one to straighten the stools and the other began washing glasses behind the counter. "Excuse me. Is there anyone sleeping back there?"

The two staff shook their heads, but the one behind the bar looked down anyway.

"What?" Tom said groggily.

"Jessie, James. I remember them being at the bar before this, so where are they?" Chakotay asked.

Tom snorted into laughter, cueing glares from both sides. "What? You know how they get when they've had a few."

"Seriously Tom, get better hobbies. You sound like a creep," Chakotay muttered.

Annika rolled her eyes, "merely sounds like?"

"Of course, what was I thinking?" Chakotay said. "I'd better find out why we have guests. Maybe it'll have something to do with what happened."

Meanwhile in the next room, Morgan peered over the balcony towards reception, wary of the people waiting around. Craig sat nearby, struggling to keep his eyes open.

"What's going on?" she asked on her way down the stairs.

"They wanna see Chakotay. I tried to warn the staff not to go in there," Craig answered in between two big yawns.

There was no time for her to question further, Chakotay stepped out, immediately followed by Annika and then Tom. Both Craig and Morgan looked a little relieved after expecting the worst.

The visitors met the trio in the middle, one stepped forward to greet them. "Commander Chakotay, I apologise for troubling you so early."

"Chancellor Valk, what brings you here?" Chakotay sounded surprised.

"Voyager attempted to contact us five hours ago, but the message was garbled and we have not been able to reach them since," the leader said. "Our scans showed nothing out of the ordinary, at least at first."

"At first?" Tom said.

Chakotay raised his hand to in front of his shoulder, Tom took it as a shut up. "Hold on. Five hours ago, maybe that was the same time we all lost consciousness. It could be related."

The chancellor's face filled with concern. "All of you? Should we call for medics...?"

"No," Morgan interrupted. Chakotay and Tom glanced toward her curiously, while Annika did so with scorn. "You weren't unconscious. Definitely, *definitely* not."

Craig rapidly nodded, his eyes wide.

"Morgan?" Chakotay said.

Morgan could barely look him in the eye, she even turned her head away towards the visitors. "Not all us were infected, no."

"I see," the chancellor said, he glanced over his shoulder to his officers.

One holding a much larger version of PADD close to the size of an A4 sheet of paper and almost as thin, whispered something in his ear. "We've heard of this before," the chancellor said.

"You... have?" Tom said, his eyes darting side to side.

"A few of our vessels have been reported stolen, crews claiming to have no memories of it other than waking up in strange places; moons, abandoned freighters," the chancellor said. "All except one crewmember who claimed some strange going's on until the pirates restrained him and dumped him with his crew."

"Space pirates?" Tom said a little too eagerly

Chakotay shook his head, "we need to return to Voyager at once."

"If the pirates purpose was to hijack Voyager, why is it still in orbit and why knock us unconscious?" Annika questioned. She noticed Morgan clench her jaw and shake her head.

"And how come there's no sign of another ship?" Tom wondered.

"According to the only one unaffected last time, they came out of nowhere then too and jammed all communications and sensors. We've had communications problems with our satellites all through the evening that we can't explain," the officer with the PADD said.

Chakotay exhaled sharply, "I guess we'll find out. Chancellor, do you have any transport we can use?"

"It can be arranged, yes, but they aren't military. They'll only get you there," the chancellor answered. "Are you sure you don't want any medics to check on you first?"

"Perhaps for Emma, and..." Chakotay said, glancing back towards the restaurant and bar. "We still don't know where two of our people are, but probably them too."

The chancellor nodded, "I'll call somebody in as well as a transport ship. Won't be long. Excuse us." He lead his officers to the entrance.

Morgan waited for them to go before scoffing, "strange goings on? That's putting it mildly."

Chakotay walked over to her, a little annoyed that she was avoiding eye contact. "What does that mean, Morgan? What happened?"

"Well you didn't just pass out," Morgan said reluctantly.

Tom folded his arms, "then what?"

Craig laughed awkwardly, once again turning a very pale shade. "It's probably best they don't know."

"Oh I don't know. Tom might be worth telling, payback you know," Morgan whispered to him. She finally turned to face the others, "since you're back to normal, we should look for James and Jess. Did any of you guys see them before you *passed out*."

Chakotay narrowed her eyes at her tone. "They were with us. You weren't, so that's probably why you weren't infected by whatever it was. Since we're stuck here until our transport arrives, perhaps we can discuss it."

"Priorities Commander, missing people. I'll look for them," Tom said with a slight smirk. "Did anyone check the bedrooms?"

Morgan shuddered and walked off, Craig meanwhile cleared his throat awkwardly. The others had no context for their reaction. Since Craig was left on his own he had to say something, "well yeah, I had my room to myself. Morgan did too."

Chakotay sighed, "it's a start. Tom check your room, I'll check Jessie and Emma's. Morgan, you take the left side of the building, Craig the right. Shouldn't take long, all the activity rooms are locked so." Annika stared at him, hinting for something. "Oh, you stay behind in case the chancellor returns before we do."

Tom and Chakotay headed up the stairs, Craig and Morgan both went in the same direction, confused as to which right he meant, his or theirs. Morgan stopped and let him go. She had to go by Annika to get to the other side.

"Why are you being so coy? What did you do?" Annika hissed.

"Ugh. You should be asking what you did, Bore-ika," Morgan groaned. Annika stared at her intensely. Morgan matched it with a devilish smirk. "I can't wait to tell a very pregnant B'Elanna what you did with her husband. Should be good fun."

"I beg your pardon!" Annika snapped.

Chakotay and Tom got to the first floor when one of the bedroom doors opened. They stopped and watched Jessie stumble out mid yawn. She spotted them, looked a little subconscious and backed a few steps into James.

Tom whistled, "oh, so what's this then?"

Morgan and Annika overheard and glanced upwards. Chakotay shook his head, he gestured his arm in front of him, nudging him slightly back. Tom got the hint and walked part the way back down the stairs.

"Are you alright?" Chakotay asked.

Jessie reluctantly stepped out and made her way to the banister to lean on it. "I think so, my head's a bit fuzzy." Despite that she rubbed her arm, "god, must have slept all night on this."

Tom snickered, "yeah and which side of the bed did you two sleep all night on?"

James stepped out next, all while staring at the helmsman blankly. "I didn't even reach a bed, I woke up on the floor."

"I don't even remember going to my room, let alone the sofa," Jessie mumbled to herself, she turned to look at James with a frown. "Was it my room or yours, and why... are we so used to sharing that one of us just followed the other?"

Morgan winced, Annika was the only one to notice. Tom quietly snickered to himself.

"So it's not just us with memory problems," Chakotay said, he didn't sound surprised. "Seems like something happened and then we passed out where we stood or sat. It infected the restaurant only it seems. And now..."

The chancellor returned with a different officer carrying an oval shaped suitcase. "Yes, she's through there," the former said, pointing to the restaurant. The new arrival hurried by everyone to get there. "Your transport is ready. Do you wish to go now or wait to see if your people here are okay?"

"Sounds like we'll need all the help we can get. We'll wait," Chakotay replied.

"Why?" Morgan frowned, "you guys are better, so why wouldn't the crew be?"

"True, they might be handling it as we speak," Tom said cheerfully.

Voyager:

"Oh, I've got an idea. Why don't we wander around the ship pretending to be in love. The aliens will jump out and try to kidnap us, but we'd be ready for them," Sid said eagerly.

B'Elanna stared up at him with killer eyes, completely forgetting that he'd probably look forward to the aftermath. "There's only a few people left on board, but sure, go get yourself shot or knocked out. That'll..."

"Okay!" Sid grinned before disappearing from the screen. The Doctor grabbed his arm to stop him.

"The intruders are spread out throughout the ship, they outnumber us ten to one. I'd advise against anything rash," the Doctor said.

B'Elanna grimaced as she sat back in the helm chair. "Thirty of us are missing. We can't call for help or transport anyone from the planet on board, and yet they're able to kidnap the love sick without even moving from their hiding place."

"Are you alright, Lieutenant?" the Doctor frowned.

"It's nothing," B'Elanna said, waving his concern away despite still cringing. "We need to find out how they're doing that. They didn't raise the deflection field until after they boarded, so it affects their transporters as well."

"This is the third time you've seemed in pain. Perhaps I should come up," the Doctor said.

B'Elanna sighed impatiently. "I'm fine! This field scrambled our shields, I don't see why it wouldn't do the same to theirs. We might have time to disable them after all."

"You said that an hour ago," the Doctor mumbled.

"Don't interrupt me!" B'Elanna suddenly roared at him, taking him aback so much he nearly fell off his chair. She groaned roughly while swinging her chair to turn her back on him. Once she was safely out of his sight she scrunched up her face and quietly tried to take deep breaths.

The Doctor climbed out his seat. "I've seen enough. Sid, lock the door after I leave. I'm going to the bridge to assist Lieutenant Torres as she's clearly in labour."

"What, no. I'm fine!" B'Elanna barked. She struggled to turn her chair back around, accidentally kicking a stirring Tuvok in the face in the process. He was back unconscious without her any of the wiser. It was too late for her though, the Doctor had long gone.

Sid peered back on the screen, "hey maybe I should get a sex change. Girls have all the fun."

Inside the shuttle bay a forcefield sprung up around a brand new gaping hole in the bay doors. An alien freighter squeezed in between the Flyer and another shuttle, barely.

The hotel group headed for the exit, only for Chakotay to stop them. "Wait. We need to split up."

"Yeah so we can get picked off slower, good plan," James said.

Chakotay's eyebrow twitched violently. "Jessie and I'll check out the bridge. Tom..." He then noticed Tom wasn't with them. He looked around the group and quickly spotted him trying to wipe down a scuff mark on the Flyer. "For the love of..."

"We'll go to Engineering," Morgan said in Craig's direction. She hurried off before Chakotay could argue.

Craig didn't and was stared blankly at, unnerving him. "Uh, she's alone so erm..." he stammered.

"Fine," Chakotay groaned. Craig ran off before he could change his mind. "James, Emma, you two go to the nearest weapons locker and have a look for our pirates. If they're still here."

"Really?" everyone left said almost at the same time, Emma in a gleeful tone while the others were shocked and a little worried.

Chakotay shrugged off any cares he had left. "Well I was going to team up Craig with James, since Security you know, but what does it matter? She's probably more competent anyway."

James glanced at Emma with a concerned look on his face, she gave him a grin that was almost innocent if it wasn't for the glint in her eye that said opposite. "They don't have knives, why am I worried?" he said, walking out.

"Because you're a big baby?" Emma answered sweetly, then ran after him.

"That leaves Annika and Tom," Chakotay said. Annika looked at him expectantly. "Lets go Jessie." He turned to leave too, making the ex-drone's face fall. Jessie shrugged and followed.

"Oh god, it's not coming off!" Tom cried.

Annika huffed and folded her arms. "What do I have to do to get some respect around here?" she muttered. The doors opened again, so she turned to give whoever it was a piece of her mind only to get a phaser blast to the chest.

Tom jumped and swung around, his arms stretched out as if to protect the Flyer from harm. Two aliens brandished weapons at him but didn't fire as they assumed he was surrendering.

"Come with us!" one barked.

"Uh," Tom hesitated as he looked around for his team. Then he spotted Annika on the ground. "Oh."

James and Emma headed down Deck Two holding rifles. They noticed the Mess Hall doors slightly ajar. Emma quickened her pace so she could get ahead of him, he took a hold of her arm to stop her until he was back by her side.

"Hey, that hurt you prick," she complained.

"We don't know what we're up against. You shouldn't run..." James said in a hushed tone. Emma kicked him in the ankle while he was talking. He stalled and shook his head, "ahead, don't run ahead or off on your own. You could get hurt, got it?"

"Fine," Emma rolled her eyes.

James continued walking, Emma hung back this time before following. To her great annoyance he stopped again to look over his shoulder at her, or more accurately her phaser rifle pointed at his back. "Can you not..."

"Oh god, make your mind up!" Emma snapped, stomping around him and ahead again.

They heard voices and approaching footsteps. James grumbled something incoherently, apart from one swear word, as he turned to point the rifle in the direction they'd come in. "Get in there, slowly, and hide," he said clearly.

Emma hurried through the ajar door while he slowly backed toward it. Once inside he turned around and quickened his pace to get to the kitchen. He was a little put off when he didn't see Emma anywhere. "Where are you?" he whispered as loudly as possible.

Emma peeked her head out from under one of the tables, staring at him as if he were stupid. "I'm not going in there." She ducked back.

The footsteps were so much closer. James crouched down so the galley would hide him, then went to find a good spot to rest and point the rifle toward the door they came from. That was when he spotted the multitude of really gross looking cakes lined on top of the counter. To get a good shot he'd have to shoot straight through a green and pink looking monstrosity. He imagined the blowback from something like that, shuddered, and instead opted to carefully slide it out of his way with the rifle.

"What's that?" an alien asked.

Emma winced, she tried to find a way to aim her own rifle whilst lying on the floor.

"It looks like a torture chamber... with tables. Who are these people?" another alien said, eyeing the cakes. A phaser blast rang out causing one of them to explode. Disgusting shrapnel was sent flying into the man's face, making him scream hysterically.

James had quickly tried to avoid the same fate by tossing himself down to the floor, but still ended up with pieces of leola root mulch and smelly sponge cake over his back and in his hair.

The first alien swung around to aim at the source of the phaser fire, the table Emma hid under. She shuffled on her belly to change her aim. James got back up to his feet, but kept slightly crouched as before, and fired into the alien's back. He scanned around for any others, but all that was left was the poor alien writhing around in agony on the floor, clutching his face.

"It burns, help," he whimpered.

Emma giggled while James walked out from the kitchen, aiming the rifle at the guy but looking a little sorry for him. He was starting to feel his own back and head warm up a little, so he did a little shake to get the so called cake pieces off him.

"Should I shoot him?" Emma asked, suddenly by James' side.

She wasn't going to wait for an answer, she aimed. He grabbed her rifle and forced it to point down at the ground. "No, wait. He might be able to answer a few things."

"Mummy," the guy cried.

James pulled a face while Emma smirked. "Then again," he said warily.

Deck One:

Chakotay and Jessie gingerly exited the turbolift a short walk away from the Ready Room door. A forcefield blocked their path, although Chakotay wasn't worried. He stopped at a panel to work on it. Screams froze them both for a moment.

"Oh god, we'd better hurry," Jessie stuttered.

Chakotay quickened his tapping. It didn't take long for the forcefield to go down. They hurried through into the empty Ready Room, where they were greeted by further screams. The pair rushed to the door to the bridge, and stood on both sides.

"Ready?" Chakotay said while readying a phaser.

Jessie did the same, "yeah sure."

They charged into the bridge pointing their phasers, only to find B'Elanna lying on the floor with the Doctor by her side. She turned her head in their direction and screamed, "get out!"

Both scampered back into the Ready Room with their eyes wide.

"Was that?" Jessie stammered.

Chakotay's voice raised several pitches, "uh huh. What now?"

Jessie laughed nervously, "you're asking me?"

The two aliens dragged Tom into the Cargo Bay where he was immediately cuffed by a guard. He looked over to the many Voyager crewmembers in the same predicament, lying unconscious or sitting uncomfortably on the floor.

They forced him to sit down with the others, then turned to leave him and the others alone with the lone guard.

Morgan and Craig strolled into an empty Engineering. Craig stopped by the door while Morgan ran over to one of the consoles.

After having a nosey around the consoles she glanced back at him, "there's only a few people left on board, and I'm picking up a weird dampening field on deck ten."

"I don't get it. I thought they steal ships by firing some sort of love beam at them," Craig said as he walked over to her.

"No I don't get it either," Morgan mumbled, she continued tapping on one console. "It's hiding something..." Her commbadge chirped, she tapped it, "yeah Morgan here."

"Have you reached Engineering yet?" James' voice asked.

"Yep, without a fight which is weird," Morgan replied.

"Not that weird. They empty the ship first then they take it and sell it off. I know where they've put the crew so we'll take care of that, but apparently we'll be in their ship's range very soon. You or Chakotay need to figure out how to stop it before it fires again."

Craig peered over a few consoles, "I don't see any sign of a ship. The only thing we're coming up to are some moons."

"Wait, how do you know all that?" Morgan asked.

"Well, I'd know a lot more if someone toned it down," James' voice sighed.

"It was only a poke," Emma's voice protested.

Morgan and Craig heard a man whimpering in the background. Morgan shook it off and focused on the same console. "Craig's right, I don't see anything out there but..." she noticed on the short range sensors distorted, almost garbled lines pushing against Voyager and breaking apart like waves hitting a rock on a beach. The intensity increased every second she stared at it. "This, I've seen this before."

Craig glanced at the same thing, "what is that?"

"I think... yeah it's some sort of wave that disrupts frequencies; communications, transporters, shields," Morgan said. "Somebody tried to trick our sphere by using one once."

"That's why Voyager wasn't responding to messages," Craig said and yet he looked confused. "You'd think something like that would mess with their own systems."

"Yeah," Morgan mumbled as her mind raced.

Craig noticed a blip approaching on the same panel Morgan had been watching. "A ship's approaching."

Morgan stared at it as well, quickly noticing the same thing B'Elanna did; the wave coming from the ship itself. A smile spread across her face as a thought came to her. "I got it. Hold on," she said, quickly tapping away.

Craig watched as the strange lines contorted further, so much so they started to go in another direction. The waves were no longer smashing into Voyager, they pushed their way to the other ship.

Morgan giggled maliciously, "this should keep them occupied for a tad."

The ship once again fired their red beam toward Voyager. Only instead it stalled halfway, then slowly bounced back toward them.

The Ready Room:

Chakotay witnessed the whole thing through the window. Another couple of screams had him cringing though.

Jessie walked over to him holding her commbadge by her ear. "Okay, good. I'll tell him," she said. Chakotay looked at her curiously. "James says that they've freed the crew. He's got a few of the aliens restrained in the Cargo Bay."

"Looks like the ship's been temporarily dealt with, that leaves one thing. It should be safe to transfer B'Elanna to Sickbay. You take care of that," Chakotay said.

Jessie laughed, "yeah right. I'm not going back in there." She left via the door they came in, leaving Chakotay to grind his teeth.

Sickbay:

Annika stumbled inside clutching her sore chest. She reached the regenerators and grabbed one.

The sound of a transporter beam distracted her, she looked up in the direction of the primary biobed in time to see B'Elanna rematerialise in the middle of throwing the Doctor's tricorder. Of course it went flying towards Annika, conking her on the head and knocking her out.

Hours later Tom was wishing that'd happen to him as his right hand had been turned to mulch, and B'Elanna had been throttling him for what felt like twenty minutes.

"One more," the Doctor cheerfully said before ducking from a hypospray going airborne. He smiled as if nothing happened, "push!"

Finally the sound of a baby's cry echoed around the room. The Doctor beamed as he wrapped a small bundle in a blanket. "It's a boy," he announced to the couple.

Tom had trouble standing still having been shaken for so long, still he grinned at the news.

The Doctor walked over to hand the bundle to B'Elanna, she melted at the sight of the tiny boy in her arms. Tom leaned over and put his arm around her to get a closer look.

"Congratulations," the Doctor smiled broadly.

Captain's Log Supplemental: Thanks to the efforts of Morgan and Chakotay's team, the ship thieves are currently in our host's custody. It might be a while before they even notice that though. No injuries have been reported other than Sev... Annika, but who cares about that. The only problem seems to be a lack of memories for those who were infected. The ones who weren't have some funny ideas about what we went through and did, but it's clearly just a big joke they've all conspired to taunt us. As if I'd share my coffee, absurd.

Kathryn walked into the Mess Hall. Immediately she witnessed something so horrific it took her breath away, "oh my god! It's true!"

Neelix froze in the middle of sweeping the gigantic pieces of broken cup scattered around a massive brown stain on the carpet.

THE END