

Episode 3.13 Single Crossing

"No, it's nearly lunch time," Neelix complained as he put some cakes into the oven.

"But Neelix, we need to perform to promote our single," Lena said.

"Didn't you just release one last month?" Neelix asked.

"Yeah, so?" Lena said.

"Hang on a second, what about James' new daughter? Don't you think he should be spending time with her?" Neelix questioned.

"Yeah he should be with his kid," Kiara said smugly as she crossed her arms.

Lena growled, she put her hands on her hips. "It's just four minutes! It's not like the song is an hour long!"

"All right, god! Do parents always get their own way?" Kiara huffed.

"I want some more coffee now!" Kathryn yelled as she stumbled through the doors.

"No, not all of them," Lena replied.

"Luckily I'm prepared for this," Neelix said with a flourished wink. He picked up a cup of decaf coffee, then rushed over to Kathryn. She grabbed the cup and she drank some. She immediately turned a little more sober.

"Woah, that stuff is great," Lena said.

"It won't last long, she may slowly turn hyper again," Neelix said. He went back to chopping carrots.

Kathryn went over to the table where James, Jessie, Duncan, Yasmin and of course Sasha were at. "Let's have a look at my granddaughter then!"

"I don't think that's a good idea, she might get scared," Jessie said, subconsciously leaning away from her.

"Of course she will, I'm still scared of Janeway," Yasmin said.

"But, why would she be scared of me? James wasn't scared of me, neither was Kiara," Kathryn said.

"How long did I keep my eyes closed for?" James said.

Kathryn put her hands on her hips. "How rude. You shouldn't judge people on their looks." She turned around, almost bumping into the annoying laughing woman carrying her daughter. It didn't take long for her to turn back around looking freaked out. "Oh my god!"

"I know, she's so beautiful," the woman laughed.

"Good lord, that nose, it must've felt like being stabbed coming out," Kathryn stuttered. James cleared his throat and smiled. "What?"

Lena walked over to the table, "we can perform our new song."

"Good, when?" James asked.

Kathryn groaned, "I hope it isn't another song about stealing coffee and holding it to ransom. I didn't sleep that night."

"After the meeting when dad comes here, he's going to love it," Lena said with an evil glint in her eye.

"I don't like that look at all," Kathryn muttered.

"Relax mum, this one's not about you," Lena said.

James smirked to himself, "well, sorta."

Lena shushed him, "we're back to our usual subject. Much easier to rewrite."

"And fun for the whole family," James said.

Yasmin looked disappointed, "aaaw, so no one dies in this one?"

James glanced toward her with a worried expression on his face. "The music videos aren't real, you do know that right?" Yasmin's face falling answered his question.

"Maybe we should," Lena said. She got confused looks for it. "There's gotta be footage of Annika's death scene. A slight edit, slap a funny sound effect on and best video ever."

A very familiar Federation ship lurked in orbit around a M-Class planet. Purple clouds churned beneath them. It stuck out like a sore thumb in the middle of calm white ones.

"You are useless, do you realise that?" Damien asked angrily.

"Whar?" Riker muttered as he stuffed his face with burgers.

"Ugh, at least Annika was a useful recruit," Damien muttered.

"Useful? She's hot," Riker said.

"For crying out loud, is that all you think about?" Damien asked.

"Hey, I haven't had an onscreen romance since Troi," Riker protested. He stood up, bits of bun all fell onto the floor as he did.

"You're cleaning that up," Damien muttered.

"No I'm not," Riker mumbled as he started stuffing his face with crisps.

Annika waltzed into the room, alive and well. Confused yet?

"Ah Annika, do you have good news?" Damien asked.

"Hell no. Voyager's got all its power back," Annika replied.

"WHAT!?" Damien roared. Riker jumped, spilling all his crisps onto the floor.

"They must've fixed the problem. You should have given me two for that ship," Annika said.

"Well good going Annika, we'll have to use Plan A now. How come Plan B works worst when you use it first?" Damien grumbled.

"Hey it's not my fault that I fell into that fire. The Enterprise would've been destroyed if I hadn't, don't you think I feel bad enough as it is?" Annika asked huffily.

"No!" Damien yelled. He threw a heavy object at her, she fell unconscious.

"What's Plan A?" Riker asked as he crawled on the floor, still managing to eat his crisps.

"Plan A is usually the most evillest one. I don't know why Annika suggested doing Plan B," Damien replied.

"What is it?" Riker asked.

"All you need to know is that Voyager and the Enterprise will regret messing with my plans in the past. It ends here," Damien replied.

"What, now?" Riker asked.

"Not now you imbecile! You spoiled the mood!" Damien yelled. He threw another heavy object at him.

Everyone had managed to squeeze around Voyager's Conference Room table, some with chairs dragged in from the Bridge.

Chakotay lead the meeting since Kathryn was too busy bouncing on her chair and giggling.

"For the last time we're not assigning job roles like a PE lesson's rounders team," Chakotay groaned into his hand.

"But it's not fair, you get the officers and experts, you gave me the civilians," Lena complained.

Chakotay stared at her sternly. "Look, your mother gave you that ship during her Tuesday "fifty coffee" binge. She's too out of it now to notice if I take it back. You're lucky I didn't after that last stunt you pulled."

Lena's jaw dropped. "But I didn't scratch it that much."

Chakotay's eyes twitched, "didn't scratch what that much?"

"So blackout huh. What was up with that?" Lena said nervously.

Tom snickered obnoxiously, "oh you Enterprise schmucks. Good luck on the ship of the damned, in more ways than one. Thanks for taking that title off us."

"Oh that reminds me. Catch!" Kathryn giggled, tossing something small at him.

His hands danced all over trying to catch it until it bounced onto the table. His eyes bugged out once he saw what it was, and he wasn't the only one. "A pip?"

"Enterprise needs a first officer, congrats Lieutenant Commander," Kathryn winked.

"What?" both Lena and Harry exclaimed.

"I have more command experience than him. It should be me," Harry said.

Lena scoffed, "I dunno what's worse. Pain in the ass or wannabe emo git."

"Hey thanks for having my back buddy," Tom said plainly. "Lena's never gonna take my advice. This isn't gonna work, unless I double team as the pilot."

"Ohno, no joystick for you, young man," Kathryn snorted into further giggles.

"It doesn't matter, not really. The Enterprise answers to us, regardless of who is command," Chakotay said.

"Yes!" Kathryn bellowed with jokey authority. "We are the Voyager collective, bow to your King and Queen, resistance is futell, fital, futile. Whatever, it's all good!" Once she was done she was in hysterics and tumbling backwards onto the floor.

Doctor Jones sighed, "that remains to be seen."

"So um, everyone else is okay with their current positions on both ships? Okay good, moving on," Chakotay said rapidly, his cheeks turning bright red. There were a few mumbles of yes and no's, all of which he ignored. "The blackout, what do we know?"

Harry got up still huffing about his lack of promotion, to get to the wall computer. A few taps brought up an image of a small black device. "This was the culprit. Apparently it's a weapon created to use against the Borg by a species called the Turei. It drains as much power as it can so it can overload and explode. Since it draws power, the explosion always causes a circuit failure. The whole ship becomes useless."

"How did it get here?" Chakotay asked.

"There are several possibilities. One is that Annika left it as a parting gift before she left for the mission. You know, that one where that shuttle bus exploded for no reason," Lena replied.

"Why would she do that? She was a little less revenge obsessed when she died," Doctor Jones asked.

Lena frowned, "am I remembering it differently? She didn't intend to kill herself. She pretended to knowing we'd stop and watch, while the plasma fire destroyed the core."

"That's the report I got," James said.

"Okay fine, so why plant the bomb if that was her plan?" Harry said.

"Until we can prove that it was Annika then we'll have to be on high alert. We don't want this happening again," Kathryn said, sounding sober. Neelix smiled as he slid the decaf jar back under the desk.

"Annika had a motive alright. Who else could or would've done it? These aliens are nowhere near here," Lena said.

"Yes but where did she get the device from? She didn't leave the ship before the shuttle incident since..." Chakotay said, then his face turned pale. "Oh."

"What?" a lot of the room asked.

"Wasn't she on her own for a while on Mercury? She could've easily been manipulated or even brainwashed without us knowing. It would explain her more recent behaviour," Chakotay replied.

"That's right, for all we know she's been plotting against us for months," Kathryn said.

"She had been causing bother with those spells she was doing. First she cast that one that made Faye go power mad. Then she cast that one that made dad..." Lena said.

"I'll just stop you there," Chakotay quickly said.

"What? Everyone will know soon anyway, our new song is all about that," Lena said. She grinned evilly.

"Oh crap," Chakotay muttered.

"Um well, since it must've been Annika then we don't have to worry about it happening again. She's dead after all," Kathryn said.

"Yeah but that's never stopped her before," Tom pointed out.

"Maybe that's true but she's not been seen on the ship for ages. That either means she's alive somewhere else or she's dead for good," Kathryn said.

Everyone but Doctor Jones sighed in relief.

"Is that all for this meeting?" Chakotay asked. No one gave him an answer. "Ok, dis..."

"Bridge to Janeway. We're receiving a distress call from a planet, they say that they are being attacked by cube shaped ships."

"Call for Red Alert and set a course. I'm on my way," Kathryn said.

Everyone scrambled out of their seats to get to the Bridge. Once they arrived Harry rushed to take his station, James joined Ian at Tactical, and Tom instinctively tried to take the Helm, for that he was glared at by Claire who wouldn't budge.

"They're claiming some of the ships are leaving ground troops," Ian reported. He glanced at James beside him, "that change shape into monsters."

"The Softmicron," Kathryn said dramatically. "I thought it was the Borg, I could do with an easy day."

"Entering orbit now and sod off Tom," Claire said.

Tom flailed his arms around in confusion, "no, this is my station, I'm the Senior, Commander..." His face turned bright red, "oh crap I forgot." He ran off to the turbolift muttering, "wrong death trap."

Chakotay smirked at the dust trail he left behind. "What can you tell us from here, Harry?"

"Oh," was the only response he got.

"There's another Federation ship in orbit. It's the Pegasus," Ian answered for him.

Kathryn groaned and rolled her eyes. "Fantastic, I needed that like a decaf in my coffee." She noticed Neelix hovering behind her and promptly shoved him to the ground. "Nice try!"

"They're hailing us," Harry said.

"Here we go, put them on screen," Kathryn said. She prepared for the usual camera close up.

The viewscreen switched to show the inside of the Pegasus Bridge.

"What are you doing here?" Kathryn asked angrily.

"We answered the distress call of course," Damien replied with a smarmy smile.

James laughed, "bored and no longer relevant are we?"

Damien's smile lost its structural integrity for a second. He scoffed to hide his offense, it failed. "The Softmicron are a danger to everyone. The sooner we get rid of them the better."

"I don't believe you Damien. What is your plan this time?" Chakotay asked.

"Damn it!" Kathryn snapped. The camera moved in, she pushed it away angrily.

"Never you mind Chuck. All you're allowed to know, and are capable of understanding, is the Softmicron are nothing but a mere rival I want out of the way. Emphasis on mere," Damien said.

"So, as soon as the Softmicron are out of the way you'll move in for the kill?" Harry asked.

"Why would I care about some random planet filled with fodder?" Damien groaned. "I have a way to banish the Softmicron from this whole area, that way they're out of my territory. Now if you're not going to help or hand your ships over, I suggest you get out of this system." He pressed something on his armrest to cut them off.

"What do you think?" Chakotay asked.

"I believe Damien wanting to get other villains out of his way. But it doesn't seem like him to want to help another species to do it," Kathryn replied.

"He's probably telling the truth when he says he doesn't care about the people on the planet. We should try to help them first and deal with him later. If he causes any bother in the meantime we intervene," Chakotay suggested.

Kathryn nodded, "you're right. Hail the source of the distress call Harry. Someone scan the surface, see if there is any damage we can help with, keep an eye out for anymore cubes. We need to be on the ball here."

"Channel open, audio only," Harry said.

"This is Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation Starships Voyager and Enterprise. We are responding to your distress call," Kathryn said.

"Thank you Captain. I am Turanga, Commander of the North Continent. Your friend who arrived before you wasn't particularly chatty."

James looked confused, "that's weird."

"I assure you Commander, the Pegasus is not an ally of ours," Kathryn shuddered. "But no matter, can we get a status of the current situation and we'll try to help as best as we can."

"I think Captain it would be quicker if you saw it for yourselves. Our Command Centre and its whole sector is secure, you will be safe."

Kathryn sighed unsurely, she glanced around the Bridge. As she expected Lena looked eager, her expression screamed *let's go already*. Then she noticed James already waiting in the turbolift door.

"Very well. I'll send a team down to your Command Centre. Please transmit your co-ordinates," Kathryn said. The alien Commander thanked her as she walked around towards her daughter, her voice lowered. "This is clearly not a run of a mill win a Game situation. It's an invasion. Something is very wrong about this, and..."

"We'll be careful mum," Lena said with a confident smile. She turned on her heel to join James in the turbolift.

"I said a team," Kathryn said quickly.

Lena put her hand out to stop the door from closing, "ooph right, okay. Uh, Harry..." Harry shrugged and rushed over to join them. "We'll grab people on the way."

Once the doors closed Kathryn and Chakotay shared a worried look. He shook his head, "you gave her command. This is on you."

"You didn't want it, was I supposed to promote Tom to your rank and have the Harry/Tom command team dynamic?" Kathryn asked harshly. She shuddered, they both did. "Over my dead body."

An awayteam of five rematerialised in a spacious metallic corridor in front of a massive shuttle bay looking door. An elderly green skinned man sitting in a wheelchair waited for them, with two guards standing behind him.

"Welcome," he said, bowing his head. "I'm Fung Turanga, these are my assistants Hach and Slax. Which one of you is Captain Janeway?"

Lena stepped forward while pulling an awkward face, "I am... sorta."

"Hmm," Turanga looked at her curiously. "You look a lot younger than I pictured you."

James sniggered and not quietly, Lena elbowed him to hopefully shut him up. It only put him off for a few seconds. "I'm her daughter."

"Ah makes sense," Turanga chuckled.

Lena turned so her team were on her right side. "These are our Security Chiefs James and Craig. Operations Harry. And Tani."

"Game Cube expert," Tani whispered to her.

"That's stretching it a bit," Lena whispered back.

"Ah, so you know what these cubes are," Turanga said with relief. "For the last few weeks the cubes started landing on populated areas. Each one dropping off hundreds of these things."

"So none of them have destroyed the place they landed on?" Tani asked.

Turanga looked deeply shocked at the thought, "no, not at all. We barely have time to evacuate, so we're fortunate that doesn't happen. Although these cubes are different every time, the ending's still the same. I suppose you know."

"Sort of. We have dealt with them before but their methods have changed," James said.

"Oh, so you must know how to get rid of these creatures," Turanga said hopefully.

"It might be a tad difficult if they're already outside the Games," Craig said meekly.

Before anyone could scold him for saying that the door behind them opened a smidgen, then closed. The team turned around in time to witness Damien, Annika and Riker stride in like they owned the place. Naturally Riker was eating at the same time.

"Oh hell... what are you doing here?" Lena snapped.

"I already made myself clear on that," Damien said smugly.

Lena growled, "shut it, I meant her!" Her finger pointed at Annika.

"Hello to you too Lena," Annika said bitterly.

"Oh how naive," Damien laughed. "Now do you want to hear an actual workable plan before you get ripped apart by the hordes of cutesy idiots?"

Craig rolled his eyes. "What's your plan?"

"Softmicron come through the won Games, much easier than using primitive things like ships, which creates a nice little loophole for us. In order for a cube to appear, it needs to come through a portal

from wherever they come from," Damien explained in a smug tone. "All of the Games are coming from one lone portal, that's why their targeting of the one city has taken weeks. Planet turns and moves, portal stays put in its orbit. My weapon will destabilise the portal as it opens its doors for a cube, sealing them off entirely."

"How do you know this?" Harry asked suspiciously.

Damien chuckled maliciously, "wouldn't you like to know?"

"Yes, I asked!" Harry snapped.

"Touchy," Annika giggled.

"It's called research. I had to see a couple of these things in action to be sure," Damien said.

Turanga and his guards looked on in shock. "Excuse me?" Turanga said.

"Oh calm down, it was necessary. Once the door's closed the Slayers can do what they do best," Damien said, creating an awkward silence for a bit. "Kill kill, mope a bit, kill."

"That sounds right up your alley," Craig blurted out in James' direction. He stared at him blankly, he still felt a chill from it. "The mope bit... I er... crap."

Lena shook her head, "he said there were hundreds."

"And?" Annika said, winking at her. It made her gag twice.

"Hmm, can I see all of the data you've collected to verify it?" Harry asked.

Damien gasped, "how dare you question my brilliance."

"I'm not, that'll be later," Harry said the final bit under his breath. "I'm questioning your sincerity."

"That word is not in my dictionary. I told you. I detest these spineless creatures. They will rue the day they messed with..." Damien snarled.

"Yeah overcompensating yeah," James said flippantly. Damien directed his scorn towards him. "If that's all you want then it's no problem if Harry takes a glimpse at it. You've got nothing to hide, right?"

"Hmph!" Damien grunted. "As if you fools would notice if I did. Very well. In exchange I need some people who aren't idiots to speed the construction up. No more than two, and I'll decide who it is." He handed over a PADD to Harry.

"How convenient," Lena groaned.

Damien overexaggerated a shrug, "my terms. Take it or fight endless Games for the rest of your short lives."

Harry glanced up from the PADD after a quick skim of it. "The plan looks sound. I should compare the data to the Games we've seen though."

"Of course it is and go ahead," Damien said.

"Are you serious about this?" Lena grumbled. "I've seen Games Cubes emerge before, the portals are only open for a few seconds."

"Our scanners will pick up the energy signatures from the portal first. It should give us a few extra minutes," Damien said.

Annika smiled smugly, "our chances are good."

"They're slim at best," Lena said.

"It'll do for now. Damien shuts the portal down, we just need a plan for dealing with the Softmicron that are already here," Harry said.

Lena didn't look so sure. She turned back towards the rest of the team, noticing James shaking his head. The rest seemed convinced. "I'll talk to mum. But we better have a damn backup plan when he double crosses us," she said quietly.

Captains Log Stardate: five something something two, oh forget it! Anyway we have forged a temporary alliance with Damien as we try to save a planet from the Softmicron. Anyone with half a braincell knows he's going to try and screw us over, so we're to keep a close eye on him in every possible way. Since he blatantly asked for two specific crewmembers to help build his machine, I've insisted on a slight compromise.

It's too bad this plan of his will work. One false move and my compromise has been ordered to claim or destroy the device, depending on the betrayal.

Kathryn watched the view of the planet draw closer in on the viewscreen. "Steady as she goes, keep us at least a hundred kilometres away from that storm cloud, try not to hit anything."

Claire nodded, her forehead drenched in sweat as she typed away at the helm. "I'm nowhere near it."

Kathryn paced to one side with her arms crossed behind her back, but still with her head facing the screen. All she could see for a few seconds were fluffy white and grey clouds. Once they cleared them everyone watching got a spectacular view of the alien city straight ahead.

"Level us off into the city, wide circuit, and ride in on inertia only. Only short bursts of thrusters in non populated zones," Kathryn said.

"Um sure," Claire said uneasily. She entered the commands in on her left, relief flooded in when the console confirmed the auto pilot took over.

"Woah," Harry muttered, his eyes transfixed on the viewscreen. Anyone left who wasn't turned their attention to it. The closer they got to this city, the darker it seemed. The clouds above it looked menacing; churning and unnaturally purple.

"This doesn't look like any storm I've seen," Ian commented.

Kathryn wasn't fazed, she did another pace to the opposite side of the central area. "It looks like another Game is due soon. At least we're ready for one. Harry scan for every possible landing location. I don't want any of these things to take us by surprise."

"Yes ma'am," Harry nodded.

Ian's console beeped, he had to tear his eyes away from the viewscreen to check it. "The Enterprise confirms they're in a parallel holding pattern. We're ready."

"Where's the Pegasus?" Kathryn asked suspiciously.

The viewscreen zoomed deep into the city, focusing on a tall building. Damien's ship sat on top of it, shaded in purple from the clouds above. Dramatic action music flared up. Kathryn found her eyes drifting back up to the clouds, they gave her a dark foreboding feeling in her chest. The loud thumping was beginning to annoy her.

"Will you turn that crap off?" Kathryn snapped behind her.

Ian laughed meekly, "sorry, soothes my nerves." Kathryn narrowed her eyes, Ian quickly turned the music back off.

A little ways below them, Turanga lead two of his guests into a circular corridor along the edge of the dome shaped building. The entire wall to the left of them was made of glass, overlooking the city around and below them. He made sure there was a wider field of view before stopping there to face it. The first detail they spotted was the eery clouds casting the lavender shadow upon the whole city.

"Ohno, we'd better..." Lena stuttered immediately.

Turanga quickly said, "no," to stop her from leaving. "The clouds never shift. They are no longer a warning sign. Not with the number of cubes we get per day."

James looked down instead into the streets nearby. It didn't take long for him to find some commotion, but it wasn't what he expected. Groups of the aliens, most with varying shades of blue and green skin were walking in one direction calmly at first, but saw something he didn't that made them run the other way.

"As I told your Captain, I thought it would be easier to show you," Turanga said, gesturing to a wider street to the left of where James was looking.

The pair glanced in that direction. They looked on in shock as scores of people were fleeing down a wide street from a couple of monstrous creatures no bigger than five foot tall marching into a nearby square. Before either of them could comment on it they glowed brightly, obscuring them as they changed shape to something twice as big.

"What the...?" Lena stammered, her eyes flew wide open.

Three smaller figures joined them, each of them different but just as menacing, to march down slowly, scaring off any more of the natives that dared to enter the street.

"The Softmicron don't have two forms they switch back and forth from. They're shapeshifters," James said.

"We probably should've figured that one out with the not a dragon, nor cutesy looking ringleader in the Sphere," Lena said awkwardly.

Turanga sighed despondently, annoyed at how helpless he was to his people. Anywhere he looked there were similar situations. "We're a peaceful people. We have little to no military presence. Perhaps that's why they chose us. A few hundred intruders, possibly, but thousands of them?"

Lena shook her head, "thousands?"

"It's difficult to get an accurate headcount, what with their shape changing. We didn't even notice it in the beginning. Eye witnesses claimed a great number of them started out looking like us," Turanga said.

"It was going to be difficult with hundreds. This is way over our heads," Lena said.

Turanga turned to them both, "yes but I know that you're both the Chosen Slayers. You're the only ones who can help us. Closing the portal will only stop the numbers increasing."

"Yeah but we're not invincible. Maybe if there was a few of them at a time we'd have a chance," James said. "Still it's not a guarantee."

"We never said we were the Chosens," Lena said uneasily.

Turanga nodded, "Captain Damien filled me in on that detail."

James groaned, "of course he did."

Lena sighed as she placed her hand across her forehead. "Look Turanga. We can't fight thousands of Softmicron on our own, there's too many of them to handle. I'd have said that before we knew they could be whatever they wanted. It only takes one to kill us off, and then what."

"There must be another way. Please they're taking over the city, I fear they will become violent probably when all of their troops have been deployed," Turanga said.

James looked again at the first street he had seen. Now there were four quadrupedal creatures lurking around, scaring off any aliens that entered their sight.

"They haven't attacked anyone yet?" he asked.

"There have been a few altercations, there's always some who will try to play at being the hero. The worst was a teenager being thrown back into a crowd. He's recovering, more shocked than anything," Turanga replied. He started to worry about his answer. "They will attack, this doesn't mean they won't."

"That wasn't why I was asking," James said. "From what little we've seen of them, I'm surprised they haven't attacked yet."

Lena agreed, "nothing about what they're doing is regular. The Games themselves are the Softmicron's weapon. We didn't know they existed since they never revealed themselves, not until the Game Sphere. I wonder what they're really up to."

James' commbadge chirped before Damien's voice started shouting through it, *"oy, idiot Slayers!"*

"If you don't gimme my commbadge back, I'll shove it up your bloody nose," Jessie's snarled, fainter than Damien's.

Lena frowned, "how did idiot Slayers reach us?"

James shrugged and tapped his commbadge, "Jess, what's going on?"

"She won't stop asking me stupid questions, that's what is going on!" Damien's voice growled.

"Have you changed your name to Jess?" James groaned.

"What? Yeah right, I have standards." They heard a slight thud.

"Eew, gonna have to disinfect this now," Jessie's voice said a lot clearer than before. *"Look, I don't trust him. Have you seen this so called portal closer? He calls it a weapon and that's what it looks like."*

"It is designed to close any kind of portal, including wormholes. God, you stupid witch!" Damien's voice grumbled. *"Don't think I have forgotten our deal Lamesie, don't think you can send her to pacify me. Get your..."*

"Keep your nappies on," Lena grunted in disgust. "We're trying to sort out the *small* issue of the Softmicron army claiming most of the city."

"Oh pish, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll beam this stupid whiny cow down. She'll annoy them enough to kill her, make sure it's on tape and then Slayer number 1..."

James closed his eyes and fists tightly. "If you don't want to spend the rest of your life cleaning your previous host's brains out of the carpet, I'd stop talking right now."

Lena laughed at the image but nervously. "Yeah, maybe I should take the first shift," she whispered to him.

James shook his head, "no it's okay, I'm curious about this weapon of his."

"Right," Lena didn't look so sure. "He's not worth it, remember that."

"No, but it's fun though," James smiled. He tapped his commbadge twice more, "Stuart to Enterprise, one to beam directly to the Pegasus."

Lena waited for him to dematerialise before she spoke again. "Killing them isn't an option. Two versus a few thousand, and the last thing my brother should be doing is going on a killing spree."

Turanga looked on curiously, and a little warily. "What do you suggest?"

"I don't know yet. We'll think of something though, we'll not abandon you," Lena said.

"Thank you, my people appreciate it," Turanga said.

Pegasus B's Bridge:

Jessie sat on one of the command chairs next to Riker. He kept eyeing her everytime he popped some food into his mouth. Damien was standing nearby, drumming his fingers against his folded arms with an impatient scowl on his face.

"You're much nicer when you're not evil," Riker said.

"I won't be nice in a minute, keep your eyes on your food," Jessie snapped.

Riker shrugged, he continued to stuff his face with a couple of foot long hot dogs, at the same time.

"You can have a look at the weapon yourself if you don't trust me. Would I do that if I was hiding something?" Damien said.

"Yes, you'll think that you're the only one smart enough to get it. My problem is why would you call it a weapon if it only closed portals?" Jessie asked.

"I'd like to see you think of a name," Damien muttered.

"What about a device," Jessie said with little interest.

"Oh fine, fatso! You didn't have to embarrass me!" Damien yelled.

"Hey, I just gave birth recently! I'm not fat!" Jessie snapped.

"Same thing," Damien muttered.

Before Jessie could murder him the turbolift doors opened. Annika skipped out with a less enthused James behind her.

"I kept a close eye on him for you Damien," she giggled.

"Can you keep an eye on me?" Riker asked in a flirty voice. Annika shrugged, then made her way to the front of the bridge to take one of two stations there.

"You didn't have to do that, Annika. We're working together now. It's only Jessie here who doesn't believe that," Damien said.

"If you were really sincere you'd treat your guests a little better," James said.

Damien laughed obnoxiously, "she's sitting there questioning my methods, being rude and accusatory. If I were you, god forbid, I'd man up and take your pants back. If you ever wore them."

"Oh I'm sorry Damien, are you so pathetic that you can't handle women who don't take your crap?" Jessie said mockingly, and with a sweet smile. Only James could tell she was one insult away from slaughtering the Pegasus bridge crew again.

"So all women?" he said with a smirk.

Damien pretended to laugh, spite took over and he was scowling once more. "Save it for the bedroom, freakshows. You can't do this without me. Janeway knows this and that's why she's perfectly okay with letting me lend her meathead kids." He turned toward James who to his annoyance hadn't changed his expression. "The weapon's missing one little thing, the frequency used to save your asses in lost Games. Get to it."

"And you chose both Lena and I to do this because?" James questioned.

"Oh gee, let me think!" Damien said extremely sarcastically. "It's not that you two are the Game Cube Slayers or anything. No, that'd be too obvious!"

"You do realise that you murdered both Jessie and my daughter recently," James said, the smirk long gone and replaced with a dark stare. "And I never got to repay you for that."

Damien sneered at him for a bit stubbornly. The nerves got the better of him, he blurted out, "you're welcome," and hurried off to the Tactical station. Fortunately for him it was the furthest away one.

Jessie tried to hold it in but she couldn't, she burst into quiet laughter. "Sorry I beat you to it."

"Why? I'm only sorry I missed it," James smiled.

Jessie gave him a wink, "I'll video it next time."

"That's hot," Riker commented with his mouthful. The couple stared at him in disgust. "What? I only heard bedroom, pants and video."

"Of course you did," Jessie said flatly.

James shuddered a bit. He tried to pretend Riker never said anything to stop it. "So, which console has the weapon specs?" Annika pointed at the station she had picked. "I'll er, have to contact Voyager first, double check the frequency."

"You can do that here too," Annika giggled.

Damien rolled his eyes. "Anni, heel. Over here!" he ordered as if she were a dog, he even clicked his fingers. Annika still skipped over obediently. "It's bad enough he bred with the witch twice, don't make me sick," he hissed.

"I'm a witch too," Annika whined.

"I haven't forgotten," Damien said.

He watched James take Annika's previous station, then peered over to Jessie looking disgusted at Riker scoffing crumbly biscuits brought out of his pocket.

"You remember the plan, don't you?" Damien whispered.

Annika looked all coy, "which one? We were up to Plan Z the last time I tuned in."

"Yes Plan C, that one," Damien muttered.

"C? Oh, which one was that?" Annika asked genuinely. Damien's eyebrows twitched many times in a couple of seconds. She gasped childishly at the specs showing on the console they were at, "oooh is he finished already? I can't wait to play with my new toy. This is my station right?"

She went to press something. Damien slapped her hand away. "No, he's still working on it!" He jumped into the air as Annika responded to the hand slap with a bum slap. "I need a shower." Annika pouted as he ran off into the turbolift.

The Enterprise, Lena's Quarters:

"I dunno mum, this stinks. He's up to something," Lena's voice said from the other side of the door.

Kathryn was meanwhile picking up objects from the floor, dropped and left there without any care. On one arm she had a couple of jackets draped over, the other she tried her best to balance a big plastic cup and some sheathed daggers.

"I know that sweetheart. When he asked for you and James only, the already ringing alarm bells broke," she said.

"I don't want to go along with him like a chump," Lena's voice complained.

Kathryn sighed, "we're not. If we're going to beat him at his own game, we have to know what it is first. Okay?" She got a huff in response. "As long as one of you is there, with Jessie who he knows not to screw around with again, he'll have no choice but to follow the plan. Once the portal's closed we ditch him, literally if you want."

"What if he does it before we figure out what it is?" Lena asked.

"He can't. His ship's down there at *ground zero*, surrounded by the Softmicron below him and us in the air. He must know if he screws us over or starts something with them, he's killing himself," Kathryn replied.

Lena stepped out of her room wearing a very lumpy tracksuit jacket and cargo trousers, making her almost twice the size as she usually was. "Too obvious?"

Kathryn tried not to laugh, "nah."

"Good," Lena said as she helped herself to one of the daggers in her mother's arms.

"Are you really going to use all of those weapons?" Kathryn asked. "Even if you hadn't decided against it, I wouldn't send you there to quell the number. Not only because it's suicide, but also because we don't want the Softmicron to know you're here."

"Mum, it's a good chance that at least one of them recognise Voyager. They'll know," Lena said while rearranging whatever she was carrying under her jacket. "This is a precaution anyway. You never know."

Kathryn reached out to straighten her daughter's jacket, mainly as a cover to disarm her a little. Lena protested by stepping back and pouting. "We may have to consider evacuating the city, discreetly," Kathryn said as she did. "We don't want to provoke them, lives are at stake. Worst case scenario we may have to fight fire with phasers. I don't want it to come to that."

"Mum, I like that one," Lena said, snatching one curved knife back. Kathryn smiled and shook her head. "How do I evacuate people discreetly anyway?"

"*You* don't. That's not what you're going back there for," Kathryn replied.

Lena looked on curiously even when she knelt down to swap the curved knife for whatever was in one of many trouser pockets.

"If Damien's interest isn't you and James, or our ships, it's this planet. I'd like to cover all of our bases," Kathryn replied.

"Is that why you wanted Voyager and Enterprise flying so low? You're baiting him? I was worried you were gonna try to forcefully lose some Games to stop them coming in," Lena said.

A twinkle in Kathryn's eye made Lena think she was right in the first place, instantly worrying her. "It's a last, if there's no other choice resort. Stopping one batch isn't going to stop the next Games coming in, and we can't help if we're deposited on the other side of the quadrant." Lena sighed in relief. "To answer your question, yes and no. Quicker to respond to whatever comes our way."

"Right," Lena nodded.

Kathryn smiled as she caressed her daughter's cheek. "Don't worry, I didn't send you and James away so I can do something impulsive."

"Oh yeah, then why did I catch Yasmin at the alien command centre, itching to go out and *watch*?" Lena asked.

Kathryn's face drained before groaning into her palm.

He couldn't resist its pull, a certain someone was not around to beat him for it. Tom collapsed into the Enterprise's Captain's chair and immediately got comfortable by putting his feet up on the armrest.

On the viewscreen Harry watched, silently judging him. He looked a little frazzled with his hair falling loose from his usual gel hold.

"You're only doing that for my benefit," he said bitterly.

Tom chuckled. "Doing what?" he asked, though he knew exactly what he was referring to.

"We've got the second batch of evacuees ready for transport," Harry said plainly to show he wasn't getting to him.

"All righty. Triah, run the lifesign screening. When you're done let the transporter rooms know," Tom said.

"Yeah yeah, I did the same the last time," Triah groaned.

"The southern continent nation, Hyi something, have said no to evacuation. The shapeshifter detail leaked to them," Harry said.

Tom sighed melodramatically. "This city is massive, the other towns and villages here can't safely sustain everyone. We need them."

"Well that sounds like a job for a first officer, doesn't it," Harry said smugly. Before Tom could respond with more than a pale face he cut him off.

Harry's good mood didn't last when he pressed the command to make the floating holographic screen vanish. Without it in the way he could see Yasmin trying to pull open the large door leading outside. "Stop!"

His screech bounced around the large empty room so Yasmin heard it a good three times, yet still opened the door. Once she was done she turned to give him a stare that made him feel like he was the one who did it. "What?"

"Like the power generator room and the blender in I hope is not the kitchen, do not... touch... anything!" Harry snapped, he went to push the door shut. Only instead it flew in the opposite direction and knocked him backwards onto the floor.

Yasmin giggled at him while Lena walked through the gap in the door, unaware of what she had done. "Thanks, I was about to beam straight inside but we detected a lifesign skulking around. I hoped it was Damien or Annika trying something." She stretched her arms behind her back and sighed contently. "Close enough!"

"Oooh!" Yasmin tried to sneak by her to see outside. She had enough time to see Wesley Crusher lying on the floor nursing a black eye, crying *why* over and over. Lena pushed the door closed to her disappointment. "Aaaw."

"What's his problem?" Lena asked, pointing at Harry. He glared at her as he rubbed his sore back. Yasmin smirked and pointed at the door. "Oh. Then don't stand behind it, what do you expect?"

"That's not..." Harry grumbled but he was interrupted by a loud klaxon echoing around them. Despite his pain he got up quickly.

Damien chuckled at the schematics on the screen in front of him. "Of course. Negative inversion, ten times the strength of the signal. So simple, even you could've figured it out. But I know that's not possible."

James stood beside him, with a mixture of a disgust and bemusement on his face. "Why didn't you then?"

Damien's head snapped back up, triggered by the insult to his pride. "Well..." he said, clearly covering. It didn't take long for him to look smug again and he made sure James got a good look at it. "My brilliant brain has so much knowledge contained within. Your puny one could not compare even if it wasn't already filled with *punch, kill, sarcasm* and *oh my god Jessie* thoughts copy and pasted everywhere. How to survive in the Games is no interest to me, and would get in the way."

"Right, get in the way of the *oh my god bunny* thoughts," Jessie said.

Damien grumbled, dividing his glare between her and a now smirking James. "I don't see the difference. Now the weapon is fully calibrated. By my estimates a Game should arrive within the next ten minutes. Perhaps you and your equally painful sister should prepare."

"Prepare for what?" James asked suspiciously.

Jessie looked over with a similar expression.

"Softmicron extermination service, naturally. What else?" Damien sneered.

"There are thousands of them down there," James reminded him.

"Oh pish, so what? I figured you of all people would enjoy some mindless slaughter," Damien said flippantly. "I suppose it would be a huge time saver if I shot a few torpedoes into the city."

"I knew it, you're not interested in helping these people," Jessie hissed as she jumped out of her seat.

"Shut up witch, why are you even here anyway!" Damien yelled.

"That's a good question, why don't you answer it," James said towards Damien.

"I told you, they're in my way," Damien said, rolling his eyes.

"Apparently so are the people down there," James said.

"You're right. You said it yourself there is no way to kill them all. This is actually the only way, unless..." Damien said slyly.

"Unless what?" James asked.

"Here we go," Jessie muttered.

Damien chuckled deviously as he walked away. "Of course, my way those smurf people will survive and I will have the most powerful creatures on my side. Everyone wins." He turned on his heel to pass them a smirk and a phaser pointed at them. "Except you of course. You know, I even surprise myself."

"Oh don't tell me, you're going to brainwash them," Jessie said. Riker pointed his hotdog at her, he quickly ate it and pointed a phaser. Damien rolled his eyes.

James shook his head, "I'd bet that was what he was going to do all along. We should've figured it out sooner."

"Yes you should have. Well if you people had brains you would've," Damien sniggered.

"Wait a minute, if you keep losing to them then how brainless are you?" Annika asked.

"Shut up you, activate the weapon," Damien ordered. Annika nodded and worked at her station.

Damien slowly walked back over to James, making sure he was out of arm or leg's reach, his hand held out. "Don't try anything funny, widespread will kill her off again. Your commbadge, I could do with another one for my collection."

James sighed, he threw his commbadge toward him. Damien didn't catch it, it rolled several feet behind him. Of course he acted as if he caught it expertly. "Good. Now what part of *town* do you want to go to? I have a hankering for the four dragons in the commercial district," Damien sneered.

"You do realise the minute you change your tune, Janeway will happily arm the torpedo tubes, right?" Jessie said.

Damien laughed sinisterly at them, "you haven't even figured the whole thing out yet. What hope does she have? Once they do it'll be too late."

"What do you mean?" Jessie asked.

"It means that I'm not gonna bother with Plan A or B's any longer," Damien sniggered.

"The cube will be coming in a couple of minutes, we have to be quick," Annika cut in.

"You know what to do," Damien said.

"I know, I know, press the button," Annika groaned. Her finger hovered over the fire command.

"I hope you said goodbye to your brats," Damien cackled.

Voyager:

"Captain, I'm picking up some strange readings from the Pegasus," Ian said.

"What is it, this is probably Damien's little trick," Kathryn asked.

"It's the weapon, he's firing too early," Ian replied.

"On screen," Chakotay ordered.

The viewscreen changed to show the Pegasus fire straight up into the darkest part of the sky. As it moved along it seemed to slice open the clouds, revealing a bright red shimmer. Whatever it was fluctuated rapidly, as if angry it was unveiled. It spat blue sparks into the night sky.

The Enterprise had been circling nearby, it veered off to port to avoid several of the strikes.

"Back us off," Kathryn barked on seeing that.

Claire nodded and got to work quickly.

"Captain, the sensor readings match a Game Cube entry portal. No sign of a Game itself," Ian stuttered.

Kathryn stared intensely at the screen. "It's done the opposite of what it was supposed to do." Her anger grew when she noticed the Enterprise stall after its turn for a moment, then very slowly it floated upward towards the anomaly.

"We're not moving," Claire panicked.

"It's pulling us in. Redirect more power to impulse engines," Kathryn ordered.

"You know that never works," Claire muttered, but she tried anyway.

"Captain, Enterprise's are at full power, they're reporting an overheat and yet..." Ian said. He didn't need to finish his sentence, anyone watching the viewscreen could clearly see the Enterprise's predicament now. The speed it was being pulled up had tripled.

Claire shook her head, "we're moving, forward. I dunno how, I'm not detecting anything from that thing that could explain it."

"What about the Pegasus?" Chakotay questioned.

"It makes no sense, they're directly below it. It's immune for some reason, in fact everything on the ground is. It's just us," Ian replied.

Kathryn's eyes narrowed, "the ground, that's why he landed his ship. Of course. Put a tractor beam on them and pull him up, I'll be damned if he's going to get away with it."

Chakotay took that as a cue to hurry towards the Opps station, currently occupied by an unknown crewmember.

"We're just out of range. We will be close enough in a minute, but the window will only be five," Ian reported. "Enterprise has missed their own window."

"That's enough. We need to get the Pegasus shields down before we can lock on, target them," Kathryn ordered. Ian nodded.

Chakotay looked on in concern, "Captain, we still have people over there."

"We have no choice. The Pegasus has the technology to manipulate the portal, they're coming with us. Target their stern shields," Kathryn said.

The Command Centre:

Turanga hurriedly wheeled over to a couple of large stations, both of them manned by Hach and Slax, and two others. The klaxon was still blaring.

The rest of the awayteam were left standing around, unsure where to look since all of the screens were text or graphical data.

"I don't understand. I thought the point of his device was to close the portal permanently, not open it prematurely. What's the point, is it an error?" Turanga said.

Slax turned toward him, "our sensors can't penetrate it, Commander. Whatever's on the other side..."

"The Games Matrix," Lena finished for them, a worried lump in her throat made her voice croaky. The aliens were more confused with that comment. Harry and Craig understood though and their complexions had paled a number of shades. "The Softmicron's realm in a way."

"Why's he doing that?" Craig asked.

Slax blurted out fearfully, "the other two ships are being pulled into it. The larger one was closer to it at the time, it'll hit the portal in forty seconds."

"That's why," Craig muttered.

"Can we do anything from here?" Lena asked.

"We haven't got anything that could stop it in time," Turanga replied. "Our tractor emitters take time to warm up."

"Wait a minute, wasn't James and Jessie on the Pegasus?" Harry asked.

"Weapons fire from the smaller ship. They're targeting Mr Damien's ship," Hach reported.

"Put it on viewer," Turanga ordered.

A large holographic screen twice the size of Voyager's appeared in the middle of the room. Both sides showed the exact same picture of the red anomaly in the sky, the Enterprise almost vertical and seconds away from being pulled in.

Voyager looked like it was flying toward it normally, their posture only slightly elevated upward. It constantly fired a barrage of phasers and torpedoes down towards the skyscraper directly under the anomaly. The tiny shield bubble of the Pegasus remained up, with no second to breathe. It fired a few shots back of its own.

"Shield strength of the Pegasus; eighty," someone reported elsewhere. Harry and Craig looked towards them. "If they keep this up the shields will fall in two minutes."

"Time until portal entry?" Harry asked.

Slax looked very nervous and swallowed hard. "For the large ship, now..." Lena had her eye on the screen the entire time. She watched helplessly as the Enterprise slowly vanished into the red. Voyager was also beginning to veer upwards. "One minute for the smaller one."

"We've got to do something. Do you have weapons?" Harry asked desperately.

"I told you. We are a peaceful species. What we have wouldn't even tickle your vessels," Turanga said.

Yasmin giggled briefly. "Sorry," she said, Lena still glared at her.

"Fine, there's only one thing left. We need to open a discreet channel," Harry said.

The Pegasus:

"One down Damien," Annika giggled fiendishly.

"What's down?" Jessie asked.

"Ha, you'll find out," Annika said with a flourished wink.

"No she won't," Damien smiled. "I've been wanting to kill you two for a while. Riker get ready, fire on a count of three."

James frowned, his eyes drifted to the computer beside him within hand reach, clearly visible to Damien.

"Aaaw, but she's so hot," Riker moaned.

"Ugh for crying out loud," Damien groaned. He and James both heard a whispered voice come from the discarded commbadge behind him. He kept a close eye on his captor as he took a few steps backwards. "Are you really gonna do anything 'bout it with her murdering psycho-freak fiancé hanging around?"

"Oh yeah, he has taste," Riker drooled. He winked at Jessie, she rolled her eyes.

Damien suddenly realised something which brightened his features, "oh yeah, why not. Can't hurt to ask. Go for it." He crouched down to pick up the badge, missing it a few times. He had to look behind him to grab it. James took the very brief opportunity to enter in a few commands.

"Yeah, I am taller and handsomer, and I have a beard," Riker said gleefully. Jessie bit her lip to stop from laughing. "Hey, 'sup hot stuff. Wanna be girl number two..."

Damien stood back up, commbadge in hand and repointed his phaser at James. "Time's up. Kill her when I count to three," he said. "One."

"First, beam James and I to the Command Centre," Jessie cut in.

"Only if I get to hit that," Riker sniggered dirtily.

Jessie crossed her fingers behind her back and tried to hide her disgust. "If you do it now, I'll be the one doing the hitting. Beam us."

"No you fool!" Damien shouted at him.

"Ok!" Riker said happily.

With his attention once more diverted and Riker's too, James lunged for the neighbouring station close by and pressed one panel. The ship shook, throwing Damien off balance and his game.

Damien then quickly turned to fire but got an elbow to the ribs before he could do anything. He dropped both his phaser and the commbadge on the way down.

Riker meanwhile plopped himself back in his chair and pressed some controls on the armrest.

"Shields should be up, no worries," Annika smirked confidently as James and Jessie beamed away. Her smile disappeared quicker than it appeared. "Huh?"

"You idiot!" Damien groaned painfully. He tried to grab his phaser but found it had gone too. He had to settle for shooting Riker a glare. "When the hell did you learn how to drop the shields?"

Riker looked confused, "if that's a kind of flan, why would I want to drop it?" Damien literally shook with rage.

"Don't worry about it, Voyager's next. They're going to die down there anyway," Annika said.

"Yes you're right, revenge will be mine soon," Damien said evilly.

"The Pegasus is airborne, their shields are down," Hach said.

Lena shook her head, her hand covered her mouth, eyes wide. Nobody could hear her whisper, "no."

"It's too late," Tani said grimly.

Turanga and his staff looked up at the screen in time to see the last hint of Voyager fading away into the red portal.

"They're gone?" Yasmin stuttered. She took a deep breath and then she yelled as loud as she could, "BOB!"

"Who's Bob?" Craig asked.

Yasmin shrugged, "I dunno, it felt the right moment."

Harry clenched his fists, "do you have transporter capability? We need to get to the Pegasus."

"No, I'm sorry," Turanga said.

Harry stared at the portal, trying desperately to think of something. "You'll have your own ships, won't you?"

"Hold on," Craig said quickly. "If it were as simple as flying back through, they'd have done it by now. We can't simply fly in after them and bring them back."

Lena nodded lightly. "He's right. We need a plan."

Harry glared between them both, "we don't have the time! You know how dangerous that place is. You remember what it was like when just the Voyager crew were trapped in some random part of it. I think the Softmicron will definitely spot two giant starships sitting in the way of their armies. And might I remind you, a Game was due any minute."

"Funnily enough I don't trust Damien's word on that," Craig said. "We're no help to them if we panic and rush in too."

"Then we take the Pegasus, force their shuttle bay open. Turanga..." Harry said.

"How's that gonna help them, we don't need a portal opener," Craig grumbled.

Lena clenched her jaw tightly. It didn't work anywhere near as much as she hoped, her hands swung out to slap both of them more or less at the same time. "Enough! We need to work together not bitch at each other."

The doors to the command room opened. Two men walked in first, James and Jessie were right behind them and rushed around their escorts once there was room to.

"We need to hurry, he's gonna use the Softmicron against us," Jessie said a little breathlessly. One computer rang over the top of her.

"What?" Harry said.

"The Pegasus is contacting us, Commander," Slax said.

Turanga nodded. The portal finally disappeared from the screen, but the new view wasn't much better. Damien and Annika stood sneering on their Bridge, with Riker stuffing his face with chocolate cake in the background.

"Thank you everyone for your wonderful efforts in fighting the Softmicron," Annika giggled. "Unfortunately..."

Damien groaned and shoved her offscreen. Everyone heard the squeak and clatter. "I didn't give you permission to speak let alone steal my glory."

"Enjoy it while it lasts Damien. I'm in dire need of a new punching bag and stabbing dummy," Lena snarled.

Damien chuckled, "ooh scary," he said mockingly. "You know you've got no leg to stand on. As we speak thousands of Softmicron are already bending to my will."

"They're what?" Craig said.

Damien continued as if he didn't say anything, "in two hours the entire city will be under my command. Once that Game finally arrives I will use the device, as Jessie so nicely put it." Jessie rolled her eyes. "You will have no means of escape. No backup. Who's going to stop me, hmm? Mwahahahaha!"

"Ow, landed on my boob," Annika cried as she stumbled back up.

"Finally! You people are not gonna stand in my way any longer. I'm sure my new toys will take great delight in ripping you and your freaks into tiny pieces," Damien continued to cackle. He gestured his arms out to look menacing and all powerful, an image ruined by Annika deeply massaging her right boob. "Welcome..."

"No don't say it," Craig panicked.

"To the hunt!" Damien did anyway.

"Ohno, now we'll never get this cliffhanger resolved," Craig sighed. The others stared at him in confusion.

TO BE CONTINUED