

Episode 2.05

Resistance

"Now is the winter of our discontent..."

The sound of cutlery being dropped into a sink made Neelix sigh, fake a smile and nod.

"Made glorious summer by this son of York..."

A few bangs rang out as if two pans were piled on top of the other aggressively. Neelix side eyed briefly.

"And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house."

The smell of something burning this time got Neelix's attention. He was about to look across until he heard a toaster eject some bread.

"Now are our brows bound..."

Somebody coughed then muttered, "what setting has he got this on?"

"With victorious wreaths. Our bruised arms..."

Something beeped five times, overlapping an almighty crash of what sounded like plates falling on the floor. Neelix groaned. The sound put off what he really wanted to focus on. "It's alright, start over. It's just some man murdering my kitchen. Go on, it's beautiful."

The Doctor beamed proudly, puffing his chest out and placing a hand tenderly there. "Now is the winter of our discontent..."

"Damn it," they heard a pained whisper. Neelix looked over only to see the back of somebody's head and shoulders in the kitchen. From where he stood, Neelix assumed he was using the grill. He shook his head, "great, even I can't use that thing without it setting on fire. I told him to leave it alone."

"Now our... excuse me, are our brows bound," the Doctor said.

Neelix waited expectantly for another interruption. Nothing happened other than people walking inside, making a point to avoid him and the Doctor standing on a makeshift tiny stage in the left corner of the room. A couple of cameras stood on each side recording it.

Neelix was starting to get tears in his eyes from the speech, or he thought it was the grotesque smells coming from his kitchen. He started to think he was the one getting punished, not his hired help.

"Hi yeah, can I have the soggy cornflakes with a splash of warm milk, please," Tom snickered while leaning on the counter.

Beside him Harry rolled his eyes and mouthed sorry.

On the other side in the kitchen they were surprised to be greeted by the chef with a smile. "Sure, just one moment." He handed over a plate with a full English breakfast to Morgan waiting a little ways from them. Tom's eyes bulged, mouth watered at it even if the toast was a little singed and the egg was runny. Harry laughed and shook his head.

"It might need a few minutes before it's really soggy," James said, placing a bowl in front of Tom. "I could pop it in the oven though to speed it up."

Harry bit his lip to stop from laughing while Tom whined at the pathetic little bowl. "That's okay, thanks," he grumbled.

"Do you know how to make pancakes?" Harry asked with a smile.

James seemed a little unsure, he looked to the side where all the pans were. The fried eggs in one had merged together and were starting to bubble and spit. "Um, what about an omelette?"

"Yeah uh, can I..." Tom tried to butt in while poking his sorry looking cereal.

Harry maneuvered around him to get to the kitchen, "I'll show you. I make a mean chocolate pancake."

"What are you doing?" Tom hissed, grabbing his arm at the last second. "There's knives in there, and lots of hot things. I wouldn't voluntarily go in there with him."

Harry yanked his arm back. "And yet strangely I still feel safer about going inside now than when Neelix is in there."

He soon started to rethink his position when he entered to find the kitchen in disarray; pans were on the floor, the dishes hadn't been washed, a frying pan appeared to be stuck to the ceiling, and a plate or two were in several pieces near the grill. That seemed to be the only thing that looked part way normal as the room wasn't on fire, at least not yet. The sausages and bacon cooking on them were looking a little well done though.

"Have you erm, done this before?" Harry asked politely, hoping to not anger the temporary *chef*.

James stared at him blankly, then looked around at the disaster around him. "Yeah, I used to own my own restaurant." Harry winced and then laughed it off. James groaned, he carried a plate to the counter for an unknown crewmember. "Don't do that. Neelix hid all the knives."

"Wh... what?" Harry stammered.

"Is that crumpets with syrup?" Tom almost drooled.

"I'm joking, I don't need them," James said. Harry still looked nervous though. James groaned and pointed at the last remaining pan, which still had almost black hash brown pieces stuck to it. "Pancakes?"

"Ri... right, watch the master," Harry tried to say with confidence. He took it, opting to clean it first and quickly since he was being watched. Or so he thought. He glanced over to find James scooping the sausages from the grill all onto one plate. Harry thought he was doing that just to clear the grill for more, but he started putting the other full English ingredients onto the same plate.

The massive, piled up plate went onto the counter just in time for Morgan to walk over. "Ah, that's more like it." She grabbed it to take over to her table. Both Tom and Harry's eyes were bulging.

Chakotay stared with a similar face as she started to dig into the massive breakfast, his own looked like a child's version. "Don't you think that's a little much?" She mumbled a no. "You keep eating like that when you're older you'll balloon up, it's not good for you."

"But I'm starving," Morgan squeaked innocently with baked bean juice in the corner of her lips.

"I dunno where you get that appetite from," Chakotay said, poking the sausages on his plate with disdain.

James walked over carrying two plates. Chakotay stared in horror as one of them went down in between them, luckily a lot smaller than her main one, with four slices of toast on it. "Sorry. Neelix's toaster only has one setting, just like his grill. Burn."

"Did you empty the backlog of crumbs out of it?" Chakotay asked. He was met with a confused stare. "I told Kathryn your next probation job should be cleaning instead. I'm not sure who was more wrong here."

James lowered the other plate, Chakotay assumed it was for Morgan as well and grew worried. It only had a bowl of cereal sitting on it, which a tiny pair of hands grasped from him. He and Morgan were joined by Kiara digging into her coco pops.

"Oh my word, this is awful, a complete disaster," Neelix cried from afar.

James shrugged and briefly smirked. "That narrows it down."

He returned to the kitchen just as Harry hurried out carrying a plate with his precious pancake on. Neelix attempted to chase him, waving a towel at him until James got in his way. His eyes narrowed. "You rotten boy, look what you've done to my kitchen. It's disgusting, I can barely breathe."

James tried not to laugh. A quick glance over his shoulder, the people he could see were eating their breakfasts without complaint.

"I told you, for your first day I already cooked something. You only had to serve it," Neelix scolded him, even swatting him on the arm with the towel.

"Neelix, I'm stuck here for a month because I killed someone. I really don't fancy being here forever," James said. Neelix looked confused. "Relax, I left you a plate of mush in the fridge. The rest made a great degreasing agent for the grill you never wash."

Neelix gasped and turned to run back inside. James heard him sobbing and couldn't help but smile to himself.

Meanwhile Kathryn walked inside to head for the nearest replicator, only she almost walked into a camera and a close up shot of the Doctor on one knee, fluttering his eyes as he spoke. "Oh Juliet, why must we be so... erm line?" He waited but got nothing. "Okay erm, oh Juliet, we should run away together and start a family all on our own."

"You're lucky I haven't had breakfast yet you sad waste of power," Kathryn hissed. The Doctor panicked and clambered backwards. She though turned to the replicator to order two cups of coffee.

Neelix spotted her and ran over with a plate filled with green and brown lumps. "Captain. I request you take that brute out of my kitchen..."

"Oh my god!" Kathryn yelped, slapping the offending plate out of his hands. Annika chose that moment to walk in, step on the sludge and fall flat on her back. "I told you not to teach him any of your recipes!"

"Of course not," Neelix was very offended, "he made his own, and wrecked my kitchen doing so. That was all the Leola stuffed livers I had left, it's all gone and now I'll have nothing to serve for dinner."

"Oh," Kathryn sighed in relief. She headed for the kitchen. Neelix followed with a smug expression. "James!" she barked.

James casually poked his head out of the kitchen, "what?"

"Keep it up and I may shorten your sentence," Kathryn said with a warm smile. Neelix's jaw dropped. "Now, can you make me some toast with coffee jam and scrambled egg?"

James tried to hide his disgust, "uh sure, but I don't have any coffee jam."

"Of course you do. Neelix keeps it in that safe on the top shelf labelled *herbs and spices*," Kathryn said.

Neelix panicked. "No, no. That's where I keep my flavourings, and erm, salt." James disappeared back into the kitchen. He calmed down as a thought came to him, "only I have the key anyway, no one can get in."

A small bang and James reappeared, "okay, toast with crappy jam and egg coming up."

Kathryn giggled, "that's a good boy." Neelix had turned rather white. He tapped her on the arm, killing her good mood instantly. "Ugh, you're still here? Fine, mind telling me what the Doctor is doing?"

Neelix brightened up considerably, "oh a new segment for my show. Today's the auditions for my original play Julie and Ronald. She's poor, he's rich but in a twist of fate they meet and fall in love. Since their family disapprove of the union, they elope on a ship unknowingly on a collision course with an asteroid."

"Oh it's so beautiful," Kathryn said, wiping tears from her eyes.

"Really?" Neelix said.

Kathryn took a plate from James, then glared at the Talaxian as if he spat on it. "What, your Romeo and Juliet boards the Titanic? As if. Whatever keeps you out of the kitchen you weirdo." She hurried off with her food and her cup, leaving an empty one on the counter.

"Who and the what?" Neelix stammered.

"Bridge to Janeway. We have received a distress call..."

Kathryn barely had time to bring her fork to her mouth. "For the love of..." she grumbled before tapping her commbadge. "Can't you handle something as easy as that Mr Tuvok?"

"Of course but the source of the distress call, you should see this."

Kathryn stared at her breakfast for a while. "Nope, just nope." Chakotay worried he'd be sent up, but instead she got up and carried her food off with her. He sighed in relief. "Chakotay!" she screamed at the door.

He ran off after her. Morgan gleefully took what remained of his breakfast to slide onto her own plate.

The Bridge:

"Thish beggle be wuth it," Kathryn said with her mouth full and chewing.

Tuvok raised his eyebrow twice for good measure. "Excuse me, Captain?"

"Oh thanks," Kathryn said, shoving her empty plate into his hands. "So what did you need me to see?"

"The ship that is in distress," Tuvok answered, gesturing to the viewscreen.

Kathryn and Chakotay turned their attention to it. They couldn't believe their eyes. "That's a..." Chakotay said briefly getting his hopes up, his second thought dashed them. "Are one of our shuttles unaccounted for?"

"No," Tuvok replied.

Chakotay stared back at the screen in wonder at the Federation shuttle craft floating on its back. "Where did it come from?"

"That remains to be seen. I'm checking the registry," Jessie replied from Tactical.

"There's no evidence of time travel or dimensional signatures," Craig added.

Kathryn still managed to stare suspiciously at the vessel. "It's got to be a trick then."

"NCC 1701 E," Jessie read from her station. Everyone stared at her. "Why does that sound familiar?"

"The Enterprise," Chakotay said in surprise. Kathryn nodded but still didn't buy it. "What are they doing here, looking for us?"

"Cut it out Harry," Kathryn said, slapping the back of his head. She wandered over to Tactical. "There's got to be something nearby. Another non Starfleet ship, a shuttle sized wormhole, some mirror universe anomaly."

"I don't see what's so unbelievable about the Enterprise being here," Craig said.

Kathryn laughed, "yeah sure, they'd send the flagship to look for us. We have as much chance of running into them as Paris shunning the Holodeck."

"The shuttle has minimal power, looks like its been drained," Jessie said. "One lifesign aboard, definitely human."

"Okay lets play along for now, hail them," Kathryn sighed.

Craig nodded while he tapped. "Audio only, the shuttle has little power."

Kathryn waited a moment before saying anything, "this is Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation Starship Voyager."

"I'm sorry, can you repeat that? I thought I heard the impossible," a man's voice stammered.

Chakotay and Kathryn shared a brief knowing glance. "No you heard right," Kathryn said softly. "Please identify yourself."

"But we're in the middle of nowhere, wow okay," the man said, his voice hoarse. He tried to clear it. *"I'm Lieutenant Ellis, Simon Ellis of the USS Enterprise. We were on a flight test around Baku when we spotted a Borg vessel. They chased us for quite some time."*

"We?" Chakotay said.

"Yeah my flight engineer, they got him," Simon said glumly.

Chakotay frowned, "I'm sorry to hear that. We'll have to hear the rest of the story later once we bring in your shuttle."

"Thank you Voyager."

Kathryn looked puzzled and mad at the same time. She waited for the comm to be turned off. "Looks like the Borg's back in action then. No matter, scan the shuttle to make sure it's safe first. Commander Tuvok..."

Tuvok was already walking across to her, she assumed to retake his station. "I suggest he have a Security team escort him to Sickbay for a full scan. We cannot rule out Mr Ellis being a drone suffering from the same viruses the Borg had months ago."

Kathryn nodded once, "agreed. You see to that."

"At once," Tuvok said. "Tuvok to Security Team One, reconvene in the shuttle bay immediately. Escort the guest there to Sickbay." He got barely an acknowledgment from what he assumed was Thompson before being cut off. He managed to look a little annoyed by it. "Crewman Rex."

Jessie pulled a few faces before turning her head to look at him. "Yeah?"

"Please go to the Mess Hall and tell Stuart to join them," Tuvok ordered.

"What, why me?" Jessie asked.

"I have a *feeling* that the team will *forget* him again," Tuvok answered. He noticed her frown at the again. "I'm sure he'll explain when you get there."

The Mess Hall:

A finger snap echoed around the room, everyone looked on in shock. "Waiter," Thompson called in a bad attempt at a posh voice. "Come here and take my order."

Foster stared at him in disbelief, then shook his head judging him silently.

James peered out from the kitchen, only to disappear when he saw them.

Thompson nudged Foster in the arm chuckling, "oy, don't make me get your manager."

"You do know you're taunting a convicted murd... oh why do I care?" Foster grumbled.

To Thompson's disappointment James re-emerged with a neutral expression on his face. Thompson quickly stuck his nose up and tried to sound posh again, "ah good. Get back in the kitchen and make me my breakfast, chop chop."

Foster cringed, "a bacon buttie to go would be nice, please."

"Sure," James smiled and returned to the kitchen.

Thompson's eyebrow twitched, "hey, can't you take a joke?"

"Yeah joke, like that evil twin joke you told at my brother's funeral?" Foster grumbled.

"That wasn't a joke buddy, it was my toast," Thompson said while looking offended. He lit up immediately, "oh toast. Do you think he can handle not mucking that up?"

Foster stared at him blankly while inside rage was brewing. His composure didn't last, "oh, so the joke was the condolences drink you gave me after it? You still haven't told me what happened the rest of the night."

Thompson pretended to look pained, "you lived for your brother. It was touching and beautiful until you barfed on those two girls in the lift."

Foster looked on in horror at his teammate as James stepped out of the kitchen with two plates. He warily placed the smaller one in front of Foster and the bigger one for Thompson. "What'd he do now?"

He didn't get an answer, Foster merely glared as Thompson poked the food on his plate with a grimace. "Oooh charcoal, yummy."

The nearby doors opened for a few people, including Jessie. She stalled on her way to the galley and kitchen.

"He didn't deserve a full English, what's the catch?" Foster grumbled.

Thompson snorted into laughter, "this is a full English? Where's my tea and crumpets?"

Foster noticed Jessie hanging around behind him, he sighed despondantly. "I'm not the guy who stalked you and held you hostage. He's dead."

"Or is he?" Thompson cackled ominously with a mouthful of toast.

James looked at him with a judgemental frown, "don't, just stop talking."

"With my mouth full, no dice mum," Thompson snickered, spitting crumbs all over.

"No, full stop. Stop talking," James said, shaking his head.

Jessie approached warily but still kept a slight distance from Foster. "I'm sorry for your loss," she said awkwardly to him.

"Oh that reminds me!" Thompson blurted out. He started rummaging through a backpack hanging off his shoulder. Foster took the chance to dig into his sandwich. "I have a present for my teammate to congratulate on his new job."

"But I've already got an annoying talker too much overcompensator, I don't need three," James pretended to whine. Jessie and Foster quietly sniggered to themselves.

Thompson pulled out material that was folded originally, quickly unveiling it as an apron with the text *kill the cook before he kills you* on the front.

James nodded approvingly. Jessie's jaw dropped, she snatched it before he could take it himself.

"What, I was going to give it to Neelix," James said innocently.

"Hmph, ungrateful," Thompson mumbled. He focused on his very well done breakfast.

Jessie shook her head while rolling her eyes. "Let me guess, instead of telling you that Tuvok wants you to join them in the shuttle bay, they asked you to feed them."

"Wha... wh, no, yeah," Thompson said all muffled with his mouth full again. He swallowed his food. "Plenty of time for both, you know. A man's gotta eat." Foster was about to take a second bite of his own meal when he was dragged away towards the furthest door. He snatched one of the sausages from Thompson's plate on the way.

"He can't be really too scared to work with you. If he did he'd shut up," Jessie said with a smirk.

James smiled back and shrugged, "I don't think that's really possible." He looked on very concerned as Jessie reached to snatch the bacon from the plate instead of the untouched pieces in Foster's sandwich. He quickly moved the plate away so she couldn't.

"Hey!" she complained.

"You don't want that one. Thompson got the burnt leftovers," James said.

Jessie still looked offended, "but I like burnt bacon. You know that."

"I know, but I doubt you like yesterday's bacon, burnt and reheated," James said meekly.

"Oh gross James," Jessie groaned while her nose shrivelled up.

"What? It's not like I got it out of the bin or anything. There isn't a bin in here," James protested, barely. He peered over his shoulder with a frown, "now that I think about it, that explains a lot." He made his way out.

"Wait," Jessie stuttered, pointing towards the kitchen. "Don't you have anything still on in there?"

James shrugged. "Yeah but it's okay. I left a tray of Leola in the oven on standby, just in case I was called away. It should be ready in five minutes."

Jessie pulled yet another face as he walked by her to leave. Still confused and grossed out she hurried to follow him.

A minute or two later a burning smell drifted from the kitchen and into the seating area. Most of the remaining crew there decided it was time to leave.

Neelix though got a whiff of it and panicked for different reasons. "Ohno! That idiot's put my Leola in the oven again." He dashed to the kitchen grumbling, "he's going to waste the entire supply if he keeps doing this." The oven with toxic fumes beginning to leak out of it was turned off. "Otherwise I'd suspect him of doing this on purpose."

Thompson and Foster waited around the newest shuttle in the bay while B'Elanna and others scurried around, scanning it.

Foster nervously looked over his own shoulder. "Where is he?" His head turned back and over his other shoulder to scowl at Thompson. "If this turns out to be a seven foot tall angry alien who stole one of our shuttles, I'm throwing you first so I can make my escape."

"Relax," Thompson snickered. "He's probably stopped for a quick turbolift smooch. Won't be long."

Foster stared at him blankly for a while. During that time the bay doors opened for James and Jessie.

"That's always you, you moron. Did you and Laura have a falling out?" Foster said.

"Nah, no way. The serial killer case has kept me in the good books for weeks," Thompson grinned.

James and Jessie walked up to them as Foster struggled to keep it together, eyeing Thompson's stupid grin. "My... my brother was one of the victims," Foster finally whimpered once he felt he had backup.

"I'm sorry, I did all I could. One out of six ain't bad," Thompson said.

"I don't remember you doing anything but jamming to Madonna," Jessie muttered.

Thompson hadn't noticed her until then. His face flushed bright red. Luckily for him B'Elanna and her team were done and she had opened the shuttle's door.

"No, no... I only like the James Bond theme, which was rather fitting at the time for you know who," Thompson stuttered.

James rolled his eyes, "yeah, sure."

Thompson glared back at him, "don't flatter yourself. The song's called Die Another Day." James and Jessie tried not to laugh. "Oh yeah, who are you two to judge with your cheesy Tragic Barbie group, and...?"

A young thin man roughly in his early thirties sporting a rough looking red stubble, strawberry blonde hair and a pleasant, relieved smile on his face, stepped down from the shuttle. B'Elanna cleared her throat as a hint to the Security team. Thompson didn't get it and still rambled off a list of songs very defensively.

James and Foster sighed, more sick of him than annoyed. They both nudged their teammate out of the way to get to the guest. "Hi, welcome to Voyager," Foster said pleasantly.

Thompson spluttered a bit. "Hi," he said, mocking Foster's tone. "So you're not a seven foot blob like he said."

Fortunately the new arrival laughed it off. "I see I'm going to like it here. Hi, I'm Simon Ellis. Test pilot on the Enterprise. Not a blob but just missed the seven foot mark by a foot and a bit."

"Okay, well I'm Jack Foster. This is James Stuart and this is, er our team's fodder and target practice," Foster said with a smirk.

"Oy," Thompson snapped.

Simon smirked until his eyes drifted in Jessie's direction. "You're forgetting the beauty of your team."

Foster flinched so much his head retreated into his shoulders. Thompson meanwhile sneered toward James who was only narrowly raising an eyebrow.

Jessie groaned in disgust, "does that line ever work?"

"If it were a line I'd put it in the no column," Simon sheepishly said. "Sorry, I just thought it was weird to leave you out."

Foster stuttered very nervously, turning white, "no, no. This is Jessie, she's not in our team." He felt Jessie's heated glare piercing his back. "She's er, um, why is she here?" he whispered.

Thompson's attempt at a quiet laugh caught in his throat so they all heard. It didn't last long when Jessie elbowed him in the arm, it turned into a pained whimper. She stomped off muttering to herself.

"I like her, she's a tough cookie clearly," Simon said with a bright smile.

"Er maybe we should be going," Foster stammered, fearfully side eyeing James. He noticed and gave him a bemused glance back.

"Yup yup, this'll be fun. Right this way," Thompson sniggered, leading the way to the exit. Foster rushed after him, followed by Simon who curiously looked around.

Thompson grimaced when Foster caught up to walk beside him. "What are you doing? James is the last guy we want watching our backs." He shoved Foster to put him off, it didn't.

James shook his head and followed them all, keeping to the back.

"You know, I was a little suspicious that a Starfleet ship would find me. But after I ended the call I remembered something," Simon said. "Voyager. That's where I heard it. You're the missing ship, lucky me ey?"

Foster sighed tiredly, "yeah lucky us."

Thompson spotted Jessie ahead stepping into a turbolift. He nodded eagerly. "Yes lucky us," he snickered. "Hold the door please!" he shouted after her.

Jessie tensed, groaned and then reluctantly pressed the panel to stop the doors from closing. Thompson, Foster and Simon reached her and stepped in as well.

"Deck Five," Thompson smirked.

Foster glared, "wait a min..." The doors started to close just as James caught up to them. He wasn't surprised, he shook his head and sighed. The doors eventually opened again and he was treated to Thompson hopping on one foot, cradling the other. Everyone else were repressing a laugh.

"So, apart from pranks, what do you guys do for fun around here?" Simon asked.

"Hope the Holodeck isn't already booked," Foster meekly suggested.

Jessie noticed Simon act like he was expecting a list, then smile politely when Foster didn't continue. She sighed impatiently, "in between each dangerous death defying mission we usually get pissed and make a fool of ourselves. The next morning people watch the videos of it over breakfast. There's usually betting involved."

Simon laughed, "oh I thought that was just the Enterprise's tradition. Do you guys have a Ten Forward?"

"No. We have a Two Throw Up," Jessie replied.

Thompson laughed a little too loudly, Foster bit his lip and looked away. James though frowned slightly before shrugging it off.

Simon seemed oblivious to it all, he smiled at her. "Better than a two forward, ey?" Jessie smirked in response.

"Oh my god," Thompson spluttered while laughing. He tried to stop it so he could direct a straight face in James' direction. "You'd better watch your own back not ours," he still sniggered.

"What?" James only groaned in response.

The doors opened. Foster stepped out first, followed by a still laughing Thompson.

"Nice meeting you," Simon said as he did the same.

Jessie nodded, "yeah."

James waited a moment before walking out. Before the doors closed behind him, he stopped to glance over his shoulder. Jessie still smiling as they closed stalled him for a moment. He shook his head and followed his team.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn was sitting at her desk with a cup of coffee in her hands. Tuvok waited beside her. The door chimed mid sip. She called whoever it was in after she had finished the entire cup. Security Team One and Simon stepped inside, the team remained by the door.

"Ah Lieutenant Ellis, I'm Captain Janeway. Welcome aboard Voyager," Kathryn said.

"Thanks, and call me Simon. Everyone else does," Simon said.

Tuvok nodded, "Commander Tuvok." He then focused on the team behind Simon. "I assume his credentials and medical confirmed his identity."

Thompson answered before Foster could open his mouth, "absolutely Commander. No homicidal Tolg people, no blobs, a-ok."

Foster clenched his jaw and averted his gaze. Tuvok slowly raised an eyebrow in judgement. "Mr Stuart," he said once apparently finished. "You may return to your other duties."

"Yeah great," James said plainly while turning to leave.

Once he was gone Kathryn stared after him, puzzled. "I'm not sure if that was sarcastic or not."

Simon chuckled, "yeah, nice guy. A little moody."

Thompson snorted a little, "you have no idea, buddy. Watch yourself, we all thought his bark was worse than his bite. Nooooope."

"You are dismissed, Ensign, Crewman," Kathryn sharply said.

Foster and Thompson scurried out as well, leaving only Simon and Tuvok with her.

"So. Do you know where you are, has anyone told you Lieutenant?" Kathryn asked.

Simon inhaled through his teeth, "not quite. The grumpy one said something like thousands of lightyears, but I'd have noticed, you know?"

"Curious, you were aware that you had travelled quite a distance when you contacted us. You were surprised to see Voyager," Tuvok stated.

Simon nodded, "well yeah I knew I'd gone far out but not that far. Though it would explain why no one's seen your ship in six years." His face started to drain, "oh, he wasn't having me on, was he?"

Kathryn glanced down at her empty cup, sighing sadly. "I'm afraid not. How far are we now, Mr Tuvok?"

Tuvok was about to answer, he hesitated and glanced down at a PADD in his hands. He tapped on it for a while.

Kathryn sighed, "no matter, you found us. I assume the team assigned you some quarters." Simon nodded. "Is there anything else you can tell us about what happened?"

"Well, we tried to evade the Borg in the Briar Patch. It was fine for a while but they must've adapted. We got a headstart, luckily the shuttles these days are pretty fly so..." Tuvok raised an eyebrow, he assumed because of what he said but the Security Chief was only baffled by his PADD results. "We didn't want to put anyone else at risk, so we set a course out of Federation space. We barely got to the border when they caught us."

Simon had to do a double take after that as Kathryn appeared to be walking back around her desk from the replicator, holding a steaming cup. He looked in the direction she must've come from, blinking rapidly. "Uh. Where was I? Oh, the shuttle was pulled inside, we were dragged out. The Borg were acting a bit funky actually, talking to themselves, giggling. We were attacked by the needles," he gestured to two punctures on his neck. "My engineer got it first. He started to change, but when they got me they stopped."

"Stopped?" Kathryn said after a sip.

"Yeah like they were cut off from the hive. I never heard anything either. The ship shook a lot, so I assumed it was because of an attack. I used it to my advantage and got the hell out of there," Simon said. He frowned, "after that, I dunno, I flew off without looking back."

"The cube must've used transwarp while you were on board," Kathryn said.

Tuvok glanced up, looking relieved. He frowned before he could speak, "transwarp coil." Kathryn's eyes drifted to one side toward him, narrowing slightly. "Was it twenty thousand or fifteen?"

Kathryn slammed her hand on the desk, startling the two men. "I said it doesn't matter, it's very far, okay!"

Simon laughed very nervously, "I have to say, I'm really lucky I'm on the Voyager. It's a lot more fun than I thought it'd be." He was stared at blankly. "I expected space crazy after six years of nothing."

Kathryn forced a laugh which sounded very bitter, "oh you're only half wrong. One word of advice, don't eat any of the food, replicate it. I'll give you some rations in advance, but we'll need to find you a post..."

"Captain, Mr Neelix is busy with his morale officer duties. As you recall you put..." Tuvok said.

"Oh yeah," Kathryn smiled, remembering her coffee jam on toast. "Excuse me." She rushed out leaving Simon flummoxed but Tuvok acted as if it were normal.

A grin once again broke out on Simon's face. "Yep I'm going to love it here, I think."

The Mess Hall:

Most of the tables were pushed closer together on the stage-less side, making sitting at them a little tight. No one minded though, since for once they weren't getting gassed from the kitchen and recognised the food they were eating.

On the other side a few women had gone up on stage supposedly willingly since they weren't running off. Neelix stood in front of them, smiling proudly.

"All right ladies. This is a romance so the lucky girl who I pick must have chemistry with our male lead," Neelix said.

"Who is the male lead?" one woman with hip length brunette hair asked.

Neelix suddenly looked a little embarrassed, "er, well... so for part of your audition you'll need to be able to kiss him and have it be believable."

"Eew," Emma complained, "why am I here again? I'm outta here."

"Oooh, ooh!" Tani threw her hand up, then jumped a few times. "Me first."

"Er, we don't have..." Neelix tried to explain but Tani was already running off the stage towards the galley. "Um?"

James noticed her, his eyes flew wide open and he dashed back into the kitchen.

Harry chose that bad time to walk in through the stage door and head for the same place, he and Tani collided. She was a bit stunned but ok, however Harry stumbled sideways into somebody's table just as they were sitting down with their plate. It went flying into their face, spilling gravy all over them.

"Oh sorry about that," Harry whimpered once he noticed.

Annika tried to glare through the gravy drooping over her eyelids. "Do not worry, it wasn't your fault." Harry noticed her scowl was directed toward the kitchen, he wasn't sure why.

"Ah, here he is, our male lead!" he heard Neelix bellow. Next thing he knew he was being pulled over to the stage.

At the nearby replicator Emma glanced over her shoulder, her eyes bugged out. She hurried back to where she stood before, "on second thoughts."

"What?" Harry whimpered, "but I didn't audition."

"Okay number one, you're up," Neelix said cheerfully.

A blonde girl with a fringe walked up to him fluttering her eyelashes. Harry felt a little better about being volunteered until she leaned in and he spotted the fringe was hiding something on her forehead. A few little spikes. He yelped and jumped back. "Oh my god, Naomi?"

The girl smiled, "yeah, so?" Once more she puckered up.

"Nope, nope, so much nope," Harry stammered as he ran for his sanity. Naomi pouted.

Meanwhile James peered out from the kitchen, saw it was safe for now and returned to the stove where some pans were almost boiling over. He turned them all down while stirring one a little too roughly, it was spilling mashed potatoe over the edge. Not that he noticed, his attention was caught by one of the tables.

"Excuse me, do you take orders? I don't eat this British rubbish," somebody said to him. James reached for one of the plates ready to go out and handed it to him. They whined and started picking the gravy soaked vegetables off to put into the pans.

"I said; well you could've told me sooner, I would've stayed behind and brought my medium tshirt with me," Simon laughed. "The last time I wore that, you were able to fly through Wolf 359 without having a minute's silence."

Jessie had been laughing until the last part, she trailed off awkwardly and only smiled. "I'm going to have to check this Briar Patch if we get home. I wouldn't mind being mistaken for a 20 year old."

Simon raised an eyebrow, "why, are you still getting asked for ID? I think you got it backwards."

"What, no," Jessie said quickly, narrowing her eyes. Then she got it and chuckled nervously. "Flattery only gets me wondering what you want."

"Well, I could do with some grub but your Captain doesn't practice what she preaches," Simon said, pointing a thumb at a table by the window.

Jessie looked across just in time to see Kathryn sprinkle coffee granules into a jug with hot water in. She shrugged it off, thinking a jug was just a bigger cup to her, but before she could look back at her own table the jug contents were poured over her plate of vegetables.

"Uh..." she could only say, feeling a little embarrassed. Simon though hadn't noticed the coffee part so had no idea why. "Neelix isn't cooking right now, you can ask for something at the kitchen until you get some rations."

Simon eyed her plate partly filled with vegetables, some meat and a yorkshire pudding drowned in gravy. The meat looked overdone and he wasn't a big fan of the mushy vegetables. "I dunno, does he or she take orders?"

Jessie noticed James heading over with a PADD, she smiled and shrugged. "Ask him yourself."

"Sorry, there's no more gravy until I find out who nicked the jug," James said in her direction.

"I'll live," Jessie sighed.

Simon looked again at her plate almost spilling over with gravy, then he stared up at James in shock. "My god. How many jobs do you have on this ship and can you spare one?"

"It's just a temp and you can have it," James replied halfheartedly. Simon was about to respond but he continued, "do you want anything to eat?"

"Sure I'm starved but I'm not sure if I'd be able to stomach the Sunday roast," Simon said but quickly laughed nervously. "I haven't ate in days, it sounds a bit too heavy."

James sighed, "I have bread, what about toast?"

Simon pulled a hesitant face. Jessie looked on, a little worried. An idea popped into her head that brightened her face, "oh, James makes the best sandwiches. One time when the power went down, he looted the Cargo Bay for stuff but it was dark and some of the stuff he brought back..." She felt a little awkward when she noticed both of them were watching her. "The power came back and so we replicated some bread. Some were really good."

"Really?" Simon sniggered behind his hand. "That reminds me of when we were doing the yearly test of the Captain's Yacht. We hit a really mini black hole and it drained everything, so..."

"Needs more coffee," Kathryn said and that was all James heard. He watched her go to the replicator with the jug, his eyebrow shot up. She'd returned to her table and mixed the new *gravy* by the time Simon finished his story.

Jessie frowned up at James, "what's the matter?"

James glanced at her confused, only then he noticed he was drumming his fingers over the back of the PADD. He sighed and dropped his arm to hide it behind his back. "Voyager Club Sandwich," he mumbled as he walked off.

"Um, what's in that one?" Simon smirked toward Jessie.

Jessie meekly shrugged, "bit of everything."

Most of the room jumped at Kathryn screaming as if she were being murdered. They looked and all they saw was James scurrying off and fast with the jug. Kathryn's death glare got everyone looking away again.

Many hours and two shifts later, James headed back to his quarters looking like he was sleepwalking. Still he managed to find his door and go in, fully expecting the lights to be on and Jessie to already be there, getting ready for bed or still reading on the sofa.

The quarters was dark and empty. He checked the time to make sure he didn't accidentally leave later, it sure felt like he'd been out for a long time. He hadn't. So he shrugged it off to head for his own room. He didn't hear the main doors opening and closing until an hour later.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn was drinking her third cup of coffee when the door chimed.

"Come in," she said in a cheerful manner.

Tuvok walked through the door then approached the desk. "Captain, I have disturbing news."

"What is it?" Kathryn asked, maintaining her smile.

"I believe a member of the crew has been in contact with aliens in this area," Tuvok said.

That did it, Kathryn's face hardened. She still finished her coffee though. "I beg your pardon."

"Mr Kim reported that there had been an open commlink with a far away alien ship. According to the computer whoever it was, was using Crewman Rex's personal computer to access the comm," Tuvok said.

"But Jessie doesn't have access to that," Kathryn said.

Tuvok nodded, "indeed. Rex has reported it stolen, yesterday she last saw it on her living room table. It seems the culprit is trying to frame her."

Kathryn rolled her eyes and got up to refill her drink. "Of course," she said while walking around him. "It's what all the cool kids are doing nowadays."

"I have a few people checking for the location of the computer, using the comm link to track it. They seem to be having some trouble though," Tuvok said.

Kathryn sat back down, "we've not had contact with any sentient not dead or future people since shore leave. Why these aliens and what for, what do they have to gain?" Tuvok looked thoughtful, she assumed he was going to answer her. She had hoped so as her only idea gave her a headache but he didn't. "Tell Astrometrics to locate the ship or planet they talked to."

"Yes Captain," Tuvok sounded surprised.

"Hmm, tell Lilly and or Emma to pop down there," Kathryn said, undoing that. At the same time Tuvok was curious as to why she asked for them. She smiled, "Lilly said her lost ship was around these parts, so I assume they know the area."

"As you wish," Tuvok said.

Kathryn frowned when he still didn't leave. "Is that all?"

"No. I've had a few complaints from Teams One and Five," Tuvok said. Kathryn shrugged as if she didn't care and concentrated on her cup. "They have one thing in common, Ensign Stuart."

"For god's..." Kathryn groaned. She placed the almost empty cup down. "What's he allegedly done now?"

Tuvok had already arched his eyebrow before she had finished. "His attention seems to be elsewhere and his attitude when spoken to is and I'll quote; *rude for even him*."

"Hmm, and he seemed to prefer the kitchen over Sickbay," Kathryn mused aloud. "I wonder what's the matter."

"I'm not reporting it because I am concerned. Stuart is still under probation and his behaviour, however slightly out of normalcy, must be reported and put on file," Tuvok said.

The last sip of the coffee Kathryn left, left a gritty taste in her mouth. Unlike anyone else, she liked it and it cheered her up. "I wonder if I could get Morgan to chat with him. Her blunt style might work better with him."

"Captain?" Tuvok was more than confused.

Kathryn scowled in his direction, "are you still here? What's the matter with you!"

Tuvok shook his head and walked out.

The Mess Hall:

"What is this?" Neelix would've screeched in his face, but James had preemptively backed off a step.

He groaned tiredly, with very little care. "Cereal." Neelix glanced down at the bowl on the counter and back up at him. "Wheat, oats, sometime with sugar. Milk."

"That's disgusting," Neelix barked.

James ignored him and his poking of the cheerios getting soggy in the bowl, to walk around him to tend to the queue waiting.

Once they were all served he was able to see the tables and their occupants again. He found himself staring in the direction of Jessie's table, once again sitting with Simon and laughing. Annoyed at himself, he turned away to wash the empty bowls.

Instead he found Neelix attempting to fry what looked like Cheerios and Weetabix together in some oil. He hurried forward to stop him but Neelix dismissively waved him off, which he found more funny than anything else.

"That's not how you make cereal, not even slightly close," James couldn't help but snigger.

Neelix turned up his nose and continued while the oil spat at him. "I'm getting dinner prepared, I don't waste anything. You go to the Airponics Bay and pick up a few of the boxes on the list." He pointed at the PADD currently melting on the grill.

James shook his head, he hurried over to remove it with a spatula. "Why do I have to?"

Neelix gasped and turned toward him, "I'm your boss, that's why."

"But, I don't want to kill anyone," James said, immediately rethinking what he said. Neelix stared with suspicious eyes. "Else."

"Are you threatening me?" Neelix snapped a little fearfully.

"No," James groaned tiredly. "I mean I'll handle it."

Neelix brightened up considerably, "excellent, I knew it'd be better to ask you. A young strapping lad like you can handle all the carrying and lifting. Run along."

James' eyes drifted to the melted PADD, it barely had a screen left let alone a list. He headed off anyway knowing anything he'd pick would still be better than what Neelix had on it.

Morgan ran to catch a turbolift, only just missing out. She grumbled a bit as she turned her attention to the computer panels on the walls. She tapped on them while she waited, unaware that someone else walked up behind her to do the same.

The doors opened once more, revealing Harry who widened his eyes so much they stung. "Close, close!" he panicked while tapping furiously on the inside panel.

Morgan grunted and reached to grab the door to keep it open. Harry whimpered.

"What the, why are you..." Morgan snapped.

"Hi Harry," she heard Naomi say sweetly behind her.

Next thing either of them knew, Harry was bolting down the corridor as if his life depended on it.

"Weird," Morgan muttered.

Naomi nodded, "yup, why does he keep doing that?"

Morgan stepped into the turbolift, turning around once she was inside it. Then she noticed Naomi and instantly got confused. "What the, when did you turn into a teenager?"

"Huh? I'm five," the sixteen year old looking Naomi said with a frown. "I'm half Katarian, we age quicker but I didn't think anyone would notice," she pouted.

"Never heard of them. Cargo Bay," Morgan said very quickly. The turbolift began to move.

Naomi looked up at the ceiling, "Kitanian, Kitty, Katnap, Kitkat?"

Morgan stared at her with a gradually raising eyebrow and dropping jaw. "Do your people also get dumber as you age?"

"No, I've got to be smart to be the Captain's assistance," Naomi said proudly.

"Do you know how to make coffee?" Morgan asked.

"Sure," Naomi grinned. She put her hands on her hips and put on a firm face, "coffee, white!"

Morgan shuddered and looked around. "Oh yeh, you're smart enough. Go for it." The turbolift thankfully arrived and she was able to make her escape. Naomi waited for the turbolift to move, forgetting she hadn't asked it to go anywhere. "Wow," Morgan whispered.

A little ways down the corridor she noticed a couple of big containers sitting outside the big bay doors. She waited nearby them, expecting the door to open. After a few minutes of that she impatiently walked in to find James sitting on a similar container by the door, staring at nothing in particular.

Morgan stuck out her bottom lip and shrugged, she pushed herself up to sit beside him and copy his face.

James slowly looked across at her, brow furrowed. "What are you doing?"

"Me? I'm skiving my protestation to sulk in a dark room. You?" Morgan smirked.

"Oh, well keep it down, I'm on break," James said, glancing ahead of him again.

Morgan sulked and folded her arms. "So, do you prefer James or do you go by Jimbo, or Jimmy. Jim, Jimminy?"

James' eyes drifted to the opposite side and widened too. When they returned he said with a slight laugh, "what?"

"No I don't get it either. I told that Thompson ninny that if you were to have a shorter name, it should be Jam," Morgan said.

"Oh, you didn't?" James groaned. He glanced at her to find her smiling but that didn't give him his answer.

Morgan burst into giggles, "no, you're not good enough for Jam."

"I'm no coffee jam, true," James muttered. "So why are you really here, Morg?"

"Eeew," Morgan shuddered and stuck out her tongue. "Morgs are dead places. Don't call me that."

"Okay, and don't call my Jimmy or Jim or whatever the hell isn't my name," James said, his lip curling slightly. "I'm still wondering."

Morgan kicked her legs gently against the container, James was a bit worried she was still denting it a little. "Oh nothing much. Just advice."

"Go and look somewhere else then," James muttered. "Unless you want how to kill people tips."

"Oh but dad told me that old people are great at giving out advice," Morgan said.

"Old?" James frowned, staring at her bemused. "I'm twenty six."

"Yeah, but I'm sixteen. You're old in my opinion," Morgan said.

"I prefer the term older. Why do you want my advice for?" James asked.

"Well, you're old enough to have experience with this sort of thing, but not too old I suppose," Morgan replied.

"Experience with what?" James asked.

"Erm, I'll have to tell you my long story first," Morgan muttered.

"Ohno, that can't be good," James winced.

Morgan sighed, accidentally kicking the container a bit more. She noticed this time and winced. "Ooops. Okay um, it's Craig. He's been a little weird. Blushing and stuttering."

"That's not weird, that's normal," James said.

"Not all the time! Ever since those ghosts took over us," Morgan protested. "I mean yeah he was a bit more before that on the stupid love hotel, but it's gotten worse since then." She looked at him expectantly. He gave her a wide eyed stare back. "Well?"

"Don't look at me, I can barely remember my own let alone yours," James said.

Morgan blinked more than usual, brow lowered. "No, no. We didn't do the love spell stuff. Definitely wouldn't go as far as you if I did."

James briefly laughed but looked sorry for himself after. "Then I'm not sure why you're asking me."

"Well, those ghosts were all over you. They were all coupley, weren't they? I'm just worried that, well..." Morgan stammered. James nodded, understanding. She didn't see it as such, she turned bright red. "Oh, what did I do?"

James' eyes widened in shock, he turned to her. "You didn't... I mean, I get it now, why you're worried. And no, I didn't see you do anything like that. From what I saw or heard, they were competing against each other with their kills. The most you did was say mushy nicknames."

"Oh," Morgan sighed in relief. She thought about it some more, which got her folding her arms tightly. "Then why is he being all weird if nothing happened?"

"No idea. I have noticed too," James said, thinking about it. "He did say something to me the other day, but I thought he'd drunk too much again with the way he was acting, so didn't think any of it."

Morgan shook a little, "what, what did he say?"

James shook his head, "don't worry. Your ghost spent most of her time stalking me. The only times she was not, she was too busy killing."

"Oh good," Morgan said, then blushed. James smirked and tried not to chuckle. "You know what I mean!" He then laughed, which got her huffing and rolling her eyes. "You're a real jerk."

"I know," James said after he stopped. "At the very least you need to smack away the drunk delusion that you kissed him."

"What!?" Morgan stammered.

James turned a little to look her in the eye, wincing a bit, "I didn't say you did. It's what he told me, while being all giddy and definitely drunk."

Morgan had turned a ghostly pale white. Her voice raised in pitch to a near squeak, "oh god, are you sure the ghost didn't make me do that?"

"Ye... no," James said hesitantly. Her desperate stare encouraged him to rethink it again. "No. The only time I could think of was when you knocked me out, but Craig was possessed too. He couldn't mean then. Like I said, whenever you were taken over, you were with victims or in the ruined building with us."

"Oh... oh good," Morgan said, breathing deeply. She slapped him in the arm, it felt to him like somebody had jammed a brick into it. "How do I get him to stop?"

"Hit him, I told you," James replied.

Morgan thought about it, then shook her head. "But he's my friend."

"Fine," James said with a shrug, "slap him."

"Hmm, he hasn't done anything. So why?" Morgan asked.

"Apart from lie after a few drinks," James muttered. Morgan's eyes narrowed. "I dunno, some guys do need a good slap for being entitled morons."

"Oh, I see. Okay," Morgan said and nodded.

James nodded as well, but then was slapped in the face leaving his face stinging horribly. "What..." he stammered, moving slightly away from her and glaring, "was that for?"

Morgan smiled cutely, "I'm just doing what you said."

James stared at her with his jaw agape. "I thought you were talking about... How am I entitled?"

He got a scoff in response first, then a slight giggle. "You've been in a right mood since Jessie's new friend came aboard. Clearly someone thinks he's entitled to the time she's giving the new guy instead."

"What, that's ridiculous," James grumbled as he clambered off the container to stand in front of her. "I don't think like that, I'm just..."

"Jealous," Morgan said matter-of-factly, eyes sparkling mischevously.

James' face hardened which only made her laugh again. "Of what? I haven't spent much time with anyone because I have two jobs. Why else would I be *grumpy*?"

"I didn't say grumpy," Morgan tried to sound confused.

"So the Craig complaints were made up, were they?" James questioned and sighed.

Morgan's face fell briefly, "no. But if he's telling people I kissed him, ugh, then he needs a slap as well."

"Hmm maybe, but you probably shouldn't do it as hard," James said while rubbing his cheek.

"I did it as light as I could," Morgan whined in protest. "Big baby."

"I'm sure you did," James sighed while moving over to clutch the container. Morgan stared at him oddly until he beckoned his head away from it. She rolled her eyes and jumped off. "I don't think this one will make it through the door."

"Whatever. Did he say what kind of kiss, and was I drunk too cos it might've been just a cheek kiss or a friend one," Morgan said.

The container made a thud as it was lifted and dropped onto its side. James frowned and looked at her, "a friend one?"

"Well yeah," Morgan smirked, "I figured you'd have experience."

"Not really, I've never kissed Craig before," James said with a straight face.

"That's it, I'm going to kill you," Morgan growled.

"I was only kidding, I knew what you meant," James said. He winced, "sorta."

"Well?" Morgan impatiently said.

James shrugged, "I have no idea. He was all, *Morgan kissed me and don't tell anyone or I'll tell people about your love spell baby*. I pushed him out of my way, he fell over and..."

"It must've been a little friend or cheek one, or he would've wanted people to know," Morgan said as her cheeks burned. James watched her curiously. "You know cos he's a guy and they're gross, they're not fussed. No offense."

"Never taken. I'm still not sure what a friend kiss is though," James said.

Morgan scrunched up her nose, "you know, a brief one, not those gross ones with open mouths. I thought you were supposed to be a grownup."

"Uh huh," James didn't sound so sure, "supposed to be. I guess I have, but like you say I wouldn't be bragging about it like Craig."

Morgan whined a little and started to pace, "oh god. I don't want to end up like you and Jessie; people gossiping about us, drunk making out, him being all *she's mine* grumpy because he thinks it means something, and..."

"Hey," James cut in sharply, more than annoyed, "I've never thought I owned Jessie, not ever. I'm glad she's made a new friend, I just... don't like him."

"Because you think he'll replace you as *best friend*, or more than that?" Morgan teased.

"Neither," James replied.

"Yeah right, you've barely talked to him. Remember?" Morgan said. She lowered her voice, "I've got two jobs cos I'm a murderer, boohoo."

James' gaze seemed distant to her, he lightly shook his head. "I should get back to the Mess Hall before Neelix serves his cereal stir fry." He walked away, leaving behind the container.

Morgan waited for him to go to have a peep inside. Brown granules poured out of the gap and piled at her feet. She quickly closed it and sniffed the air in disgust. A thought occurred and she smiled. "Oh, looks like free rations for Morgan this week."

The Mess Hall:

Many people hurried by and almost into James as he came back carrying several boxes piled up high enough so he could barely see where he was going. Since he heard Neelix's painful screeching he called singing, he wasn't sure if it was only that or the food that chased them.

He dumped the boxes by the galley and made his way into the kitchen, despite the noise coming from there. There he saw Neelix prancing around while singing into a ladle. He noticed him a second later and threw it away.

"Oh that was quick, um..." Neelix stuttered, blushing. "There should've been four boxes, go go."

"Um, I brought five," James said, pointing a thumb over his shoulder.

Neelix chuckled, "that should've taken you a good few hours, they're pretty big." He brushed by him to look outside. Sure enough there were five containers piled up on the floor. "Oh. Well I'm glad I asked you," he said, swinging around to face James again. "Why don't you go on your dinner break now."

Something was starting to burn in the kitchen. James hesitantly took a step forward, then stopped. "I dunno. I don't want the kitchen to burn down or..."

"Why do you keep threatening me? I'm doing you a favour," Neelix complained.

James groaned tiredly again, "no. I mean I'm not. Never mind." He walked around him to go to the replicator. He looked around after for somewhere to sit. There were many tables free, but he also noticed Jessie beckoning him over to her and Simon's. Reluctantly he went over to theirs.

"It's been ages since we hung out, I'm glad I skived a bit longer," Jessie smiled once he sat down.

"Are you sure, you remember the last time Janeway thought you were a minute late?" James said, looking worried.

Simon nearly spat out the drink he was still sipping and laughed. Jessie cringed for that and what James said.

"Oh god, I thought she was going to rip your hair out. Yikes," Simon chuckled.

James frowned, confused. "Huh? I meant when she made you stay back fifteen minutes to make up the time, but she locked the turbolifts and forgot the password."

Jessie laughed nervously, "yeah, she'd try but she'd be having to wear a wig for months." She looked at a still confused James. "I missed a turbolift, or rather Harry closed it in my face on my way to my shift yesterday. She kept whinging about her coffee gravy or something, and I told her to cool it. Bad idea."

"You told me you told her to shove it in an airlock," Simon snickered.

Jessie smirked back at him, "that was the metaphor version. I meant up her arse."

Her commbadge chirped and she tensed, then tapped it.

"Jessie I'd get back if I were you, she's stirring from her nap," Danny's voice whispered.

Jessie groaned, "okay, be right there." She got up quickly while wincing. "Sorry, I'll be back after she downs five more cups."

"See you in an hour," Simon said while trying to keep a straight face.

Jessie nodded, then hurried off for the nearest door.

Simon sighed and glanced over towards James with a friendly smile. He forced a one back, only briefly and looked down to focus on his dinner.

The next ten minutes were more than awkward and quiet.

"You've known Jessie for a long time, right?" Simon asked. James only had time to look up again. "I gotta know. How is a girl like that still single?"

James only stared back at him, unsure what to say to that. All he came up with was, "what?"

Simon grinned, showing off his dimples. "Come on, you must know. A girl that gorgeous would be batting them off all the time. She'd have her pick."

"Maybe she wants to be single," James said in the plainest tone he could so he wouldn't snap. He shook his head and returned his attention to his plate.

Simon wasn't done though. "You don't believe that, do ya?" he laughed. "She's funny and doesn't take rubbish from people, so that'd put *some* off but not everyone. I mean, a guy could really fall hard for a girl like her."

"Do you really need me here for this?" James muttered.

"You gotta lighten up," Simon said, slapping him on the arm as if they were close friends making fun of each other. James tensed and clenched his jaw, determined not to snap at him. "Life's short you know. Gotta take chances."

James decided to ignore him this time. Simon didn't seem to notice at all, he was sighing dreamily off into the distance. "Yeah definitely. I'm going to ask her out tomorrow. What do you think, do you think she'd say yes?" He pretended to zip his mouth and look away.

Jessie wandered back over looking relieved. "Apparently Morgan found Janeway's stash. She's gonna be a while."

"Ah," Simon grinned.

"We should get a few more drinks. Do you want one too?" Jessie asked in James' direction.

He put down his fork and pushed his chair out. "I gotta get back to work."

Jessie's face fell, she eyed his still half full plate. "But you haven't had your dinner yet."

"I'm not that hungry," James shook his head and walked away to the smokey kitchen.

Jessie watched after him with a confused frown. Simon felt bad for her and poked her in the arm to get her attention. She glared at him for it, making him laugh. "Is he always this pleasant?" he asked her.

"No," Jessie replied. "I wonder what's wrong."

"Maybe we should leave him be. It looks like he's got enough problems," Simon said, gesturing to the kitchen.

Neelix meanwhile screeched, "don't touch that, it needs to go hard first!" There were a few clatters, getting everyone left's attention. "No, don't put it in the sink. It's took months to marinade."

No one thought anything of that comment until a pan was hurtled over the counter and onto the floor. Anyone who got a good look at it saw the mould chunks dotted around inside it. Funnily enough everyone lost their appetite and started to leave.

Jessie cringed, "ugh." She averted her eyes. "I really should talk to him first before..."

Another clatter and Simon did as well. "I think we already know what's the matter with him. Let's get out of here."

"I hope you're right," Jessie sighed.

The following day

The Ready Room:

"Again?" Kathryn said.

"I am no closer to solving this mystery Captain, but I will continue until I find out who has been doing this," Tuvok said.

"Have you ever thought about an alien intruder? They always seem to sneak aboard without us knowing about it," Morgan asked in between spoonfulls of ice cream.

"I have considered that possibility," Tuvok replied.

"Very well Commander, dismissed," Kathryn said. Tuvok nodded in response and he walked out. "Morgan, did you at least do what I asked?"

"Of course I did," Morgan replied. "That's how I found it."

"Well?" Kathryn groaned.

"Being treated like crap in the Mess Hall, Neelix, and Tuvok's obviously been a boring old fart and slave driver, apparently," Morgan replied.

Kathryn pursed her lips and glanced off to one side. "Er, I see."

"There's other stuff too but..." Morgan said.

"But what?" Kathryn asked.

"I'll not say anything cos he's my friend and I'm not going to tell the whole of Voyager about his problems," Morgan replied.

"Morgan, I try to help every member of my crew when they need it. He might want help," Kathryn said.

"If you want to know, why don't you ask him yourself?" Morgan asked.

"Because he'll probably prefer to talk to you than me," Kathryn replied.

"Can I go now?" Morgan asked.

"If you wish," Kathryn replied.

Morgan walked out the door leaving Kathryn with yet another cup of coffee.

The Mess Hall:

"Oh god, it's worse than I thought," Morgan said in disbelief.

James nodded, "I think he's going to tell her tonight."

"Yikes, I wouldn't like to be her right now," Morgan winced.

"I don't know what to do," James mumbled.

"What do you mean? This isn't your concern," Morgan said, her eyes sharpened.

James looked around, sighing deeply. "I know but... Jessie's not going to take this well." Morgan narrowed her eyes suspiciously which annoyed him enough to glare back. "What? You asked me earlier for advice because Craig blushed around you. What if he asked for a date out of the blue?"

The question took Morgan aback, literally as well, she pulled back and sat up straight. "What a joke, we're friends."

"Exactly," James said.

Morgan continued talking almost over him, "we're not you and Jess. I don't get all soppy if he gets hurt, and he doesn't get all denial-y when accused."

James' face was blank. "Uh, you've said that already."

"See. Anyway there's nothing we can do, unless we actually tell her before he does," Morgan rambled.

"What difference will that make?" James groaned.

"I don't know, but I didn't hear you coming up with anything," Morgan hissed.

"Fine, but I think you should tell her," James said.

Morgan's jaw dropped. "Why should I? She's your best friend."

"Various reasons," James replied.

Morgan laughed, "oh is jealousy rearing its ugly head again?"

"No of course not, why would it be?" James bitterly grumbled.

"Were you asleep during our chat yesterday? I don't know anybody who wouldn't be jealous in your position, if you know what I mean," Morgan said.

"Believe what you want. Don't you think you should go find and tell Jess now," James said.

Morgan shrugged and began to stand up. "Sure, why not? I'll spare you the heartbreak if she's actually happy about the news."

On her way out she posed in front of the camera next to the stage. Neelix tried to pull her away from it. Of course he got nowhere and she left when she was finished, or sick of him.

Simon walked through the same doors a few minutes later. He stopped in front of the camera too for a little while before Neelix pushed him away as well. Simon then headed over to James' table and he just sat straight down.

"Hello there, today's the big day. Wish me luck," he said cheerfully.

"You'll certainly need it," James said without even looking at him. He merely focused on his nearly empty cup.

"What do you mean?" Simon asked.

"She'll not be interested," James replied.

Simon chuckled, "oh, you're a mind reader are you? I'll bite, why not?"

James looked up at him without moving his head. "She doesn't trust men as it is, you know that. Don't make it harder for her by being another idiot to make a move on her."

"Oh really, what did you do?" Simon asked and he burst out laughing again.

"I didn't do bloody anything," James protested.

"I was only kidding, really. That was a real scare, don't ever do it again," Simon said.

"I wasn't," James said, rolling his eyes.

Simon's face fell, then tensed. "Stop having me on, you're starting to annoy me."

"I'm not *having you on*," James said irritably. "I'm telling you the truth so you'd better keep your mouth shut."

"But, she wasn't scared of dating you," Simon said.

James finally lifted his head to look directly at him, his eyes sharpened. "What are you talking about?"

"Well you're either the exception or you're the reason she's so gun shy with relationships," Simon answered.

"Neither. We're best friends, always have been," James muttered.

"So Jessie made that *little* get together four years ago up then? Strange thing to do," Simon said while pretending to look thoughtful.

James couldn't hide his shock so instead he looked away. "She told you?"

"Yeah, she told me everything but it took some coaxing out of her. She said it almost ruined your friendship with each other," Simon said with a concerned expression. "Ouch, no wonder."

"I doubt she told you everything," James said.

"It would seem so, she must really trust me. Poor thing, the only guy she trusted and he broke her heart anyway. The fact that she can trust again, that's a good sign," Simon said in a lighthearted tone despite his words.

It didn't fool James, what he said pushed various buttons. His jaw and fist clenched, eyes hardened. "You have no idea what you're prattling on about. So from now on, keep your worthless opinions to yourself."

"Hmm," Simon tried not to smirk. "What part of anything I said was an opinion? You destroyed any trust in men she had, and yet she's trusted me enough to know something sensitive about her past..."

"Maybe you shouldn't betray that by bragging about it to me," James cut in.

That stalled Simon only for a moment. "How long did it take to get her to trust you that much?" James pointed his hardened, almost piercing eyes in his direction. Simon laughed it off though, "not a few days I'm willing to bet. Looks promising to me."

"You're deluded," James grumbled while drumming his fingers on the table absentmindedly. "You'll destroy that trust the instant you ask her out. She thinks you're her friend, that's why she talked to you. She thinks, no hopes that you'll be one of few men that don't have an ulterior motive, that your friendship with her is not just a stepping stone for more."

"Oh, is that why you two don't hang out much anymore?" Simon asked, in a pretend concerned voice.

James could feel himself starting to shake from all the repressing. The other hand was clenched under the table. Simon could tell easily with his flexing, tense jaw. "We're still friends today because she knows that I'm perfectly happy with being friends with her. I don't need or want more from her."

James didn't expect Simon's face to drain, or for his expression to turn from smug into looking like he had been slapped. Him leaning forward to growl at him was a surprise too, "you're really starting to piss me off, you know. If she has a phobia of men, and yet you of all people she was okay to date..."

"You're not understanding a word I say, are you? Forget it. All of it," James hissed.

"No, I really am," Simon said angrily as if he realised something. "You're still in love with her, and you really do want more from her again." James shook his head, partly smirking at the accusation but that riled Simon up further. "Admit it. You don't want me to ask her out because you know that I'm not only your competition, I can actually win here."

"That's ridiculous, I got over her a long time ago," James tried not to laugh at him.

Simon made a loud, dismissive, "hah?" sound which most of the room heard and looked at. He pointed his finger at the other man in front of him threateningly. "You're not fooling anyone, except maybe poor Jessie. If you were really just a friend, you wouldn't be trying to stop me."

"Look, I'm only trying to protect her, and I'm also trying to stop you from embarrassing yourself," James said.

"Well, thanks for your concern," Simon said sarcastically.

"For god's sake," James this time did laugh but bitterly. "If she told you about us in the past, how it happened and you're not surprised that she has trust issues, then you should already know all this. It's way too soon to be confessing your lust for her, you'll only scare her off..."

Simon's eyebrow twitched viciously, "lust? No, I won't. You'll see when I tell her I love her tonight," Simon replied.

"Bad move," James groaned.

"Stop trying to put me off her. I think what happened between the two of you is long over with now, so get over it and move on," Simon snapped.

"That's not what I care about right now. I'm worried about what her reaction will be when you tell her," James tried not to snap back.

"Worried? Are you worried that she might feel the same way about me?" Simon asked with a dry smirk.

"No," James scoffed.

Simon tried not to show his offense and so covered it up with a sly smile. "Are you worried that I'll kiss her tonight?"

James stared at him coldly. Anyone else nearby who were listening in were getting the secondhand chills and opted to move out of harms way, but still close enough to watch and listen in.

"You'll only get resistance," he eventually said in a voice coated with venom.

Simon smiled as if he won. "Look, if she does then I'll keep trying until she reciprocates."

"I... what?" James stuttered until the words fully hit him. He tried his best to remain perfectly still but that was making him visibly tremble in the arms. "So basically you're saying; you won't take no for an answer. That so many no's will turn into yes."

Simon's face softened as if he felt sorry for him. "Dude, was she your first, only?" James tightly pressed his lips together and looked away, hoping that not seeing his stupid face would curb any violent thoughts. "This is how relationships are made. Women are coy, they love the chase. It makes them feel special."

It was never going to work so James stared at him once more. "Let me be very, very clear here. If I find out that you've tried to push her into anything she doesn't want to do, I'll make you regret it."

"Oh really, what are you going to do?" Simon taunted him.

One second he was still being stared at while he was smirking. The next a fist flew into his face. The room span as his face burned, then there was nothing but black. All of that before he even hit the floor with blood gushing from what was left of his nose, which wasn't much.

"Something like that," James said casually as he stood up. He walked off, leaving the rest of the room gossiping about him.

Little did he know, the last minute had been witnessed by Morgan and Jessie as soon as they walked through a different door.

Jessie cringed so much her eyes closed, Morgan meanwhile found it hilarious. "Oh god, not again," Jessie complained. Morgan's quiet laughter made her turn her head and scowl at her. "Why is this funny?"

"Why is it not?" Morgan giggled, then smirked at her.

A few people gathered around Simon. Someone tapped a commbadge.

Jessie groaned. "I really hoped that he..." She shook her head, "no. I'll talk to him." A few steps forward she noticed Morgan following her, a head shake told her to stop. Still she said, "alone."

"Ookay?" Morgan sighed.

Jessie changed her pace to a run when she exited the Mess Hall. She didn't have to do that for long, she spotted James about to reach a turbolift and press the call button.

"Hey! What are you in such a hurry for!" she yelled.

James stopped, his shoulders tensed. "It's better for him if I am."

"What's he done that's so bad?" Jessie asked.

James sighed and turned around to face her. "I thought Morgan would've told you by now."

"She did," Jessie said with a grimace. "Am I the only one feeling a bit of deja vu?"

"What do you mean?" James frowned.

"This isn't the first time you've had a fight with a guy that's fancied me," Jessie lightly scolded him while smiling.

James shrugged, "and?"

"And, why do you keep doing it? I can understand Tom and those boys in our class all those years ago; skivvy and creepy," Jessie shuddered. "But Simon, he's not that bad. Why did you hit him?"

"I was just trying to protect you," James replied.

Jessie's face twisted, "what? Protect me? According to you he's going to ask me out. I'll say no and it'll be awkward, I'll lose a friend. That's unavoidable."

"You don't know. He said to me that he was going to try and kiss you, and if you resist he's going to keep trying. Saying no to him is not going to be enough, he's going to try anything to get what he wants," James stuttered irritably.

"I doubt he would try and hurt me or anything, you don't have to worry about it. I'll be fine," Jessie said, smiling reassuringly.

"I'll be home anyway, my regular shift isn't until tomorrow. Don't tell him I'm there. If you need me at least you'll know where I am," James said.

Jessie clicked her tongue as she shook her head. "If it'll make you feel better then ok. Wouldn't it be a bit awkward, weird if you hear it?"

"I shouldn't unless he shouts," James said, briefly softening his face. "Why did you tell him about us anyway?"

"It kinda slipped out," Jessie answered meekly. She lowered her head to one side toward her shoulder. "You know I already had an idea, I saw a tint of jealousy in his eyes. That's exactly what I see in yours now."

"Don't you start too," James tried to laugh it off but he sounded only tired. "First Morgan, then Simon, now you. For the last time it's not jealousy, it's just worry."

"Well I hope so," Jessie said. "I just wonder if you left him in one piece."

Sickbay:

The Doctor scanned Simon as he lay on the biobed.

"Hmm, this is interesting," he muttered.

"For the last time, what?" Morgan groaned. The Doctor barely looked over his shoulder at her, his face a little flummoxed. Tom stood nearby biting his lip. "You called me here and all you've said so far is hmmm."

"The Borg must have a new way of assimilation. A few of his bones have been replaced by metal ones to decrease breakage," the Doctor said as if Morgan never said anything.

"They obviously don't work very well," Morgan snickered.

"No, they are fully functional," the Doctor frowned as he closed the tricorder. He reached for the regenerator on a nearby tray.

Morgan peered over at the patient. The gleam of metal fragments, some blood and the lack of a nose threatened to make her snigger again. "Are you sure?" she asked in a clear sarcastic tone.

The Doctor scowled in her direction, "of course I'm sure. This metal I've never seen before. It's very durable. No human could do this. I don't understand."

"I knew it, James isn't human," Tom said with a few frantic nods.

"Mr Paris, you're here to assist me not annoy me," the Doctor grumbled.

Tom frowned, "since when?"

Morgan turned away from them. "I knew it," she whispered. Still they heard her and stared across which she felt. Reluctantly she turned back. "If the Borg thought this was punch proof, then he has to be stronger than Borg can adapt to. The only people that are, are the Games Slayers of the regular and Chosen variety."

"Huh," Tom said but didn't sound confused, it was like he realised something.

The Doctor anticipated his response and groaned, "she said Games, not Gay."

Tom gasped in offense, "that's very homophobic Doc, I'd never say that." Morgan and the Doctor passed him the same judgemental looks making him nervous. "What I was going to say is that it explains a few things." He frowned, "it explains a lot, and I feel like an idiot for not guessing sooner."

"Why would you guess? It's not something regular people know about," Morgan said.

"Well..." Tom said but then hesitated. "Oh no I mean, I think I've heard the term Slayers before. Games though, that's new. If he slays games then that'd explain my holonovels."

Morgan rolled her eyes, groaning loudly. "No, how bad they are explains why they're messed with."

Tom pouted angrily and folded his arms, mumbling to himself.

"Let me get this straight. Stuart is a Games Slayer, which means that despite being human, he can shatter metal with his fist?" the Doctor tried not to laugh.

"Well I don't know, it's just a possibility. A rare one, that's why I wasn't entirely sure. There are never that many Slayers, especially Alpha Quadrant ones. They're even more rare than good looking EMH's," Morgan replied.

"I'll ignore that, Morgan," the Doctor scowled.

Morgan smiled innocently and turned to leave.

**Later that night
Jessie/James' Quarters:**

"What are you going to do in your room all night?" Jessie's voice came from an open bedroom door nearby.

James sat at the table barely skimming a PADD. "Not sure. Maybe I'll clean it."

Jessie peered out around the door, raising an eyebrow and smirking. James didn't notice right away, when he did he couldn't help but laugh. She shook her head and disappeared once more into her room.

"Nah but seriously, Morgan offered to come around before he does. Once he or both of you have gone out, we will too," James replied, looking again at his PADD.

"Huh," Jessie's voice grunted lightly. She stepped into the frame, eyeing him curiously. "What is it with you and Morgan? Have you all of a sudden become bestest buddies?"

"Do I detect a hint of jealousy?" James said in a light tone but straight face.

Jessie laughed it off, "I'll never be jealous of Morgan. You two have fun doing nothing, ok."

James laughed at the same time the door chimed. He glanced across briefly, then back at Jessie. "Yeah, you too." Then he was standing up to head for the door.

"Wait," Jessie abruptly said to stop him. She gestured to her outfit; long cardigan, casual top and leggings. "What do you think? Too sloppy, like I've been sitting around my quarters all day?"

"Uh..." James said to not say what he was thinking. He couldn't think of anything else and her stare was hardening. "Not even close," he did anyway.

"Damn it," Jessie grunted, turning around to go back into her room. "I need to replicate something chavvy like a tracksuit. Ugh, I hate..." she muttered until the door shut behind her.

James sighed and continued for the door, desperately hoping the night wasn't going to be as bad as he pictured.

"Oh come on, lets play Snap again!" Morgan moaned.

"Keep your voice down, he'll hear you," James whispered. Then he continued pacing back and forth.

Morgan quietly giggled. "Oops oh yeah, sorry. Another game of Snap?"

"No, I'm sick of that bloody game," James replied.

"Oh that's because you keep losing," Morgan grinned.

James sighed, stopping for a moment. "Why don't we play something else?"

"Like what, I only know one two player card game, the rest are solos," Morgan replied.

"It doesn't have to be cards," James said.

"Hey, it's not like you have a computer to play on," Morgan muttered.

"I do, there's a one that plays games in there somewhere," James said as he pointed at the mess on the floor.

Morgan pretended to huff. "I'm not going near that, I'll not come back alive."

"Then play your one player card game. I need to keep an ear out, just in case," James said.

"Nah you don't. Why don't you go in the mess to rescue the console for me?" Morgan asked sweetly.

"Maybe later," James shrugged.

"Coward," Morgan laughed. She plopped herself down on the only chair in the room and started to spread some cards on the small cabinet beside it.

James continued to pace. Morgan occasionally glanced over, irritated by it. She dug out some headphones from her pocket.

In the next room Jessie and Simon sat on the sofa in total silence, Jessie fidgeting and averting her eyes elsewhere. Simon seemed too deep in thought to notice.

"Did I tell you what your ex-boyfriend did to me?" Simon asked to break the silence.

"No," Jessie sighed, "you didn't, but I already know. What did you say to him?"

She was surprised to hear a good natured chuckle from him. Still she didn't look at him. "All I can think of is that I asked him about you. He got all defensive and snooty, telling me to back off. I tried to lighten the mood but he wasn't having of it." The pause afterwards was uncomfortable. He smiled at her, "I know better not to piss him off again. I'm treated but my face still aches."

"Hmm yeah," Jessie murmured. "I'll try to talk to him tomorrow. He's been really stressed lately, that's probably all it is. Maybe we should get going, the dinner rush away will be over soon."

Simon laughed until she got up, then his face fell considerably. "Wait, there's something I wanted to talk to you about before we go."

Jessie froze on the spot, internally cringing and closing her eyes. "Oh, now?" She hesitantly sat back down, feeling her shoulders tense up to near her ears.

"The last few days have been great, amazing even," Simon chirpely said, briefly grinning in her direction. He wasn't put off by her staring straight ahead, biting her lip nervously. "I've never met anyone like you, and I've never felt this way ever. I'm falling in love with you."

Jessie's eyes flew wide open, mouthed what. She shakily turned her head slightly in his direction, halfway she changed her mind. Instead she scrambled to her feet. "Please leave."

Simon looked like he'd been slapped. Still he kept his smile painted on as he stood up as well. "Why? What did I do wrong?"

"I... this is out of the blue. I didn't know that..." Jessie stammered. It annoyed her, she tried to shake it off. "Look, I'm not the dating, girlfriend kind of girl. I don't do that." She noticed him looking aside, clearly confused. "Anymore."

"Because of *him*?" Simon asked quietly.

Her shoulders sunk. "No." Jessie took a few steps away while holding her own forearms. "I've always been this way. I don't fall for people, at least very easily. I've never loved anyone. I don't know why. I've thought for a while that it isn't for me."

Simon watched her head for the main door, he wondered why until it opened and she stepped aside. "No, no that's not true. You might not have met the right guy yet, that's all," he said desperately.

Jessie ended up looking down at her feet, she sighed deeply. "I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry about," Simon said, trying to smile again. He walked over to her. "There's nothing wrong with only waiting for the special someone. The one that you can't stop thinking about and you catch yourself staring at. I used to be so tongue tied around girls, I had no idea why at the time. But with you it's so simple, I feel like I can really be myself and I never struggle to think of a subject."

"But," Jessie tried to cut him off.

"The real test, how you know for sure, is that first kiss," Simon said. Jessie stared at him as if he were Neelix trying to feed her. She discreetly took a step back, inadvertently closing the door. "Or even better, the second, third, hundredth. If it's still special then I say you've found the one. The one you'd die for, and couldn't live without."

He noticed Jessie staring off in he assumed no particular direction, eyes hazy but her face was starting to flush. Simon smiled, he finally found the right thing to say, he thought.

"You're right," she eventually said, getting his hopes up further. "I have felt that way."

Simon stepped closer while she was still looking away from him. "About me?"

Jessie tightly closed her eyes, her whole body tensed. "I'm sorry, it's not you. I'm really sorry." She turned back to the door.

"I know," Simon said coldly, freezing her in her tracks again. "It's that jerk you live with, isn't it?"

"He's not a jerk, and it's not him," Jessie said.

"Don't try to fool me, I may have only known you for a few days but I know when you're lying," Simon snapped.

Jessie reached for the door panel. "Please go now."

Simon grasped her wrist to stop her with a firm, "no."

"What..." Jessie stuttered, she tugged her arm away. Simon made sure to stand in between her and the door, forcing her to back off further into the living room. "If you don't, I'll call Security to do it for you."

Simon followed. Quick as a flash he snatched her commbadge and tossed it to the floor. His foot went over it. "Why do you need to do that? I thought we were friends," Simon said, his tone was dark and icy.

Jessie shook her head, then she noticed her entire torso was trembling. She backed off yet another two steps. "We are, that's why I haven't done anything. Not yet." The laugh she got in return chilled her to the bone, almost like he was mocking her. "I want to be alone okay. Don't make me... I don't want you to get hurt."

"But you don't need to be alone, not when I'm here," Simon whispered, trying to make his voice soft and gentle. It did the opposite, it made her shudder.

"I'm warning you, if you don't go you'll regret it," Jessie said, briefly glancing toward one of the other doors.

Simon caught it, his eyes narrowed. "Why are you acting this way? I'm not going to hurt you."

"I don't care, go," Jessie tried to say firmly but she was shaking too much.

"You don't want to be alone do you?" Simon said with a suspicious tone in his voice. His eyes sharpened, he stepped closer. "You want to have your boyfriend back. Well if I don't get you then he won't."

Morgan heard something through her headphones. She looked around the room while taking them off, quickly noticing that James had gone.

"Oh great," Morgan muttered. She rushed over to the door and it opened automatically.

Covered in cuts, clutching his arm and limping, Simon tried to hurry past her. Morgan noticed the broken glass around the coffee table in the direction he came from. What shocked her the most was seeing Jessie lying on the sofa trembling violently.

"What the... hell?" Morgan could only stutter in response. The door closed. She glanced in its direction, winced as that meant Simon had gone.

James crouched down near the sofa, offering both his hands to Jessie. She took a hold of one to sit up, then threw her arms around him in a tight hug.

Morgan looked at them and the door, feeling helpless on both sides. "What do I... what happened?"

"Morgan contact Security, tell them to go after Simon," James said.

"But," Morgan squeaked.

James cringed as he could feel Jessie's trembling vibrating through him. "Just do it."

Morgan tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Security. Whoever's nearby James and Jess's quarters, you need to arrest Simon."

"Miss Morgan? Clarify," Tuvok's voice questioned.

"I don't know, but I'm going to find out. It shouldn't take long, he's injured," Morgan replied.

"There had better be a good explanation, Tuvok out."

The Ready Room:

"Mr Ellis has been taken to the brig, and the Doctor is on his way to treat his wounds," Tuvok reported.

Before Kathryn could think to reply, James pretended to cough, "shame." She stared at him at the same time he averted his gaze to the ceiling.

"James," Kathryn groaned tiredly. "I'm sure you have an explanation, because..." She glanced over towards her daughter and Jessie sitting on the sofa. Jessie with her head down, absentmindedly pulling on a strand of her own hair while Morgan softly talked to her. "We can't keep doing this."

James' expression turned blank, except his eyes which hardened as they focused on her and Tuvok. "I was in the next room. I heard her shout, then some commotion. I went in there and saw him..." he said quietly. He briefly glanced in Jessie and Morgan's direction, then back again. "He'd forced her onto the sofa."

"And then what?" Tuvok asked, cueing an eyebrow raise pointed upwards from Kathryn and a cold stare from James.

"And then I pulled him off her," James replied. His eyes narrowed at the Vulcan, "oh I'm *sorry*, should I have been more gentle with him?"

Kathryn cleared her throat, once again facing him while Tuvok raised his own eyebrow. "Forced her onto the sofa. Are you implying...?"

"It's pretty obvious isn't it?" James muttered. He shook his head, glancing down. "I knew he wouldn't take no for an answer, that's why I was there."

"I see..." Kathryn started to reply. She was cut off by Jessie bursting into tears. They all looked over and saw Morgan gently putting an arm around her shoulders, trying to comfort her. Despite that, James turned to go over as well. "Wait," Kathryn said quickly to stop him. It did to her relief.

"Witnesses have already reported seeing you hit him earlier. Tom called his face an explosion, very colourful."

James shrugged, "so?"

Tuvok's eyebrow still managed to get higher. "So, until we know for certain what happened, you are guilty of assaulting him twice with no provokation. While on probation that is extremely serious."

Morgan walked over with her eyes widening. "No provokation? Are you blind?" she snapped in Tuvok's direction. "I've never seen Jessie cry, ever. Whatever happened there, the prick deserved that and more."

"Don't bother Morgan. We've got to make sure the poor entitled and abusive asshole hasn't lost a hair on his head, before worrying about silly little things like their victim's health and safety," James said in a very sarcastic tone. He rolled his eyes, then pointed them off side to the wall, "it's always been the human way."

"You are putting words in my mouth, again," Tuvok said. "I was pointing out that your testimony..."

Kathryn sighed loudly and with a touch of a growl on purpose to silence him. He took the hint. With the whole room awkwardly silent, she got up from her desk to walk over to Jessie. The sight of her shaking while burying her face in her hands slouched over her own lap made her hesitate a moment. She sat down beside her.

"Jessie?" she said softly. Jessie lifted her head only slightly, her hands desperately trying to wipe the tears from her face. "It's okay, you don't have to. If you can, tell us what happened. If you need anyone out to do that, just tell me."

Jessie rested her chin in her hand, tears still threatened to fall from her red eyes. "No, no one," she said hoarsely. "I turned him down, he didn't go. He got mad." She sniffed and wiped a few more tears with her spare hand. "I thought he was gonna attack or kill me, he pushed me into the wall, leaned in and... tried to kiss me. I tried to push him away but I couldn't. He forced me onto the sofa. That's when James helped me."

Kathryn nodded gently while placing a comforting hand on her shoulder. Jessie looked away sniffing. Kathryn pointed her next comment in James' direction, "how did he help you?"

James stared back with a little offense. "I already told you; pulled him off her and chucked him away like the garbage he is." Kathryn noticed Morgan nodding in approval, she scowled at her instead. "I know, I should've done more but he ran away before I could wring his neck."

"I doubt you want another murder on your record, Ensign," Tuvok said.

"Don't put words in my mouth," James said, imitating him.

Kathryn checked on Jessie before getting back up. As she was staring solemnly at her lap, no tears visible, Kathryn headed over towards her daughter. "I get James being there, it's his home, but why were you there during all this?"

"Uh, I was listening to music in his room. It was a fade out and I heard the clatter," Morgan replied.

Kathryn only heard the first half of Morgan's answer. It hit her in the face, she turned bright red and rapidly glanced between Morgan and James. "Excuse me, what? What were you doing in *his* room?"

Morgan rolled her eyes and smirked, "I told you. Listening to music."

Kathryn groaned tiredly once more into her hand. "Give me strength."

"Captain, what should we do with Lieutenant Ellis?" Tuvok asked.

"Keep him in the Brig until further notice," Kathryn sighed in response. "We'll need to question him..."

"Chakotay to Janeway."

Kathryn tapped her commbadge. "Yes Commander."

"Two ships are approaching. They wish to speak to you."

"There isn't enough coffee in the universe," Kathryn muttered.

The Bridge:

"Have they threatened to kill us or board yet?" Kathryn asked flatly as she sat down in her seat.

Chakotay briefly smiled. "No. They seem friendly."

Kathryn nodded. "Get the red alert on standby," she whispered to him. "On screen."

The viewscreen changed from showing the two simple and pretty small ships, to two men standing in what looked like a control room. One stepped forward, staring at the bridge crew firmly and without blinking.

"I am Surantagen, leader of the Valarians," he said.

Tom glanced back at everyone, bemused. Everyone who noticed him doing it shook their heads.

"Captain Janeway, what can I do for you?" Kathryn said with a friendly smile.

"Our planet needs help. Our planet is in the middle of a heat wave and we cannot produce much food," Surantagen explained as if he were reading a shopping list. "Can you give us a few food supplies in exchange for some dilithium?"

Kathryn briefly exchanged a glance with Chakotay. He hoped it wasn't the hint for red alert. "A trade would be acceptable. When do you want to make the trade?"

Surantagen bowed his head. "Much thanks, Captain. We are grateful. Our mining fleet is in orbit of our world. I suggest we do the exchange there."

"Very well. Send us the co-ordinates and we'll follow you," Kathryn said.

Another head bow from both men and the viewscreen changed back to ship view.

"Captain, I suggest we proceed with caution," Tuvok said.

"Oh I'm way ahead of you, Commander. Keep the shields at max, scan the area. Just in case, have two transporter locks. One on a few rations and another on what's left of the Leola Root," Kathryn said, smiling darkly. Chakotay tried not to laugh.

Tuvok didn't have energy left to react as normal, "yes Captain."

The turbolift opened near him, letting somebody out. Morgan was about to go in instead, but Harry blurred by her to get there first. The door closed before she could even think.

"What's his problem? I'm only here to drop my CV off for the Captain's Assistant position," Naomi pouted, waving a PADD.

Morgan blinked, still mostly frozen from what happened. She shook it off and headed across the bridge to go wait for the other turbolift.

Tom snorted into laughter as soon as he thought it was safe to. Morgan's turbolift door closing cued him in. "I didn't realise Harry was such a chick magnet."

Kathryn's face hardened into stone. Unfortunately for Chakotay she first pointed it in his direction. He shuddered, but knew that a Tom thrashing was due any second. To his and everyone else's disappointment she instead walked over to Naomi.

"How many spoonfuls of instant coffee go into my order?" Kathryn asked.

Naomi's eyes widened in horror. Anyone nearby could see the wheels in her head desperately trying to turn, puffing smoke out occasionally. "Uh, twenty?"

Kathryn smiled, "you're hired."

Meanwhile in the corridor outside of the Ready Room, James and Jessie waited for a turbolift to arrive. Jessie kept her head down, slightly turned away from him, a hand cradling her stomach as if it were sore. James wanted to say something to help her but that clued him in to keep quiet.

When it finally arrived they stepped into it.

"Sorry," Jessie mumbled, taking him by surprise. "I didn't want to go out the bridge way. Too embarrassing."

"It's okay, I get it," James said as he tried to regain his bearings. "You've done nothing wrong though."

"Hmm," Jessie barely responded, still staring at the floor. James thought that was all she was going to say for now. She mumbled something he didn't make out, then shook her head. In a clearer volume she still mumbled, "haven't I?"

Her question had him recoiling and hoping that he misheard, or what she said before that he didn't hear made it make more sense. "No, no. Really, you did nothing..."

Jessie tilted her head back up to normal level. He could see her blotchy, cried out eyes looking ahead, distant. "He said he loved me." Her eyes drifted across briefly to check his reaction. He didn't, not visibly. "He gave me this rousing speech and..." she sighed angrily, "and I responded with a leave me alone, get out."

"Jess no. That doesn't excuse what he did," James said gently.

"Maybe," Jessie mumbled. "Some of the things he said, I can't stop thinking about them. That after a hundred or so kisses that are still special like the first, you've found your true love. Really stupid, I dunno why he said that. He and I never..." She cleared her throat, fidgeting slightly. "Dumb right?"

James glanced away for a moment, shoulders tensed slightly. "Um, yeah. It sounds like rubbish."

Jessie laughed very weakly, "yeah, and that he'd die for me and junk." She scoffed while her head turned in his direction, then back ahead again. "I mean, he's only known me for what, four days?"

"Right and he couldn't imagine life without you, huh?" James tried to force his own laugh.

"You got it," Jessie laughed, at least hers sounded genuine. "Weirdo, huh?"

The laughed fizzled out, leaving them in an awkward and complete silence for a minute.

"Er, how come we haven't arrived at the deck yet?" Jessie frowned.

James thought about it and quickly cringed. "Crap, we forgot to tell the lift where to go."

"This is getting silly," Jessie said inwardly. "Um, deck five."

"Deck nine," James said after her.

Jessie lightly flinched when the turbolift started to move down four decks. It went by so fast, the doors opened before she knew it.

"Wait," she abruptly said, pressing the panel to shut them again. James looked at her, not confused like she thought but worried. "I can't believe I didn't thank you for saving me. I'm sorry. Thank you."

"You don't need to thank me. I'm just glad you're ok," James said, giving her a smile that unlike the laughs earlier was sincere.

Jessie smiled weakly as she stepped closer, anxiously beginning to raise her arms, then down by her side twice as quickly. James thought he understood what she was doing. He closed the gap and put his arms around her. More than relieved, she held him tightly again, resting her head on his shoulder.

They were like that for a while until Jessie pulled back slightly so she could look him in the eye.

Morgan stepped out of another turbolift. She looked around very irritated. "Where is he, the little turbolift hogger?"

"Please restate the question."

"What?" Morgan snapped up at the wall panel. She gave the wall a little kick, leaving a massive dent where her foot was. While she walked off a realisation hit her. "Oooh, right. Computer, where's Harry Kim?"

"Harry Kim is in his quarters."

Morgan pulled all manner of disgusting faces. "I'll get him later," she muttered to herself.

Further down the corridor her stomach growled and she stopped with a frown. "Wait, where am I?" She peered at the panel which quickly showed her a deck plan of the ship. Her lifesign seemed to be slap bang in the middle of it with turbolift shafts at equal distance. "Damn it!"

Morgan continued in the same direction. Once there she pressed the call button.

She didn't have to wait long. From the sound of it, it was already there waiting for someone to use it.

As soon as the doors started to open she was greeted to the sight of James and Jessie in the middle of an intense kiss. She had to firmly bite her lip and hold her breath to stop from laughing out loud. Though she also thought the sound of the doors would've gotten their attention, but it was clear they hadn't heard it.

In the end she had to clear her throat. That did it. They both pulled away and stepped back from the other. Jessie's face flushed bright red as she started to stammer. "This is my stop, bye," she said very quickly and sped out of the lift.

Morgan almost lost her composure while stepping in instead. The smirk was threatening to turn into something more, a brief snort gave her away. James awkwardly tried to avert his gaze away from her, absent mindedly clearing his throat.

"Don't tell me that was a friend kiss," Morgan said, lips trembling.

"It started like that," James said quietly.

Morgan once again snorted, but it didn't stop her. She laughed behind her tightly closed lips.

"Aren't you in the turbolift for a reason?" James groaned.

"Oh yeah, I was going to eat but I'm no longer hungry," Morgan tried to say innocently but she was sniggering too much. She noticed James looking very unimpressed at her, that didn't help at all. "Fine, deck two," she laughed.

The ship shook violently and the turbolift stalled for a moment.

"Make that deck one," Morgan said.

The Bridge:

"Who's firing on us?" Kathryn asked like she already knew.

"It's the Valarians," Tuvok replied. "Their mining convoy are armed."

Chakotay sighed not in surprise, he was wondering why they even fell for it. "How many?"

"Including the first two vessels, twenty one," Tuvok answered.

"Shields status?" Kathryn barked.

"91% and holding," Tuvok replied. The back part of his station started to fizzle loudly, cueing blank stares from the command team. Even he looked embarrassed. "Apologies, my display panel is damaged, it's showing everything upside down."

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "oh of course. Fire back, target the heavier hitters."

"Aye Captain," Tuvok said. Another ship shimmy threw him off his targetting sensors, then he noticed something about the last hit.

Morgan and James arrived on the Bridge near Opps, James noticed it was empty and went to take it.

"What's going on?" Morgan asked.

"The robotic guys attacked us, to the surprise of no one," Tom replied.

"Captain, the weapons from the mining freighters are passing directly through our shields," Tuvok reported. Many stared at him in shock. "The only reason the shields are damaged is because the lead vessels are targetting the emitters. One more hit and they'll be down."

"What!" Kathryn roared.

Another phaser blast grazed the hull causing a few big explosions all around the bridge. It didn't deter Kathryn's furious jump to her feet and glower at no one in particular. "They're the aliens our traitor was talking to."

Chakotay scoffed, again not surprised. "They gave them the shield frequencies. We need better Security around here."

"That's what I've been saying for years," James commented. Tuvok tried to stare at him with his usual stare but the ship trembled too much to keep focus. James was too busy frowning to notice, "wait, what traitor?"

"Whoever stole Jessie's laptop, duh," Morgan said as if it were obvious.

James' blank stare in her direction made her think twice. "No one told me."

"O'Hara to Tuvok."

Tuvok tapped his commbadge looking puzzled. "We're rather busy up here, Crewman."

"Yeah er, I was just... passing by..." a woman's voice nervously stuttered.

Thompson's whispered in the background, *"tell him about the forcefields dropping and how it's not my fault."*

"What about the getting knocked out by a little shove into the wall?" Foster's voice sniggered.

"Um, it's not Thompson's fault. He was in the toilet," O'Hara's voice said.

Tuvok managed to look annoyed. He felt that was happening more often than late. "Some context, I insist."

"That Simon guy's gone. We tracked him down to the shuttle bay," Foster's voice replied. *"He's in his shuttle but it's shielded."*

Kathryn angrily growled and loudly, even managing to overlap a console hissing and spitting fire sparks. "That's it. From now on, no more guests, especially those with sob stories."

Another phaser blast hit against the hull close by. The Bridge shook violently, it took everyone a while to get their balance back.

"Oh god, where has that guy gone this time?" Morgan moaned. A few of the bridge crew looked at her, then Opps beside her and noticed that James had gone.

"I think we've got much bigger problems than that," Tom said.

"Captain I've got the shields operating but only at 25%," Tuvok said.

"It's better than none," Kathryn said. "Something tells me they don't want to kill us. Someone or thing onboard is what they're after."

The shuttle bay:

Foster, Thompson, their part time teammate Ivans, and O'Hara snuck into the bay. As far as they could see nothing looked out of the ordinary. They continued to look around.

They got to the Enterprise shuttle when they heard the bay doors open and close.

"Oh great, someone else is here now," Thompson stuttered.

"Would you be quiet," O'Hara hissed.

Foster groaned and approached the shuttle, tricorder in one hand scanning it. He pulled a confused frown at the results, then pushed his hand out towards the hull. Thompson smiled expectantly, O'Hara judged him silently. What neither of them expected was Foster's hand caressing the hull. They both stared, speechless.

"The shield's been taken down," Foster explained.

Thompson tried to shake his rare speechlessness away. His gormless face remained though. "I knew that... first."

Foster opted to ignore him and open the shuttle doors, quickly dropping his tricorder for the phaser in his belt. Despite not having to do anything else, Thompson still pointed his own phaser after Foster and Ivans did.

Inside it, one of the chairs swung around. Simon stared at them, his eyes wider and cold. He got up to confront them. Foster and Ivans stepped back a bit, then fired at him. Foster winced, expecting more trouble but Simon stumbled backwards into his chair.

"That was anti-climactic," Thompson muttered.

Ivans laughed nervously, "you're surprised?"

O'Hara tapped her commbadge. "Bridge, we've got him." She hurried into the shuttle to have a look at the console Simon had been using. Thompson mimed all sorts of don't do that signals which Foster got a good laugh out of. She clearly hadn't noticed with her back to him. "Looks like he was trying to send them a crew manifest. That's weird."

"Not really," she heard James say behind her. She jumped and swung around, just in time to see Thompson and Ivans clamber fearfully out of his way. James meanwhile sighed, disappointed. "Oh you already got him." He walked over to the slumped body anyway and knelt down, making O'Hara nearby tense up.

"Excuse me. He's already unconscious. What are you doing?" she asked, once more prompting Thompson's mime act.

James looked up at her in dismay, "he's not dead?"

Foster laughed very nervously, "no, we don't normally shoot to kill."

Thompson nudged him in the elbow, "he probably does, so shhh!" he whispered.

O'Hara scoffed, judgement in her tone and in her face. "So for hitting on the girl you like, he deserves to die huh?"

"Seriously Laura," Thompson squeaked desperately, holding his hands out and up right. "Don't poke him, he bites like a bull terrier."

"You might want to start taking your own advice," Foster muttered to him.

Several more tremors knocked anyone standing into the left side of the shuttle, James merely bumped into the console. Simon and his chair slammed into it, almost hitting him. He groaned as if it were a minor annoyance. "They're not going to stop until they get the shields down," James said as he turned to look at the console he landed on.

"Why though? They clearly have no reason to worry about them," Thompson stammered.

O'Hara straightened back up, "that's not our problem, let the Bridge handle it. We should get this guy to Sickbay." She didn't wait, she leaned across the consoles to key something in, unaware that James was accessing the same system as her.

The Bridge:

Tuvok pulled himself up from his charred station, immediately greeted by Kathryn staring at him from the other side. It unnerved him for a second. "The shields are gone, Captain. I'll try..."

"First, alert Security to prepare for intruders," Kathryn snarled. Then she stomped off to his relief.

Morgan's eyes lit up, "ooh, can I join them?"

Both Kathryn and Chakotay instinctually said no in perfect unison. Kathryn though reconsidered as a thought came to her. "Actually," she said to Chakotay's horror. "Sure, go ahead sweetie."

"Heh, awesome," Morgan giggled and ran into the nearest turbolift. She almost ran into Harry in the process, she pushed him into his own station and carried on her way.

Chakotay side stepped closer to Kathryn. "Kathryn, she's only sixt..." he whispered.

"I have a feeling from what we know and what she told me, we're going to need her," Kathryn whispered back with a glint in her eye, "nothing to worry about."

Harry clutched his stomach with a new console shaped dent in it, the other hand grasped the station. Something there made him forget all about that and look worried. "Er, Captain?"

Kathryn eyed him with a smirk, "have you finished hiding from a five year old, Mr Kim?"

Harry turned beetroot, "no, yes. Erm I'm detecting previous transporter activity, ours, on one of the bigger ships."

"What?" Chakotay snapped. He turned his attention to the viewscreen which showed one of the ships from before and little ones surround it. "Who?"

"Uh, the commbadge signal says it's the new Lieutenant guy. Ellis?" Harry stammered.

"You tell us!" Kathryn snapped. Harry whimpered. Kathryn groaned, "god damn it. That team told us they got him. Imbeciles."

Tuvok's station beeped angrily at him, he showed some concern. "Mr Paris, move us out of their range. Full impulse."

Tom froze, worried that Kathryn would throttle him if he listened, or didn't for that matter. He chose to live and hurriedly typed in a course correction. The ship turned sharply.

"Commander?" Kathryn questioned in Tuvok's direction.

"The lead vessel and two freighters have activated their auto destruct. We have less than..." Tuvok began to answer but another tremor, this one light, cut him off. "Twenty seconds."

Harry checked behind him, and twice at the display at his fingers. "Two freighters self destruct cancelled. Some are retreating. The others are flying in circles." He cringed, "well two less are, they smashed into each other."

Tom sighed in relief, wiping sweat from his brow with his arm. "Tom saves the day, again."

He didn't have to look to know everyone were staring at him, and not nicely.

Kathryn was strangely the first to stop. Her hands flew up over her shoulders in frustration. "First get us out of here, overinflated ego. Then can somebody please tell me what the hell's going on?"

"I dunno, but it smells like bullcrap," Harry mumbled quietly. Still he was heard and blankly stared at, making him blush furiously. "What, Ellis beams over and they all go crazy like the Borg did. Hardly, was he that annoying or something?"

Kathryn stared into the back of Tom's head. This time he felt it for sure and started to shake. "Oh, I can understand that. But nevertheless, I want an investigation carried out. Tuvok, question Security Team One."

Tuvok nodded, "yes Captain."

Captain's Log Stardate 12814.5... wait what? Oh god, are we time travelling again!?

"Um Captain, the display is still upside down," Tuvok's voice said.

Jesus Chr... fine! Supplemental: I have no idea how to make sense of this. We rescue an Enterprise crewmember who ran into the Borg and he repays us by turning in our shield frequencies to the nearest Borg wannabes. When I get home, the first thing I'm going to do is give that entire ship's crew a slap. Pricks.

Anyhow. The aliens looks like they suffered from a similar glitch their idols did. Apparently the only theory about that isn't true, Neelix's Leola Root is still accounted for so that wasn't the cause. Mr Tuvok claims he has an explanation as to why. If it makes no bloody sense it's probably right. That's the theme lately.

Kathryn impatiently tapped the PADD lying in front of her on the Conference Table. She then noticed each chair was occupied and staring at her. "Well?" she said sharply to cover her embarrassment.

"Mr Kim was correct that Simon Ellis transported to the lead vessel before the destruction. The evidence backs it up," Tuvok explained, though he noticed Kathryn's twitching eyebrow. He quickly handed her a PADD of his own. "We also found this in the shuttle."

Kathryn brought it in front of her to read. She immediately scoffed. "*I know you all confused with what's going on, I know I am. Just today I found out something disturbing. When my shuttle was being assimilated, their cube was attacked by a race called the Valarians,*" she read aloud, clicking her tongue now and then. "Bloody moron, it's *you're all confused!* What a stupid ass typo."

Chakotay carefully took it out of her hands as she continued to rant. "*It turns out that they were the ones who disabled the Borg, stole drones including myself, to turn into their own collective.*" He shuddered, "this sounds very Unity-esque."

Tom sat back in his chair, smiling contently, "that was a good one." He didn't notice B'Elanna rolled her eyes in disgust.

"You may as well toss that *evidence* into the bin, Commander. The pervert can't even write properly," Kathryn grumbled.

"It's a typo made by fast typers. It's very common," Harry said, immediately regretting it before Kathryn pointed her worst deathglare at him.

Chakotay chose to continue reading aloud, "*it didn't completely take to me. I'd hear their scattered voices sometimes, some stronger than others, confusing me into doing things I normally wouldn't. I am very sorry, especially to Jessie. I would never hurt her myself...*"

Jessie fidgeted in her seat and averted her eyes to the window. James noticed from the other side of the table, his shoulders hunched up slightly as he stared down at the table.

Chakotay cleared his throat awkwardly. "Skipping that bit. And that." He used his thumb to press to the next page. "*I realised that it was my doing that Voyager was attacked. In return I tried to go to their ship when our shields were down, hoping that...*" The PADD was snatched from his hands, "uh."

He noticed Kathryn walked over to Neelix and hand him a PADD, he assumed the same one. "Here's some unedible crap you can add to your breakfast menu tomorrow."

Neelix gasped in offense, "as if I'd do that."

James remembered the PADD on the grill the other day, smiled and shook his head.

"Um Captain, that was our only other ev..." Tuvok protested.

Kathryn exhaled sharply. "And I'm supposed to believe this garbage? Notice how he's not responsible for anything, except his heroic saving of the ship? I'm not buying the *Lovely Simon Is Innocent, Honest* series, you couldn't pay me to read it."

"But, what other explanation is there?" the Doctor wondered. "His body definitely had Borg like implants, his story there checked out. We saw the Valarians behave as the Borg did when they were confused."

"Correct. Security Team One all said the same thing; that Ellis' transporter signal to Sickbay looked like it was disrupted by a second signal. No contradictions in their story. Both signals came from the Enterprise's shuttle," Tuvok said.

B'Elanna nodded, "we assume he had a transport to the aliens ship on a timer or when Voyager's shields were down, and it was a really lucky coincidence it happened during his Sickbay transfer. But I can't find the algorithm for such a thing. If he did it, he hid it well."

Chakotay's face tightened as a particular comment replayed in his head. "When you said Team One said the same thing. That didn't strike you as odd? Did you include O'Hara in this?"

"Of course Commander," Tuvok said, eyeing him curiously. "I questioned Foster, Thompson, Ivans and O'Hara. They said O'Hara did the transport as normal, then they described the overlapping signal identically. Torres and I investigated the claim. It was conclusive."

Kathryn glanced toward Chakotay with a similar expression, "what are you getting at?"

Chakotay turned his head to look at the other side of the table in James' general direction. He didn't seem to be paying much attention, he looked even bored with his chin sitting in his palm. His neighbours; the Doctor and B'Elanna were confused as to why they were being stared at.

"Oh nothing, it's just..." Chakotay said hesitantly, turning his attention back to the head of the table. "Even Thompson described the scene the same? That idiot would've took the credit, or at least changed a few details to seem better than he is. And it still doesn't explain why they were beaming him to Sickbay instead of arresting him. If he were injured, then they'd still have to send him to the brig first. So why?"

Tuvok's eyebrow raised gently, "he was out of character, that is true, but I don't see any reason to doubt their explanation. O'Hara wasn't Security trained, hence the mistake. I can't think why they would feel the need to lie. As you say, Thompson would've took the chance to take credit for saving Voyager. Even make up a story to explain the glitch. He didn't and must've known the evidence Torres and I found would contradict him."

"I suppose," Chakotay said, sounding unsure.

James smiled behind his hand, nobody saw it.

Kathryn sighed in relief, "good, we can move on to more important things." Neelix's face lit up, his hand started to raise. "I didn't say more terrifying things. Nobody's interested in seeing your Romeo and Juliet knock off."

Neelix pouted and folded his arms huffily, "it's not. I was inspired by the Upendi events. Despite what she did then, Annika's relationship with the prince was so tragic and beautiful. I wanted to speak to her about it, but the computer says she's not here."

"Yeah right. We'd be so lucky," Kathryn scoffed.

Meanwhile:

Annika stared in utter disbelief at the scene in front of her. Previously stone faced Valarians were dancing to some horrid, squealy music, chucking alcoholic drinks over their own faces. A few would pick a fight with someone, then seem to forget it and do something else entirely. She did notice one staring gormlessly at what looked like a Borg computer panel, which he occasionally tapped with his thumb.

"When I find out who was messing with the transporters, I'm going to..." Annika grumbled to herself.

A male computerised voice rang out around the whole ship, "*auto destruct in two seconds.*"

Annika merely groaned, "oh fu..."

THE END