

Season Five Special Virtual Fairytale

Voyager

The Mess Hall:

Noah and Neelix stood by the kitchen supervising some poor schmuck who had been volunteered to put up a Christmas tree that was tall enough to reach the ceiling. There also were a few putting up separate decorations. Two crewmembers were trying to attach a mistletoe above one of the doors.

Ylara walked in via the only clear door, with a confused look on her face. She stopped next to the two supervisors.

"Just a little more to the left," Neelix said.

"What's going on?" Ylara asked, making the two men jump. "That tree looks out of place here, and it'll die surely."

"It's not real," Noah stuttered, he rushed away.

"It's almost Christmas, oh of course you don't know what it is," Neelix replied. "It's a human holiday, well more or less. It celebrates the birthday of the son of their god."

"Which one?" Ylara muttered.

"Like I said, more or less. It's really a 'Christian' holiday, they have different beliefs to you. But a lot of people celebrate it even if they don't, like me for example," Neelix said.

"I still don't know it. It does look a little tacky though," Ylara said.

"If I understand correctly you were born long before the holiday came to be," Neelix said. "You should try it. There will be parties, gatherings, and one of the nursery teachers mentioned a children's nativity play. You also give out presents and cards, which you receive too of course."

"Somehow I doubt I'll get anything," Ylara muttered with a raised eyebrow.

"You never know. Some people can surprise you at Christmas," Neelix grinned. "Now will you excuse me?" He dashed off toward the tree. "No no, the star goes on the top."

"But Neelix, there's no room for a second star," the crewmember with a star, standing on top of a ladder moaned.

Neelix frowned, "where did the other one come from? That's a wall decoration, who put that there!"

Ylara sighed, lowering her eyebrow again. "Ok? I'd rather not take part, thanks."

Meanwhile:

"I'm not going to have the same argument every year, it's pointless," Jessie muttered while opening a large box on the floor. "I mean I always win."

"Um no, you only started winning when we had kids," James said. He sat down on the nearby chair by the window.

Jessie pulled out a plastic Christmas tree branch, she then threw it at him. He caught it with one hand, even though it didn't go in the direction she aimed it. She smiled sweetly at him, "so you'll never win ever again."

"No, obviously not," James sighed.

"Then help me put the tree up," Jessie said.

"What's the point?" James started to say, but she raised a finger to interrupt him. He raised his eyebrow, "if we're attacked it'll just fall over."

"There's nothing breakable on it," Jessie said. She shuffled over to him on her knees, and took a hold of his spare hand. "We haven't a bad Christmas since '77, maybe your curse is lifted."

"Uh '78, Kiara transported us to that weird planet she created," James muttered.

"That wasn't for long or on the day itself," Jessie said. "Surely you can't say anything bad about '79 or '80, especially '80. Remember that was when Amy spoke her first word. I know crap year but..."

Christmas 2380

Earth, James/Jessie's previous residence:

Jodie and some mystery guy stood by the dining room door, the guy held a mistletoe above their heads. While they were doing that Jessie stood eyeing the half decorated tree with distaste, "it only looks half done, don't you think?"

Duncan stood next to her, "yeah, Aunt Jodie found some decoration and then he grabbed it, there was a chase, weird."

Jessie glanced down at him puzzled, she then looked at her sister. She and the guy were busy smooching under the mistletoe, she didn't notice Duncan look over too. "Oh right, so childish, you'd never catch me doing that."

"Dad's really not into Christmas," Duncan said with a disgusted look on his face.

Jessie raised an eyebrow at him, "that's not the only reason why we wouldn't have done that."

Duncan shrugged, "yeah right, you use any excuse to just smooch each other. You must do it on purpose to sicken me."

"Firstly there's nothing wrong with showing affection. Secondly no we don't. Thirdly, he wouldn't chase me around the room. He didn't as a kid, why would he now?" Jessie muttered with a pout on her face.

"So you would do what they're doing now?" Duncan muttered. "Gross."

Amy crawled her way over to look at the tree. She made herself sit directly in front of one branch. Then she began to play with the chime bell decoration and giggle cutely.

James made his way into the room via the kitchen door, Sasha ran in after him holding a chocolate cupcake. He had a tray of them, "hey I just replicated cupcakes, Sasha's idea, I'm not getting into the spirit I swear." He put them on the dining table.

Jessie glanced over at him, "I'll only think that if you talk that way, it's like you're trying to hide something."

"Good point, I'll remember that," James shrugged his shoulders. In the corner of his eye he noticed Jodie and her boyfriend, he didn't react until he turned to look at them directly. "Must they do that in front of our kids?"

"I know, grossing them out with kissing and flirting is our job," Jessie replied with a smirk. She made her way over to him, once she did she wrapped her arms around his shoulders. "How dare they," she sarcastically snapped. They both heard a loud knock on the front door, "I'll get it." She headed toward Jodie and her boyfriend, thought better of it and went the other way.

James walked halfway toward the tree, "that's the best Christmas tree I've ever seen."

Duncan looked at it in disgust, "really?"

"Yeah, it shows the true meaning of Christmas, I say anyway," James replied. He glanced down briefly at Duncan, then said quietly to himself, "a complete disaster."

Duncan pouted as he didn't hear him, "I know you don't like Christmas dad, you can still say stuff."

"Nah nothing, I just remembered a better tree than this one," James said with a smirk on his face. "Still it's close."

Amy squeaked in delight as she discovered a small bit of tinsel on the ground. She put it on her head, then looked up at her dad. Jodie and the boyfriend had stopped a few seconds before and were watching.

"Aaaw, if that doesn't melt that Scrooge heart, nothing will," Jodie smirked.

"All right I'll admit that was adorable, but it doesn't make me suddenly like Christmas, it just makes me..." James said. Amy then tugged on his trouser leg, looking directly up at him with her big chocolate coloured eyes. "Makes me wish we had her twin sister here as well, more than I did before," he said quietly while looking back at Jodie.

"Yeah I bet," Jodie smiled.

Amy pouted, then tugged on his leg again. Before he looked back at her she squeaked, "daddy."

He looked down at her in surprise, "did you just, you just said. You guys heard that right?"

Jodie nodded, "I did, that was so cute."

James knelt down next to her, he then gathered her up in his arms, "can you say it again?" All she did in response was reach out to touch his cheek.

"Jessie!" Jodie called.

"I'm coming," Jessie moaned as she rushed down the hallway, "what?"

"Who was at the door?" Jodie asked.

Jessie stared blankly, "carolers, now you yelled at me for that?"

"Jess, Sarah-Amy's just said her first word," James said as he stood up.

"Oh, what did she say, I can't believe I missed it," Jessie questioned.

Present Day

"Yeah I guess so," James said. "Fine, but if I break the tree..."

"You haven't done that since you were ten," Jessie smirked while shaking her head.

Christmas 2359

Earth, Shield Row:

James and Jessie's foster mum, Sarah finished decorating the Christmas tree. She backed off a metre to have a better look, a ten year old James stood nearby with a packet of crisps in hand. "What do you think?"

"It looks like a tree," James muttered in response. "With lights and crap on."

Sarah raised an eyebrow on him, "must you say that every year?"

"Why not, you have trees, stupid mince pies and Santa lists every year," James replied, he stuffed more crisps into his mouth.

Sarah sighed, "I really wish you'd let yourself like Christmas sometime. I'll tell you what, next year I won't bother getting you any presents. I'll tell Jessie that you were just bad all year, and Santa didn't bring you any."

James frowned and tilted his head to the side, "you know what I just thought of."

Sarah groaned as Jessie walked into the room, neither noticed her. "What, is it something that doesn't make sense with the Christmas story? Or is it the mistletoe?"

"No, you can mix Santa's name around to spell Satan," James replied.

Jessie giggled, "maybe they have the same parents."

Sarah glanced at her, "don't listen to him sweetie, he's just being Scroogy again."

"Mum, I stopped believing in Santa when James and I caught you putting the presents under the tree," Jessie said.

"All right fine," Sarah sighed. She walked toward the kitchen, "I'm making those 'stupid mince pies' if either of you want any." She disappeared from sight.

"Nah, I'd rather have those candy canes on the tree," James said.

Jessie squinted her eyes at the tree, "are they real or just pretend?"

"Only one way to find out," James replied with a smirk on his face. He walked up to the tree. He tried to take one of the candy canes off one of the branches but it was stuck, he pulled at it but the tree started to topple over.

"Um, you should stop that," Jessie stuttered nervously.

James stopped but he hadn't realised the branch he had a hold of had snapped off. "Ok maybe they come attached to the tree already." He turned his head and noticed the branch, "oops."

"Looks like Santa won't be visiting you this year, but Satan will be," Jessie smirked.

James smiled nervously, "yeah, well it could have been worse. The tree could have..." On cue the tree fell over in his direction, he quickly got out of the way though. "Yeah, did I tell you I'm moving out?"

Jessie stared at him and the tree with wide eyes, "there's still only two people you haven't blamed something on yet. There's me and gravity, take your pick."

James thought about it for a second, "stupid gravity."

"Good call," Jessie nodded her head.

Present Day

"Yeah but it could still happen," James said. "I haven't put up a tree since, Jodie and her current boyfriend put up last years, and we haven't had a tree in our quarters, well ever."

"So you'd let your four month pregnant wife put up the tree on her own, and three young children help her put on the decorations, while you just sit there?" Jessie questioned.

James groaned as he stood up, "you really know how to break me, don't you?"

"That's what wives are for," Jessie smirked. She shuffled back to the box, then started lightly throwing pieces of tree on to the ground. James knelt down beside her. She stroked his upper arm. "Oh come on, it won't be that bad. I really wish you'd let yourself enjoy Christmas for once."

"I'll try, I did last year," James said.

Duncan ran in from his bedroom, holding a padd in his hand. "I did it." He handed it to James.

"What did I say you have to do in return?" Jessie asked.

"Um, be good until and on Christmas," Duncan replied.

"And?" James questioned.

"And not tell the kids in the nursery that Santa isn't real," Duncan replied. Jessie patted him on the head gently. "What about Sasha and Amy?"

"They've been told too," Jessie replied.

"Yeah but Amy's a blabbermouth," Duncan said.

"She'll not tell, she doesn't even talk to the other kids that often. Besides I promised you all a nice extra present on Boxing Day if you don't," Jessie said.

"What is Boxing Day anyway, do people just fight all day?" Duncan asked.

"Well it's either that or it's a day when all the bad kids get put in a box, or their toys do," James replied with a smirk.

"Don't tell me, your dad did one or both," Jessie said with a raised eyebrow.

"On my second Xmas yeah, just the toys were boxed though," James replied. "I wouldn't have put the other option passed him though."

"You won't put all of my presents away in a box, will you?" Duncan pouted. Jessie smiled and shook her head as she placed her hand on the side of his face.

Sasha ran in with her own padd, "daddy, why does Duncan have to be in our class?"

"It's only cos his teacher thinks he should work in the fortnight before Xmas, we don't," Jessie replied.

"Yeah especially for the last week. Parents just take the kids to the nursery to be looked after while we work, and not really be taught. On Earth Duncan would have been off for the second week, it's easier if he just goes to the nursery this week," James replied.

"Oh ok," Sasha pouted.

"I don't smell do I?" Duncan muttered as he stared at her.

Sasha shrugged, "no, we just already have a lot of bad kids."

"Sasha's one of them right, oh more presents for me right?" Duncan said.

"I'm never bad," Sasha mumbled.

Jessie shook her head, "you're all getting the same amount of presents, don't be silly Duncan."

"But I'm gooder than him," Sasha pouted. She handed James the padd in her hand.

"Yeah but we don't believe in the whole 'bad kids get no or less presents' thing," James said.

Jessie smirked, "only cos he wouldn't have gotten anything every year as a kid."

"I'd argue but it's very true," James nodded.

"How's Amy doing her list then, she can't use padds?" Duncan asked.

"Oh she's doing a list via the computer over there," James replied, pointing at the desk. Sure enough you could see Amy's little blonde head behind a computer, only just. "I just told her to press a certain button if she wants anything, it goes through a catalogue of stuff."

"She'll be there all day, and it would take a month to go through it," Duncan said.

Jessie raised her eyebrow while reading his padd, "uh huh, just like a certain boy I know and love."

"What, I didn't put that much," Duncan innocently said.

"You're not getting any weapons so that'll cut down the list," Jessie said.

James tried not to laugh, "you're supposed to avoid telling them what they can't or will not get, not lie to deceive them."

Jessie stared at him, "sixteen, no younger." Duncan pouted. "I know you had some when you were fourteen, nearly fifteen, but he won't."

"I was ok, it's not like I accidentally cut myself or others," James said. "Duncan's smarter than me." Duncan's face lit back up.

"Don't encourage him," Jessie said with a small smile. "The Chosen's before you were long dead before you were even born right? There were no naturals around surely. This time around you'll be here, he doesn't have to rush into the job."

"I know, but he'll need training with the weapons eventually, before going out," James said.

"Damn it you're right," Jessie grumbled. "Ah ha, he shouldn't be allowed to slay until he's the age you were when you stopped being reckless. So twenty three, twenty four."

James narrowed his eyes but just mockingly. "Hey I wasn't constantly reckless before then."

Jessie smirked at him, "if you say so. You must have agreed then anyway or you wouldn't have given it up, excluding dire emergencies for what, four years?"

"So, when can I have weapons?" Duncan asked.

Both James and Jessie answered differently at the same time. Jessie answered, "twenty three, or two."

"Eighteen," James answered. The couple stared at one another.

"I like dad's answer better," Duncan said.

Jessie sighed, "of course you do."

The nursery:

All of the children sat facing the front on a big mat. Poor Duncan looked a little out of place because of his height, even while sitting the oldest child looked tiny next to him.

"All right children, we've got two weeks and as it's Christmas, I thought we'd do a nativity play," the teacher named Jacqueline said. Everyone groaned. "No it'll be fun, I've already made the stage and sitting area on the holodeck."

"Crap, can I go back to school?" Duncan asked.

"You'll still have to be here next week while everyone will be rehearsing. You'll be left out then," Jacqueline replied.

"I don't mind, that's ok," Duncan said. All the other kids stared at him. "What?"

"Sorry Duncan, we need all the kids we can get for this," Grace sighed.

"Crap," Duncan grumbled.

"Joan, we should tell them what parts there are before the auditions," Grace said quickly.

"Yes yes," the third teacher muttered. "But it would be a better idea if each child auditioned for four parts, it's easier if they didn't know too much about who they're auditioning for. It's fairer too."

"That's the opposite of fair," Jacqueline shook her head. "But it'll have to do considering we don't have many children."

"So, let's get going. The date is next week, we've got just over a week to create a masterpiece," Joan said.

Later

Holodeck One:

A basic stage was set up in a large school assembly hall. All three teachers stood on the stage with piles of padds in their hands.

"All right first we need to vote for the part of the lead angel. Traditionally all the boys in the class vote for who they think is the prettiest of the girls, the leader is always the prettiest," Grace said.

"That's just discrim... whatever, I bet she's the dumbest too," Duncan said.

Joan ignored him, "Grace, the padds." Grace stepped down, she handed padds to all the boys. "When you've chosen give them back to me." Most of the boys looked around at the girls, fiddled with the padds. All but Duncan and one nameless boy handed them back.

"What's the matter you two?" Grace asked.

"There's twins," the nameless boy moaned. The two identical blonde girls glanced at each other.

"Then choose who'd be more suited for a lead role," Grace said. "Duncan?"

"This is stupid," he muttered. "Two are my sisters, it's sick."

"Then choose from the others," Grace sighed.

"Ok who do I hate," Duncan said to himself. He looked around the class at the girls. One of the twins twirled her hair in between her fingers, her sister sat quietly looking around at the other children fearfully. A girl close to Amy's age sat in front of them, pulling her older sister Linsey's hair. She turned back to slap her lightly. Duncan handed his padd back to Grace.

She looked through every padd. "Votes are counted. The angel will be played by... Sasha."

Sasha widened her eyes, pouting her lips. "Uhoh."

Duncan pulled a face, "this play is really going to suck, she's never going to do it."

"We'll see," Jacqueline muttered.

Later:

Johnathan and one boy stood side by side, by the left of the stage. Carl was in the centre reading from a padd. Sasha on the right looking very nervous. Everyone else were sitting in seats.

"Now thanks to you we believe in good will, and oh god who wrote this?" Carl muttered.

"I don't know, can you finish?" Jacqueline groaned.

Carl rolled his eyes, "good will and the benefits of sharing, and uh thankfulness of the season. Ugh can I audition for the "good guy"?"

"Ricky? Go right ahead, that's two," Joan sighed.

"Ok uh hum. I bet he hasn't learned a thing. Still thanks for um," Carl said, squinting his eyes at the pidd. "Making fools out of Ashley and the others."

"Carl can you at least read the lines with enthusiasm," Grace smiled.

"He's three, not an actor bucking for an Oscar," Jacqueline said.

"I know that, but just a little enthusiasm is all I ask. It's just a bit of fun," Grace sighed. "Next."

Carl glanced at Sasha briefly with a pout on his face, she looked relieved. "But I wanna try the next line."

"Sorry, Johnathan it's your turn," Grace said. Carl continued to pout and stormed off the stage.

Johnathan walked over to take his place. "Ok he hasn't learned a thing, still uh thanks for making fun of Ashley and co." He turned toward Sasha and stepped closer. She screamed then ran off just as he pretended to raise something.

"What, I wasn't going to," Johnathan nervously muttered, glancing around. His eyes met with Duncan's, he smiled and did a little slow wave at him while raising an eyebrow. "Um, I need to go to the loo."

"Ok, go on," Grace smiled. Johnathan ran off as quick as he could.

"I wasn't going to until later anyway," Duncan shrugged his shoulders. He moved his glance at Carl, he grew nervous.

All of the children sat in the chairs, while the teachers sat on the edge of the stage facing them.

"We should pick who's playing characters in the Jesus part of the story, you know Joseph, Mary," Grace said.

"What kind of dumb name is Joseph?" Duncan muttered.

Grace glanced at him looking worried, "haven't your parents told you the Christmas story?"

"No, why should they?" Duncan pulled a face.

"You have to know the story, even the basic version if you celebrate Christmas. Otherwise what's the point," Grace said. "Aren't your parents Christians?"

"Our mummy's a witch and dad..." Amy blurted out.

"That's a big no then," Jacqueline smirked.

"No dummy, she just didn't get the question," Duncan said. "What's a Christian?"

Grace looked like she was close to fainting, Jacqueline and Joan smirked at her briefly. "Oh don't worry about that kids, Miss Grace is an avid Christian," Joan said. "Oh and Duncan, it's a name for the people who believe in a certain religion."

Amy looked confused, "they all follow people called Christian or Chris?"

"No, no," Grace shook her head. "Where did it all go wrong?"

"Grace take a deep breath, it doesn't matter. Not everyone follows the same thing," Jacqueline said.

Grace groaned. "Ok fine, what do I expect from children raised by a witch and, what was the dad again?" she muttered quietly so only the other teachers could hear.

"She didn't say and I think you shouldn't know either," Joan muttered. "Anyway you don't have to be a Christian to celebrate Christmas really, so don't let her try to convert you or anything."

"Now Mary and Joseph don't really speak any lines, there's the three kings who sing, shepherds, you don't have to be a boy to play those, Mary and Joseph should still be played by a boy and girl though," Jacqueline said.

"Yes so if you want to sing a part, queue up by the stage," Grace said.

"What do we have to sing?" Linsey asked.

"Anything for the audition. Why doesn't everyone have a try," Grace replied. Most of the kids groaned in disappointment.

Later:

Duncan stood in a huff on the stage, arms folded tightly.

"Come on, just sing a little bit. Why not Jingle Bells," Joan said.

Duncan sighed, "ok fine." He cleared his throat, then started to sing but quietly. "Jingle bells, Neelix smells, Tom Paris laid an egg." Miral and a few others giggled.

"That's enough," Grace butted in. "Next."

Duncan glanced to his left and laughed, "good luck." He rushed to his right. Amy shuffled over to where he had been standing before, with her eyes wide and pouting her lips.

"It's ok sweetie, I bet you have a lovely sweet voice," Joan said.

"No," Amy squeaked.

"Aaaw, of course you do. Just one line," Grace said.

"She should just sing with someone else," Jacqueline whispered to her. "She is a bit young after all."

"Ok, why not just sing the words 'Away in a Manger'," Grace said.

Johnathan began singing from off stage, "away from a manager, can't sing in tune at all."

"I'm done then," Amy stuttered, she rushed off.

"Johnathan, you go too," Grace sighed.

"Aaaw shame," Johnathan muttered, he followed Amy to the other side of the stage.

Scott meanwhile walked to the centre. He waved at the teachers, "hiya."

"Ok honey, what are you going to sing?" Jacqueline asked.

"Um, jingle bells, jingle bells, singin' all the way," Scott sang, really emphasizing on the words bells and way. "Uh, um, jingle bells."

"That's ok, wrong lines but ok," Grace smiled.

"Thank ya," Scott said, he did a little bow before walking off.

Grace leaned closer to the other teachers, "he could sing a lead, he's adorable and isn't scared of the audience."

"Excellent point," Joan said.

Jacqueline nodded, "so who else do you think? Johnathan wasn't afraid either, he just needs to stop parodying songs."

"Yes same with Duncan as well. Others for sure are Heidi, Linsey and Sadie," Grace said.

"Yes yes, but the others will have to sing together during the Mary and Joseph scenes as angels or shepherds," Joan said.

"They'll be ok together, it's less scary then," Jacqueline said.

"Mary and Joseph don't really say that much, I think Joseph has one line," Joan said, glancing at a padd. "Yes he does, so even shy ones can play those two. Sasha would be perfect as Mary. Joseph I'm not sure, but someone the same age like Carl or..."

All of the children looked on, some looking really worried. A few started talking in small groups. Jacqueline stood up and clapped her hands. "It's ok children, we'll be busy deciding who plays what, you can play until then."

Outside the Nursery:

All of the parents, excluding Tom and Jessie, stood outside waiting for the kids to come out.

"Have you heard about the play?" Daniel muttered.

"No, what play?" James questioned.

"The teachers are making our kids do this nativity play thing," Daniel replied.

B'Elanna glanced over with a frown, "but Miral can't even read, what's she going to do?"

"Yeah I was just thinking the same thing, Amy is only just learning. How will they read a script?" James muttered.

Daniel shrugged, "Scott's the same. He's more interested in painting everything, and stuff."

"What are you going to do if Triah is still alive and we find her?" James smirked.

Daniel grinned, "get a video camera, it's going to be a laugh."

"It's your life. Scott will be doomed to live his life full of 'look at this mess, clean it up or I will'. He'll never really get a chance to live in his bedroom to mess it up, but he'll still manage," B'Elanna said.

The doors opened. The children ran or walked through them. Amy soon attached herself to James' leg as usual, Duncan and Sasha stood next to him looking glum.

"What's the matter, did you get a 'good' part?" James asked.

Johnathan tugged on his mother's leg, "Duncan and Sasha have to kiss."

"What?" both she and James exclaimed in shock.

"Well that's screwed up in so many ways," Daniel said.

Duncan glared at Johnathan, "gross, we don't. Teacher said I just pretend to."

"Uh what kind of sick nativity play is this. No kids should be kissing, even just pretending, especially siblings," James stuttered.

Amy tugged on his leg, "I'm an angel."

"Me too," Sasha replied, pulling a face.

"It's ok dad, it's just on the cheek," Duncan muttered. "My character uses a mistletoe on the lead angel."

"I'm starting to get a little deja vu here," James said to himself.

"I can help with that. You and Lena, connected to Emma, I mean first meeting, ring any bells?" B'Elanna questioned. "Seriously what's up with your family?"

"B'Elanna, stop trying to fill Tom's shoes. It's bad enough that we have one of him," James groaned. He glanced at Johnathan too, "ok two of him. I meant the play's familiar anyway."

"It is?" B'Elanna muttered.

"Ah, oh crap," James stuttered. "Jessie and I did the same one."

"Don't tell me the rest, we got it," Daniel smirked.

"Great," James groaned. "You two have the same parts your mum and I had when we were eight."

"It's not fair," Duncan grumbled. He stared at Sasha, "it's your fault, if you hadn't kept screaming or crying with the others, we wouldn't have this problem."

"I cried with you as well," Sasha said.

"I don't remember asking for more deja vu," James muttered. "Wait, no boys got that close to her right?" All the parents of the boys overheard, they grew pale and quickly lead their boys to safety. James looked around at them, confused, "what?"

Only the loved up parents of the four girls, Holly, Linsey and the twins Britney and Heidi, remained. Also nearby was Trinity's annoying mum. She laughed horribly, "aaw I'm just as protective with my little princess." She cooed over her annoyed daughter.

"Mum stop it," she grumbled.

"Stop what sweetie?" the mum asked.

"Everything. Laughing's a good start," Trinity replied.

Duncan smirked at her, "nobody touched her dad. A lot of boys wanted to, god knows why. For some reason they ran away from the stage when I was forced to audition. Teacher said it would be easier for her if I was the mistletoe kid cos I wouldn't try to actually kiss her, it's not fair."

"Actually it is. I feel better that it's you," James said. "So all the girls will be the angels, the boys the students obviously, who's doing the Jesus birth flashback?"

"Johnathan and one of the twins, the big mouthed one," Duncan replied.

Heidi pouted, "am not big mouthed."

"You so are," Duncan said.

The next day

The nursery:

All of the girls stood in a line, Grace and Jacqueline wandered around them, every now and then directing a girl to another part of the line. Joan stood in front of them, she put her thumb up, "perfect."

"Ok, let's practise the song girls. The ones who can't read the lyrics just listen to the others. You can learn by copying," Grace sighed. She joined Joan's side. "One, two, three, go."

The girls, more or less started singing 'away in a manger', but at different times. Sasha and Britney appeared to be miming. Amy, Miral and Holly stood still doing nothing but look helpless.

"I think we should try it with the piano," Grace said. She went over to the electric keyboard on the nearby table. "We'll try a few times and then it's the boys time to practise. Then the older girls can teach the younger ones the lines, yes? Good."

"We need more than a week," Jacqueline sighed.

Later just the boys stood at the front of the class, the girls were nowhere to be seen this time round. Carl was reading lines while walking up to a bored looking Duncan. He tried to look menacing while doing so.

"I'd like to see you try anything, uh," he said, frowning in confusion. "Little nerd? This isn't right." He pointed a finger at Duncan, at this point he was smirking down at the boy who was half his height. "Um my back is covered, there's nothing you can do."

"Um yes there is," Duncan said, about to flick the boy on the forehead.

"Ah," Grace interrupted. Duncan pouted and lowered his hand. "That's not your line."

"So? I got the wrong part," Duncan said.

"He's right. This boy is supposed to be the smallest, an outcast," Joan sighed. "But not cos he's taller and looks a lot older."

"We should have these two swap parts. Duncan would play the perfect bully," Jacqueline said.

Duncan pulled a face, "hey." All the other boys agreed with the teacher, nodding their heads. "I'm not, you just annoy me. All I did was flick Johnathan, it's not my fault he's so light he fell over."

"Miral should play the bully, she's worse than him by far," Johnathan muttered.

"I'm not a bully," Duncan moaned.

Later that day

James/Jessie's Quarters:

"Am I?" Duncan asked as he stood in the middle of the living room.

Jessie sighed from the sofa, "not that I know of." Duncan folded his arms, pouting his lips angrily. "Honey, sit next to me," she said, patting the sofa space beside her. He jumped onto it next to her. "If you're anything like your dad at school then no, you're not. If you've hit someone for no reason, insulted somebody a lot for no reason, then that's another story."

"Don't think I have," Duncan said. "Does Tom count?"

"Not really, he always starts it," Jessie smiled. "It's just an acting part, it doesn't mean you're an actual good bully. If I remember right the main bully is the bigger, stronger boy. While your old part was the smaller, weaker looking one."

"Then how did dad get the part?" Duncan asked.

"Mainly because he was the only boy who didn't try to properly kiss me or make me cry," Jessie replied. "All the boys were the same age, size so."

"Yeah it's cos I stand out, I feel stupid," Duncan muttered.

"It's only for a week now, isn't it? This day and time next week it'll be over with," Jessie said.

"No, add one more day to that," Duncan said.

Jessie put an arm around his shoulders, "meh, it doesn't matter. It must be nice to stare down at all the boys."

Duncan's face quickly lit up, "yeah it's funny when Carl was trying to 'bully' me like he was bigger. He's tiny."

"Ah you see. Enjoy it while it lasts, they'll catch up eventually," Jessie smiled. "I just hope you don't end up being just my height, but not too much taller than your dad though."

"Why?" Duncan questioned.

"Cos I'm small, and tall people like Tom make me feel smaller," Jessie replied.

"Yeah but you can make him cry like a baby," Duncan grinned.

"I haven't in a while, I'm overdue," Jessie said. "Wait, which one's Carl anyway?"

"Um small kid, annoying," Duncan replied. "Sasha's age, supposedly born on the same day."

"Oh, oh boy," Jessie muttered nervously. "Only two boys were born on that day, Johnathan and the boy with that perverty father."

Duncan pulled a face, "what's your point mum?"

"He hit on me while I was in labour, your dad beat the snot out of him," Jessie replied. "Was Carl one of the boys who tried to kiss Sasha on the cheek?"

"No didn't get the chance, he wanted to," Duncan said. He grinned again, "are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"What, the term 'like father like son' except more literal, except that you're protecting your sister not fiance?" Jessie replied. Duncan nodded. "Then yeah, but only if he tries during practise."

"But what if he tries to kiss her on the night itself?" Duncan asked.

Jessie smiled, "oh just tell the teachers I'm in charge of the seating arrangements for the audience."

Duncan looked confused, "I don't get it."

"You'll see. He'll behave, leave the rest to me," Jessie said.

Two nights later

The Mess Hall:

A Christmas party was in full swing. Kids were running around, and or eating on the snack food that

were on the tables. The adults stood or sat around, most of which were obviously trying to stay sober for the kids this year.

Neelix, while dressed up as an elf, headed toward a small man-sized homemade Santa grotto in the corner. "All the kids are here now, are you ready Santa?"

"Um no, the fat cushion keeps falling out," Tom's voice said from inside. Neelix shook his head, he faced the doorway which was blocked by a door made of tinsel.

Harry and James walked nearby. "There's not many people who don't celebrate it. During the party, nativity play and the days themselves. We'll have less than a skeleton crew," Harry said.

"Well if you asked me five years ago I may have been free to help you out," James said.

"I know, I'm not asking for you specifically to cover any of those days, well except tonight. The kids are going to that sleepover while the rest of us crank the party up a notch, you know," Harry said.

"No can do, I'm one of the volunteers to babysit them," James said with a shrug. "Three of them are mine anyway so."

"Oh," Harry's face dropped. "Well all that's left is um, Chakotay to command both ships. Tom and I will be here."

"No way, he's banned from Voyager," James said.

Harry frowned in confusion, "since when and why?"

"Since episode four, and why can't fully be said, this special is up in advance," James replied.

"Can't fully?" Harry muttered.

"Some I can tell. He nicked off before an important battle, tried to turn Jessie evil, worked with Damien. Should I go on?" James replied.

"No, good points," Harry said. "How come he gets the command of Leda over me then, he did mutiny against Starfleet after all."

"Cos you don't have the backbone to argue with him, especially now," James answered. "Just get Craig to watch our bridge, he's not really in the Christmas or any good spirit."

Harry clicked his fingers, "of course Craig, thanks. All we've really got left is one or two Security volunteers, Voyager's opps to fill for tonight. Christmas Day we need some people for Security, after that we're done."

"Ok Security's easy. Ylara is a BC Egyptian, she won't know what Christmas is, and our new alien Security newbies," James said.

"Right, good good," Harry smiled.

James stopped in front of him, he had to stop as well. "Ok now you can tell me. Did you forget to sort the Christmas shifts and are just making me do it all?"

"What, no, I just didn't finish in time. I really thought why should I sort Voyager's when it's your job to sort shifts out here," Harry replied quietly.

"Tom gave that job to you for Xmas, cos he knows fine well that I organise the Security shifts for both by default. And we both have three children to please this time of year too," James said. "While you just sit on your ass all day, probably wondering when and if Emma will guest star in this season just so you can do that 'almost kiss her' thing."

Harry frowned at him, "do you practise these long insults long before you have a reason to make them?"

"Sometimes," James replied, smirking just slightly. "Actually no never, it's just easy to insult you. It has been eleven years after all."

"Swell," Harry muttered. "Still at first you had good points. You're obviously better than this than I am," he said while waving the padd in front of him like he was hinting.

"Fine but you have to take my place as one of only two babysitters for about fifteen kids," James said.

Harry turned a tad paler than usual, "no that's ok. Practise, practise ey. I need to expand skills to keep my career going, etc, bye." He rushed away. James smiled smugly to himself before heading toward one of the groups.

Neelix stepped back out of the grotto, joining Noah who was also dressed up as an elf. "Um, aren't elves supposed to be small?"

Noah shrugged, "you're small enough for the two of us."

"Never mind," Neelix muttered. "He's ready now."

"Good," Noah smiled. He clapped his hands to get everyone's attention. "All right kids, Santa's ready." Most of the kids in the room charged toward him. "Ah, you need to line up, it's ok, you'll all be seen to."

Neelix shook his head, he tried to get the kids to stand in a queue.

"We don't have to, do we?" Duncan asked while looking up at his mother.

"Well if you don't the kids might ask why," Jessie replied. She passed him a little wink, "besides, he has presents."

"Suddenly I feel like I've done this before," Duncan muttered.

Christmas 2377:

Craig looked back at Duncan. "Don't you want a present?" he asked.

"He has presents?" Duncan said questioningly. He rushed over to Santa.

"Ho ho ho, merry Christmas young man," Neelix said.

"I want a present," Duncan said.

"Now that's not polite, young man," Neelix said.

"I want a present! Give me one now, you fat b*****!" Duncan yelled.

Everyone who was watching them, immediately turned to James.

"What?" he said innocently.

Present Day:

James smirked at Jessie, "hmm I wonder why."

"Oh yeah," she quietly said.

"Who is Santa?" Amy asked.

On cue Tom stepped out of the grotto, with a Santa outfit on complete with a white beard, and a bigger than usual stomach. "Ho ho ho, merry Christmas," he laughed in a fake deep voice. Then a cushion dropped from his jacket, reducing his stomach size. The kids laughed, some pointed too and a lot of the adults just smirked in his direction.

"Oh, Santa's been on a diet this year," Tom laughed awkwardly, still using his fake voice. "I was worried you little ones wouldn't recognise me, ho ho."

Sasha giggled while Amy looked on with fear in her eyes, she clutched James' leg tightly. B'Elanna then stood beside them. "There's always one, isn't there. Though it is better than your eldest swearing abuse."

"I didn't do that," Duncan said. "Don't remember."

"Funny, he kinda did before," James said quietly to Jessie.

Jessie hid her smirk behind her hand, "no you wouldn't Duncan, you were only eight months old."

"I bet you do remember," Sasha said.

Heidi poked Tom in the leg, "weren't you a lot shorter last time, and every year before that?"

"Oh ho ho ho, Santa has a lot of magic powers," Tom laughed. "I kept meeting one handsome dad who was a lot taller than me, so this year I thought I'd try to match him."

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, "and funnily enough he isn't here this year."

"You don't stink either," Britney quietly said. Neelix looked a bit hurt, he turned his back away to hide it.

"Santa scary," Amy mumbled. She looked up at her dad, "is he a demon, can you kill him?"

"No honey he's not a demon, sadly," James replied as he knelt down next to her.

"But that hasn't stopped him trying in the past," Jessie smiled. B'Elanna nodded.

Carl cocked his head to the side, "are you gay?"

Tom stared blankly at the boy, "why would you ask that sonny? Santa has a wife, a very gorgeous one at that."

"You said one dad was handsome," Carl replied.

"I was just complimenting the nice man, he was one of the best dads I've met in a while," Tom said. "Ok elves, the chair." Noah smirked at him, he pushed a chair up to him. Tom sat down on it, "now who's first?"

The loved up parents of the Holly, Linsey and the twins glanced at each of their children. They chose Holly, her mum picked her up and handed her to Tom. He sat her on his left leg, "now what's your name young lady?"

"Holly," she replied. She grew a little interested in his fake beard and began playing with it.

"What a pretty name you have, ho ho," Tom laughed. "Now tell Santa what you'd like for Christmas."

Duncan squinted his eyes toward Tom, "I'm trying to figure out who it is. The elf's Neelix so it's not him."

"You'll probably know when you get closer, just don't yell it out," Jessie said.

Later, the queue was only half the length. Miral was sitting on Tom's knee. "Ho ho ho, hello young lady. My you're the prettiest little one I've ever seen, I see you take after your mother."

"Yeah, nothing like daddy," Miral said. "Daddy's annoying."

Tom laughed nervously, "uh huh, I'm sure deep down you think he's a goodish dad, who cares about you."

Miral narrowed her eyes, "is that a fake beard?" She started picking at his beard, he tried to stop her.

"No no, ho ho. Just tell me what you want for Christmas," Tom mumbled. He soon regretted it, Miral had obviously memorised a big list of things she wanted.

"This is boring," Johnathan groaned. "Where's dad anyway?"

B'Elanna glanced behind her nervously, "um, working I think."

"Ok, let's see what I have for you in my sack," Tom interrupted Miral. He fished his hand in the sack beside him. He brought a wrapped present and handed it to her. "Don't open it before Christmas."

Miral shook the present, "it's chocolate."

"Um, you don't know that," Tom nervously mumbled.

Miral shook her head as B'Elanna quickly took her off his lap, "now now Miral, I don't think you're getting this."

"No he doesn't, that's a cheap present," Miral pouted.

B'Elanna, now pretty embarrassed for once, lead her and Johnathan away. "He saves the best until the day itself, now please will you behave for once."

Next up was Amy, but she only was closest cos she had just been put down and hadn't realised. Tom glanced at her, he did his fake laugh again. "Ho ho, who's next then?"

She glanced toward him with fear in her eyes, she then burst out crying. James quickly picked her back up. "I'll just take her somewhere else." He walked away trying to comfort her.

Tom looked uneasy, "did I do something wrong?"

"No, she's just a little freaked out by you know, the laugh and all," Jessie muttered, smiling nervously.

"Ok sorry, um, what about your other little girl?" Tom asked.

"It's your turn Sasha," Jessie said, she picked her up. "Remember, play along and you get the present." She handed her to Tom.

"Hello sweetheart. Santa knows you've been a very good girl this year," Tom said. "So now, tell me what you'd like for Christmas."

"I already did a list, I can't remember all of it," Sasha quietly said.

"You don't have to tell me all, just name one thing at least," Tom said.

Sasha glanced away briefly, "I wanna another sister or brother, to replace Duncan."

Duncan looked up from a plastic plate of sausage rolls, "what, that's bloody cheeky. What did I do?"

Tom tried not to laugh while Jessie wasn't really sure how to react. "Um what's wrong with your brother?" Tom asked.

"He sometimes picks on me," Sasha replied.

"Do not," Duncan mumbled with a mouthful of sausage roll.

"Aaaw brothers can be jerks sometimes," Tom said. He looked up at Jessie. "But I'm sure mummy and daddy have already got that present in the pipeline, soon."

Jessie narrowed her eyes, "you really do pry too much, don't you Santa?"

Tom quickly looked away from her, "um eh, it's nice though to have older siblings though Sasha. I bet he looks after you most of the time."

"I guess, he keeps beating up boys who tried to kiss me," Sasha said.

Duncan pouted, "flicking, I only flicked them, and they just fell into the wall."

Tom clicked his tongue, "now that's naughty, Santa doesn't approve of that."

"Oh boy, don't go there again," Jessie quietly said.

"Yes I remember our first meeting with Duncan," Tom said, eyeing Jessie. "It's Sasha's turn anyway, and I have a nice present for you." He handed Sasha a present of her own. "Merry Christmas."

Jessie took her back off him. Duncan didn't waste anytime in going over to Tom, he looked worried.

"Um I think you're a little big for..." he stuttered. Duncan ignored him, he jumped on to sit on his left leg. He grunted in pain just briefly, "oh you're getting a bit big for Santa little uh, boy."

"You're a big wuss aren't ya?" he muttered. "Mum lets me sit on her knee sometimes."

"Ok does mummy have any feeling in her legs anymore?" Tom muttered quietly. Jessie narrowed her eyes. "Oh um, ok, um..."

"I'm not heavy, you're just weakish," Duncan rolled his eyes. He stared at him, trying to figure out who he was.

"Ok you are a naughty boy, and if you don't change your ways you might not get any presents. I'm afraid Santa can't give you any today," Tom said.

"Mum says we get even amount, you're not real," Duncan said. His eyes widened, "I only know one guy that tall and annoying who's..."

"Now now, here have a present, I was only kidding," Tom stuttered. He quickly handed him a present.

"I should have got one anyway Tom," Duncan said smugly.

Jessie tried not to laugh, "ok sorry Tom, I told him not..."

"No, it's all right Jessie," Tom said.

"I can't wait to tell dad about this," Duncan laughed.

"Ah ha, he already knows," Tom laughed mockingly. He then realised what he said, "oh, that's not a good thing is it?"

"Nope," Duncan shook his head.

Tom handed him another present, "here, for the love of god, don't tell anyone else."

Duncan smiled, "I wasn't going to anyway, sucker." He jumped off, then picked up his plastic plate again.

Tom shuddered like he was going to lose his temper any second, "Jessie, I guessed or assumed wrongly right?"

"Tom," Jessie warned, shaking her head. "You've been lucky with Sasha and Amy so don't complain." She walked away with Sasha.

Tom groaned, "yeah that's why I'm wondering."

The next day

Deck Two:

Ylara was one of the very few crewmembers occupying the Mess Hall. She sat down on her own at a centre table. Damien walked in as all the other crewmembers started heading out, laughing or chatting amongst themselves. He sat down beside her, she pulled a disgusted face as he did.

"What are you doing, your chores are done. Unless you want me to give you more," she muttered.

"I just figured you'd want company is all," Damien replied. "It was just a temporary tiny act of niceness, take advantage of it."

"Fine, just try not to be annoying," Ylara sighed. She glanced at him briefly. "If that's even possible."

"Ok but I think it's a bit off that while everyone's off, except us cos we don't celebrate Christmas, we're not manning important stations," Damien said.

"Other people are actually, and it was predictable," Ylara said.

"I suppose so. Both of us cannot be trusted and one is too stupid to do anything," Damien sighed.

"Stupid? I'm from thousands of years ago, or whatever. What's your excuse?" Ylara grumbled.

Damien turned his head to smile at her, "I told you, nobody trusts me to do anything remotely important. I was even rejected for the cleaner position."

"You cleaning voluntarily, without being threatened, hardly," Ylara scoffed.

"Strange though. You'd think the morgue would be eventful this time of year, and it isn't," Damien said, looking slightly disappointed.

Ylara frowned in confusion, "does Christmas involve ritual sacrifices?"

"No, but it does involve ritual too much drinking, unmanned helms and big crashing sounds," Damien replied with a smirk planted on his cheeky face. "But to even the death out, there's drunken one night stand babies."

"Seems to me like humans haven't changed much," Ylara muttered.

"They're just monkeys with spaceships and unfancy suits," Damien said. "No offense."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're human," Ylara said, raising an eyebrow.

Damien stared at her coldly, "I suggest that you don't make an enemy out of me."

Ylara climbed out of her chair, smirking to herself. "How many times over is that now?" She walked away.

"What the hell does that mean?" Damien asked.

Holodeck Two:

The entire staging area was decorated with Christmas lights and tinsel. There lay a set ready on the stage, the curtains were only pulled half back. All of the boys were passing a football to each other by hand. Each of them wore a basic school uniform with dark blue sweaters.

Behind the stage itself, the teachers and the girls stood around a dressing room. A lot of the girls were dressed in white gowns, the others hid behind a small curtain. Joan held a couple of those annoying tinsel rings that you wear on your head, on her arm. Britney was the first victim.

"Aaaw, look how pretty you are," she cooed. Next up for the torture was Linsey, who seemed to like it, and Holly with the biggest sulk you could get on girl her size.

"You lot, hurry up," Grace called over to the curtain.

"No, look stupid," Miral's voice moaned.

Jacqueline rushed over to have a look, "all you look so precious as angels." She smiled while walking away, "it's just the dress rehearsal anyway."

It wasn't long before the girls were stood in their formation. The boys were sitting on the chairs watching them, most of them with smirks on their faces. Grace sat at the piano at the side of the stage, she began to play a slow tune.

Most of the girls began to sing, still a little out of sync, but not as bad as before. "On the fourth day, Ashley didn't know how, to claim a miracle and lost his way. Wished his wish away, like the rest. Lost the wish to raise his pride."

Amy burst out crying, she ran off back stage. The piano playing stopped abruptly, while everyone else stared at where she stood before.

"Ok we've really got a problem," Jacqueline muttered.

"You think? We've only got two days to work with after this one, we can't just ask every parent to take their children away for practise on weekends," Grace stuttered. She groaned into her hand, "I should have been a primary school teacher."

"It's not her fault, it's a crap song," Duncan said. He looked down at himself in disgust, "and this uniform's crappy."

"Would you two stop worrying. Amy hasn't got a big part, most nativities have at least one child that does something wrong. That's the charm really," Joan sighed.

"Fine fine, let's continue," Grace groaned.

"Great, the show goes on," Johnathan said.

The teachers and most of the students sat in the audience chairs.

"Cue Mary, Joseph and the donkey," Grace called.

Heidi and Carl stepped out from the side of the stage, both in their Mary and Joseph costumes. Carl badly pulled a fake donkey on wheels with them. They wandered around the stage, stopping in front of each set as they passed them.

"What's my line?" Carl whispered.

"I'm a dummy," Heidi whispered back.

"I'm a... hey," Carl loudly said. "Minx."

"What's a minx?" Sasha asked, looking at Duncan beside her.

"I dunno, Carl probably made it up," he replied.

"What are you two doing?" Joan asked.

"The wife's being annoying," Carl replied.

Jacqueline groaned, "you just have one line Carl, it's not hard. Ok let's do this a fifth time."

"Maybe you'll have better luck with the donkey playing Joseph," Duncan commented.

Carl glared in his direction, "I'd like to see you do better."

"Anyone can say that one line, freak," Duncan muttered.

"Now you two, save it for the play," Grace scolded.

"You're the freak with your Slayer crap, and look older," Carl said, looking proud of himself.

Duncan's face stiffened, he jumped to his feet and stormed out of sight.

"Well at least the tension will be real," Grace sighed.

The Mess Hall:

As it was one of the two main lunch hours every table and seat was taken, several people had to either eat standing up or wait around until a seat cleared. A lot of the tables were taken by the families.

Tom shovelled a chicken stuffing sandwich into his mouth, and of course started to munch on it sloppily. B'Elanna looked on in disgust, she slapped him just as he looked like he was going to speak. "Wait until you swallowed that you pig."

Tom did as he was told, "don't call me that in front of Miral, the last thing we need is another name she can call me."

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, "fine, but don't eat and talk at the same time either."

"I was just going to say that it's supposed to be worse around here on the one PM dinner shift break," Tom said.

B'Elanna shook her head, "I doubt it, the twelve one is when all the children leave the nursery."

"Exactly, most people pick one to avoid kids," Tom said. Johnathan and Miral stopped eating to stare at him. "I can't think why."

"It's probably cos most of them are annoying whiners," Bryan muttered before putting a fork into his mouth.

"Bryan you're a kid too," Tom said.

"Most people around here don't know that," Bryan said with a pout.

Miral looked at the muffin he had on a plate next to his main one. "I want that."

Bryan looked at her, "so? Mum and dad are here, you can't do your 'I am too cute to have done anything' routine."

"You called me a whiner, I want it," Miral muttered.

"You are a whiner," Bryan groaned. He dropped the fork onto his plate, then picked up the muffin even though his main plate was half full. Miral stood up on her high chair to try and grab it off him, he just raised his arm up higher and turned the chair around. Then he just pushed most of the muffin into his mouth, and did the teasing 'mmm' sound while he chewed.

Miral sat back down, folding her little arms in a huff. "I'll get you later," she said in a sweet, innocent voice.

"Mum, guess what?" Johnathan blurted out.

B'Elanna hushed him, "shh, eat your dinner first. Then we can discuss the rumour."

Johnathan's eyes lit up, "really?"

"Not in the way you think," B'Elanna muttered, glaring at Tom who was again sloppily eating the sandwich. His eyes looked toward her innocently, then made a little 'what did I do' squeak.

Meanwhile at the Stuart table, Duncan sat in between Jessie and Amy, poking his food with the fork in his hand. Jessie glanced at his plate, then him, "what's wrong, do you not like it?"

"I dunno, haven't had any yet," he muttered in response.

"Are you feeling all right?" Jessie said with concern in her voice, placing a hand across his forehead.

"Fine mum," Duncan said.

"Carl hurt him," Amy blurted out.

Duncan glared at her, "did not, I'd hurt him back if he 'hurt' me."

"You didn't, you went in a huff," Amy said sweetly.

"He didn't hurt me though," Duncan grumbled.

"What did happen?" Jessie asked.

"Nothing," Duncan replied, looking down at his lap.

"Duncan, what did Carl do?" James asked.

Sasha glanced at Duncan, then him, "he called him a freak."

"See, you don't always hurt 'em," Amy said. "You always say you do so."

"Yeah I bet you always lied about school on Earth," Sasha commented.

"Ok that doesn't matter," Jessie butted in. "Is what Sasha said true?"

"Yeah, so what? Freak isn't a hurtful word is it?" Duncan muttered.

"I think it is," Jessie said.

James raised both eyebrows and nodded in agreement. "I got called it all the time."

"I said I'm ok, doesn't anybody believe me?" Duncan moaned.

"All right then, I won't ask your dad to do that thing then," Jessie sighed.

James glanced at her, "what thing?"

Duncan pulled a face, "yeah."

"I'm not going to beat up any kids, no matter how tempting it may get," James muttered, as he spotted Johnathan glancing over in Sasha's direction. Tom quickly made him turn around in panic.

"Don't, are you trying to get your daddy in a coma?" he stuttered.

Miral looked up at him with her usual cute innocent stare, "what's a coma, sounds bad." Tom groaned into his hand as she looked over, obviously not understanding why he was panicking over Johnathan's staring.

Jessie laughed behind her hand, then rested her head on James' shoulder. "Can we ask the Paris clan to move near us."

"God please no," James muttered in response. He glanced at little Sasha, who hadn't been paying attention. "Are you trying to get her stalked?"

"No but it's funny to watch Tom, and you squirm," Jessie smiled evilly.

"Oh yeah, what about Kirsty," James said.

"What about Kirsty?" Jessie muttered.

Duncan glanced toward them, "hey, what thing?"

"That thing I was going to make him do to stop Carl from trying anything on stage," Jessie replied.

"Why would you do that to her if it's about me?" Duncan asked.

"Oh I'll still do that, I was just going to extend the plan," Jessie replied. "What about Kirsty?"

James shook his head, "you didn't notice? Shame, I thought that since you'd be overprotective mum with any sons you would have."

Jessie widened her eyes, "what, what did she do?"

"Nothing really," James muttered with a frown. "Now what was that thing?"

"Oh you're sitting next to Carl's dad," Jessie replied, pointing at Carl's table. As usual his parents were arguing.

"What the hell for?" James protested.

Jessie shrugged, "if he knows he's sitting next to you, he'll remember what you did on the day Sasha was born, then he will make Carl behave himself around her on stage."

"What, Carl? I thought Duncan had the part," James said.

Duncan meekly smiled, "yeah they thought I was more bully like, and was too big to play the small bullied guy."

"Huh really, which am I more mad about?" James said to himself.

"Either the bully or the small part, hmm," Jessie said. "I say the bully part as you got chosen for the bullied part years ago for other reasons, not height."

"Huh? Oh yeah, you had the same part. Sorry," Duncan muttered.

"Don't be," James said. "Look if Carl's being a prat, I can sort it without using violence."

"You're just going to intimidate him, aren't you?" Jessie said, raising an eyebrow.

"Kinda, it'll be more like a promise that when he's eighteen or something, I'll be able to hit him," James replied. "He doesn't know that I probably won't know where he is then."

"I told ya, he barely annoys me," Duncan said.

"Liar," Amy giggled.

Three days later:

The children sat on the mat on the floor in the classroom, everyone but Amy, Scott, Holly and Miral held scripts in their hands. Those three girls sat beside either Trinity, Heidi or an unnamed girl that was around the two twins age, while Scott sat beside Carl. The other kids sat in a group in front of them.

"We can only do this for one more day, boys and girls. Your younger partners have to know their lines before lunch, or we'll never make the stage on Wednesday," Grace said.

"Everyone else can practise their own scenes. We'll have to help the young ones as well, so you'll be on your own for now," Jacqueline said. She sighed as the group's eyes lit up, "you'll still be in the same classroom, I mean we'll be too busy to help you lot."

Carl raised his hand, "I need to practise too miss."

"Ever heard of teamwork Carl?" Grace groaned.

The door opened, Joan ran through them. "We have a problem." Grace and Jacqueline turned to her. "Linsey, Heidi, Holly and Britney's parents have been given an extra two days shoreleave, they don't want their daughters stuck here when they can look after them themselves. We'll have to do the play on Monday."

"We weren't even ready for Wednesday let alone Monday. What do we do?" Grace stuttered.

"Cancel?" Duncan suggested.

Grace groaned into her hand, "no Duncan."

"It was worth a try," Duncan muttered huffily.

Jacqueline smiled, "I have an idea. It won't work for everyone, but it could work for some."

"Uh what?" Joan questioned.

"I know a way we can get some of the kids here to practise over the weekend," Jacqueline replied. Most of the kids overheard her and groaned in disappointment. "It all depends on the parents."

The following day, the Holodeck:

The children either sat or stood on the stage, the ones who could read, read from their scripts. This time at least one of each child's parents were helping the kids rehearse.

Carl and one of the unnamed boys talked quietly. Nearby James knelt in front of Sasha, trying to help her with her lines.

"Ok you distract Sasha's dad. I can't practise this scene with him standing so close," Carl said. "Especially at the end."

"Are you crazy?" the boy muttered.

"No, if he gets mad he'll hit dad instead," Carl smiled.

"Won't your dad be really mad when he comes to?" the boy said.

Carl's smile disappeared, "crap that's true."

"Plus her dad's still scary when mad, and your dad isn't around," the boy said.

"Can't do nothing but yell though," Carl smiled again.

Grace walked over to them, "let's practise the last scene, Carl, Sasha."

James looked behind him at Carl, Sasha kept tapping his arm to get his attention. "Daddy, daddy."

He mouthed, "I'm watching you." Carl widened his eyes, cowering slightly. James turned back to his eldest daughter. "If he tries anything, kick him, wait did your mother teach you?" She shook her head. "Kick upwards through the legs until you get a squeal or scream."

"But daddy, I can't do it in the final play, he has to," Sasha mumbled.

"He's only allowed to pretend, but for now let's just say he doesn't need to practise that part," James said. "Ok sweetie?"

"Yes daddy," Sasha said, pouting a little. "I don't want to do the play though."

"I know you don't, why do you think I changed the shifts around so four kids had to pull out," James said. "I thought that would work."

"Have you got any other ideas?" Sasha asked. "Just say you want to spend time with us over Christmas."

"I would but, the only reason I was able to get rid of Linsey and company's parents was cos they didn't have important enough jobs," James replied. Grace stood beside him, not looking very happy. "I'll think of something," he whispered.

"Mr Stuart, you're not helping," Grace muttered. "She, like a lot of kids need a confidence boost. School plays are an excellent way of doing that."

"She doesn't need a confidence boost, she's just shy like her mother was. Giving her the lead part in a play didn't help her either," James muttered, shaking his head. He straightened up, then moved a little out of the way.

Grace rolled her eyes, "ok, begin the scene. Duncan."

Jessie and Duncan looked over, she put an arm around his shoulders. "Now remember what I told you."

"The term 'break a leg' isn't literal," he replied.

Jessie cringed and closed her eyes, "no, but yeah, later, I mean about the scene."

"Some actors use real life stuff in their performance," Duncan said.

"Yes, so remember what Carl might try in the final play and use the, er tension while you speak your lines," Jessie said.

"But mum, this is the final scene," Duncan muttered.

"Crap, never mind then, go," Jessie grumbled to herself.

Duncan pouted slightly, "if you did Sasha's part, why aren't you helping her instead of dad?"

"He wanted to keep an eye on Carl," Jessie replied.

"Ah," Duncan said, he then went over to Carl and Sasha. Grace sighed in relief, then gestured her hand for them to start. Duncan cleared his throat as he put the padd behind his back, "I see now. Now thanks to you we believe in good will and... and, er... crap like that."

Grace groaned into her hand, "if you get stuck you're allowed to look at the padd."

"No, I like my version better," Duncan grinned. He noticed the look on Grace's face, groaned then decided to glance at the padd. "Now thanks to you we believe in good will and the benefits of sharing, and thankfulness of the season. God this is crap."

Carl glanced at his padd briefly then put it behind his back. "I bet he hasn't learned a thing. Still thanks for making fools of Ashley and company."

"And the others," Grace corrected him. She looked toward Sasha, she looked scared to death. "Honey, it's ok."

Jessie moved forward, "allow me." She went over to kneel beside Sasha, "honey if you get scared, just remember one thing. What helped me through this play was that if you say your lines right and everything, it won't be as scary. On the first night I was so scared, I barely said a thing at first, but when I said one line I felt better. The trick is to get yourself so into the play, that you don't even notice anyone else. If you do nothing you'll be more aware of the audience."

"That's, pretty good advice, I suppose," Grace reluctantly said.

Jessie looked at her briefly with a frown on her face, then back at Sasha. She nodded her head. "All right sweetie, you'll be great." She gave her a kiss on the head before moving out of the way.

"Carl, repeat your last line," Grace said.

"Still thanks for making fools of Ashley and the others," Carl said.

"That wasn't my intention," Sasha quietly said, looking down at her feet. "We came here to teach you the..." She looked at her padd, "true meaning of Christmas."

"Why would someone name their kid Jesus Christ, I saw somebody get slapped for that like he was swearing," Duncan said as he looked at his padd.

"It's blasphemy if you're talking about something else, now," Grace muttered.

Duncan groaned, "the birth of Jesus Christ, whatever."

"Um yeah, yes," Sasha stuttered.

"We get it, it's not about getting gifts and stuffing our faces," Duncan said, rolling his eyes.

Jessie moved over to stand beside James. "Why does that teacher keep looking at me like that?"

"She's supposed to be a devoted Christian, or Catholic, can't remember which," he replied.

"So?" Jessie said with a raised eyebrow.

"So one of them isn't a big fan of witches," James replied.

Jessie pouted, "it's not my fault. So if she walks over to me with fire I should be worried."

James smirked, "so would I if she was carrying it." Jessie narrowed her eyes, then slapped his arm.

"On a torch, not in her hands!"

James rubbed his arm, "ow."

"Big baby," Jessie muttered. "I never hear you say ow when it's a demon, or vampire. You just do it to me so I'll feel sorry for you, or make me feel bad."

"No I do it cos it hurts," James said.

Jessie shook her head, "yeah right."

Meanwhile Carl had said his last line, he walked a little closer to Sasha. She backed away. James moved forward quickly to stand in between them, "don't even think about it."

Grace groaned, "it's apart of the play."

"You don't need to practise that," James muttered.

Carl looked back at the boy he talked to earlier. He looked annoyed as his distraction was in progress, but James hadn't noticed it yet.

James frowned at Jessie, "do you feel that?"

"Feel what?" she asked. "Aaaw, does it still hurt, do you want me to kiss it better?"

"Maybe later," James replied. "It's something else anyway. Kinda like." He turned around when he heard Amy crying her eyes out, as usual her cries were loud and ear piercing. The boy from before quickly ran away before James saw him. He went over to pick her up.

Carl continued what he was doing, Sasha noticed and decided to run this time. "Damn it." He turned around to find Duncan in front of him. "Uhoh."

"Yeah unlike my dad, I can hit you," he smiled smugly. Carl ran too, Duncan chased him.

Jessie looked around the room with a bewildered look on her face. "They've really fixed up the ending."

Meanwhile James tried to comfort Amy. "Who did?" She pointed at the boy who hid behind Johnathan. Like expected, he ran as well.

"This is a disaster," Jacqueline groaned.

"It was your idea to ask the parents to help with the weekend rehearsals," Grace muttered.

"You should know better than to listen to my ideas, let alone actually do them," Jacqueline said.

The boy's cries filled the room, everyone but Miral turned to look at him. She had the usual innocent smile on her face. B'Elanna knelt down next to her, "did you hit him?"

"No mummy," she replied sweetly. "Never do that." Johnathan burst out laughing, nobody else who wanted to, dared.

"Why don't we try a different scene when everyone's..." Grace said, then she raised her voice, "calmed down!"

"Hey if you had some control over a certain little pervy boy and his mate, we wouldn't have a problem," James said.

Jessie pulled a face, "his mate, what do you mean?"

"Amy said the boy said 'just cry or something will you, get your dad's attention' while poking her," James replied.

"Ugh, let's have another go at the singing," Grace groaned. Most of the kids widened their eyes, then ran to hide behind their parents. "What, that's the best part. We've only got another day after this."

Duncan got bored of chasing Carl, he went over to stand next to his mum. Sasha finally emerged from hiding, and ran over to her dad. "Have you ever thought of putting down that this play is a comedy? Then if stuff like this happens, the audience will have a good laugh so," Duncan questioned.

"That's if there is an audience besides the parents," B'Elanna commented as she carried her daughter over to them.

"No no, invites have went around both ships. I'm expecting a big turnover," Grace said.

Two nights later:

Grace stood by the Holodeck doors waiting impatiently. Harry walked up to her, making her eyes light up. "Oh are you here for the show?"

"No, I was just passing by," Harry replied. Grace pushed him through the doors, then smiled like nothing happened.

Harry shook it off then looked around, several crewmembers were sitting in the audience. Most of them didn't look too pleased.

"I'm guessing I'm not the only one," he muttered. "Oh well." He took a seat.

Behind the stage:

All the girls excluding Heidi were dressed up in their angel outfits, she was dressed up like Mary. The boys were dressed up in the school uniforms.

"Jacq, we have another problem," Joan whispered.

Jacqueline sighed, "what is it?"

"One of our props and lights people has just turned up, drunk," Joan replied.

"What? Oh, I'll do it instead, you rally the troops," Jacqueline groaned. She walked away.

Joan pulled a face as Grace walked in behind her. "Not enough people have turned up, have you got any other ideas?"

"Quickly replicate some drinks and snacks, if that doesn't bring in people, what will?" Joan replied.

"Right, then a shipwide announcement," Grace muttered, she ran back the way she came.

Joan clapped her hands, all the children gathered around her. "Ok it's time. Now remember, there is no audience to be intimidated by, but try not to screw it up."

"Great pep talk," Heidi said.

"Thanks, I thought so too," Joan said. "Girls, it's time. Curtain will go up in five minutes."

All of the girls went through the stage door, they took a while to get into formation. Heidi pushed her way to the front. The shy girls kept trying to hide behind the person next to them. Joan gently moved them back, then checked the tinsel rings to see if they were on right. "Ok the lights," she rushed off the stage again.

By this time the audience was a little bigger, Grace had replicated a long table at the back of the room. Several crewmembers walked in carrying trays of food. "Good, thanks. Now stay and you can have some." The crewmembers looked uneasy.

B'Elanna, Bryan and Tom with his newly shaved hairstyle walked through the doors, they stood around to figure out where to sit. James and Jessie were not far behind them.

"Are you dreading this?" Tom asked them.

"Oh yeah," Jessie replied.

"Of course, it's crap," Bryan commented.

"Bryan," B'Elanna hissed. "We're dreading this for other reasons."

James frowned at Tom, "I can see my reflection in your head, that's not good."

Tom pulled a face at him, "yeah right, you can't even look that high up."

Jessie laughed, "oh yeah, I can see mine." She quickly fixed her already perfectly combed hair while staring up at Tom's head.

Grace rushed over. "I've told crewmembers to stay off the first two rows, they're for family."

"I know, I was the one who did the seating remember," Jessie said.

"Who's in charge of the ship anyway?" James asked, gesturing his head toward Harry. Tom looked over, he panicked.

"Oh god."

Meanwhile on the bridge:

Kevin sat in the big chair with his feet up on the station. "Oh yeah, I bet this and the Enterprise one is a real chick magnet, how else would Tom get a girl?"

Jodie pulled a face at him, "uh Tom and B'Elanna were together years before he got any command. As you know the helm isn't a chick magnet."

Kevin shrugged his shoulders, "oh it totally was, you couldn't keep your eyes off me."

"Ugh, I only partially liked you cos of the Slayer thing," Jodie muttered.

"Speaking of which, aren't you supposed to be at the play?" Kevin questioned.

"Aaw crap, Jessie told me to go," Jodie said. "Hey, I bet Nathan isn't even there."

"No cos the first half of the episode was released before his debut, we couldn't mention him," Kevin said.

"Still," Jodie folded her arms as a sign of protest. "I wasn't told in a scene either."

Kevin rolled his eyes, "fine, as long as you and Jessie have your fight where I can see it."

"Ugh you're a perv," Jodie groaned.

"What? No I appreciate violence, I didn't say that to see hot sisters cat fighting, honestly," Kevin said, as Jodie couldn't see his face he smiled cheekily.

"Why don't I believe you?" Jodie raised an eyebrow. "I'll go, only to get away from you." She stepped into the turbolift.

Holodeck:

One of the curtains had gone up, and the girls were busy singing the intro song. Well almost all, Sasha and Britney mimed again and Amy just stood there pouting. She turned her back to the audience, making a lot of them go 'aaaaw'. At the end of the song Carl's parents rushed in, Grace pointed them to the two seats at the end, next to James.

"Damn it, the girlfriend better not sit next to you or..." Jessie whispered to him.

"It's ok, I could still reach him if she does," James whispered back.

Tom, who sat next to Jessie, frowned at them. "What are you two up to?"

"Nothing," they both replied.

The girls quickly vacated the stage, the second curtain went up so everyone could see the full stage. The boys were scattered around a dormitory set.

Carl and one of the boys talked near the front. "Do you think your mum will visit?" the boy asked shyly.

"Of course, mum always does," Carl replied.

Johnathan looked at Duncan, he stood in a huff by one of the beds. He tapped him on the back to get his attention, Duncan turned slightly and pushed him to the ground. The audience more or less laughed.

"I hope that was part of the play," B'Elanna grumbled. She looked to see both James and Jessie's response, Jessie covered her face with her hand while James couldn't help but smirk. "Didn't think so."

Duncan then noticed the entire stage were looking at him, "aah crap." He headed over to Carl and the boy, Johnathan quickly got back up. He ran to catch up. "Ha, you think your mum will see you this year?" He looked around nervously. "Uh, something about dead parents," he muttered.

"Non orphan sons are abandoned here," Johnathan said, coughing nervously. "Why would she come back?"

"What of your mother?" Carl questioned.

"What of?" Duncan said with a raised eyebrow. "You mean about."

Carl groaned, "no, I thought you were supposed to be smart."

Duncan narrowed his eyes at the smaller boy. "Forget it, your mum hates you and doesn't want to see you again."

Carl pretended badly to look upset, "that's not true." He turned his back on the audience, "you suck, freak show."

"That's it," Duncan grumbled. He pushed Carl to the ground, then marched off the stage.

Johnathan cringed, then quickly shook it off. "Uh, that'll teach you." He ran off the stage.

Grace joined Joan backstage, she already had a bottle of alcohol in her hand. "We're so, so screwed."

"Well at least the audience don't know the difference," Grace said.

Later as Jodie ran to the front to take her seat on the second row, Trinity walked onto the stage. Carl knelt on his own, pretending to pray. "Oh child of light. Uh what does thy trouble you?" Trinity stuttered.

Carl looked up, he stood back up. "An angel? Did you get lost and are looking for someone else?"

Trinity walked forward, she tapped his head with a little wand with tinsel on the top of it. "Um, um, you wish for your mother to see you this Christmas. It's a noble wish." She looked backstage briefly, "that can be granted."

"Really? But what have I done to deserve this wish?" Carl asked. "Oh, be granted."

"Only your true soul, or something," Trinity replied, shrugging. This made a few people laugh.

Duncan walked onto the stage, then hid behind one of the props. "When will my mother come?" Carl asked.

"On Christmas Eve, when you see a bright star in the sky," Trinity said in a bored tone of voice.

Duncan groaned, he turned to shake his head at the audience. He mouthed, "crap isn't it?" The audience who understood him laughed quietly. Carl and Trinity looked confused.

"Duncan," Grace snapped quietly.

Carl walked off the other side of the stage, then Duncan stepped out from his hiding place. "So you grant wishes huh?"

Trinity sighed, then pulled a worried face. "Only to few who deserve it."

"What about ones who need it?" Duncan muttered.

"Only those with pure good in their hearts, I think," Trinity said.

"Maybe I would have been good, if my mother wasn't taken away from me," Duncan said, sounding bored as well.

Carl's father scoffed, "that explains a lot."

Jessie looked at him with a nasty look on her face. "You got something to say?"

"Wow, she's alive," Carl's father whispered to his girlfriend.

"Shut up you prat," she snapped back.

Duncan and Trinity left the stage. A starfield curtain fell down. The group of girls re-entered the stage, and stood in a formation. Somebody began playing the piano. They all began singing Holy Night. Half way through, Miral stepped forward. The tune changed to a different style Christmas song.

"Oh god, she's going to sing," Bryan groaned. Tom and B'Elanna didn't hear as they were too busy looking proud.

"I saw mummy kissing Santa Claus underneath the mistletoe last night," Miral sang cutely. "At least he's not a creep, and doesn't kiss sheep. She thought that I was tucked up in my bed fast asleep. Then I thought Santa Claus and mummy, imagine all the presents. Oh I wish he were my daddy." The girls behind her looked confused as she rejoined them. They quickly left the stage.

Tom stared ahead of him in disbelief, B'Elanna didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "What the, what did I do to that girl?" Tom protested.

"That's what I'd like to know," Jessie said, smirking to herself.

Later:

Duncan and Trinity were on stage this time. Trinity pretended to look distraught. "I'm sorry, I can't, it's bad," she sniffed.

"So's the play," Duncan said. He looked at the audience, "you know I'm right."

Then some of the angels stepped on stage, Sasha walked in front of them. Trinity ran to hide amongst them. Sasha spoke up but ever so quietly. "You claim that we don't do what's right. Yet er, you are the one who's doing that."

"Oh, more angels, more wishes," Duncan said.

"Wrong," Sasha said. Her tinsel ring fell over her face, some of the audience did the 'aaaw' and/or laugh. She quickly fixed it. "It's time you learned your lesson."

"Ooh what are you going to do?" Duncan yawned into his hand.

Sasha looked more nervous as she separated from the others to stand in the centre of the stage. Then she had to face the audience, she looked at the ground instead. "Let me tell you a story of, the son of god." With that she ran off the stage. The angels walked after her, cringing a little. Duncan sighed, he turned back the other way. The curtain raised to show the Bethlehem set.

Tom leaned over to whisper to Jessie, "please tell me at least one of Duncan's lines were the ones in the script."

"A few were," Jessie replied, raising her shoulders meekly.

"I'll give you this though, I didn't expect Sasha to say a thing," Tom whispered before sitting back. B'Elanna elbowed him, flashing her angry eyes at him. "What? Oh." He leaned over again, "what about pushing Johnathan?"

"That was supposed to happen," James replied, obviously lying.

Tom looked at him suspiciously, "what about the other push? I find that hard to believe as you played the bullied boy as a kid."

Jessie giggled into her hand, James shook his head at her with wide eyes. "Don't."

"I won't," she said.

Tom of course looked interested, "what, what did he do?"

"Oh, let's just say that Duncan's performance is perfect in comparison," Jessie giggled.

"Guys, watch the play," James nervously said, looking away from his giggling wife. She attached herself to his right arm, patting it with one hand.

"Yeah Jessie, god," Tom smirked.

Bryan pouted, "aaw but I wanna know what happened."

A little while later Heidi and Carl, dressed as Mary and Joseph of course, sat in front of the fake baby in the hay. The angels arrived on the stage when the piano began playing again. Again only a few of them sang, the song was 'Away in a Manger'.

The spot lights shone on the walkway beside the audience. Near the Holodeck doors stood the three kings, which were one unnamed girl, Linsey and Duncan. They all sang 'We Three Kings' while walking down the aisle, well more or less, Duncan only pretended to while pulling faces. They stopped by the stage. The unnamed girl walked up the stage on her own singing the first verse, Linsey followed with the second verse.

"Ugh god," Duncan groaned to himself when it was his turn with the myrrh verse. "Myrrh is grime, it's cheap perfume. Chokes the life out of a groom. This stupid song makes me feel like crying. Why can't I just go home?"

The children were soon back in the dormitory set. Linsey had forgotten to throw off the King's jacket that was on top of the angel's outfit she had on.

Duncan sighed mostly out of relief, "I see now. Now thanks to you we believe in giving and crap. I'm the stupid cliché villain who reforms at the end for no good reason, probably out of boredom." Everyone but Carl smirked or giggled.

"God what's the matter with you?" Carl groaned. "Do you think you're too good for this?"

"Oops," Linsey muttered, she quickly threw off the king's jacket.

"Isn't Christmas about goodwill, so you're supposed to forgive and stuff," Duncan smirked. "Do you think you're too good for that?"

"I don't remember this part," Jessie commented. James smiled smugly.

"I know."

She looked at him suspiciously, "ok, you told him to do this, didn't you?" The look on James' face when he glanced at her gave her, her answer.

"But, you're not supposed to..." Carl muttered, pouting.

Duncan walked over to the angels, and stopped near a mostly relieved Sasha. "Thanks to you we know who the real bad guy of the pl... this school is."

Sasha's eyes shifted nervously, "um, that wasn't our intention. We wanted to teach the true meaning of Christmas."

"Giving, forgiveness, and that it isn't about getting presents, right?" Duncan said.

"Uh huh," Sasha said.

Carl stepped forward, putting his hands on his hips. He felt like he could still get his usual line in so gave it a go, "thank you for making this a better school to live in. I'd like to give you a gift as a thank you." He got nervous as Duncan didn't budge an inch, he stayed in front of his little sister, daring

"Thanks," Sasha quietly said, now fully relieved.

"See, that felt good didn't it?" Duncan said smugly.

"Shut up," Carl muttered quietly.

Meanwhile all three teachers looked frazzled with worry. "Never ever again," Grace muttered. "Kids, just end the damn play."

The children quickly lined up to do the bow. The curtain fell in front of them, the audience clapped politely most of them had confused expressions on their faces.

"Your plan would never work Jess, Carl didn't care about his dad," James said.

"Fine, so instead you tell Duncan to read your version of his script? I knew some of it was familiar," Jessie shook her head.

Tom looked at them both, "you mean James re-wrote Duncan's lines?"

"Not all, Duncan made some stuff as he went along. I just did the last scene," James replied.

Grace's voice went over the speakers, "that's not all we have ladies and gentlemen, so please stick around." A couple of crewmembers quickly escaped anyway.

"What now?" Bryan groaned.

As the curtain fell, all the children gathered into a group. They were singing a Christmas song that had been written in the twenty second century. Scott stepped out from the group. He pulled a few faces while he tried to remember the words to his song, he shrugged and began singing. "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. Oh what fun it is to ride on, something something, some, oh jingle bells." He backed back into the group.

This time a pouting Carl stepped out. "I broke my bat on Johnny's head. Somebody bitched on me. I hid a frog in somebody's bed. Somebody bitched on me. I did a dance on Mommy's clothes. Climbed the warp core and tore my pants. Somebody bitched on me. So, I'm gettin' nuttin' for Christmas. Mommy and Daddy are mad or just plain stingy." He stepped backwards.

It was Johnathan's turn next. "Grandma got crashed into by a reindeer, flying a shuttle home from Voyager on Xmas Eve. She'd been drinkin' too much egg nog and we'd begged her not to go. But she'd left her medication, so she jerked the shuttle out of the bay doors. When they found her Christmas mornin', at the scene of the attack. There were hoof prints on the viewscreen, and incriminating Claus marks on the back. And we just can't help but wonder: Should we open up her gifts or send them back?"

Sasha and Amy both went forward, both blushing red in the cheeks. The piano played a different tune, the two stood there looking scared to death. Amy burst out crying and ran off the stage, Sasha got even more nervous and stepped backward.

Duncan's turn was last, he stepped forward. "Thomas, the annoying ex-helmsman, looking like a big hedgehog. If you ever see him, bring a gag or phaser. All of the other guys used to laugh and call him names. They never let poor Thomas play with them. Then one dull Christmas Eve, someone said, 'Thomas you really should think, about shaving off your hair'. Nothing really has changed, they all point and laugh. Thomas, the annoying ex-helmsman, now looks like Justin Timberlake."

Everyone in the audience but Tom of course, laughed and clapped. Duncan grinned as he backed into the group. They all did another bow, the curtain closed on the entire production.

Tom put his hand across his shaved head, "I need a toupee." B'Elanna smirked at him.

"So," Grace said. "What are we doing next year?"

Jacqueline and Joan stared blankly at her. "Holographic versions of the kids, that's what," Joan muttered.

"Here here," Jacqueline said.

THE END