

## **Episode 5.09**

### **Death of the Soul**

The earth cracked open. Crowds of people skidded to a halt as several victims were swallowed by the crevice. People ran in many directions, most of which leapt over the still growing crack in the ground. Fathers grabbed their children and ran as fast as their legs could take them.

The planet's two stars were blocked by a never ending stream of black storm clouds. Despite the conditions several battered ships battled their way through to land nearby. Every single person changed their path to go towards their rescuers. Too many people were knocked to the ground in the stampede, the ones who tried to help them up got knocked over too.

Within seconds the ships were full, the doors began to close on the screaming crowds of people who were still left. The ships took off to fly back into the unforgiving clouds.

After a long five minutes of battling through the storms, each ship flew out of the planet's atmosphere and into the calm of space.

Anybody who was trapped by the viewports of the ship looked down at what was once their world, but they couldn't see a thing. They felt the ships jump to warp.

More ships passed by, using their sensors alone they navigated towards what appeared to be nothing. They were enveloped by the darkness, only for another long ten minutes.

As they re-emerged a separate ship flew from a different point on the black planet, its design and colour was a lot different to the rescue ships. Those ships failed to notice or even care that the mystery ship jumped into a purple portal that appeared only for a few seconds.

"Surround it, go, go, go!" the alien leader bellowed from afar. His soldiers ran to take positions around the Delta Flyer. A couple climbed up on to the top of it. The leader joined the group converging on the entrance to the shuttle. A group of three shone the lights on top of their rifles through what was left of the front window. They could see two figures lying slump on the consoles.

"Two unconscious, Commander," one of them reported without budging from their position.

"How many were aboard?" Commander asked a member of his group.

"Seven Sir," she replied.

"Into position, get that door open," Commander ordered.

He stepped back as his soldiers aimed their rifles at the doorway. They fired along the lines of the door to force it to open. Eventually it did, with a thud it fell to the ground. Immediately three phaser rifles were pointed back at them.

"Don't, it's on wide. One shot is all I need!" Craig yelled at them.

The aliens did not budge. "I'm afraid not, boy. We're all around you. It's not like we're here to kill you. Surrender."

"Oh, so you weren't the ones who shot us down here?" Craig retorted.

"We had no choice. Lower your weapons!" Commander threatened.

"Wait, if you're not trying to kill us, what do you want?" Nathan asked him.

Shar rolled her eyes, "not caring, Nath."

"This isn't a negotiation. You can't get to all of us before we get you. Just come with us," Commander calmly said.

"Oh, so you need us?" Craig said. He pressed a button on the rifle; it made a powering up sound. The fingers of the soldiers nearby tensed on their fire button. "Better earn it then."

Shar smirked as she was about to do the same. Nathan looked between them both. "God guys, be cheesier and more psycho please." He reached over to undo what Craig had done.

"Good, now put the weapons down," Commander ordered.

"No, you obviously need us, so you won't kill us," Nathan said.

Commander scoffed, "we only hinted that we didn't want to. We'll do whatever we must to save our world. We only need..."

A loud phaser fire interrupted the argument. Even though it clearly wasn't him, everyone instinctively turned to Craig. He looked just as confused. The aliens at the front then noticed their teammates guarding the side and rear of the shuttle were down. Commander gestured his hand, the remaining soldiers knew what to do.

Everyone then heard a thud against metal coming from the Flyer. The men on top of it turned to fire on something behind them. One lost his weapon right away, he got it right back in the face. The force of it threw him off the shuttle and to the ground. The second man was tripped over, and fell face down onto the roof.

Craig shrugged, and then aimed straight ahead of him at the other attackers. They had already spread out, and taken cover. Shar and Nathan followed suit.

Commander looked out from behind the tree he chose to use as cover, frowning at the roof of the shuttle. He aimed to fire. The man lying on the roof went flying towards him just as he fired, taking the full shot. Still airborne, he crashed straight into him, knocking them both into the tree.

Several of the front team threw themselves at the Voyager team before they could be fired at. Shar responded to one with a knee to the ribs, then a fist to the face. Craig and Nathan seemed happy enough to use their rifles against their melee attackers.

With only a few attackers left, a figure jumped off the roof, landing nearby Craig. Startled, he swung around to punch whoever it was in the face. He quickly regretted it as his fist felt like it was on fire. He looked to see who or what he hit, but was given a fist to his own face for the trouble.

Shar meanwhile knocked another guy back, and then shot him in the chest. She and Nathan then noticed the nearby ship, and over a dozen new soldiers were running for them.

"Drop your weapons, do it now!" many of them yelled.

Nathan shrugged and hit one last guy in the head.

The earlier arrival stepped closer to the Commander. With just a gentle nudge the man who had crashed into him was rolled out of the way. Commander looked up in time to see a rifle pointed at his head. "Stop!" he commanded.

The soldiers lowered their weapons. Shar and Nathan kept their weapons anyway.

"Your people too," Commander said to his attacker.

"I'll think about it," James said.

The conscious Voyager crewmembers looked in their direction, staring at him with a bewildered expression on their faces.

"If you lose the weapons, and treat my wounded," James finished.

Commander shook his head, "you hurt more of mine than we yours."

"You could have killed someone in that crash, you may have," James said. He dug the rifle into the man's cheek. "Do you really want to even the score?"

Commander sighed, "you heard him. Treat their wounded." The conscious soldiers dropped their weapons and headed back to their ship.

"How... what?" Nathan stuttered.

"Later. See if the others are ok," James ordered.

"From what I saw, just Jach and Chiny were hurt; bump on their heads. Craig, well..." Nathan replied, smirking a little. On cue Craig groaned from the floor.

Shar sighed, "just when I thought this trip would be dull. We'll keep an eye on the new doctors, shall we?" She turned to go into the shuttle, Nathan followed.

"Ow, how many head pieces do I have?" Craig groaned.

James shook his head, "it was your own fault. Why did you hit me?"

Craig looked up, ignoring the pain he got for looking mad. "You came out of nowhere, you git. I was confused. I think the question is; why did you hit me?"

James only answered with a shrug, leaving Craig to grumble at him. He held a hand out for him. Reluctantly Craig used it to help himself up as quickly as possible.

Commander got up just as a few soldiers came back with medical supplies. A few of them went inside the Flyer, the others spread out amongst the downed soldiers. One checked the man who had knocked the Commander over.

"I have to say, I'm impressed. We knew we'd have to capture a Slayer, but we thought twenty of us would be enough," Commander said.

"Sure, ignore the bloke on his side with the broken face," Craig muttered.

"It was a team effort," James shrugged. He glanced briefly at Craig, "more or less."

"Would have been nice if we were in on the plan, or any plan," Craig mumbled.

"What made you even think that our shuttle had one aboard, anyway?" James asked.

Commander smiled, "well, we have our secrets, like you seem to."

"Hmm yeah, creepy. If you wanted him, you could have just asked," Craig commented.

"You mean like the last time we asked your Voyager for help. Unfortunately this is the only way that seems to work," Commander said.

"As we're the winners of this round, maybe you could drop the cryptic crap and leave us to fix the mess you made," Craig grumbled.

Commander sighed, "I'm afraid your shuttle will be down for quite a while. Days, weeks. You won't survive on your own that long."

"Good thing we've got your ship in the bargain," James said.

Commander's smirk left his face. "Do you think we are fools? We didn't take any chances in this mission. You could have beaten us, and then taken our ship. What would we get for our troubles then?"

"Cryptic boy strikes again," Craig commented.

"You've disabled your own ship," James said.

Craig looked at him with a frown, "you're kidding?"

"You'll find nothing in it to repair your own either," Commander said. "Don't get me wrong, we can help you fix your vessel, for a price."

Craig shook his head. "You only want him, why screw us over for?"

"I doubt he'd co-operate otherwise," Commander replied with a smile.

"Why don't we find that out," James said casually, stepping closer. The Commander backed off twice as far.

"We wouldn't do something like this if we weren't desperate," he stuttered. "Please, at least hear us out."

Craig shook his head, "doesn't take much to scare them, huh."

James passed him a bemused look, just briefly. "For all we know you would do something like this, just for the hell of it. You shot down an innocent shuttle, set a bomb near where civilians were..."

"That wasn't us," Commander butted in. Craig raised an eyebrow. "The second one, I mean. The government do this all the time. They're trying to turn the people against us."

"Shooting a small shuttlecraft down is still a bit fishy," Craig commented.

"Didn't you say earlier stuff like this works better for you?" James added on.

The Commander sighed, his shoulders slumped in defeat. "Fine, you don't believe us. Why don't you see for yourselves?"

"Haven't we already?" Craig muttered.

"No," Commander bluntly said. "Come with us to one of the power plants this so called government are running."

"This is the master plan? I have to say, I've heard better," James said.

The Commander looked around briefly. "You need convincing, right? You won't help us till we show you what horrific things they're doing to this planet. Why else would we force you down here?"

"Since you mentioned him, I'd say kill him and the innocent us," Craig replied. "Otherwise I'm not buying it. Why go to all this trouble to recruit a Slayer into the terrorist gang that bombs power plants."

"We have no reason to hurt or kill him, do we? We have a very good reason for bringing him here," the Commander said.

James shook his head, "enough of the third person, ok. If this is so important, why don't you just tell us the whole thing, instead of badly being vague?"

"Because when I was told what was happening, I didn't believe it either," the Commander replied. "That was until I saw it with my own eyes."

"Wow, this guy really doesn't want to give away the plot," Craig commented, he turned his back away from them.

"As a gesture of good faith, we'll help restore your shuttle's power. Our scans told us it would take days to repair. In return, just come with us on this one incursion," Commander said. "Then I'm sure once you've seen it, you'll help us."

"Good faith, he doesn't even know what that means does he?" Craig grumbled.

"Fine," James answered. Craig swung around to stare at him, his eyes widened. "On one condition."

"We already named it," Commander said.

"You're on your own then. Since you shot down our ship, we'll take yours as well. Whether it helps repair our ship or not, it doesn't matter," James said.

The Commander clenched his teeth, and closed his eyes tightly shut. "What's the other condition?"

"Well it's not so much a condition really, just a warning," James replied. "If I think you're up to no good..." He unsheathed a thin sword from his leg, and a bigger one from his back. "It'll be quick."

Craig smiled to himself before turning back away from them. He had time to see the horrified look on the Commander's face.

"You wouldn't," he managed to splutter out.

"One of those bombs on the space station was metres away from my family. I think what you should have said was you haven't yet?" James said.

"If you were just going to do that anyway, why did you..." Commander muttered. "I already told you it wasn't us."

"Just let me talk with my crew, then we can go whenever," James said as he walked back towards the shuttle. Craig followed him.

"All right, when are you going to tell me what's going on?" he asked as they got to the door.

James glanced briefly at the Commander, who had quickly rushed off to talk to some soldiers. "Now, pretty much."

Craig rolled his eyes with a sigh, "you can be a right drama queen sometimes. Not that I didn't enjoy the last part. So where exactly did you hide on the Delta, for two hours?"

"I didn't," James replied. Craig frowned at him. "Think about it."

He groaned, "we couldn't even see this ship, yet you were able to sneak aboard unnoticed. Yeah, not buying it."

"They only cloak during battles," James explained.

"Right," Craig again groaned. "So you sneaked aboard their ship, hours before they decide to shoot us down to get you. You knew, didn't you?" James gave him a nod as a reply. "So knocking the watchers into a coma before they decided to train the newbies, didn't occur to you?"

"In case you haven't noticed already..." James said, gesturing his head towards the shuttle. "They're a tad more powerful than we are. I didn't want them trying to do the same to Voyager or the Leda. Besides, what they're complaining about, we need to be here for it."

"We?" Craig muttered.

"Look, do you want to know or do you just want to pick holes?" James groaned.

Craig shrugged, "it's not my fault that this plan has more holes in it than the Titanic."

"All right, I'll just fill in one of the trainees or Li'Chin," James said.

"It's your way or the high way today, right?" Craig said with a sigh.

James shrugged, "yeah."

Craig looked confused, "what is a high way?"

"I dunno, a taller, higher up... way. Now..." James muttered.

"While we're on the subject of stupid sayings, the Titanic one. More holes in it than the giant, what?" Craig said. James turned to go inside the shuttle, Craig smirked to himself and tried to quickly grab his arm. "Wait, kidding. I'm not that stupid."

"Fine. Remember that vision I was talking about?" James asked with a sigh.

"Demons attacking the crew, Jessie stabbed, something at something percent. Yeah," Craig replied.

"Right, well it's a little more up to date now," James said.

Craig pulled a face as he glanced around at the nearby soldiers. "These guys have something to do with it?"

"That's the thing, I don't know. Where they want to go though definitely is," James replied.

"Hmm, so they could be telling the truth about their world about to blow, or they could be the ones who do it," Craig mumbled to himself. "Either way; bye, bye planet... while we're still on it. Why are we here again?"

James shook his head, "forget it. At least one of us has to go with them, we need to know if they're behind it or not."

"Of course they are. If all they needed to do was blow up a power station that's killing them, then they don't need you for that. Well unless the power station's security system is a vamp or something," Craig commented.

"If you remember they just want me to go to this place, to prove what's happening. They probably want me for something else, god knows what," James said.

"Right, so this vision hasn't shown you that part?" Craig stated. "You're being almost as vague as uptight soldier guy."

"Look if I could make sense of it all so I could explain it, I would, but I can't," James snapped. Craig shrugged. "All I know is that this planet is definitely going to die, and not neatly. Voyager gets invaded, while the ship's under attack from someone. The rest of it was all mixed images."

"Two events, one vision. Voyager's attack probably happens while we're gone..." Craig said.

"They're linked. I just don't know how yet," James said.

Craig folded his arms, cringing as a headache came out of nowhere. "What about Jess, then? I figured you'd have brought her, to stop her annual stabbing."

"Funny. She knows to avoid the Bridge, or Voyager itself. She should be ok," James said, not sounding fully sure.

### **Meanwhile**

"Prepare for trouble!" A familiar voice bellowed over-dramatically.

The only response was an awkward silence.

"Ahem. To cause the Voyager crew aggro and grief."

More silence.

"Hmph! To denounce the evils of bad writing and grammar." The man's voice tried badly to sound like a woman, "to spread our annoying Slayer/witch spawn across the stars."

The speaker got a deserved punch in the face. "Waste of Space!"

The man rubbed his sore cheek, "Slayer groupie." With his other arm outstretched he finally continued in his normal voice, "the great Damien continues on against pain and strife."

"Oh for god's sake, get a life."

The two aliens looked at each other. "Anyway!" they managed to say unison.

"I see what you mean," the original one said to the ex-rabbit. He only nodded in response.

Jessie marched forward to close the gap between her and them. "You'd better have a good reason for kidnapping me, with him."

The original alien raised a small phaser like weapon. "Don't worry, my dear, we do."

Jessie's eyebrow twitched, "my dear?"

"No you didn't. Obviously you only wanted one of us," Damien butted in. He sighed and shook his head. "Honestly, the goody two shoes always need things explaining to them."

"You're mistaking me for a goody two shoes again?" Jessie grumbled at him. "I understood just fine."

"Yes. You were brought here to help us with a little problem," the shapeshifter remarked. A smirk grew on his face, "however I couldn't resist the two for the price of one deal."

"I see. You heard of the powerful Damien, and you went to all that trouble just to meet me," Damien boasted. Jessie meanwhile pulled a few



The two men looked at each other with a knowing smile.

*Lieutenant Commander Paris' Log, Stardate 58... erm, 2382: Since the bomb accusation has been cleared up, we've been cleared to dock with the trading station again, at least until we hear from the Flyer. In the meantime we're still preparing for a possible invasion. In other news we've got a surprise visitor, and the bridge is still feeling a little tense.*

Chakotay cleared his throat loudly enough to make Tom jump almost out of his chair. He looked around to see him and Kiara staring at him.

*See what I mean?*

He quickly leaned over to press a button on the side panel. "Well nobody said anything for ten minutes."

"In answer to an earlier question, Starfleet must have been stoned," Chakotay said, turning his head towards Kiara. Unable to bear looking at him, she turned her head away.

"Give me a break. I can't handle awkward situations, and this one needs a stronger word than that," Tom stumbled.

The turbolift doors opened, Kevin strolled out with a chirpy smile on his face. "Hey guys, reporting for... woah!" He redirected himself towards Kiara. "Good job growing up, or should I say hot."

"Oh god," Tom groaned.

Chakotay clenched his fists, while Kiara seemed too dazed to react.

Jodie looked even more nervous as she read from her station. "Um..."

"No!" Tom nervously snapped at her.

"She's eight," Chakotay seethed.

Kevin turned to look in his direction, "eight what?"

Tom quickly jumped onto his feet. "Guys, guys. Kevin wasn't here when Kiara looked her age, nobody's told him, probably. Now can we please..."

Chakotay talked over him, "years old! Don't think that I can't beat that stupid grin off."

Jodie shook her head, "no, no, this isn't important. At all."

"Ah, don't get your knickers in a twist. I didn't know that. I'll wait till she's sixteen next time I call her hot," Kevin smiled.

Tom covered his face with his hands, "oh god!"

"I mean, yeah if it was just Damien, but Jessie's gone too," Jodie muttered over everybody else.

"Do that, and I'll do what I did to the last so called Slayer that pissed me off," Chakotay growled.

Kevin snorted, "what, try to drown me in a bathtub?"

"No, actually yes... that's better. Now can we get back to some norm..." Tom stuttered. He suddenly swung his head in Jodie's direction. "Wait, what about Jessie?"

"Finally!" Jodie sighed. "I detected an energy surge in the Conference Room, and..."

"Look man, Tom's the only one buying the evil Chuckles image. Cut it out," Kevin commented as he headed for the helm.

"Am not," Tom complained. "Ok, energy surge?"

Chakotay shook his head, "yes, because the universe revolves around Jessie Sue."

"Who?" Kevin asked.

"Ok energy surge, the sensors didn't detect it right away. Now the computer's just telling me both Jessie and Damien aren't aboard," Jodie explained.

"You probably just don't know what you're doing," Chakotay grumbled.

Kiara picked up a tricorder, and without a second thought threw it towards the viewscreen. It bounced, without leaving any crack, and nearly went flying into Kevin's face. He ducked in time. Everyone slowly glanced her way. She opened her mouth to speak, instead she waltzed into the turbolift without saying a word.

"Kiara," Chakotay called for her. He rushed to get there before the door closed, but he was too late.

"Didn't take the Lena news well, I see," Kevin commented from the helm.

Tom closed his eyes and wished he was back in the Delta Quadrant. "We didn't even get that far."

"Ouch," Kevin whistled.

Everyone's eyes were now on Chakotay as his shoulders slumped in defeat. Everyone relaxed as he entered a different turbolift.

"It's all right. Ylara went on the Flyer mission," Tom sighed. "One disaster at a time."

Jodie nodded, "I've scanned the Leda and the station, there's no sign of Jessie or Damien."

"Great. Check the Leda's scanner logs, see if they caught the energy surge a little better..."

Kevin looked confused, he quickly butted in. "Ylara's still on Voyager."

Tom's face went deathly pale. "Wha... what?" He managed to get even paler as he remembered something. "Oh, of course she is. The visions, right. Well..."

Jodie looked on in sympathy. "I'll check Conference, then the logs on the Leda if they're not there. It's probably just Damien playing a prank." She headed into the Conference Room.

Tom looked towards Kevin expectantly, hoping he'd throw him a bone as well. He just shrugged.

"Maybe you could go and warn Ylara, tell her to go somewhere Lena wouldn't. Or even just a little message to everybody, not to say anything about her?"

"That sounds like a Security job, and it's helm time now," Kevin answered.

"We're not going anywhere," Tom muttered, his last remaining patience was running out.

Kevin pretended to think about it. "No."

"No?" Tom almost squeaked.

"We know demons attack the Bridge, wouldn't it be safer if I was here?" Kevin smugly explained for him.

Tom sighed. "All right, fine. Some random person will tell Kiara that her mother is not only dead, but is possessed by the girl who *killed* her. Then we'll find out Kiara didn't finish her *not to blow things up when I'm emotional* course when the ship is in a few tiny pieces. Then when those demons appear to invade the bridge, they'll just be floating around in space, while your gallant microscopic parts try badly to finish them off. You're right, definitely stay right here. It could mean the difference between death and death."

"Wow," Kevin could only say. Tom relaxed a little as he thought he won. "You think I'm gallant?"

"That's the part you pick up on?" Tom groaned into his hand. "Just do it. If any demons arrive, you'll hear me screaming anyway."

Kevin snickered. "Ok," he finally agreed. He pressed a few buttons on the helm, the comm activated. "Bridge to everyone on Voyager. Do not mention..." Tom quickly ran forward to turn it off.

"Are you really that thick?" he bewilderedly asked.

"No, just making a point," Kevin replied.

"Fine, I'll go ask somebody else," Tom said in defeat.

The opps station beeped as an unknown walked over to man it. "Um, we're being hailed. Audio only."

Tom rubbed his sore forehead, "fine. Let's hear it." The unknown nodded.

*"USS Voyager, your presence is no longer welcome amongst us. If you do not leave within one hour, your crewmembers will die. There will be no more warnings, and no negotiations."*

Tom was about to speak but the intercom beeped. "What the..."

The unknown crewmember looked very nervous. "Um, that's not all."

"Yay?" Kevin commented.

"All of our communications from the station came from the relay station. This one was masked, I have no idea where it came from."

"No negotiations? What does that mean?" Tom stuttered. Before anyone could interrupt with a smartass remark, he grunted loudly. "What I mean is, what if we do leave? What happens to Jessie then?"

"And Damien," Kevin said with a smirk.

Tom rolled his eyes, "yeah sure."

"Um," the unknown stuttered. All eyes went back to him. "I've scanned the station. There are no Human lifesigns there."

"What's Damien again?" Kevin asked without looking back. Tom shook his head.

"Suggestions?" he eventually asked. The Bridge's response was silence for once. "Naturally."

"Well James isn't around, so we can stick around for the hour without fear of death," Kevin commented.

"I thought you were here to bodyguard the Bridge, Kevin?" Tom said, finally smiling like he used to. "We needn't have worried."

Kevin just laughed, then shook his head nervously.

"Here's what we do. We'll have a chat with the station, then we leave the area for the time being. We'll discuss it amongst ourselves at a safe distance."

"What about the Leda and the Flyer?" Kevin asked.

Tom closed his eyes, "one thing, at a time!" He turned to opps. "Hail the station."

"They're not responding," the opps crewman said.

"Open a channel anyway," Tom ordered. He nodded. "Kadin Station, this is the Starship Voyager. We have just received a very strange message threatening us to leave, they also claim credit for two missing crewmembers. We must discuss this at once. Voyager out." He sighed, "ok people, we'll wait for half an hour. If we don't get an answer, take us a lightyear away."

"Check," Kevin responded. "If it were them, let's hope just communicating with them hasn't killed Jessie, hmm?"

"I'm not worried," Tom said.

"Right, you're just in an invisible shower, right?" Kevin smirked.

Tom quickly wiped the sweat from his brow, "it's warm in here."

*"Harris to Paris... hey that rhymes."*

Tom groaned, "oh god." He tapped his commbadge. "Yes it does, what is it?"

*"The Leda detected the same thing, and no matter where I scan, there are no signs of Jessie and Damien. They're not on either ship or the station."*

"Change of plans. While we wait for the station to get back to us, Conference," Tom muttered.

"What about it?" Kevin asked seriously.

"Why don't you stay behind and guard the bridge. Oh and if the Flyer contacts, give them an update," Tom shook his head. He headed for the Conference Room. "Paris to all senior staff, report to the Conference Room immediately."

Once Tom was gone, Kevin smiled to himself. "I got it."

"This is our target."

An alien computer screen activated to show a small tower, with a sphere as a top floor. Several lines of alien text highlighted higher parts of the image.

"Right, you guys are not terrorists," Craig commented in an uninterested tone.

The Commander bit his tongue for the time being. "Disabling this tower alone wouldn't do anything. It is connected to one of three much larger towers, here..." He keyed in a few commands. The screen revolved around to show an aerial view, then zoomed out. They could now see four more towers just like it, surrounding a much larger structure in the centre. Blue lines connected the smaller towers together, as well as to the centre tower.

"We already have planted devices in Towers 1 through to 4. Once we plant one in 5, we'll activate them. Our theory is once they're disabled, the power to the centre will be disrupted. If this is successful, we move on to the other two structures."

"What exactly is the bigger building?" James asked.

Commander sighed. "It is supposed to be the power distribution centre. The five towers generate the power, and the centre sends it out to the people."

James raised an eyebrow, while Craig just shook his head. "You don't believe that?"

"Three distribution towers brimming with power, yet even cities can spend days without power. Most villages have resorted to sitting next to campfires to stay warm," Commander explained, the frustration in his voice growing. "Meanwhile these massive

buildings are lit up brighter than our star. Not to mention that ever since these blasted things were built, the soil has become brittle, trees have been dying in the summer, other plant life have withered and died. The only way to get food now is to replicate it, but guess what?"

"There's no power to do that, yeah we get it," Craig commented.

Commander narrowed his eyes. "Is the idea of millions of people starving to death boring you?"

Craig thought about replying, but he decided just to shake his head and pace.

"Once you *disable* the power station, those cities you mentioned are going to end up like the villages. Powerless," James said for him.

"If we don't, the planet will completely die," Commander bluntly said. "We make it look like an accident, on their part. The people overthrow the current government as a result. Whoever takes over, uses a different power source. The planet recovers. Do I really need to explain this any clearer?"

"I'm sick of asking this but, if that's all you want to do, why get him to help you?" Craig asked, gesturing his hand to James.

"If you must know. When we infiltrated the last two towers, we uncovered something," Commander replied.

"Something like, what?" James questioned.

"You wouldn't believe me, you have to see it for yourself," Commander repeated himself. This earned a scoff from Craig, he walked away shaking his head again.

"Let's say you're right for the moment. How is three buildings generating way too much power, killing this planet?" James asked.

Commander's eyes cast downward.

"You don't know, do you? This whole thing could be just a coincidence," Craig commented.

Commander's eyes shot back up. "It is not!" He turned around to march out of the door. Once he got there he stopped to look over his shoulder. "We leave in ten minutes." He continued on his way.

"You can't go with this clown," Craig said.

"If he's lying to us, I don't want to not be there," James said.

Craig paced again, "why is he avoiding telling us this *something*. That alone is fishy, but the whole thing stinks."

"You think they're terrorists, yet you want to leave them to it?" James asked him.

"God," Craig groaned as he folded his arms. "Fine, you're right. However, if I were you, I'd badger what that *something* is, out of him before you go."

James frowned as he remembered something, Craig watched him with a worried look. "They're draining the life from the planet."

Nathan appeared at the doorway, he stayed where he was. "They're what?"

"Where did you get that from?" Craig asked, glancing briefly at the newcomer.

"When they first contacted Voyager. I think that's what they told us," James quietly said.

"So, what? Their power comes from plants, or soil?" Nathan asked, not seriously.

Craig shrugged, "that could be anything. Our planet mined coal, oil... So that's it, these idiots are loony extremists. No wonder he got pissed when he mentioned campfires. He's a tree hugger."

James rolled his eyes, "yes, that's it. Episode solved."

Craig shook his head and turned around to look at Nathan. "Shouldn't you be watching the Flyer?"

"Everyone's been treated, and Chinny is getting into a tizzy about what's happening," Nathan replied with a smile. "He's not happy that you hid your plan from him."

"Yeah, that's terrifying," Craig commented with a smirk.

James smiled as well, "tell *Chinny* to keep his glasses on. I'll update everyone when I get back."

"I'm so glad you said glasses," Nathan sniggered as he turned to walk out.

"Until then, what do we say to the expendables?" Craig asked.

James turned to frown at him. "Expendables?" Craig casually shrugged. "Just tell them to get the Flyer fixed. We need someone to make sure the aliens don't forget their part of the bargain."

"Oh they won't, I know just the man to pester them if they don't," Craig said.

"We don't know if they deserve Li'Chin yet," James commented.

Craig smirked, "they shot us down, I say they do."

"All right, do what you have to," James shrugged. He headed for the doorway.

Craig sighed to himself, "good luck."

## **Voyager**

### **The Conference Room:**

Almost everyone had gathered around the table. When I say almost, one unfortunate person had to stand.

"Ok, is everybody here?" Harry asked from the head of the table.

"No," Jodie answered.

Harry smirked and shook his head, "funny stuff." He leaned back in the chair, sighing as he relaxed into it. "This is a sweet chair."

"Of course it is," Tom grumbled. Everybody turned their heads to look at the lone stander. He stood in a huff, with his arms folded. "I'm the Captain, why do I have to be the one who stands?"

"You didn't call shotgun," Harry grinned.

"I was serious," Jodie grumbled to herself. "No one listens."

Tom stared at the empty seat on the opposite side of the table to Harry. "Seriously?"

"Knock yourself out," Harry commented.

Tom didn't listen, he rushed over to the chair. At the same time the door opened, Chakotay marched over and swiped the chair before Tom was about to sit on it. He fell butt first on the floor while Chakotay sat himself down, without a care in the world.

"Now that is comedy," Harry snorted as everyone else laughed.

"It's ok, I only broke my ass bone. I'm totally fine and will get up right away," Tom squeaked from the floor, almost in tears.

Chakotay looked down at him, "you only have one ass bone? News to me."

"It's called a Coccyx," Doctor Jones calmly said as he got up. He headed over to the poor ex-helmsman.

"You're right, all better," Tom cried. The Doctor smiled as he tended to him. "With Danny around, you had to be careful with words like that."

"I see," Doctor Jones commented.

"What's the huge emergency anyway?" Chakotay grumbled.

Harry shrugged, "Tom's the one who called the meeting. I only know about the old emergency."

Doctor Jones helped Tom to his feet, then gave him a hypospray. "Sickbay after this."

"Uh huh, not going to argue Doc," Tom stuttered. He winced at every step he took, he decided to stay still after a few. "Jessie and Damien have been kidnapped, and..." He winced as even the slightest movement hurt him. "Somebody on, ah, the station has taken credit, eeh. Um, ah... or the station itself has, ow. Oh, there we go." He relaxed a little as the pain killers kicked in, he ignored everybody's smirks.

"That's not all," he continued. "Kiara's back."

A few people smiled, then it quickly dawned on them and their faces dropped quickly.

"Oh dear," Harry could only muster.

"Did you find her?" Tom asked in Chakotay's direction.



"No," he replied quietly.

Harry's face seemed to turn a little purple, "where is Ylara anyway?"

Tom shuddered slightly, "it's ok, don't panic. She's not senior staff."

"In different circumstances I'd recommend sending her to the Leda," B'Elanna commented.

"Speaking of which..." Tom began to say.

"It should be done now as we speak," Harry quickly replied. "Though I didn't expect this."

Jodie looked around at the two of them. "What's the problem? My sister's missing, and I think Ylara can defend herself. That's sorta the whole point."

"Are we really sure she and Damien didn't just get beamed to the Leda?" Harry asked with a frown.

Tom shook his head, "no... I mean yeah we are. Damien chased her into the Conference Room with a rabbit, the energy surge was there."

"And we also have a message from unknown origin," B'Elanna added on. "If it was the station, why would they try to hide it?"

"They said to leave the station, and they're not calling us back," Tom said.

B'Elanna drummed her fingers across the table. "You said Damien chased her, he's had it in for her before."

"Well we can only hope she returns the killing her favour," Chakotay commented.

Tom shook his head, "I don't think it's him. He's got nowhere to go anyway. He wouldn't want us to leave the station either, it doesn't add up if it's him."

"The station wouldn't change their communications tactics, and they've already cleared us of the bombing," Harry muttered. He looked towards Tom. "Are there any ships with us at the trading station?"

"There was one, but it left before they disappeared..." Tom replied. His face turned a little ghostly white. "They left before the bomb went off."

B'Elanna raised an eyebrow, "how do you remember that?"

"I remember it as it was a sweet looking thing," Tom commented. B'Elanna shook her head.

"Well that means they're likely to be the bombers, not our kidnappers," Harry said.

"The terrorist ship," Chakotay bluntly said.

"They never docked at the station, I'm sure. If they did the station security would be all over them," Harry said. "They weren't even in transporter range of it."

Chakotay groaned, "maybe they have more than one ship."

"Completely different design," Tom remarked. "I'd suggest checking the lifesigns on it, but we have enough problems."

"I noticed we left the station for half an hour," Chakotay mumbled. Everyone turned their heads in his direction. "It seemed a bit odd to me to follow the Flyer for a while then come back."

Tom looked a little uncomfortable, this made the pain come back. "We were just making sure they were ok, it is a bad time to be sending them away."

"Uh huh," Chakotay narrowed his eyes suspiciously at him.

"Who cares about that, Jessie was still here when we did it," Jodie snapped. "We're still nowhere forward."

"I hate to say it but the demon attack and..." Tom said, glancing briefly at Chakotay. "The other thing are our biggest problems."

"So what about the Flyer?" Harry asked. Tom panicked and shushed him.

"What about it?" B'Elanna also asked. She looked around the room to see if anyone knew what the fuss was about.

"Nothing, I just think we have to prioritise," Tom stuttered. He was fooling no one. "Look, we need to find out where Kiara is and also warn Ylara somehow. Convince Kiara to join the Leda for the time being, we need Ylara here." He wiped the sweat off his brow. "If she finds out about her, we're as good as toast. Then unless we're being attacked by demons, we deal with the kidnappers. OK?"

"If we stay here any longer we'll be dealing with killers," Jodie grumbled.

"We'll leave the area closer to the deadline, it should give us more time. Hopefully..."

The intercom beeped; *"Clarke to Paris. That station is hailing us."*

The relief in Tom's sigh could be heard on three decks. "Put them on screen in here." He turned around slowly to avoid aggravating the pain that was getting worse again. As he did the screen on the wall changed to show the alien from the previous communications.

"You have an interesting imagination, Mr Paris. Kadin Station does not trade or steal people."

"The person who messaged us said we weren't welcome here anymore," Tom said. "Since it was masked, we know it couldn't be official channels."

The alien looked a little annoyed, "our Security teams are second to none. We'd notice if some unscrupulous characters were kidnapping people, and sending ransom notes."

"Sure, like you noticed them planting bombs," Chakotay commented.

"We believe that the terrorist group were responsible for that," the alien muttered.

Chakotay smiled and shook his head. "So you did notice them then, my apologies."

The alien started copying Tom's nervous sweating. "All I mean is when it comes to savages planting bombs on themselves, we're powerless."

"All I mean is that the two people who have been kidnapped, were the prime suspects of this *savagery*. Meanwhile the third one is conveniently missing from this senior staff meeting," Chakotay said, shifting his glance to Tom. He looked back and smiled in a charming way to the alien. "Of course that last one isn't your doing."

"Okeydokey!" Tom almost squeaked. By now he was close to drowning in his forehead sweat. "Creep factor achieved, now can we please ask for your help in finding our crewmembers?"

"Of course. Your three crewmembers were cleared of any terrorist links..." the alien commented. A few people scoffed a little as they remembered Damien was one of them. "... And it is our duty to help, as this is a crime that has taken place within our space."

"Great, thanks," Tom said.

"We will review our scanner logs, and carry out searches. I am confident though that your people are not here," the alien said. "We will keep you informed. Kadin out." The screen turned off.

Chakotay got up out of his chair. "How long are we going to keep this charade up, Tom?" He walked over to close the gap. "I'm no fool, what's going on?"

"What, you think we turned over James or something, then they took Jess and Damien as well?" Tom stuttered. "You're out of your mind, but we knew that already."

"If you did, you'd tell me. You know I'd be the first one to applaud you for it," Chakotay said.

Tom's collar suddenly felt a little tighter. "I don't know what to tell you. Jessie and Damien were kidnapped, nothing to do with me. Honest." Jodie looked at him with some contempt. "Oh my god, this isn't a conspiracy. I don't know anymore than you do about that."

"Chakotay raised a good point, as I tried to say before," Jodie grumbled, staring at Harry briefly. "James isn't here."

"I definitely don't know about that. He's probably training or something," Tom fidgeted slightly. B'Elanna looked at him with some sympathy, while the rest of the room stared accusingly at him.

"Right," Chakotay groaned. "Computer, locate James Stuart."

The computer responded, "*James Stuart is on Deck Eight, section three.*"

Chakotay's face fell, Tom seemed a bit shocked to hear that which everyone noticed. "Well..."

"See, he probably just forgot to come," Tom said with relief. "If I said what the meeting was about he wouldn't have."

"So our theory about the station kidnapping the people they accused of bombing is out?" B'Elanna questioned, giving Tom a brief knowing glance. "Maybe now we can concentrate on finding them and Kiara, hmm?"

The rest of the room didn't seem too convinced, but most of them nodded in agreement anyway.

"Yes, dismissed," Tom said.

Everyone but he, B'Elanna and Chakotay evacuated the room, muttering to themselves.

Chakotay didn't need to say anything else, the look he gave Tom was a message alone. His whole body shivered as the man who used to be gentle, left the room staring daggers at him.

"You're a really bad liar," B'Elanna said with some affection in her voice. Tom relaxed a little. "Would you tell me?"

"I can't, it's for everyone's safety," Tom replied. "I can tell you though that Jessie being taken is definitely not planned. On the contrary, that's the last thing we want."

"All right, I trust you. The problem is, nobody else does," B'Elanna said sadly. "Everyone is creeped out by Chakotay, but if they start to take his side..."

"You aren't seriously thinking they'll listen to him over me? I know nobody listens to me anyway but... no, he's so far gone, he's in Kazon space. He doesn't care that Jessie is missing, he's just trying to prove I'm not command worthy."

"Exactly, don't play his game," B'Elanna said, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. "You're better at it than they all think. Prove it."

Tom gave her a warm smile. "I don't deserve you."

"You're right," B'Elanna teased.

**Bridge:**

"Well!" Chakotay demanded.

Harry shook as the man glowered at him. "I only know that Voyager left for a short time, to follow the Flyer. Nobody told me why. That's why I asked, ok!"

"Fine," Chakotay grunted. He moved away giving Harry some space to breathe safely. "We used to be a great team. Now Kathryn is gone you're a bunch of lying, deceiving misfits. Who else knows, huh?"

"Take a chill pill man," Kevin commented.

"No I won't, *dude!*" Chakotay growled at him. "She really was the glue that held you freaks together, wasn't she?"

"You're overreacting," Harry boldly piped up. "We are in danger of being invaded, and those watchers stupidly thought it would be a great idea to send half of our newly trained fighters away. Tom probably just wanted to make sure they didn't get attacked by the terrorists, or crash."

Kevin looked deep in thought for once, "I'd be more suspicious of those watchers."

"If that was all it was, I wouldn't be suspicious, would I?" Chakotay said.

"Uh, yes you would. It was what you brought up first," Jodie commented.

"And you were wrong about your last one," Harry finished.

"Right, right. Why not follow the Flyer to its destination? Why move a lot of Voyager's personnel to the Leda first? Why hasn't James come to the meeting about his missing wife?" Chakotay nagged at them all. Everyone just shook their heads at every question. "Why were him and Tom plotting away behind everyone's back just this morning?" This got everyone's attention.

"What?" Harry muttered.

"Uh huh. Those two don't get along, but they still hung around that Ready Room for two hours," Chakotay said.

"Maybe 'cos they're the ones in charge," Jodie grumbled sarcastically. "We don't have time for this moronic paranoia. Your grandkid, who was training to control her destructive Q side, doesn't know her mother's permanently possessed. My sister has disappeared, and with Damien of all people. Also the ship's going to get invaded pretty soon. We have enough problems, so stop trying to make some."

"You know..." Chakotay quietly said. "I'm getting really tired of people lecturing me."

Kevin half smirked, "we're just as sick of you whinging."

Chakotay's shoulders slumped again in defeat. He raised his hand to cover his face.

"We're not getting anywhere arguing about it. Let's just find Ylara, and keep her somewhere Kiara won't go. Then work on the kidnapping," Harry suggested. "We obviously can't do anything about the invasion, that we're not already doing, until it happens."

"Sounds good to me," Kevin commented.

"Now Harry thinks he's the Captain. This can't get any worse," Chakotay grumbled, obviously forgetting that those words are an eternal jinx.

The turbolift doors opened, Annika skipped out of the lift wearing a flesh coloured catsuit. "Hey guys, when's the meeting?" Everyone almost gagged and turned away to shield their eyes.

The tower loomed over the group, casting an intimidating large shadow over them. Two men stood by the doors, rewiring the control panels. One woman and a man stood guard, each pointing the rifles in the other direction. Commander stood with his arms folded, monitoring them all.

"We're in."

"Excellent, we're getting quicker," Commander approved. He turned to nod at his guards, they looked and nodded too. He turned to James, "shall we?" He then followed the two hackers, who quickly rearmed themselves, into the building. James looked back at the guards, they waited for him to go as well. He did so, the guards stayed a safe distance behind him.

"Do you always have no guards to deal with?" he questioned.

Commander smiled to himself, "right now, they have no reason to believe we're after the towers. They won't know till it's too late."

"I'm just saying, if they were that dangerous, they'd have people guarding," James commented.

"They have their workers, they're likely to be trained to deal with intruders. We've avoided them so far," Commander said in a smug tone.

The group made their way to double doors, which lead to a seemingly never-ending stairway.

"Do not worry, we are not going to the top," Commander said in a hushed voice. "It would be too obvious to have it at the top, wouldn't you think."

"No, I'm thinking you should stop boasting, you're not impressing anyone," James said.

Commander frowned, he passed his front guards, they smirked back at him. They all made their way up the stairs. After five floors they broke off the stairs, and stood guard at the double doors. One of the men used a scanner on it, "it's clear, hurry." He opened the doors, he and the other front guard rushed through, guns first. The rest followed them down a small corridor, and through an office door.

The office though was a control room, full of computers with screens filled with images of the building. The first two men in headed straight for the computers.

"Once we disable a few security cameras, we're good to go," Commander explained.

James rolled his eyes, he went to one of the computers. The Commander looked at a bit uneasy, so he nodded at the guards at the door. They kept a close eye. "Commander," one of them said as James was about to press something.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

James continued anyway, "you lot are a jumpy bunch, aren't you?"

Commander walked over, holding his rifle protectively. "You don't know what you're doing. You could jeap..." He stopped when he noticed he'd tapped into something other than security footage. The screen showed a schematic of the tower. "You can't access that here, they'll notice."

"No they won't," James shook his head. "You wanted to show me something, right?"

"Yes, emphasis on the word *you*," Commander muttered. "If they catch us..."

James wasn't listening by this point, he was staring at the schematics with a frown on his face. A few more commands changed the display to show the larger tower. The Commander's face at this point had gone from tense to relaxed.

"This... this is impossible," James finally said.

"You know what this is, what it means?" Commander said, his voice sounded too cocky for his own good. "Why we needed you?" James turned his head to look at him briefly, then back at the schematics. "We should continue our mission."

"No," James quickly said. The group ignored him, Commander put his hand up to stop them.

"I thought you'd understand," he grumbled. "You must know what's at stake!"

"I do, that's why you shouldn't do this. It's a waste of time," James tried to explain.

"Sir, we haven't got much time to argue about this," one of the hackers said.

Commander nodded, "a waste of time? This planet has a population of five billion. These things are sucking whatever life this planet has left. This'll be no more than a rock if we don't disable it. We won't be able to evacuate everyone in time, we'd be condemn..."

"Save the speech," James butted in. He pressed a button to move the bigger tower schematic on a bigger screen, one of the smaller ones appeared next to it. "The power's not being drawn from these towers, then sent to the big one. It's the other way around. These things, they're a ruse. Are you too dense to see that?"

Commander growled, he raised his rifle. James shook his head and grabbed it off him. "You'll jeopardise everything we've worked for." He turned to his team, "we'll do this mission without you. You're on your own." The team started to leave.

"Once you set the charges or whatever you're doing to the last tower, and activate all of them, they'll know what you've done. They probably already do," James quickly said. Commander stopped at the doorway, his fists clenching. "You'll lose your chance to disable the real problem. Stop and think about that for a minute."

"Sir!" one soldier tried to interfere.

"Don't you think we would have seen what you're talking about, if it were true," Commander grunted. "We brought you here to see the power source after all. I have no idea why you want to stop us, but we'd rather die than let you. Let's go."

"Fine," James sighed. Commander turned to the door again. He then felt the rifle against his back. "Then you'll die." The others pointed their rifles at him. "All you'll do is kill the people in the towers, the people living near them, and for what? I've killed for a lot less."

"Lower your weapons," Commander ordered his team.

"Sir, the security cameras will reactivate in ten minutes," one of the hackers stuttered.

"I knew it was a mistake to recruit this... this freak," one of the men growled.

"Do it!" Commander ordered, passing them a knowing glance. The team understood and reluctantly lowered their rifles.

"So you're not willing to die for this?" James commented.

Commander grunted, "there are only five of us, that'd be easy for you. We'd lose our chance."

"You probably already have. It's time to leave," James said.

Commander smiled, "I don't think so. You underestimate us." He nodded at his team. They went to fire, James did too but nothing happened. He pushed the Commander into two of them, but it was too late.

"Good work," Commander smiled as he climbed back to his feet with the others. He looked down at James, then nudged him with his foot, he got no response. "Is he?"

"Just stunned sir," the woman replied.

"Good. Let's finish what we started. I'm sure he can get himself out of here," Commander said. The team made their way to the stairs again.

"How did you know, sir?" one man asked. "That he'd take your broken rifle?"

Commander smiled again, "these things usually do get a bit overconfident." The group continued on their mission.

**Meanwhile:**

"Ugh no!" Jessie groaned behind her hand.

Damien stood in front of her with a mischievous smile on his face, while she sat on the floor against the wall. "You just said, you don't know what it is..."

"I don't need to. Just no!" Jessie snapped.

"Well you obviously need some help, considering your past choices," Damien snorted.

"For the last time, I'm not naming my kid after you," Jessie almost growled. Her eyebrow twitched a little, "my kids have great names, what the hell do you mean by that!?"

Damien laughed as he started to pace. "Duncan sounds like he'd go great with a bowl of soup."

Jessie gave him a deserved kick in the ankle, he lost his balance and fell into a heap.

"I heard it was B'Elanna's idea, why get so bitchy about it?" he complained, nursing his ankle.

"No, I asked her to name him that. I heard the name when I was little, and I thought..." Jessie grumbled. "I don't need to explain myself to somebody who names a little rat Snugglebumps!"



Damien seemed very offended, his mouth was agape and he was speechless for a whole five seconds. "He was cute and snuggly!" He maneuvered himself to sit instead, still cradling his ankle. "You do know Sasha is short for a boy's name, right? Though, that must be a family tradition."

"No, no it's not, and my name can be for a girl or a boy, but it sounds girly anyway," Jessie said, her lack of resolve slipping.

"Right," Damien huffed. "Don't even get me started on the cutesy useless one. Nobody with two names and a hyphen in there introduces their full name. You might as well called her Pain-In-The-Ass-Amy."

Not as he expected, Jessie smiled sweetly at him. Within seconds she had jumped on top of him, smacking him a few times in the face with the back of her hand, in between shaking him roughly by the front of his shirt.

Two of the aliens walked in, they smirked at the scene in front of them. Of course they decided not to break it up.

"What are you going to name..." Damien managed to blurt out before he was hit again. "The next one?" Another smack interrupted him. "Dead Sister-Janeway?" Jessie decided this time to clench her fist, she raised it.

"Ahem!" one of the aliens cleared his throat.

The two stared in their direction. Jessie shrugged and hit him anyway.

"Not that, that wasn't entertaining, but we're on a schedule," the alien commented with a smile.

Jessie climbed onto her feet, brushing herself down like Damien was dirty. "Gross, all over me." She moved back to her old sitting spot. "If any of you touch me, the same will happen."

"Hmm, that won't be necessary," second alien commented wryly. He gestured at Damien, who now looked a bit worse for wear. A group of Security aliens walked in. Two of them leaned over to help him to his feet.

"Huh, you want him? Not that I'm complaining but, huh?" Jessie stuttered.

The first alien stepped forward as they dragged Damien out. "Don't worry, we haven't forgotten about you." He smiled as he turned around to leave.

"Quite the opposite," the other alien laughed as he followed him out the door. They slammed it shut behind them.

Darkness crept over the Delta Flyer crash site. Craig stood watch as two of the aliens carried a large piece of equipment from, in his eyesight, nowhere. His eyes travelled up to watch as the last rays of sunlight crept over the horizon. In the far distance he swear he could see what looked to him like streetlights blinking. Then he noticed that the last batch of aliens had come from that general direction. His attention was literally miles away as Nathan walked up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder. Nathan

smirked as he ducked, but Craig only just turned around after a little jump in the shoulders.

"Learnt your lesson, huh?"

"What do you want?"

Nathan still passed him a friendly smile. "That was the last of them for the night. They're inviting us to their base."

"You mean they're trying to lure us away from the shuttle," Craig said skeptically.

"Yeah, while we're gone they can go rogue, slap some wheels on it and push it around. Little joyriding scamps," Nathan teased him. This earned him only a blank stare. "Look, you're never going to ask, so I'm just going to tell you anyway."

"No," Craig butted in. He turned to go back to the Flyer.

"Believe it or not, but I've been where you are, man," Nathan followed him.

Craig scoffed to himself, he climbed into the shuttle, almost bumping into a leaving alien. "Yeah we're all here."

"Your girl wouldn't want you to be a little grouch forever. At some point, you just have to get on with it," Nathan said.

"Did he..." Craig turned around with some fire in his eyes. "Does James really think it's funny to talk about his sister like that?"

Nathan widened his eyes, and raised his hands into the air. "That's a leap. Keep it up and we may get off this rock yet."

Craig shook his head, "why do I never understand what you're yammering about?"

"I've heard it from a few people. The only thing James said about his sister was that he had a few," Nathan replied. He pulled a face, "that sounded wrong."

"Yeah, just a little," Craig shriveled his nose in disgust. "Maybe you should stop talking to avoid future stupid comments."

"Harsh. Don't waste the rest of your life, ok. I wasn't always this charming. It took some years of acting like a you before I hit rock bottom," Nathan said.

Craig stopped the last of the aliens as they were leaving. "Some of us will go to your little camp."

"I really wouldn't recommend leaving people to guard, it can get very brisk during the night," she said.

"We'll manage," Craig mumbled. He went further into the shuttle where the rest of the team were.

Nathan smiled to himself, "fine, ignore me." He followed.

"Anybody who wants to go to this camp can go. I'd watch your back though," Craig said.

"Ah yes, a good nights rest and we can pick up tomorrow," Li'Chin said with a chirpy smile.

"You didn't really listen to me, did you?" Craig muttered.

Li'Chin stood up, he clapped his hands enthusiastically. "That is why I'm here, you and I are a team on this exercise. Are we not?" Craig just shook his head. "I'm glad we agree. If it'd make you feel better, I'll stay awake and keep an eye on everyone."

Craig almost laughed, "right, that'd be just creepy." The team all nodded in agreement. "I can be one, but I'll need two people to stay behind in the Flyer."

"Until it's fixed, the Flyer's not steal worthy," Janet commented. She looked to Jach as if to confirm that, he just shrugged. "Right?"

"It's our only way home, you airhead," Shar grunted.

Jach raised his hand, everyone looked at him surprise. "Miss B'Elanna has been teaching me a few things, I've been helping already. The sooner we get it fixed, the better right?"

"It's going to get a little frosty in here," Nathan warned.

"I prefer the cold," Jach said with a confident smile.

"There you go, you got a huddle buddy," Nathan grinned at Craig. He just pulled another disgusted face.

"Ah, I'd recommend that our second in command get some sleep," Li'Chin butted in.

Craig stared blankly at him, "hang on, James just showed up randomly after saying he wasn't coming. How come he..."

Li'Chin stamped his foot, "no, I'm the first in command!" The others sniggered behind him.

"Oh," Craig mumbled. "I'll never complain about him again."

"Where is he anyway?" Li'Chin asked.

"Anyway!" Nathan stepped forward. "We need somebody good to guard little Jachy here."

"Hey," Jach complained. Shar gave him a raised eyebrow. "I'm not complaining, I just resent the little."

Li'Chin looked around at the trainees one at a time, like he was judging them. "In our current group, I'd rate Shar, Nathan and Janet the top of the class."

Craig this time laughed, "Janet, her?"

Janet pouted, "hey, I'm kick ass."

"Indeed she is," Li'Chin laughed as he pushed his glasses closer to his head. "Out of the three of you, I'd eliminate Shar. Those two don't get along very well."

"Thank god," Shar huffed.

"Gee thanks," Jach commented. She gave him a glare that made him feel two inches shorter.

"I'll leave the rest to the two of you. Let's go everyone," Li'Chin said. He more or less skipped out of the shuttle. Shar and Binene waited a minute before following him.

Nathan folded his arms, "soo, do you want to go, or..."

Janet shuffled over to sit right next to Jach, he by this time looked petrified. "That's ok. I'll keep this cutey safe, promise."

"Um..." Jach squeaked.

"Ok, have a blast. Come on sulky," Nathan laughed. He headed out, pulling Craig by the arm.

"Why?" Jach squeaked again.

Once they were out of the shuttle, Craig pulled his arm back.

"Now, now. I was just giving them some privacy," Nathan winked at him.

Craig sighed, "you're insane, you all are." He marched off towards the lights he saw earlier.

"Oooh that's some fighting talk you got there," Nathan sarcastically said. He ran to catch up with him.

### **Voyager:**

The corridors were eerily dark, the yellow lights flashing were the only source of light. Tom and Harry were the only figures walking down it, both with an uneasy look on their faces.

"I don't know Tom. I quite like the idea of being at ship's length of him," Harry was saying as they turned a corner.

"Do you really want to leave Chakotay in charge of a few hundred people?" Tom retorted, allowing himself to smile for a second.

Harry shuddered so much he felt he had to stop. "No, but I'd prefer the idea of swapping ships with him, if you catch my drift."

"He won't be of much use here," Tom warily sighed. He stopped too, and stood in front of his friend. "Yeah I know, he's a bit psycho. Everyone believes he's more bark than bite though. Even if they were wrong, he may not help."

"I don't know," Harry mumbled. "I get the impression he still cares about Voyager, because of the Captain."

Tom looked around, his eyes cast downward. "It's just not the same. Voyager isn't Voyager without a few crewmembers gossiping in the halls, Neelix stinking the Mess Hall out with Leola. God, I even miss the Doc singing Lady Gaga in Sickbay."

Harry couldn't help but laugh, "um, what?"

"I think somebody who doesn't like opera reprogrammed him," Tom laughed too. "I think I preferred the opera tunes."

"It is a little creepy here," Harry sighed. "Though having monsters running around, and chaos sounds like Voyager too."

Tom raised his shoulders, his smile faded. "The Security checks, the lifesigns and demonic scans... It was all for nothing, wasn't it? Too bad we don't have enough witches, we could do with another anti-demon shield, or heck even an anti vampire one."

Harry's face lit up, "maybe that's it." Tom stared at him, he was way behind him. "Maybe that's what Jessie was doing before she died, and maybe..."

"That's why she's been kidnapped," Tom finished for him, finally catching on. "The last time she did that though, she had to be brought back from the dead because we only had two or three witches. We only have Annika this time, eugh."

"Hmm, and didn't James say she was working a console. Seems a bit odd," Harry's optimism faded. "Damn, so much for progress."

"Nah, you're probably right, at least about kidnapping her anyway. Why Damien though?" Tom thought outloud.

"Didn't he admit to dealing with demons before. We've seen that ourselves," Harry responded.

The two men stood in silence for a while, both of them thinking furiously. Harry eventually turned his head, with another idea look on his face. Tom did the same. They smiled knowingly at each other, they were thinking the same thing.

"Damien kidnapped her, because he knows..." Tom said at the same time as Harry spoke.

However Harry said, "the kidnappers want to know..." They stared with raised eyebrows at each other. "Ok, I thought we were in synch. What were you going to say?"

"You first," Tom said with a heavy sigh. "Yours is probably the right one."

"All the more reason to hear the wrong one first," Harry said, allowing himself a chirpy smile.

"He kidnapped her now knowing that she'll try to prevent the demon attacks. He's attacked us like this before, only he disabled the shield first," Tom said, ignoring the smile and comment from his best friend.

Harry nodded, "I suppose, but... For years he was interested in taking or destroying this ship, having power over people and for people to fear him. Then for some reason he

decided to focus on more demon like goals, killing Jessie for example, trying to take her kids."

"So erm, it's him. I was right. Go Tom," Tom smiled to himself.

"Not long after he tried that, he went back to his usual routine though. I think he, as usual, took credit for stuff he didn't come up with," Harry said.

"Uh Harry?" Tom mumbled.

"Oh... sorry, got a bit carried away," Harry stuttered, shaking his head. "I just think cos of that, it's far more likely he's been kidnapped, with Jess, to either get information about the demons he's worked for or with, or even controlled."

"Why though?" Tom asked with a confused look on his face.

"Why not?" Harry responded.

The intercom beeped, *"Bridge to Paris. The station's hailing us, and FYI we only have five minutes."*

"Route him here," Tom groaned.

*"Mr Paris. I thought you'd like to know that we've found no masked signal, or any other evidence of a transmission. We've searched thoroughly, there's no sign of your people."*

"Great," Tom sighed. "I'm afraid we'll have to take the threat seriously, but can you keep investigating?"

*"If I were you, I'd look into those terrorists. They asked for your help, tried to frame you... it seems likely they kidnapped your people for leverage."*

"Where would we normally find them?" Harry asked.

*"If we knew, we'd certainly do something, don't you think? We'll look into it on our end, but I'm afraid you're on your own. Kadin out."*

"They said their world was dying. Maybe we should check out some habited planets that are nearby," Harry suggested.

Tom looked at him, his face was getting strangely pale. He tapped his commbadge.

"Bridge, set a course out of here, slowly. We don't know how far they want us away. Tell the Leda to follow." Harry looked at him, half in concern and the other half in curiosity.

*"To where?"*

"Anywhere. Spin somebody around, wait till they stop and go in that direction. It doesn't matter yet," Tom grumbled.

*"Ok check."*

"What's the matter?" Harry asked.

Tom shook his head, he continued down the corridor.

The console flickered back to life, much to the relief of the young alien trainee. However it was short lived. With a sigh, he fell back to his knees and crawled underneath the station, armed with a spanner.

Janet stood by, and couldn't resist checking out his butt for a few seconds. "Nyah, I've seen better," she said to herself. With a sigh she decided to have a look outside. Her eyes felt like they clouded over as they tried to adjust to the complete darkness. She could just see the outline of the alien ship standing mere metres away. Then she averted her gaze to the lights in the distance.

The only light in the shuttle came from a large torch lying on the floor, it had been attached to another console. It began to flicker on and off, this got Jach's attention. He quickly stumbled out of the station, bumping his head in the process.

"Damn," he mumbled as he rubbed the sore part of his head. The light flickered again, reminding him of what he was going to do. The young man rushed over to the other console to check the connection. "No, no..." he stuttered.

In the corner of his eye he saw what appeared to be a humanoid shadow creep across the floor. Just before the light went out completely, it disappeared. His whole body shook, the grip on the spanner tightened.

Janet tried to amuse herself by humming softly to herself. It seemed to calm her nerves a little. Her whole body tensed up as she heard something drop on the floor inside the shuttle. Quickly turning on her heel, she ran into the shuttle with her phaser ready to fire.

"Jach?" she stuttered. Using the light on the phaser she inspected the cockpit, to her horror it was now empty. "This isn't funny!" Janet knelt down carefully next to the station he was working on, he was not back under there. All she could find was his spanner. A rustle in the branches just outside startled her, she swung around to point the rifle towards the front window.

"Oh no," Janet stuttered as she tapped her commbadge. "Ackleys to..." was all she had time to say.

James' eyes shot open. With a groan he pushed himself to his feet. His attention went immediately to the security cameras.

The picture on one of the screens was filled with static. A quick look at the console and the tower schematic told him where the camera was pointing. He carefully checked the exit was clear, before running for the stairs.

Only a few floors above him, screams and shouting were echoing down the stairway. When he reached the floor he was aiming for, both weapons he kept on his leg and back were pulled out.

The door he was about to open, swung open. James got out the way in time as a body flew through them, colliding with the stairs metal banister. He looked briefly to check

who it was, quickly turning his attention back on the door. James now found himself face to face with an unfamiliar alien, her cold black eyes stared right into his own.

He took a big step back as it swung a couple of long daggers in his direction. James swung his lighter sword to block another barrage of swipes. The alien hissed as it couldn't break through, she hunched down and rolled passed him. He turned around and it attempted to kick the weapon out his hands, he was surprised that the force of it almost did and made his wrist sting for a few seconds.

A second figure emerged from the door, with a sword in hand he grabbed a hold of James around the shoulders. Before he could do anything to retaliate, the alien woman lunged for him. With a swift kick, the girl flew backwards into the banister.

The newcomer swung his sword holding hand around to go for the kill. All he got instead was a heavy elbow to the ribs, which made him drop the weapon. He quickly tried to move his grip to his victim's neck, but James switched his weapon to his other hand and grabbed it first. He flipped the alien over his head. The alien groaned as he was dropped into the hard cement floor, even leaving a crack in it behind.

Without even blinking, the woman lunged forward again to slash with the knives. She managed to get him in the arm before he dodged. On her second swing, James grabbed her wrist. Staring right at him with no expression on her face, she pushed him backwards into the doorframe. Clenching her spare hand, she took a swing at his head. He ducked just in time, the fist went straight through the wall instead like it was paper.

James let go of her other wrist, quickly evading to his left. At the same time the girl had pulled her fist and dagger out of the wall. James looked down at both of his swords, then at the girl in front of him. She had no qualms about killing him, but he knew he couldn't. Taking a chance, he tossed them to the side. The alien didn't even register this, she charged forward with the same blank stare on her face. He dodged all the hits she could throw at him, the final swing left her open. He swung his own fist into her face, as hard as he would hit a demon. This was enough to knock her down and keep her there.

He heard a groan from behind him. The body who had flown through the door tried to cover a gaping chest wound. Blood pooled through his finger tips. "My people..." Commander stuttered. "Please, check them."

James rushed over to kneel at his side. His hand quickly went to the wound, but then he noticed the man was no longer breathing. Standing back up, his eyes focused on the open doorway. Now that it was calm, he could see four figures lying on the floor in the room.

As he walked passed the second attacker, movement from one of the bodies caught his eye. The figure was struggling to get back onto their feet. James hurried over to help him, but he managed on his own.

"The others," he stuttered.

James looked around at the other three bodies, then at the Commander. "I'm sorry."

The man's eyes cast downward, then his focus was averted to the two aliens lying on the floor. "They were so strong, really strong, like..." He looked back at James. "Like you."

"We should go before they recover," he said quietly.



They both headed back out of the room. The alien man grabbed James' leg as they passed, he shook it slightly to get him off. His black eyes stared up at him, not even blinking. "What... what are you?"

This sent a chill up both of the men's spines, the alien continued to stare with no emotion on his face. They quickly left the room, James grabbed the weapons he dropped before heading back down the stairs.

"You really should hurry up with that. I don't really fancy sharing a brig with a screaming baby," Damien grumbled from the floor. He had a few more bruises on his face. Whether he got those from his kidnappers or Jessie, it wasn't clear.

Jessie decided to just sigh loudly as she continued fiddling with the door panel. It sparked when she tugged on a wire, she pulled her hand away in time. "I thought that was my problem."

Damien smirked at her, he rested his arm on his knee. "You're next, you know." She seemed to ignore him. "They think they've hit the jackpot, capturing the Slayer's *playmate*."

Jessie rolled her eyes, "enough already."

Damien sighed and shrugged. "I tried to help, tell them you were no use to them. I suggested poking you enough to turn evil, then..."

"Is that what you're doing now?" Jessie muttered.

"I bet you were embarrassed that it was me they were after, not you. It's an easy mistake to make. You're always an easy target," Damien yammered on.

A few wires were pulled out, this time there were no complaints.

"Your only use though seems to be spitting out future ass pains, and being Evil Slayer fodder," Damien continued. "Considering what they were asking of me, both seem unlikely. Quite boring actually."

Jessie swung around and chucked the wires at him. "I'm trying to concentrate here!"

"You're not even curious what happened to me, hmm?" Damien said anyway.

"Only you care about you," Jessie grumbled back at him.

"Too bad," Damien sang badly, taunting her. Jessie cringed, wishing she had more than just wires to throw. "It could help us both, but... it is rather nice in here, hmm?"

"Just this once," Jessie groaned to herself. "What did they ask you?"

"I'm assuming these morons are having demon issues. Who else to ask but thee demon expert?" Damien smiled confidently.

"Then why didn't they kidnap Ylara, Zare... heck even Kevin?" Jessie smugly asked him.

Damien's smirk faded surprisingly quickly. "Why do I care?"

"You cared five seconds ago," Jessie briefly laughed. "What did they ask you?"

"You remember that little shield you put up years ago, which I breached?" Damien climbed to his feet. His usual cocky smile returned to his face. "You can work the rest out."

"Do you ever answer simple questions?" Jessie grumbled. "You didn't breach it anyway. Some idiot messing about with magic, killed the anti-demon shield." Damien was about to butt in but Jessie was too quick for him. "Also, if they wanted to know how to get a shield, it'd be me they wanted, not you."

"Right. Did you ever manage to get that shield back up, or maybe beef it up with the anti-dead people shield?" he asked, even more smugly than usual. "I didn't think so."

"As per usual, you don't know what you're yammering about. Did they ask you specifically about the shields, did they ask how to be the biggest time waster, or were you even listening at all?" Jessie snapped.

Damien sighed in slight defeat. "They just asked over and over, *tell us about the shield.*"

Jessie frowned, "that's it?"

"No. They said they'd get it out of you if I didn't co-operate," Damien shrugged, like it didn't matter.

"So what did you tell them?" Jessie asked.

Damien smiled at her, "I told you. I mentioned you're quite obsessed with your hair. To call your daughter Dumb Hyphen Ass. Oh and ask for details about your, um... baby exploits."

Jessie half rolled her eyes, groaning to herself. "Great, thanks."

"They were really pissy about this shield," Damien said to himself. "Oh, and they said one more thing."

"What?"

"*The more time you waste, the better it is for us, or something,*" Damien muttered. "Which makes no sense. Wouldn't that be worse for them?"

Jessie frowned for a moment, then it hit her. Her eyes widened, "oh god."

**Meanwhile:**

Harry paced the Leda's Bridge, his face was full of sweat and he was grimacing. Chakotay watched him in amusement, actually so did everyone.

"You missed a bit," he pointed at a spot in front of him.

Harry felt like he could cry at any moment. Instead he just continued mopping.

"Voyager's slowing down. We must be far enough away," Naomi said from the helm.

Chakotay sighed, "fine, don't slam the brakes. Take us out of warp at the point they did."

Naomi pouted, "cheeky, I can fly better than you."

"We don't know how far away they wanted us to be," Harry piped up. Chakotay narrowed his eyes at the poor Lieutenant. He continued mopping.

The Opps station beeped furiously. "Um, Commander?"

Chakotay swung his head around to glare at the person manning it. "Why the hell is Neelix manning a station!?"

"For once we're running out of characters," Harry replied nervously. He was still scrubbing away so he felt a little braver. "If Original Voyager can do it, why can't we?"

Neelix by this point had started sweating, "I'm detecting some energy readings, starboard bow, only fifty kilometres behind us... and following."

"I got them too, they look familiar," Faye said from Tactical. Her station beeped at her, her face whitened.

Still flying at warp speed, the Leda was being followed by a blue energy ball, half the size of the ship and growing. Four smaller white lights shot out of the energy ball. They flew right through the shields like they were nothing, slamming right into the hull. Two hit each of the warp nacelles. The small ship dropped out of warp, slamming to almost a dead stop.

"Tom!" B'Elanna yelled from the Engineering station. "Something's just hit the Leda."

Tom turned on his heel so far he nearly fell over. "What? What has?"

B'Elanna worked furiously at her console, her head shaking. "I don't know, some kind of energy signature. I'm analysing now."

"They're dead in the water," Jodie mumbled. "They were ten minutes behind us at warp."

"They were supposed to attack Voyager. We evacuated this ship as the Leda would be safe. There are three hundred people on that ship," Tom panicked. "Did they know?" Nobody knew the answer, or they didn't want to voice it.

"If we go to help them, the visions will likely become reality," Kevin pointed out.

Tom raised his shoulders, closing his eyes. He clenched his fists tightly. When he opened his eyes, he had made his decision. "What are we waiting for?"

Kevin smiled proudly, "aye aye." He tapped on his station with one hand, the other clutched a large knife he had on his belt.

Nobody could really see anything on the Leda's bridge. Dark suffocating smoke hovered over everything. The source of it, the raging fire at the back stations seemed contained by a recently put up forcefield. Consoles sparked, their users ducking each time.

Chakotay pulled himself up, coughing madly as the smoke filled his lungs. "Put that... fire out!"

Neelix had his arm covering his mouth, his other arm working Opps. "The forcefield's up, but..." he stammered. "The ventilation systems are damaged."

"At least the inertial dampers did their job," Harry coughed. He chucked his broken mop aside. "Damage report, dare I ask."

Faye shook her head, "warp nacelles took a direct hit." She coughed badly, then pulled her shirt up to cover her face. "The warp core is designed to shut down at that much damage, to prevent a breach. Nacelles are leaking plasma though."

"What the hell hit us?" Chakotay growled.

"It appeared to be torpedoes," Faye stuttered. "The energy reading's gone."

"Where?" Harry demanded.

"I don't know," Faye mumbled. "It was like it was following us, maybe it overtook."

Chakotay's face tightened, "Voyager. We were just in the way."

"No, they just didn't want us to be," Harry stuttered.

B'Elanna looked up from her station, "there it is again. It's half a lightyear away... and closing."

Tom collapsed into his chair, he gripped his armrests securely. "This'll be it. Red Alert! All hands, what's left of you, battle *stations*."

The lights dimmed, the red alert klaxon rang around the tense bridge.

"Drop us out of warp. We want to be a *little* more evasive than the Leda was," Tom ordered.

"Yep," Kevin acknowledged. He looked back, "I have one suggestion."

"I'm ok with anything right now," Tom said.

"You take the helm," Kevin looked back. "I don't fancy abandoning the helm when we're under attack, outside and in."

Tom smiled, "I thought you'd never ask." He rushed forward to take Kevin's place. "Put that thing on screen when it's in range." Kevin meanwhile picked up a bag from behind the helm. "Jodie, you know what to do."

Jodie nodded, "that I do." She keyed in a few commands. "Done, once whatever that is gets here, it'll think we have a full crew compliment."

"Hopefully that'll stop the thing changing its mind, and going for the Leda," Tom muttered to himself.

Kevin pulled out a phaser rifle, and a folded down axe. "Until they board us anyway."

"Then lets give it a good fight," Tom looked at him, eyeing the axe with worry.

"Incoming!" B'Elanna bellowed. The viewscreen changed to show the blue energy ball appear from a flash of white. It closed in, but slowly.

"What the hell?" Tom stuttered. He looked down to key in some commands anyway. "If it thinks we're going to stand here and stare at it, it's got another thing coming." He pressed the big orange button. "Computer, activate Manual Steering, Paris Three."

Kevin stared with his mouth open as the right part of the helm opened up, and a completely new panel appeared in its place. It looked a lot like his Delta Flyer helm design.

"Nobody told me that was there!"

"Duh, I haven't used it yet," Tom commented with a smile.

B'Elanna smiled her *that boy* smile, shaking her head. Her smile soon faded as she read her station. "You're not going to believe this."

"At this point, I'll believe anything," Tom said.

"That energy reading matches the readings we got off Death Corridor," B'Elanna answered him. "It's almost on top of us."

Tom nodded, "it's ok, we're ready."

Voyager swerved out of the way of the energy ball, just as it started to expand. What seemed like endless small silver and purple ships flew out of it, breaking into different formations. Voyager tried its best to dodge each wave, but they were soon surrounded in every possible direction.

"Uh... I'm afraid to ask," Tom almost squeaked.

B'Elanna pulled a worried face, "yeah, don't. The good news is, their shields are barely registering, and each ship is only big enough to be manned by one person."

"Maybe we should hail them," Jodie giggled nervously. "Ask them nicely."

Tom tensed his hands over his helm controls, "what are they waiting for?" He watched one of the formations of ships on the screen, each of them fired a sky blue beam towards them. "Note to self, shut up."

Jodie swallowed hard, "they're scanning us. At least I think that's what that is."

B'Elanna shook her head, "I don't think so." The red alert klaxon which had just recently turned off, was soon replaced by the deeper intruder alert. "Energy signatures on Decks 15, 13, 11, 8, 5... and 2."

Tom quickly pressed in a few commands on the normal station. "Paris to all hands, if possible break up and secure decks 15, 11, 8 and 5. Team S1, secure 13." He turned to Kevin, "make sure they don't break into the kitchen, that could be deadly."

Kevin smirked at him, "Neelix took his Leola with him."

"Then make sure they don't get to the Bridge," Tom ordered, nervously smiling back.

Kevin gave him a hand to the forehead salute, before rushing for the turbolift, carrying his bag over his shoulder.

"Which team's S1?" Jodie asked nervously.

"Hopefully Ylara, if Kiara hasn't zapped her out of existence," Tom replied. Jodie made a little confused noise, "you weren't here when 13 was a demonic target sign. Best to have our strongest there, just in case it still is."

"What about James?" Jodie commented.

Tom could only shake his head, it wasn't time for this now. "Those beams are holding us still, as well as generating the energy on those decks. Suggestions?"

"We need to get out, now," Jessie grunted as she tore apart the panel. Damien watched in amusement.

"You don't want to miss your stabbing, huh?" he sniggered.

Jessie grumbled, "I was obviously trying to use a shield to stop the invasion. That's what the 80% was."

"So you think these people kidnapped you to stop it, even though they were obviously winning," Damien sneered. He briefly shook his head while rolling his eyes. "You were working an anti-demon spell from a computer panel, of course, it's so obvious!"

Jessie firmly ground her teeth as she worked. The door continued to stay closed, even though the panel was now bare. "Oh come on, there's no locking thingy. Why won't this open!"

"Probably because you've broken the door," Damien smiled in a superior way. Jessie turned around, her fists were now clenched. "Hey, you were the one who did it. Might I suggest something?"

"Only if it's useful. Otherwise, your jaw will be smashed," she grumbled.

"You're a witch. Learn a few spells," Damien commented.

"How will that help me now!" Jessie screamed at him.

Damien couldn't help but laugh, "now whose fault is that? If you can't even open a door, what chance do you have of making your own anti-monster shield. Hmm?"

Jessie calmed a little, then she pulled a disgusted face. "You're right."

"Wow," Damien mockingly gasped. "Telling me something I already know. You're learning."

"What was I doing then?" Jessie asked herself. She glanced briefly at a smug Damien, then turned her back on him. "You wouldn't make a shield, you'd be the one trying to get through it. Kidnapping either of us, it doesn't make sense."

"You're forgetting, and I don't know how, that I'm a genius," Damien explained. Jessie scoffed at him. "Fine, forget the fact that the shapeshifter changed to a rabbit. They wanted me, and they got you as a bonus. I've worked with demons before, it makes plenty of sense. Though, I hate to say it but you're right about something. I wouldn't be offering to help, would I?"

Jessie turned around to stare directly at him, raising her right eyebrow. "Worked *with*?"

"Yes, you tried to infect me with a virus only the other day to find that out," Damien grumbled. "Though it's easy to forget, it has been years since that episode."

"Funny choice of words," Jessie said with a suspicious tone of voice. "You said with. It's not like you to help anyone."

Damien gave her a sly smile, "you're smarter than you look, or seem... or are."

"What, are? Genius my ass," Jessie muttered.

"Just making a point," Damien smirked. "If it helps me, I'll help. It's really not that complicated."

"Saving Voyager from demons and attacking ships would help you, you're stuck with us," Jessie said.

"Not anymore," Damien shrugged. He pulled a face, "just you. Eugh. The door's broken now, I think even a genius would have trouble. You really need to learn some simple transporting spells."

"If you're really a genius, fix it," Jessie grumbled.

"What's the point? Voyager could be gone for all we know. Since I'm not there, I couldn't care less," Damien commented. With another shrug, he smiled to himself. "This shield, it's a shame, I bet it would have been beautiful. RIP Damien Shield."

Jessie stared at the insane man, her mouth hanging open in disbelief. "Oh my god. Can you still make this shield, so it can get you away from me?"

"I'm not a demon," Damien said in a mocking tone.

"Then your shield has the wrong name. You thought I had bad naming skills," Jessie said.

"Oh I see, very clever. Not," Damien muttered, clearly offended again. "You know I have new found respect for your freak of nature husband. One hour or so with you, and I'm cracking up. You must be an ace in the bedroom or something, cos ugh!"

Jessie's face managed to outdo Janeway's old deathglare, she raised her fist. The pair then disappeared in a white flash.

They reappeared in a different room, and they were not alone. Damien was soon on the floor, nursing his jaw.

"Damn, beat me to it!" a familiar voice complained.

Jessie turned to the source, her face lit up. "Kiara?"

"Hey Jess, sorry it took me so long," Kiara said with a sad smile. She turned to Damien, "how is he not dead?"

"Maybe I don't turn evil as easily as I used to," Jessie replied. She looked around at her surroundings, "this isn't Voyager."

Kiara looked a little nervous, she rubbed the back of her head. "Yeah, I've been in the continuum learning not to use my powers so much. I'm a little rusty."

"Another potential power, gone to waste," Damien muttered to himself. He climbed to his feet. "Why was I so keen on kidnapping you both for my crew? I'm actually doubting my intelligence. Me! This is sacrilegious."

Kiara clicked her fingers, Damien's mouth disappeared and was replaced with just skin. "Better."

Jessie nodded, but then she looked disappointed as Damien was still making noises. He stamped his foot as well as making groaning noises.

"It's the least I can do, considering what he did to my grandma," Kiara grumbled. Jessie stared with concern. "Yeah, it didn't take long for someone to blab it. I just wish it didn't take me so long to locate him. Then he was getting interrogated, so waiting seemed good."

"Usually I'd agree, but Voyager's in trouble. We know at the very least one of us is needed there," Jessie explained. Damien made a high pitched groan noise, his eyes rolled. "Can you?"



"I'll try," Kiara nervously said. She clicked her fingers, but nothing happened. "Oh no, for god's sake..." She stamped her foot, "that first one shouldn't count! That was me coming home, damn!"

Jessie frowned, while Damien could only make squeaks. "What?"

"The Q wanted me to stay, but I said I wanted to go to my family. We agreed that I can be mortal, but only use minor powers five times in a month."

Damien made a desperate squeak, Jessie couldn't help but laugh behind her hand. "Oh I'm loving this, sorry."

Kiara didn't seem happy though, "that'll wear off I'm afraid. Jeez, you'd think they wouldn't count my first transport."

Jessie sighed in disappointment, "well we're out. Maybe we can find a shuttle or escape pod off this station."

"Station?" Kiara mumbled in confusion. "This isn't a station."

"Uh, that was the only thing around. What else could it be?" Jessie asked.

Kiara turned and pointed at a wall panel, showing a schematic map of a ship. Damien laughed slightly. The girls looked at him, his mouth was back. "Crafty, I like it."

"Great, at least with a station we'd know where we are. We could be anywhere on a ship," Jessie muttered.

Kiara nodded, "at least we have a map of the ship, it's a start."

Craig walked around the side of the Flyer, squinting as the bright alien torch reflected off the hull and briefly into his eyes. He reached the other side of the vessel, joining Nathan and Shar standing in front of the shuttle's tip. The main window now had a neat circle shaped chunk taken out of it, big enough for somebody to fit through.

"Why?" Craig could only say.

Nathan shook his head, "they're not in the camp, or in the alien ship. If our friends took 'em..."

"No, these guys were competent. That doesn't sound like them," Shar said. She pointed at the window, "they managed to do that without even making a peep."

"These guys have infiltrated a few towers before," Nathan pointed out.

Craig shook his head, "she's right. Somebody else did this." Nathan stared at him quizzically. "They didn't want us in the Flyer at all. It's not like they killed them and took the shuttle, it's still here. Whoever did it, wanted them."

"I think we're back to why," Shar muttered.

"I don't think you want to know," the female alien said as she joined the group. "I was afraid of this."

"Not afraid enough to warn us," Craig grumbled.

The alien stared with narrowed eyes. "It's not like them to take aliens. They usually take people straying from villages looking for food. Kidnapping visiting aliens, that's a risky move for them."

Craig was beginning to lose patience, "who's they?"

"Our enemies of course," the woman replied.

Nathan laughed like he didn't believe any of it. "Are you saying your government have a habit of kidnapping its own people? The way you were going on, you'd think they'd be voted out by now."

"As if the people in villages or small towns would be allowed to vote," the woman snarled. "Nobody in the big cities would even know this was happening."

"We're still on why," Shar commented.

The woman sighed, "when I said you didn't want to know, I meant we don't even know ourselves. We only have theories. People just vanish."

"I think we have a good idea." Everyone turned to look and point their flashlights at the source of the comment. They could just see James and the injured man walking up to them.

"Ohno," the woman stuttered. "Are you all that's left, what happened?"

"Never mind that, he needs medical attention," James muttered. The woman nodded, she rushed over to another group.

"I know these guys are so vaguely annoying, but you already know beating them up doesn't help," Craig commented.

James allowed himself to smirk briefly, "it never does."

The group rushed over to tend to their comrade, they took him away to the ship.

"Dare I ask though?" Craig said.

Nathan shrugged, "saying that is asking."

"What happened here?" James questioned.

Craig looked back at Nathan and Shar, then pointed at the window. "Jach and Janet stayed behind to guard the shuttle. That didn't work out too well."

"That's not true, the shuttle's still there," Nathan pointed out. Craig clenched both his fists and his jaw.

James sighed, "I wish that was the worst thing happening right now."

"Did they even get a chance to do what they wanted to the tower before... you know," Shar asked.

"No, their bomb was still in its case," James replied.

"What about the something?" Craig questioned.

"Oh it was something alright," James commented. He looked back at the Flyer with a worried expression on his face. "We need her fixed, top priority."

"It wasn't before?" Nathan teased.

"He means it's more important than Janet and Jach," Craig said with a roll of his eyes.

Shar's eyes flashed with fury, she marched forward. "You're not serious are you? I know you're not a real human when you pull crap like this!"

James swung his own head in her direction, he stepped forward to close the gap between them. Nathan quickly put an arm in the way. "Ok you two, enough with the testosterone display, we've got more important things to worry about. Yes?"

Shar turned and slapped him hard in the face. "Are you accusing me of being a slimy man!?"

"Um, ow," Nathan complained, he rubbed his sore cheek. "And yeah, you can be very mannish."

"Jerk," Shar grumbled, she stomped on his foot and stormed off.

Craig tried his best not to look amused, he cleared his throat. "Ok, so we fix the shuttle and then what? We don't know where those two will be."

"No worries, I already have an idea where they'll be," James said.

"Mind lending me that crystal ball when you're done hogging it?" Nathan commented with a smile.

James passed him a raised eyebrow, though he missed it in the dark. "They'll likely be in the central tower."

"Likely?" Craig muttered.

"Do you want me to waste time explaining, or do you want to rescue them before there's nothing to?" James snapped at him.

Craig seemed a bit taken aback for a second. "You think they took them to kill them?"

"No," James replied.

Nathan frowned, "so *nothing to* refers to... what?"

James looked down then back at them, "to the things that attacked us."

Nathan and Craig stared at each other, then back at him.

"Whatever they were, they were strong," James continued.

"Great, demons?" Craig groaned. James shook his head. "What, ok... vampires? Robots?"

"They looked just like our alien friends," James replied. Craig was about to say vampires again, but he quickly interrupted him. "They were alive."

"Dude," Nathan said to himself. He then pulled a face as the others stared at him. "I've been around Kevin too much." He shook his head, "your theory is they were lab rats?"

"Oh come on!" Craig groaned. "How did you make that leap? James is just as vague as those idiot alien terrorists, how can you..."

"Not demonic but strong, plus evil government kidnapping people. I was always good at maths," Nathan smiled.

Craig threw his hands up in the air, scoffing as he walked away. They heard him mutter, "they could have been witches."

Nathan bit his bottom lip and raised both of his eyebrows. "He's a bit touchier tonight."

"Good. I'll need a team to go get them back," James said.

"Ho boy, this should be good," Nathan laughed.

Craig walked back over to them, passing a glare at the older man. "What about the Flyer?"

"Anyone who stays behind, fixes it. If those aliens are still here, they help or guard," James replied. "It isn't the hardest of plans, is it?"

"Fine, I'll come with you," Craig said. He cringed as Nathan raised his hand. "No, one sarcastic asshole is bad enough."

Nathan opened his mouth and placed a hand to his chest. "I'm not sarcastic, you wound me."

"No, you're just flamboyant now," Craig groaned.

"We're definitely using our big words tonight," Nathan commented. "I'd normally say leave him behind to cool his jets, but he may get it out of his system."

"Guys, save it for the stronger than you aliens," James butted in. "We'll leave once you're ready, make sure you bring more than just a phaser."

### **Voyager:**

"Are you sure?" Tom asked nervously.

*"Positive. They do look like portals, but nothing's coming out. Yet."*

"Those beams are what's generating them," B'Elanna read from the ex Engineering station. "They share the same signatures, and they're pointed in the right places."

"All we need to do is get out of them then," Tom mused to himself.

"You said that these things are similar to Death Corridor," Jodie reminded everyone. "It was Jess that helped us out in there."

Tom briefly looked back at her. "Let's not start panicking until we're being invaded. She used a spell that time, you don't use a console for that." A light switched on his head. "B'Elanna, let's try constantly re-modulating the shields. It may throw them off."

B'Elanna nodded as she worked quickly at the console.

"We can't keep doing that with these guys surrounding us," Jodie warned.

Tom smiled confidently, "leave that to the pilot." He hovered his right hand over the control stick, grasping the small lever with his left.

"It's working," B'Elanna sighed in relief. "The energy signatures are fading. Maybe it's time for a more permanent option."

"Can't we fire at some of them, clear a path," Jodie suggested.

"I'm glad we're all on the same page," Tom remarked, breaking into a grin.

"If we fire at any of the close by ones, the blast may weaken our shields." B'Elanna turned briefly to the back part of the station, then back again. "The beams are loosening their grip."

"Things may get a bit bumpy," Tom commented. Everyone on the bridge looked at somebody else with worry. Tom's hand pushed the lever forward.

Outside, the alien ships closely changed their formation. The ones firing the beams seemed to close a tight net around their prey. A dozen more encircled the front saucer, charging up another attack.

They didn't notice, or didn't have time to react as Voyager's warp nacelles lifted. One flash later, Voyager was gone, leaving a trail of alien debris scattered in its wake.

Everyone clutched to their stations, even though nothing was happening at the moment.

"I hope they don't catch us anytime soon. The forward shields are at twelve percent after that stunt," B'Elanna remarked.

Tom pulled a half smile. "Better than the alternative."

"If they catch us, we'll end up like the Leda," Jodie mumbled to herself. She dared to let go of her station. "Speaking of which, are we..."

This lowered Tom's spirits, his shoulders fell. "No, they want Voyager. They're not interested in them, and I'd like to keep it that way."

*"Astrometrics to the Bridge..."*

Everyone's face turned very pale, they also remained deathly still like the voice was in the room with them.

Tom mouthed, "what is Annika still doing here?"

"Fodder," B'Elanna also mouthed, shrugging.

*"Helloooo?"*

Tom reluctantly tapped his commbadge with the hand that wasn't on the speed lever. "What is it?"

*"That was a very efficient way of dealing with those meanies, Captain Paris. Couldn't have done better myself."*

"You definitely could have, just tell the aliens you were on board," Jodie commented.

Tom shook his head. "Yeah, thanks. Is that all?"

*"Only ten minutes away there's a planet with two satellites. One of them we could easily hide in its pole."*

"Um... which one?" Tom asked with a sense of dread all over his face.

*"Either pole will do sweetie."*

Tom almost gagged, his hand went to his mouth just in case. B'Elanna came to his rescue, "he means which planet, you bimbo." She turned to Jodie, "honestly, she was a lot less annoying as the Mary Sue of the series."

Jodie seemed genuinely confused, "she's always been crackers. Not just any old crackers; she's crackers with Edam cheese and butter spread."

"She was lucky enough to miss out on Season One, B'E," Tom remarked. "Anyway, there's got to be a better solution than sitting around and waiting for them. I say we try to outrun them. Are they chasing us?"

"There's no sign of them, but you can count on it," Jodie replied.

"I knew I should have made Annika torture Damien into giving us his cloak specs," Tom muttered to himself.

*"Me? Oh no, violence is part of the old me."*

B'Elanna sighed, "I have a feeling that they'll catch us if they want to. They came out of nowhere, and those readings..."

"Yeah, I vote for hiding. The magnetic poles may make it harder for them to find us," Jodie said.

"But... if they can't find us, they may go for the Leda. We can't risk it," Tom stuttered.

"We don't have to stay there too long. Just long enough to fix the shields and investigate what happened. You said it yourself, they're not after the Leda. They disabled them and left," B'Elanna explained.

Jodie frowned, "yeah, but why? What's so special about Voyager?"

"I've been asking this for years," Tom sighed in response. "Is that planet habited Annika?"

*"Yes, it's a dingy looking M class planet. Oh, what a coincidence."*

B'Elanna looked amused, "it is? It doesn't help us one bit."

"You're right there," Tom quietly said to himself.

*"No no, silly. The Flyer was heading in that general direction. If we're not hiding there, we should at least go to say hi."*

"I don't know why I even bothered," Tom groaned to himself. "Send the co-ordinates to the helm, we might as well go meet our fate."

Jodie frowned, "what the hell does that mean?" B'Elanna flashed her a fiery glance. "Jeez, everyone's so touchy. I figured it would be me."

*"Yes, being touchy is fun."*

Everyone almost gagged yet again. Jodie pressed the cut off button like it was covered in slime.

"Ok, here goes nothing," Tom sighed. He lowered the lever slightly, and then guided the control stick to the left.

After walking for a good while in complete darkness, the bright light they were faced with made it extremely difficult to keep their eyes open. As the alien Commander had described to them, the looming centre tower was covered in blinding lights. The five small towers surrounding it could only be seen from the tower's light reflecting off them, even though they were about a couple of miles away.

Standing guard at the large glass doors, were two aliens holding large plasma rifles. Ten metres directly in front of them stood a seven foot tall electric metal fence, surrounded and hidden by large, but dead trees.

Behind one large tree, stood the three Human soon to be trespassers. Each of them armed with a phaser rifle with a strap hanging off their shoulders.

Nathan pointed towards the fence, then at a tree branch almost touching it. "I'm definitely getting the bad guy vibes here. Even the trees aren't safe."

Craig shook his head as if it would help in ignoring him. "How do we get in without proving it? We run in, get shot. We shoot first, we get noticed."

"As if he needed you to explain what you meant," Nathan commented.

James looked up to the tower, squinting his eyes a little. "There's plenty of windows."

"Yeah, and every one of them belongs to an occupied room," Craig said.

"Not necessarily. We know these guys are huge energy hogs. I bet they all went home and left the lights on," Nathan commented with a smirk.

"There's also a fence with a sign on it. A huge energy plant wouldn't put some flimsy fence up, hire two guards and chuck a Keep Out sign on," Craig said.

Nathan sighed, looking a little disappointed. "Did we have to bring Mr Negative with us?"

"Why not, it's usually me," James commented. He turned back to the others, his eyes still burning a little from the light. Craig showed him the tricorder he was using. "He's right, it's an electric fence. That's an easy fix though."

The other two glanced towards the fence, then looked back at him. Nathan smirked while Craig looked a little unsure. James pulled out a knife from near his pocket.

"Oh, we're not digging underneath are we?" Craig complained.

Nathan's smile grew wider, "oh, I hope we are."

James stared at them blankly, then shook his head. "With a knife?" He handed the knife to Nathan, "go ahead. Craig and I will meet you back outside when we finish the mission, and you're still in the hole."

Craig shrugged, "well you have been over dramatic lately, how was I supposed to know?"

Nathan pouted a little as he handed the knife back. "You guys need to have fun sometimes, really."

"Anyway, we just pick where we want to go through the fence, and I'll take care of it," James said, already starting to lose his patience.

"I dunno, stabbing a fence might take some good aiming and patience," Craig muttered. "You don't have one of those, at least."

James covered his face with his spare hand, "well at least we're closer to what I had in mind." He walked away from the others, keeping a close eye on the tower.

Nathan frowned in Craig's direction. He shrugged and followed, Nathan did as well.

They didn't have to go far, as James stopped near the left side of the building. He raised the knife.

"Um, electric and metal equals yikes," Nathan warned. He then brushed his hair back, "next thing you know, spiky hair."

Craig rolled his eyes, "yes, cos that would be the worst thing that could happen."

"It's got a rubber handle, so shut it," James muttered.



Nathan smirked at his impatient voice, while Craig just sighed to himself. "I'll keep a look out," he eventually said, turning his back to the others.

"How do you expect to cut through metal with a knife, even if it wasn't electrified?" Nathan asked. "Rubber handle or not, metal hits metal and whoosh!"

James didn't listen to him, he held out his spare hand. "Tricorder." Craig handed the tricorder to him, then turned his back on them again. After fiddling with it a bit it began to beep, he then knelt down and put the tricorder on the ground right next to the fence. "That should do it." Carefully he placed the blade of the knife against a part of the fence.

"Um, my question's still valid. That's metal you want to cut through," Nathan muttered.

"And?" James only said as he then sliced at the thin metal. The knife went clean through without any resistance, electrical or otherwise.

Nathan looked speechless for once, he looked to Craig for help but his back was still on them.

"Well, first the appearing out of nowhere, now this. I thought my sis was the witch of the couple," he eventually said.

Craig pulled a confused face as he looked back over his shoulder. James didn't react as he seemed too busy to be listening.

It didn't take long to cut a bigger hole in the fence. Once it was done, James knelt down to pick the tricorder back up. "I'll go first, to check it out." This time he didn't get any vocal protesting. Ducking his head he carefully climbed through, rearming himself with a bigger weapon. Nathan followed, and finally Craig.

By the time Nathan and Craig reached the wall, James was having a peek through the window nearby with his eyes and the tricorder.

"There's no one there," he said.

"Great, got any more tricks up your sleeve? Breaking a window may get some attention we don't want," Nathan questioned.

"Nope, just the same trick," James replied, gesturing with the knife again. Nathan pulled a face as a headache started to form, he again looked to Craig for help.

"What's your problem?" he only mouthed.

Moments later James lifted his leg over the window sill, then climbed inside. He had a look around the small office while Nathan did the same.

Craig climbed in while keeping a lookout behind him. "That thing must be blunt by now."

James briefly looked at the jagged knife before putting it away. "It pretty much was before the window."

Nathan looked on, wincing slightly. Craig walked forward to nudge him in the arm with his elbow.

A tricorder scan stopped James from going any closer to the door. "There's people outside."

Craig shook his head, only then he noticed something at the corner of his eye. He turned towards the wall on his left. "I have a really bad idea." The other two stared at what he did; a small square vent near the ceiling.

"Well, it's better than going through the door," Nathan muttered. His attention went to the desk nearby, "instead of fighting over who gets to pick up who, why don't we..." James walked over to it, Nathan cringed a bit when he grabbed it. "Not drag it across the floor."

James tossed him a bemused look before he lifted the desk off the floor with one hand, and carried it across the room like it was a paddy.

"You're not going to give me a weird look for that too, are you?" Craig complained in Nathan's direction. His mouth was already open to say more things, but decided against it.

James put the desk down next to the wall, and climbed on top of it. The vent was just in arm's reach, so he carefully pulled the metal grating off.

"We're still going to be fighting over who carries who," Nathan sighed. "Craig's the tallest, but..." Craig passed him a narrowed eyes stare. "He's the grouchiest kid this side of the quadrant, so he'll probably drop us."

"Prick," Craig muttered under his breath.

James smirked at them both. "We just need to decide who goes first. Whoever does, has to make sure the coast's clear, and if not, find another route."

"Surely that's you," Nathan said.

"Sure, if you want him to pull your arms out of their sockets on the way up to the duct," Craig said.

Nathan widened his eyes while James stared blankly at him. Craig's response was just to shrug his shoulders.

"When have I ever done that?" James complained.

"Um, okay. I'll take charge, being the oldest and wisest," Nathan stammered. "I'll go first, James second, Craig third so he doesn't have to do anything, agreed?" He didn't wait for an answer, he climbed on to the table with James, then reached up to grab the edge of the vent. As he had to stretch his arms just to grab it, he didn't have much luck lifting himself up.

Craig scoffed to himself. "Looks, like you're first to lift people, or last to push them. Your choice," he then said in James' direction.

Nathan stopped what he was doing, and turned to James with his face extremely red. "I forgot the tricorder."

"Yeah sure," he said with a smile, handing him the tricorder. Once Nathan put the tricorder away, he tried again. Craig couldn't help but laugh quietly as James grabbed Nathan by the legs to lift him up. He yelped a little once his head was in the vent, which echoed down it. That made Craig laugh even more.

"Ssshhh!" James shushed him, while trying not to laugh himself.

"What happened?" Nathan's voice echoed.

Craig shook his head, he climbed up next. "I'd put the table back, in the rare chance that the whole building doesn't know we're here, no thanks to Nathan's squealing."

Inside the vent, Nathan could only hear muffled voices as he maneuvered himself into a sitting position. "Seriously, what happened?" He dragged himself backwards a bit, just in time to see Craig appear in the vent just as quick as he did.

"Scooch," he whispered.

Nathan stared at him, not believing his eyes. He inched back again as Craig rotated around so his back was to him.

"More than that."

"Right," Nathan mumbled. Using his arms he dragged himself back another metre.

Craig leaned forward so his arms were hanging out from the vent. Meanwhile James had put the table back and was heading back. He lifted the vent grate over to him.

"The arm and socket comment comes back to mind," he said, closing his hands into a fist.

"For the last time, I'm not that heavy," James muttered. "Move then."

Craig pulled a face as he retreated back into the vent, James grabbed the grate back off him.

"What are you... we're leaving him here? He is shorter than us, he won't reach if I couldn't," Nathan commented.

Craig looked at him, bemused. "Yeah that extra inch really helped you get up here."

Nathan frowned just as one hand grabbed onto the edge, his eyes widened yet again as James seemed to jump up and climb into the vent on his first try. He moved around to face the hole to maneuver the grate back where it was.

"Oookay, you said the security system will be three floors up so..." Nathan stammered. He began to crawl off down the the tube. "This way gents."

"Why does he always do that?" Craig asked, looking back at James.

"What?"

Craig shook his head, he turned around to start crawling after Nathan. "You haven't noticed?"

"I dunno, I just assumed eccentricity runs in the family," James replied when he did the same.

Craig bit his lip to stop himself from sniggering loud enough to be heard. "Not that, and I'm telling Jessie you said that."

Nathan meanwhile had stopped crawling as he reached a dead end, at least ahead of him anyway. He looked up to see the vent continued vertically for three metres. "And they said I wasted too much time on slides."

Craig and James looked at each other briefly as Nathan stood up. His hands pressed against the vent, then he straightened his back up against the other side.

"Is it wrong that I want him to muck this up?" Craig whispered.

"Depends how much noise he makes when he does it," James answered with a smirk.

To both of their disappointment, Nathan lifted his knees up to lean against the vent. He was gone from their sight in a few seconds.

"Looks like it's up to you to muck that up," James said.

Craig scoffed. "You wish, I'm not going to do that." He crawled forward to reach the end, and carefully looked up. He got there just in time to see Nathan's leg disappear over the edge. He tried to copy off what Nathan did, but by the time he went to put his knees up, he stumbled back down. Immediately he got back up, this time deciding to try to jump and reach where Nathan was.

"Aaaw, was someone slide deprived as a little tyke?" Nathan's voice taunted him. He offered both of his hands.

"I can do it," Craig huffed as he tried to climb again. James shook his head and began to crawl closer. "Don't even think about it!"

"Gee, fine," Nathan huffed, thinking he was yelling at him. "I'll scout ahead, shall I?"

"You do realise that one of us still isn't keen on closed in spaces, so..." James commented.

Craig grunted as he tried to get his legs up, one at a time. "Not my fault you're a little wuss..." he said breathlessly. James groaned in response. Just as Craig got his other leg up, he started to tumble again. Only this time James grabbed him by the legs, and pushed him up.

"Yey he did it," Nathan laughed, looking back. He did a double take as Craig was now lying face down, with his head against the ground.

"Hurry up!" James' voice yelled from down the bottom.

Craig lifted his head, "I hate him."

Inside a small room filled with alien computers, another grate fell from its vent onto the floor. Nathan popped his head out, as well as the tricorder in his hands.

"Yep, definitely clear."

He swiveled his legs around so he was in a seating position, then jumped down onto the floor.

"Am I the only one wondering why a room this important is unmanned?" Craig's voice mumbled. He then came into view.

Nathan looked around towards the door as he jumped down into the room too.

"Yeah, cos we're too busy wondering if Craig ever listens," James commented as he was next to leave the vent.

Craig pulled a face as Nathan turned to him. "The Security room's still one floor up, mate."

"But you said... three floors, I'm pretty sure there were three..." Craig stuttered.

"Three's how many times it took you to get up the last part," Nathan smirked. "It's ok, I don't blame you for losing count."

James walked forward to join Nathan, so he could take the tricorder. "So, how are we getting up to the next floor?"

"Easy," Nathan smiled. He pointed to the door, "that leads up to a large room containing a pair of stairs. The room we want is just up them."

"Great, so we climbed through the hell vents, cut open an electric fence, just to walk into reception," Craig muttered.

"Easy hissy fitter, there's no one around. I guess the only people still in the building are the few desk lackeys on night shifts," Nathan said.

James went over to the door. "Or the guards."

"And or, or," Nathan commented with a smile.

Craig was not impressed. He quickly walked forward to join James.

"There are people around who could probably reach us in time."

"Um yeah. Night time or not, surely somebody would be guarding a large area like that. I mean, what else would it be?" Craig questioned.

"So your solution is to waste time chatting about it?" James commented. He turned back around to face Nathan. "You know the plan, if you listened anyway."

"Yep. Get to security room, locate our friends with it, do what we did before to get here. Check," Nathan replied.

James shook his head as his hand went to grab the door handle, "just a yes... never mind."

As soon as the door opened, the trio crept through it one by one. Just like Craig expected it would be, the room they entered appeared to be a large reception area. A large desk stood in between the two large stairs leading up to a raised walkway above the back of the room.

James lead the way up the stairs, keeping half of his attention on the tricorder. Nathan remained in between him and Craig, clutching the rifle hanging against his front while Craig had chosen to hold it properly, while pacing backwards.

The pair stopped as James did half way up the stairs. "Change of plans."

"Great, which chairs do we need to take cover from?" Craig muttered.

"Get to the security room, now," James ordered as he turned back to go down the stairs. Nathan held out his arm to stop him. "No time. There's a group coming this way, I'll make them think there's only one us."

"Are you crazy?" Nathan whispered. Craig poked him in the back with the rifle, or rather nudged him. "But..." He reluctantly continued up the stairs, so did Craig. However he stopped just as he got to where James was, he handed him the tricorder.

"If we have time to get there, surely..."

"Just get Jach and Janet out," James whispered back.

Craig nodded, he rushed up the stairs to join Nathan on the platform. At the dead centre there was a door, surrounded by dark windows. They both ducked their heads so if anybody was in the room, they couldn't see them coming. When they reached the door they crouched down onto their knees.

"I can't see in, it's like a mirror on this side," Craig whispered as he handed Nathan the tricorder. He began to work on the panel next to the door.

They froze as they heard some doors slamming open directly beneath them, then some voices yelling in an alien language.

"Hurry," Craig whispered harshly. Nathan threw him an angry glance which surprised him.

Just underneath them eight of the aliens marched out of two large doors, quickly spreading around the room. One side stepped closer to one of the stairways. He turned his head to look over the solid banister. He got a phaser rifle to the face for his trouble.

After he stumbled back, James appeared from the other side of the banister, aiming the rifle. The other aliens turned to face him simultaneously, almost robotically. His phaser fired a wide shot, which enveloped the whole room in front of him. His eyes widened as the aliens only stumbled back, slightly dazed.

"What the..." he stuttered, quickly raising the setting from High Stun to the next level. The aliens recovered and rushed for him. The one close by brandished a long, curved dagger and literally leapt at him. James grabbed the nearest sofa like chair, and threw it into his path.

The security door clicked open, Nathan pushed it softly to open it enough to let them in. Craig got back onto his feet, but stayed hunched, and went inside. Nathan looked back, wincing at the noises he was hearing downstairs, then followed him inside.

The room they entered was huge, but filled with computers taking up the entire walls. Most of them were filled with screens showing parts all over the building.

"All right, first things first," Craig thought out loud as he approached one of the computers. Nathan stood behind him, scanning the screens one by one. He turned, eventually settling on the window. "Disabling the camera for reception..."

"Yeah, it's a little late for that," Nathan commented.

"Really not. Have you seen our people on any of the security footage?" Craig questioned. He glanced back, "Nathan, the screens!"

Nathan frowned as he managed to catch a glimpse of the fight below. "Um, right. Not yet." His attention went back to the many screens on the stations.

Meanwhile one alien had grabbed James from behind, his arm tightly around his neck. A group of three surrounded him just as he punched another alien down to the ground. Just as two of them lurched forward, he swung both of his legs up to kick them right back. The alien on his back tightened his grip, but he was hurled over his shoulder anyway.

Another alien took that chance to also jump onto him from behind, this one quickly raised a dagger. James pushed himself back into the wall, the alien instantly lost her grip on him, and fell to the floor.

He quickly ducked as the last two standing aliens swiped their sharp weapons at him. One responded by kicking him in the head, knocking him almost onto the ground. He recovered in time to block the other alien's swipe with one of his own weapons. Both aliens stared blankly into his eyes with the same creepy blackness as the last ones. One punched, while the other tackled him. All three of them crashed into the back wall, tearing a huge hole as they tumbled through it.

Craig and Nathan felt the ground shake as the wall supporting them weakened. Craig held on tightly as he continued to work. Nathan meanwhile had his eyes on one particular screen, the colour in his face had gone and had been replaced by a sickly white.

"Typical," Craig could only say. This prompted deathly pale Nathan to briefly look over his shoulder at him. "James can't resist smashing people through walls. I miss the good old days where he just hit you."

"Um..." Nathan could only say.

"Good thing is, nobody saw it. I'm checking any rooms that may be brigs, or heck even labs," Craig continued, unaware of Nathan's mood.

"That um, wasn't him... well, it was but..." Nathan stammered.

Craig decided to see what he was looking at, which was a view of the reception pointed straight towards the new hole. "Damn, there's another camera? Ok, hang on. It would be useful if you, oh I don't know, look for our people!"

"Right," Nathan stuttered, he rushed to another computer.

As he did, he missed the shot of one of the aliens being thrown from the hole and into the nearby rubble.

Two aliens that had been knocked down before, got back up. One of them eyed the thrown alien, without hesitation she ran towards the hole.

James appeared with a few new scrapes across his left arm, and chest. He leapt over the rubble to avoid the alien running for him. She stopped instantly, and raised a thin sword in her left hand. He looked back as the second alien had also joined them.

They leapt forward to attack. James jumped up to grab a hold of the banister behind him, he kicked one of them down, then tried to pull himself further up. The woman also jumped, grabbing his legs.

A couple more of the down aliens staggered back up, ready for more. Just then they heard a beep coming from afar. They looked over to see the phaser rifle lying discarded on the reception desk. Before they could decide what the beeping was, it fired another wide shot in their direction, this time knocking them to the floor.

"There!" Nathan announced, pointing at one of the screens. He placed the tricorder onto the console and pressed a few commands. Craig rushed over to his side.

"That's not far, there's even a duct nearby," he said, not sounding particularly happy about that. Nathan looked at him, the colour was back in his face again.

"I'll let you go first this time, hmm?"

"Hmm?" Craig mocked him. "Sure." They both turned to leave via the parallel door to the one they came in.

James meanwhile had climbed to the top, even with the stubborn alien still trying to pull him back down. She had however climbed further up. With one arm she tried to swipe at him with the sword she had managed to hold onto, he took that opportunity to push her off of him. He then pushed himself up onto the walkway, dodging the banister in the way. He looked back down to check if the aliens were still down, before heading for the security room.

More voices from below stopped him in his tracks. With a heavy sigh, he turned back around.

"How long have they been missing?" the alien, formally known as Snugglebumps, demanded.

His two companions stared at the younger man, one of them smirked with disrespect.

"Does it really matter? They're not going anywhere."

*Snugglebumps* snarled, puffing some air out of his nostrils. "Thoughts like that lead to plans being ruined all the time."



"I'm sure the witch will kill him, long before they can figure anything out. They can't do anything about it now."

The smirking alien laughed to himself. "Do not fret, Galnar. Snuggles here is just cranky about giving up his master."

The pair didn't even flinch as Snugglebumps' already large form, changed into a beast twice his size. "Call me that now!" He swiped a large claw within a centimetre from the joker's face.

"Put it away Lurkrun," the alien referred to as Galnar chuckled.

"I told you he was too young for this mission. A first Shifter are only good for cheap laughs." The second alien walked over. With just his index finger he poked the man now more than twice his size. This managed to push the beast back a step. "Right Bumps?"

"If it wasn't for me, we wouldn't have the witch. Some respect..."

Galnar waved him off. "Yes, congratulations for sniffing out the Slayer's wife. It must have been like searching for a star in the sky."

Snugglebumps, or rather Lurkrun growled but reverted back to normal anyway.

"More like finding a bomb and bringing it home with you," a familiar voice taunted them. The aliens heads swung around to the source. "Cos that's all you've done," Damien sneered.

"You!" Galnar snapped. "Are you as stupid as you look?"

The trio approached the intruder.

"Yes, of course," Damien smugly retorted. He quickly shook his smugness off, ready to correct himself. "By that I mean, I do look like a genius, after all." They blankly stared at him. "But you, I'm not the one bringing aboard a pissy witch who has been evil before. Also not to mention being hooked up with the Chosen. You'd have better luck kidnapping the Phage."

"Where is she?" the unnamed alien demanded.

Lurkrun closed the already small gap between Damien and the others, he grabbed the intruder roughly by the arm. Damien only smiled at him.

"I liked you better as Snuggles." This obviously prompted a growl. "She thinks that I'd pretend to betray her, gain your trust, then turn on you. She's never been the brains of the group."

"I assume you're here for another reason," Galnar stated.

"Well, we got along so well the last time I betrayed Voyager, didn't we?" Damien smiled deviously at the trio.

Galnar and the unnamed alien looked at each other knowingly. Lurkrun frowned as confusion filled his face. "What are you blabbering about now?" he asked.

"Please! Your excitable self shapeshifted in front of me. Only a regular Joe would miss what that means."

Lurkrun snarled at his companions. "He's trying to throw us off. The witch is probably doing something as we speak."

Damien briefly looked at the others, faking a shocked expression. He turned back to the man holding his arm. "You manage to think of something like that, yet think you can scare off other shapeshifters by shifting. I should have known you weren't a rabbit, you don't have the brains to be one."

The unnamed alien sighed, "we'd be fools to overlook the incident four years ago."

Damien smiled in his direction, "what's a little *traitorism* between friends?"

"We're not friends with Humans!" Lurkrun spat.

"Hmph, Human," Damien complained, dragging his arm away. "As if! They're weak, the lot of them. Even their Slayers are pathetic."

Galnar smiled coldly, then began to pace in a circle around him. "You betray your own people for kicks, yet you work with them to ensure your own survival. You enslave innocents to achieve your own ends. You think you are the centre of the universe, the most perfect thing to grace the cosmos."

"What's your point?" Damien smiled smugly.

"I'd say that's a perfect description of every member of the Human species," Galnar laughed, stopping directly in front of him.

"You're forgetting one little detail," Damien said whilst trying to hide the anger brewing in him.

"You're right, I could go on," Galnar retorted.

Damien forced a devious smile. "I'm the brilliant inventor of this shield you keep harping on about." This wiped the smirks off the older aliens faces. "It's based on the principles behind the portals that opened on Deck Thirteen ten years ago. Of course, if you figure anything out from that, be my guest. I'll just be on my way."

Lurkrun moved around to stand in the doorway, blocking his escape. "Unbelievable, this *Krashak* was the one who enslaved an entire unit to attack the Humans with, four years ago? I should kill him for that alone."

"Relax!" the unnamed one groaned, with a roll of his eyes. "Damien, do us a favour and pet him between the ears."

"I will not stand here and continue to be insulted," Lurkrun growled.

"Then walk," the unnamed alien said.

Lurkrun marched through the door, muttering to himself. "He'll just do it again, fools."

"Well, now that the imposter is out of the way," Damien turned to leave. The unnamed alien took Lurkrun's place.

"Do not think you have the upper hand. Your so called enemies are being destroyed as we speak."

"Really? Good. In that case, I'll keep the information to myself," Damien remarked, folding his arms tightly. "I'm sure Voyager won't be able to decipher my notes enough to make it. They probably didn't know you'd even attack to even bother. It's not like they have people that have the ability to see the future. That'd be a bummer if they did."

Galnar took a few steps closer to him. "If you were so willing to betray them and not us, why wait until now? We were alone in the interrogation room."

"What can I say? I can't resist an old fashioned betrayal. I'm sure Jessie will enjoy it too," Damien replied.

**Meanwhile:**

"Do you think they'll buy it?" Kiara asked in a worried tone.

"Not a chance. It keeps them distracted, gets him away from us, and might get him killed. Win, win I say," Jessie replied with a cheeky smirk. Kiara smirked back at her.

"You do realise though, that we've got more chance of him turning on us than..." she said in mid thought. Jessie put an arm out in front of her. "Never mind."

"No," Jessie whispered as she quickly pulled Kiara with her by the arm. They disappeared around the corner. Seconds later Lurkrun marched down the corridor.

Once he was long gone, Kiara bit her lip nervously. "Sorry."

"Forget about it, I doubt Q's would teach you to be discreet," Jessie continued to whisper. She headed back into the corridor, and continued down it. Kiara followed closely.

"A... little help!" Craig stuttered painfully. His body lifted off the ground, pulled by his own hair, then slammed back down.

Nathan coughed as something heavy was pressing him into the wall, by his chest. He tried his best to change the setting on his phaser rifle.

"I'm kinda in the same pickle, you know!" he managed to spit out.

Craig tried to break his second fall with his hands pressing against the floor. It was a waste as they just slid forward from the strain, his head hit the floor yet again.

The phaser rifle beeped, getting the lone alien's attention. Her head swung around just as Craig's head was lifted up again. She dropped him, then used her now spare right hand to slap the rifle from Nathan's hands.

"Um, uhoh," he squeaked.

Craig's response was to only groan from the floor.

The alien's right hand swung to Nathan's throat. Her eyes stared deeply into his as she began to squeeze.

"Ugh, good work Nath..." Craig muttered as he lifted his head back up. He then caught sight of the dropped rifle. With a lot of painful effort, he looked behind him. "Never mind."

His hands quickly reached to grab the rifle. Even that noise got the alien's attention. It was enough to stop her choking the life out of Nathan. Craig rolled onto his back, only then noticing the alien's attention had shifted again, then he fired. She fell backwards to the ground.

"Phew," Nathan sighed in a croaky voice. His hand checked to see if his neck was still the same shape. "James wasn't kidding about them."

Craig groaned as he got back onto his feet, whilst checking the wounds on his head. "Uh huh." He headed over to the small computer station in the centre of the room. Ten doors decorated the walls of the room, all but one reinforced with a blue forcefield.

"Makes you wonder how he could take two of them, alone," Nathan said, as if to himself. "Or eight."

"Uh huh," Craig wasn't listening, he was busy working on the station. "We didn't get here fast enough. I'm only getting one lifesign." His head turned to one of the doors. "I'll get the door open, you go."

"Right, right," Nathan said, rushing to the same door.

Craig nodded. "Now."

The forcefield disappeared, the door then opened from the middle. Nathan rushed inside a tiny, spartan cell. The lone figure scrambled to his feet despite the many injuries he had. "Nathan? How..."

"Jach, no time. Where's Janet?"

Jach's eyes closed, his head lowered. "They took her away." His balance wavered, and he stumbled forward. Nathan caught him quickly, then helped him walk out of the cell. Craig soon joined them once the door closed behind them. "They wanted me, but..." his voice cracked.

"But what?" Craig asked like he didn't want to know.

Jach looked back up at them, his eyes filled with anger. "She stood in front of me, demanding they take her first. They hit her. They didn't want a *filthy human*."

"They took her anyway?" Nathan questioned.

Jach nodded, but it even hurt him to do that. "Obviously I wasn't strong enough for them," he stammered, gesturing his hands at his wounds.

"I have a crappy feeling about this," Nathan mumbled.

Craig stared just ahead of him, at nothing in particular. "We should go..."

Nathan shot an annoyed glance at him. "And leave Janet with these guys, what's the matter with you?"

Craig turned his stare to Nathan. "To the laboratory on the next floor down."

"Oh," Nathan looked a little embarrassed. "Maybe Jach should rest up inside one of the ducts then. He's in no condition to help us out."

"But..." Jach tried to protest.

"If you want to help Janet, you should stay out of harm's way. We can't really break into a lab while we're keeping you upright," Craig explained to him.

Jach sighed, he knew he was right. Nathan smiled encouragingly in his direction.

"Fine."

"Don't worry, if we don't get her out, maybe James will."

Craig was about to say something but was interrupted by the alien girl stirring. He gestured his head to the only unblocked door. The trio quickly left before she awoke. Once they entered the corridor, an alarm started blaring.

"We're out of time," Nathan stuttered.

A group of three aliens stood in the middle of a corridor, calmly discussing something despite the loud alarm. Only a few metres away James stood with his back to the wall, just around the corner. He could just hear bits and pieces of their conversation over the noise.

"Of course..." one spoke. "Compatible... procedure. Respond... to... encouraging results."

The other two seemed a bit angry at him. "No, you..." one went to a mutter, so he couldn't hear the rest.

"I don't... It... matter. She is clearly... Human... What difference..." the first one said with confidence.

One of the aliens looked over in the general direction James was. He muttered something to the others. They turned to go in the other direction, and quickly too.

Once they were around another corner they continued talking. "Get that thing out of here," the last one snarled to the two behind him. He heard a small bang which made him turn on his heel. His eyes widened at the sight of his two comrades collapsing to the ground, with James standing in the middle of them.

"I really hate being called a thing," he said casually, before raising a fist.

The alien man fell to the ground too, James stepped over him to continue on his way.

His pace slowed as he heard slight footsteps around another corner. This time he armed himself with the rifle hanging off his shoulders, and one of the swords. Carefully he turned the corner, only to be greeted by a familiar face.

"Janet?"

His attention immediately went to her eyes, which instead of her usual bright green were black as night.

"Damn," he had time to say before he was backhanded into the wall.

Craig jumped down from another vent, surprising a lone alien working at his desk. He went to press a button on his computer, but was shot before he could reach it.

"Hurry!" Nathan yelled down from the shaft. Craig turned, he could only see Jach sitting on the edge of the shaft. Before he could jump himself, Craig rushed over to grab onto his legs while Nathan held him around the shoulders.

Once he was safely down, Nathan jumped down to join them.

"There's two in the corridor outside," Craig warned them. His head turned to Nathan, "ready?"

"Yeah if they're not enhanced aliens," he replied nervously.

"I don't think we have a choice," Craig said, also sounding a little nervous. He turned to Jach, "if we're not back in twenty minutes..."

"Yes, climb back into the vent and escape. I know," Jach snapped.

Both Nathan and Craig went over to lift the desk the alien was at to the wall where the vent was. Nathan then went towards the door, raising his rifle. Craig looked over to Jach one more time, he got the hint and went to take cover behind a small filing cabinet.

"He wants to help," Nathan sighed.

Craig went to join him on the other side of the door. "Tough, he can't fight. Janet knew that, that's why she..." Nathan stared at him with a raised eyebrow. "We're wasting time."

Nathan pressed the button on the door panel, the door itself shot open. The pair ran outside, each of them pointing their rifle in opposite directions. To their surprise nobody was there.

"This way," Craig whispered back at Nathan. He nodded. With his back still on him, he started to follow Craig.

Just around the next corner, an alien holding a small flat computer in her hands walked up to a door at the end of the corridor. She keyed in a few commands on the panel to open the door and go inside.

Craig stopped, forcing Nathan to bump into him first before stopping too. "What, what?" Nathan said, turning around. Craig pointed the rifle at the security camera just above the door the woman went into. A red light was flashing on the side of it. "Great, the security camera's are back on as well. Now what?"

"Simple. We need to get in, they can't see us..." Craig muttered as he upped the setting on the rifle. Nathan made a little cough to get his attention, but it failed to work. Craig got ready to fire but stopped as soon as a hand appeared over the tip of the rifle. "What?"

"It's too late."

Craig looked to his left to see the owner of the arm. "Why the hell not? It'll give us a few minutes."

James' response was to only take the rifle. Craig scoffed before looking back at Nathan, who was staring at dismay at the state James was now in. Added on to the wounds he had before, his forehead was split open and still bleeding, whilst a part of his sleeve had been ripped off to wrap around his bleeding right arm.

"I told you, it's too late. We should get out while we can." He turned to walk back the way the other two came. Craig reluctantly followed, Nathan however stood there for a short while with a guilty look on his face. He eventually followed them.

#### **Meanwhile on the alien ship:**

The two girls had reached a small office containing two computers. Jessie stood guard at the door, while Kiara worked at one.

"I've found it," Kiara said with a proud smile.

Jessie looked back over her shoulder. "Great, we'd better hurry then."

Another computer beeped violently from afar. The unnamed alien hurried over to check it. "Galnar!"

"Quick, he may have a treat," Damien sniggered.

Galnar was not amused, he stood his ground in front of him. "Not now, Bray."

"But sir, it's the witch," the now named alien said.

"Oooh, too slow. She'll be escaping soon," Damien teased. Galnar narrowed his eyes quizzically. "Your Security must be as good as your personalities."

Galnar grabbed his arm to drag him roughly over to Bray with him. "What about her?"

"We've had a computer security breach. Whoever it is, they're looking for..."

"The shuttle bay," Damien answered for him. The two stared at him with faces of thunder. "What, it's not like you have a clothes shop with a 50% sale on. Where else would she go?"

"Get Lurkrun and stop her," Galnar commanded.

Bray nodded, he turned to leave. He stopped abruptly when he felt somebody following him. Damien stopped as well, Galnar soon grabbed his arm again.

"You must think we're deeply stupid," Galnar said coldly.

"Of course, but everyone is compare..." Damien remarked. Bray swung around to deliver a backhand to his face. With a thud, he landed sideways on the floor.

Galnar nodded at him, he returned it and rushed through the door. The leading alien stood over Damien, he meanwhile dragged himself back up, covering his right cheek with his hand.

"If I were you, I'd talk before we catch her," Galnar muttered. Damien opened his mouth to speak, Galnar quickly raised his palm into the air. "About the shield."

Damien managed a laugh, even if it hurt his now sore jaw. "I thought Voyager was being destroyed as we speak."

"I'll admit as we're alone, they eluded us. Something to do with their shields. Interesting, no?" Galnar explained.

"They remembered to switch them on. Oooh, bad luck," Damien sniggered.

Galnar's hand shot forward and squeezed Damien's throat. "Tell me how to remove it!"

"Firing at them usually does the trick," Damien managed to croak.

"You know I don't mean their regular shields!" Galnar roared in his face. He pulled him closer, and higher. "How did they close those portals you mentioned. That is the key to this shield, isn't it?"

"Clever boy," Damien goaded him. He was soon dropped on to the floor. After checking his neck was in one piece, he stood back up. "Won't do you any good though."

"I'll bite, why is that?" Galnar impatiently asked.

"There is only one way to close those portals, and I'm not afraid, you don't have what it needs," Damien smugly replied.

Galnar smiled darkly. "If you are really in a traitorous mood towards your *friend*, maybe you can help us acquire what we need."

Damien dared to step forward to look the other man directly into his eyes. "That could be a problem. What you need is on Voyager itself." Galnar's eyes narrowed, partially hiding the anger in them. "Now what? I told you how to lower their shields. Do you need me to tell you how to do it? It's the little button labelled *fire*."

"I could kill you in an instant," Galnar growled.

Damien sadly sighed, "is this what passes for villains these days? I know it's hard to top me, but this!?! Mindless little beasts with the shared brain power of that blonde baby Jessie spat out two years ago. No motivation, no drive, no point. It's a little boring to be



honest." Galnar went to grab him again, but he quickly stepped back. "Ah ah, do I have to spell it out for you?" He pointed at him, "you... need..." He then pointed at himself, "me." Once again he pointed at the alien, "imbecile."

"If you're not going to tell me, there's no point in keeping you around, is there? Entertainment perhaps," Galnar said.

"Did you really think I'd tell you everything? I expect to be compensated. Being allowed to live, or not, is not encouraging me to bow down," Damien smiled.

Galnar sighed. "Very well. We can work something out."

"Good. Your group is badly in need of some brains," Damien said.

"First. We need a test of loyalty and commitment. The witch should be dealt with as we speak," Galnar said.

It didn't matter how fast they ran towards it, it had already happened and there was nothing they could do about it. However they continued to rush straight ahead of them.

Jach however collapsed as the pain was too much. Nathan stopped and double backed to check on him.

James reached their destination first, while Craig arrived seconds later breathing heavily. Both of them couldn't believe their eyes. Straight ahead of them all they could see was smoke billowing from just below their feet. Craig turned his back on it and walked away, while James stared down at the huge chasm right in front of him.

"The camp," Nathan stuttered as he knelt down beside Jach. "Why?"

Craig stopped in front of them, "they were a threat. That's all they cared about."

Jach lifted his head weakly, staring intently at the smoke ahead of him. "But they weren't. Against those things, they didn't stand a chance."

James looked back, his eyes cast downward. He soon turned back.

"The Flyer was further ahead, we should keep going," Craig said.

"That's if it's still there," Nathan said wryly.

James turned to the side to start the walk around the hole in the ground. "Things, right," he mumbled to himself. Nathan overheard and watched him walk away.

"One way to find out," Craig said.

As the group finally cleared the chasm in the earth, finding normal ground again, they could hear a woman yelling in the distance. The group picked up their pace, or in Jach's case just tried to. Nathan stayed with him, keeping a supportive hold of him.

Once they reached the top of a small hill, James and Craig could see the familiar sight of the Delta Flyer and the alien ship. They could just make out three figures standing outside. The yelling got louder and louder as they approached.

One of the figures spotted them first, she charged forward to reach them. James stopped as she went right for him, throwing her hands against his chest as if to push him away. "This is all your fault! You could have stopped this!" she screamed.

Craig looked back at the two other figures briefly, both were alien and unfamiliar to him. His focus went back to the other pair.

"Calm down, what happ..." James uncomfortably said.

"Calm down? Don't you tell me to calm down, you freak of nature!" Shar screamed at him. She stopped pushing at him, realising it wasn't making any difference. Only then both he and Craig saw the puffiness of her eyes, and the red in her cheeks. "Why didn't you stop us from coming here? Oh I know, you preferred to appear out of nowhere and show off instead. I hope you're happy..." She looked behind him at the approaching Nathan and Jach, then back. "You have three lives on your conscience, though I'm sure it's pretty busy in there already!"

Nathan gently helped Jach sit down on the bottom of the hill, then quickly headed over to the other three. James turned to the side to walk away a few metres.

"Three? What happened to Binene and Li'Chin?" Craig asked.

Shar scowled at him, as well as giving him a slight push. He stumbled back a little. "What do you think?"

"I think they should have been here with you, you know, fixing the Flyer," Craig responded.

"Don't you dare try shifting the blame!" Shar growled, her finger then pointed towards James. "He knew this would happen, but he didn't care enough to do anything about it. We're next obviously."

"Hey, hold your crazy horses Shar. I really doubt he put us all in danger on purpose," Nathan butted in.

"I still don't know what even happened," Craig muttered.

Shar flashed him a deathglare. "They're dead, that's what even happened! All because that idiot over there, thought we'd be better off here."

"Again, why weren't they here with you?" Craig impatiently asked.

"It wanted the Delta Flyer fixed. Both of them went with the aliens to get some supplies, and..." Shar grumbled. "All I heard was a huge bang. We could see the light from it, from here."

"It?" was all Nathan could say. Shar gestured again in James' direction. "Oh come on, that's not cool."

"Not cool? Binene, Li'Chin and it looks like Janet too are all dead thanks to..." Shar shouted in his face.

"Hey!" Craig snapped at her. "Maybe instead of blaming James for something he didn't foresee, maybe you should blame the assholes who actually bombed the camp. Or maybe you could do something useful and shut up for five minutes."

Shar clenched her jaw, she then responded how he expected; her hand went across his face. Then she marched off towards the shuttle.

"I'm sorry, but don't you think that the resistance was wiped out because of what we did?" Nathan quietly asked, the shame in his voice was obvious.

"No," James replied when he was right next to the pair. They both jumped as they didn't notice him approach. "They got into the small towers many times, it wasn't until the last one that they were attacked."

"So?" Craig quietly said.

"So, they were probably going to attack the camp anyway, right?" Nathan sighed in relief.

"Right," James answered him.

Craig didn't look convinced. "The resistance were only attacked in the tower that one time they bring an outsider with them, not just any old one as well."

"It was the last tower they were attacked in," James angrily repeated himself. The other two stared at him, not sure what to make of it. "It had nothing to do with me. Their mission would have had them destroying the towers if they had been left alone."

"The towers that you said were useless," Craig reminded him.

"The towers that if destroyed, would have given their game away," James muttered.

Both Craig and Nathan frowned at him, even more confused than ever.

James shook his head, "never mind that now. They either didn't know the resistance were planting bombs until that last one, or they did and they wanted to give them false hope to the very end."

Nathan cringed a little, "the last one I wouldn't put passed a group of people who make super powered crazy people."

"Hold on. Give what game away? That the main tower should have been the real target? If I were these government guys, I would let them find that out the hard way. It's not like they would have gotten to the top of that tower to bomb it," Craig said.

"It doesn't matter anymore. We should find somewhere else to camp for the night. It's already late," James said.

Nathan nodded, "yeah, there's nothing stopping these guys dropping a bomb on the Flyer as well. One of us should tend to Jach as well."

Craig turned around to walk over to where Jach was resting, he knelt down next to him.

"What about our last remaining alien buddies? It's probably not a good idea to leave them here," Nathan said.

"Probably?" James commented with a raised eyebrow. Nathan shrugged. "You should talk to them, I'll get some supplies. I really don't want to hang around here much longer."

"What about Shar? She's probably not going to be thrilled about coming with us," Nathan questioned with a wince.

"If she doesn't come, I'll force her to. No one's getting left behind this time," James muttered. He headed for the Flyer leaving Nathan looking a little worried.

"Rather you than me," Nathan said to himself. He shuddered a bit, "maybe not."

**Meanwhile:**

Jessie and Kiara were waiting around a corner, keeping a close eye on a door a few metres ahead of them.

"Is it time yet?" Kiara whispered.

Jessie shrugged, "we'll know soon enough." She rushed for the door, with Kiara right behind her. The door flew open, stopping them in their tracks.

"I hope we're not thinking of stealing a shuttle. That's a bit too obvious, don't you think?" Lurkrun sneered. He pointed a phaser like weapon at them, and then walked forward to close the gap between them.

"Well we could leave via an airlock, rabbit obsessed shapeshifters first," Jessie muttered.

Lurkrun smiled, "witty."

Jessie eyed the weapon, then looked back up at him. "Maybe you should put that away before you get hurt."

Kiara leaned to her left to make it seem like her head popped out from behind Jessie. "Yeah!"

Lurkrun's face grimaced. "Who is... where did this child come from?"

"You didn't see me coming did ya?" she retorted. If that wasn't enough, she tilted her head to the right, and pulled a neer neer like face.

Jessie shook her head whilst raising her hand to her face. She decided against it halfway up. "I don't know, I just assumed it was more trickery from you." Kiara turned her head, pulling a different face at her.

Lurkrun seemed offended by the suggestion. "Hmph, she's not one of ours." He snarled at the girl, her eyes widened and she backed away a step. "Absolutely *not* one of ours!"

"I'm sorry, did I hurt your feelings, Snuggles?" Jessie taunted.

Lurkrun growled, his arm shot out to grab her arm. "If I were you, I'd be more concerned about your freak and spawn. Right now, if they haven't already, they're being ripped apart by our *little pets*. Maybe he should have gone on his little training mission."

"What did you mean by trickery?" Kiara quietly squeaked at her.

Jessie pulled her arm out of his grip. "Maybe you shouldn't have touched me." Before he could respond, her foot stamped on one of his, and then an elbow collided with his ribs. He doubled over, just in time to see something flat and grey fly towards his face.

Kiara laughed as the man literally twice Jessie's size fell onto his back. "I haven't missed that."

Jessie shrugged her shoulders, then lowered what appeared to be the metal casing of the computer she worked on before. "It never gets old. Take his weapon."

She hesitated a little before kneeling down to disarm the unconscious alien.

"Enough!"

The two girls swung around to the source; Bray holding a similar weapon to Kiara.

"You aren't leaving, there's nowhere left for you to go," he warned. "Your small ship is burning in space, that tiny shuttle lies in tatters on our planet, and Voyager..." He chuckled to himself, "I'll leave that one to your imagination."

"Then why does it matter if we leave or not?" Jessie asked him.

Bray smiled maliciously at her. "I'm sure we can find some use for a witch, and whatever you are..." He then looked a little unnerved as he glanced at Kiara. "You... You were the first. I should gut you where you stand!"

"First what?" she dared to ask.

"Abomination," Bray answered, pointing the weapon in Kiara's direction. "Shall I mend the timeline?"

"Oh... that," Kiara uneasily said. "I still don't get the first part," she whispered to Jessie.

*"Bridge to all hands, this is the Great Damien speaking." Both girls rolled their eyes. "I'm sure one particular member of the crew knows how a back stabbing feels like, literally and figuratively of course. So I'm a little surprised that you'd allow yours truly to wander into the villains lair, alone. It was a typical Jessie plan, doomed for failure."*

Bray smiled as Damien continued to yammer on in the background. "Well right now, Slayer's brat, you're the first to die. Though the mother of three of them sounds a lot more appealing." His phaser like weapon pointed at Jessie instead.

"Well it's a bit late now," Kiara muttered. This earned her the phaser back in her direction.

*"I suppose having so many annoying little whiners can have an effect on a weak mind like yours. Maybe..."*

*"Will you get to the point?"*

*"However, I suppose everyone can be right only once in their lives, unlike me."*

"We're still waiting for yours," Kiara commented.

*"Ahem. So my friend here is completely rushing my great speech, but no matter. The point, is never trust a genius villain to do your dirty work for you."*

Bray stared in dismay as both Jessie and Kiara disappeared in a transporter beam.  
"What, what is this!?"

Galnar marched over to Damien, he waved just as he also did. "What happened?"

*"The witch and the brat have transported away."*

Galnar looked at the communications panel Damien was at earlier. "It only shows the last communication, how did he get into the... Gah! Never mind, find them!"

The trio meanwhile appeared inside a small cockpit similar to the interior of the alien ship. Damien looked too smug for his own good.

"Don't look like that, it was my idea," Jessie grumbled.

"It takes a genius though to pull it off," Damien commented. He turned to one station to work at it.

"Um, I hope one of you geniuses knows how to fly this thing," Kiara said.

Jessie and Damien looked at each other, then at what appeared to be the helm. Damien rushed forward first to nab it.

"Oh who am I kidding, I can't even fly one of ours," she muttered bitterly to herself.

Bray had reached the control room, joining the furious Galnar at the same station.  
"There are no Human lifesigns on this ship, impossible!" Bray rushed to another computer, he then looked up at the monitor.

"Galnar, look!"

Galnar swung around just in time to catch one of their shuttles already outside, and shoot off into warp. His station then beeped at him, he begrudgingly pressed one of the buttons.

*"I'm glad you enjoyed the show Gullible. Oh by the way, you wanted a shield, I made one up for you. See you never."*

"Follow him, now!" Galnar shouted back at Bray

Bray looked very concerned as he worked his station. "He's done something to mask the warp trail, I can't."

"Incompetent *Krashak!* You saw his direction, follow," Galnar ordered.

**The planet:**

Under the cover of a steep hill on one side and a dense batch of trees on the other, the rest of the Flyer awayteam settled around a fire, contained within some rocks. The two aliens who remained sat with them, talking amongst themselves with a sullen expression each planted on their faces. Shar had calmed down, or at least was storing herself up for another outburst, while the others quietly argued over something.

"It makes more sense my way, and..." Nathan said.

"Nobody would have time to really rest in shifts. It was dark before we even went to the tower," Craig interrupted him. He took a bite out of the rations, this made him pull a face like he was chewing a lemon.

"Exactly, we only need one person keeping a lookout," James added on.

Nathan shook his head. "No way. We've all been to hell and back, so we all need a rest. Every one of us."

"Divided between the six of us who can, we'd only be on watch for about twenty minutes or something," Craig groaned.

"And? It's not like everybody only gets to rest for that long. Times that by five and what do you get?" Nathan said.

Craig frowned at him, "it wasn't even twenty minutes, it was an exaggeration."

"Even better. I don't understand why you two are being pissy about it," Nathan complained.

James climbed to his feet, still holding his uneaten rations. "I'll keep watch for god's sake, you should rest while you can." He put the rations down where Jach lay sleeping, and walked towards the hill.

"Nobody agreed to that," Nathan commented as he got up too. Craig lifted his hand up as a stop gesture, his mouth was again full with the tasteless rations. "It's still a few hours. We can at least have one more guard to take over, you know for half the night."

Craig reluctantly swallowed his food. "Don't bother. He can be a stubborn git, just like his..." His face fell, then his eyes were cast downward. "Just leave him be."

Nathan looked back over his shoulder in time to see James sit near the top of the hill; not too high to be seen from afar, but high enough to keep watch.

"I'm sure Slayers need to rest just like us," he said back in Craig's direction.

"Oh for god's... don't whinge at me then, tell him," Craig complained.

"Why? I didn't even know he was one until..." Nathan muttered, interrupting himself with a cringe. "I guess the shuttle fight should have been my first clue, but..." He looked up as he heard Craig laughing quietly. "What's so funny?"

"You're in a Slayer trainee group, and it didn't occur to you that your teacher was one. Thanks, I needed a good laugh."

Nathan frowned at him, this only made him laugh a bit louder. "I doubt that being a Slayer is a requirement. I mean those watchers couldn't even do battle with a fly, but their job is to train them."

Craig managed to get tears in his eyes, he tried to wipe them away and calm down. "You're right, of course. If a watcher can't be bothered to train some people, they usually just pawn them off to a random Security officer."

"Speaking of being a stubborn git," Nathan muttered at him, narrowing his eyes. "I just figured he was a regular Joe Slayer. I had no reason to think he was the real deal." He turned his head away, "I had plenty of reasons otherwise."

"Hang on, save some of that for tomorrow. We all need something to get us through the day," Craig sniggered behind his hand.

"As if," Nathan scoffed, rolling his eyes. He looked over as Shar got up to check on Jach. "I can't believe you can laugh at a time like this."

"You were the one telling me to lighten up, or some claptrap like that," Craig said with a sigh, his laughter finally faded.

"Still," Nathan groaned.

Craig shook his head. "Maybe one of us should get up after an hour, or something. Just in case James changes his mind."

"Yeah sure," Nathan said unenthusiastically.

"Get some rest then," Craig said. Nathan looked at him with surprise on his face. "I was the one in charge of the mission, you know."

"That was Li'Chin," Nathan muttered. He sighed, "I'm not resting yet. I can't get those creepy aliens out of my head."

"I'm sure I could convince Shar to knock you out for the night," Craig commented with a wry smile.

Nathan managed a small smile himself. "No thanks." He finished off the last of his rations. "This may seem like a dumb question..."

"Then why ask it?" Craig commented.

Nathan scowled at him, "forget it then."

Craig mouthed the word wow, then decided to lie down where he was.



Shar meanwhile got back up and sat down where she was before. Nathan looked at her. "How are you doing?" She just shook her head as a response. "Yeah, me too." He turned his attention back to the hill.

### **Voyager Deck Thirteen:**

The turbolift doors opened to reveal a very uneasy looking Tom. His eyes darted around and his fists were continuously clenching. Eventually he grew the nerve to take the first step off onto the deck.

"It looks like every other deck," he told himself. The skin on his arm formed goosebumps as the top of half of his body shuddered. "That's what's so creepy about it." Steeling what was left of his nerves he turned the corner, but it wasn't enough. He jumped out of his skin.

"A little jumpy?" B'Elanna greeted him from the other side.

Tom's shoulders relaxed instantly, his heart still continued to beat faster than normal. "Dear god, why did you do that?"

B'Elanna placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Relax Tom. Nothing weird has happened here in almost eight years." She smiled mischievously, "and to answer your question; I couldn't resist."

"Hmm, with wives like you..." Tom mumbled to himself. "So we could have met on another deck, I assume?"

"Maybe," B'Elanna admitted, pushing out her bottom lip. "But scaring husband pranks aside, this deck's still the best place to be."

Tom sighed loudly, which creeped him out further as it seemed to echo down the small corridor. "You just said to relax as nothing weird has happened in years."

B'Elanna turned around to walk in the direction he was going before. "I wasn't counting today."

With a much quieter sigh, Tom reluctantly followed his wife down the corridor, then around another corner. This time though, he slowly peeped his head around it. With nothing to scare him in near sight, he continued normal pace.

The pair reached their destination, near the end of the corridor. Waiting for them already was Ylara with a very impatient look on her face.

"Yes we know the deck's haunted or something, can we go now?" Tom tried to say without his voice breaking.

Ylara frowned at him while B'Elanna laughed and shook her head. "Where's..."

"She's still here," Ylara interrupted in an angry tone.

Tom now looked white as a sheet. "Who?"

Ylara stepped a metre to her left revealing the catsuited Annika in all her glory, sporting a tricorder. Tom yelped as he made his second out of his skin jump. His hand rushed to his chest to check if his heart was still ok.

"God! Women are evil," he stuttered, prompting a smirk from B'Elanna.

Ylara shook her head. "When those portals disappeared she came running down that corridor." She pulled a disgusted face, "imagine that for one second!" Tom must have as his face turned from white to green instantly. "I'm surprised she didn't knock herself out."

"Anyway!" B'Elanna pretended to cough into her hand. "Brain bleach or not, Annika discovered something."

Annika turned around after hearing her name. "Hi Tommy, you ok?"

"No," Tom groaned. "What did you find, and quickly? I hate this place."

"Well they didn't," Annika said with a toothy smile. "Many portals opened, or started to all over the ship, right?"

"Right, I said quickly," Tom muttered.

"It wasn't, as nothing came out. Silly boy," Annika said in a patronising tone.

Tom looked to B'Elanna for help, she smiled back with sympathy. "I had similar troubles when she called me." Her head turned back to Annika. "Tell him about Thirteen's."

Annika laughed, "oh, I see. Well, out of all of them, this one was the biggest, the most powerful and... Ooh wait for it." Tom impatiently waited for it. Ylara meanwhile was probably turning Evil again. "Was the first to open."

"Right. Maybe you could have told me that, on the bridge," Tom said to B'Elanna. She narrowed her eyes, telling him not to push his luck. "Erm well, when it was reported to me, it all happened at once."

"To the naked eye, yes," Annika said, winking for emphasis or just for the hell of it.

"As opposed to a one wearing a skirt? Get on with it," Tom snapped.

Annika gasped, placing a hand on her chest. She turned to Ylara. "Isn't he getting rude? It seems like everyone is these days, must be the air." Ylara turned her head in her direction with a cold, annoyed stare. "You too Lena?"

She couldn't take it anymore. To avoid casualties, Ylara marched off down the corridor muttering obscenities on the way.

"Um, what she means is that the Deck Thirteen portal opened a few milliseconds earlier than all the others. They opened at once," B'Elanna explained, sniggering to herself.

"Yes, she gets it and isn't mean about it," Annika added on, giving a bad evil eye to Tom.

B'Elanna shook her head, "as it seemed to be generating more power, and was first, I thought the obvious."

Tom understood her, but it just made him feel a lot more uneasy about where he was. "They didn't attack the Leda like this for a reason. They couldn't."

"Exactly. Though it is safe to also assume that they wanted Voyager over the Leda anyway for other reasons," B'Elanna said.

Tom looked behind him. He could still hear Ylara muttering to herself. After turning his head back, B'Elanna nodded a confirmation. "But why? This is the last ship you should attack with hordes of demons."

"It's still the first ship you'd want to, if you were said horde," B'Elanna said.

"It's still bothering me though. They have these ships, why the need for the portals? I know that they went through our shields, but considering what happened to the Leda, that's not a problem," Tom mused.

"You're assuming those monsters are driving the ships," Annika commented. She clicked her tongue and folded her arms. "They're not that clever."

B'Elanna frowned as she turned her head in her direction. "So who is? Who'd hate us enough to send demons onto us..."

"When they could just as easily blow us out of the sky," Tom said.

"Not really. The Leda was never built for battle. It's a science ship," B'Elanna reminded him.

Tom seemed surprised, "why am I finding this out now?"

"It was supposed to be spared an attack, and it answers your question," B'Elanna said with a sigh.

"Yeah but Starfleet chose it to go on a dangerous and mysterious mission with us, doesn't that seem a little odd to you?" Tom questioned her.

Annika's eyes widened, "ooh, the plot thickens."

"No it hasn't," B'Elanna sighed. "Anyway, when Annika and I put two and two together with this portal, I had a look at the readings myself."

Tom didn't like where this was going, "and?"

"I know why Jessie and Damien were kidnapped, well one of them anyway," B'Elanna replied.

"Oh?" Tom's face lit up slightly. That quickly faded, "the scene's going to cut out before you tell me, isn't it?"

B'Elanna smiled in response.

He didn't realise how tired he really was until he started to climb the hill, but Nathan continued anyway.

"Get some rest," was all he got when he reached the half way point.

That didn't stop him, he kept on climbing.

James shook his head, then turned it back towards the other side of the hill. "You never listen, do you?"

"That's not true," Nathan huffed once he reached where he was. With a deep sigh he sat down nearby. "I listened when you told me to leave you behind."

"True, but I didn't expect you to protest then," James said.

This made Nathan sigh in annoyance. "I hope you really don't think of me like that, I didn't want to leave you to die." James slowly glanced in his direction with a raised eyebrow. "Jessie would kill me," he stammered, forcing a smile.

"Probably," James smiled too.

"Our secret?" Nathan asked him.

"Sure, if she knew about that, she'd kill me too," James replied.

Nathan's smile turned genuine, only for a few seconds. "Listen, I hope you didn't decide to sit up here all night cos of Shar. She was upset, I doubt she meant any of it." James scoffed and shook his head. "I mean it's understandable if you blamed yourself too but..."

"I don't," James interrupted him.

Nathan stared for a moment, unsure what to say at first. "Well, um... good, cos it's not you know. The watchers brought us here, the aliens shot us down. I don't get how or why you got here, but it still doesn't equal fault."

"I know," James said with a shrug.

"Great," Nathan muttered. "If you start thinking like that, we should all discuss it. The last thing we need..."

"What are you doing?" James finally asked, frowning at the older man.

Nathan's eyes widened a little, "huh?"

"I already said that I don't blame myself for what happened. Why are you still talking like I said the opposite?" James questioned.

"I dunno," was all Nathan could answer with.

"Maybe the old me would have blamed everything on me, but now I know it's stupid. It was egotistical really of me to think that I'm responsible for everything that happens. It's in the past," James said, almost ranting.

Nathan frowned. "I see, yeah I guess it is. Though for someone in your position, it's really easy to fall into a blame trap."

"Yeah, and I didn't. It's no problem. All I'm doing here is making sure the rest of you are safe, that is my job after all," James muttered.

Nathan didn't look convinced, he shook his head to hide that. "Sure, I guess."

"Yeah," James sighed, looking away again.

"Yeah," Nathan copied him, he dragged himself a little down the hill, then got up. "Just remember, you're a Human being like the rest of us... well more or less." He grew a little nervous. "Er, by that I mean, Shar and Jach aren't. What I mean is you're just as mortal as the rest of us. My point is; you should rest sometime too."

James looked down at him with a frown. "What do you think I'm doing?"

"When I say rest, I mean..." Nathan explained, then made a loud snoring noise with his eyes closed.

James' stare turned into a blank one, he then tried not to laugh. "You're insane."

"I prefer to call myself charming and a blast," Nathan said with a chirpy smile. "Look, Craig's offered to take your place when you need a nap. I don't mind either. We all got a bit beaten up back there."

"Thanks, but no. I'm fine," James sighed. His attention went back away.

Nathan sighed as well. "If you change your mind, we're the guys down there." He continued down the hill.

"Told you he was stubborn," Craig said, still with his eyes shut.

"Yeah, definitely runs in the family," Nathan muttered to himself as he sat down.

Craig opened his eyes, immediately frowning. His head then turned to look in Nathan's direction. He didn't notice as his attention was on the fire. With a sigh, Craig turned his head back and tried to rest his eyes.

Far over the horizon, the black sky was slowly turning into a beautiful shade of red. The few clouds in that part of the sky were lit up by a hazy orange. The beauty of the scenery was lost on the Flyer team, the tension was back to running high.

Shar paced back and forth in front of a sitting Jach, he watched her nervously. Craig and Nathan were also sitting, but they seemed more annoyed than anything else. James stood on the quieter side with the aliens.

"Maybe we should calm down and be rational about this," Jach spoke up. He winced as Shar threw him a stone cold glance.

"That's easy for you to say. You weren't there," she grumbled.

"No, he was too busy getting kidnapped and beaten to a pulp by these guys. You're right, what was he thinking?" Craig groaned sarcastically.

"Oh for... Yes that was awful, but he didn't witness a camp full of people being wiped out in two seconds. Excuse me for not being rational after seeing that," Shar snapped.

"Fair do's. So maybe we can have some quiet time from you, while you calm down. It'd be better for everyone," Nathan commented with a sly smile.

Shar shifted her glare in his direction. "People are dead, don't you care?" She pointed in James' direction. "Why don't you direct your snark to the one who actually deserves it."

Nathan stood up. "Now wait a min..."

Craig shook his head meanwhile, then interrupted him before it got worse. "Of course we care, we all do. However whinging and pointing blame isn't making things better, it's making it worse."

"Can't our *mighty* Slayer defend himself?" Shar grunted.

Nathan groaned as he sat back down. "Good god, put a sock in it."

Shar looked puzzled, "what's socks got to do with it?"

"It's a Human expression. It means shut your fu..." Nathan replied hastily.

James quickly interrupted this time, "Craig's right, there's no point in bitching about how we got here. We need to figure out what to do next."

"You would say that," Shar scoffed.

James took a few steps closer to her. "Just out of curiosity, what do you want me to do about it now? This is obviously more important to you than us surviving and getting off this planet, otherwise you'd let the rest of us figure things out." Shar turned her head away. "Well?"

Shar turned back and smiled at him. "You're right, I am wasting time. It's too much to ask for a cold blooded murderer to feel guilt for the new additions to his list. I dunno how you can pick up your own kids with all that blood on your hands. Though I'm sure they're used to being covered in it."

Nathan was about to speak up again, but Craig gave his arm the elbow.

James clenched his fists, the look on his face almost matched Janeway's death glare. As Jach was just behind Shar when this happened, his eyes widened and he quickly moved next to Craig.

Even Shar's smug smile started to waver as James closed the gap between them. "If I was this cold blooded murderer you think I am, you wouldn't have had the chance to say that to me. Don't forget that." He turned away to head back for the hill.

Everyone but Shar relaxed a little when he was out of earshot.

"Well, that was... horrifying," Jach said.

"Please," Shar tried to scoff, she seemed a little unnerved to pull it off. "He knows I'm right."

Nathan stood back up, just avoiding another elbow from Craig. "But you're not though. He blames himself too, so perhaps you should dial down the crazy bitch, hmm?"

"Does he?" Craig questioned. "For once it seems like he's not."

"Crazy bitch?" Shar grumbled.

"Well yeah, I barely know him and it seems blatantly obvious to me," Nathan said.

"Good, maybe that'll bring Binene, Janet and Li'Chin back," Shar retorted.

"Wow, there's really no pleasing you, is there?" Craig groaned.

Shar shook her head, "knowing he's responsible doesn't mean he feels bad about it."

"Oh come on, you don't know that. What does it matter anyway, it's not going to help us," Nathan snapped.

Craig stood up as well. "All right, that's enough!" he yelled at both of them. They looked at him with surprise on their faces. "Why don't I clear this up, right now. Say James did what you wanted, Shar, and nobody came here. The tower team still would have been slaughtered, the camp immediately bombed afterwards. Meanwhile the three you mentioned are alive and well until the demon invasion, where they and you probably don't fare any better."

"But I..." Shar tried to butt in.

Craig continued, "the other scenario, is James comes here alone. The only difference there is he probably dies when the camp is bombed, or survives at the Flyer like you. Meanwhile the three you men... well that part's the same, isn't it?"

"There's no proof Voyager will be attacked while we're gone," Shar muttered.

"Actually if you hadn't have been whinging, James would probably have given you that proof, also we'd probably have some sort of idea what to do about now. Instead I have to spell this crap out for you," Craig continued.

"Bravo," Nathan quietly said to himself.

Craig ignored him, "oh yeah, there's the other scenario. We go on the training mission like you mentioned, we're shot down and captured. The aliens find out James isn't with us. They go on their mission without him. As we're likely to be in the camp, we all die in one shot like them."

"You don't know that," Shar grumbled.

"They wanted to capture us, I doubt they'd let us stay in the Flyer," Nathan pointed out.

"Also James wasn't even on the shuttle, so they had other reasons for thinking he was with us," Craig explained. "So er, where are we on this whinging situation? Finished?"

Good, now can we get onto something more important like sitting around doing sod all, or I dunno coming up with a plan."

Jach raised his hand, "well I could continue my work on the Flyer."

"You may need to repair that hole in the viewscreen too," Nathan said. Shar meanwhile turned away with her arms folded. He gestured in her direction, "good work Craigy."

Craig shook his head. "She was giving me a headache."

Nathan winced a little, pointing at Craig's head. "That may have something to do with being slammed into the floor, over and over."

"It doesn't help. So one of us should help him, another guard. We fix the Flyer and then what? Do we get back to Voyager or do we try and help with the aliens?" Craig wondered.

"We have their ship..." Shar grunted. She turned and pointed at the two remaining aliens. "I say we just fix ours using parts from it, then get back to Voyager."

"You really have to stop pointing..." Craig groaned.

"We can't do that, not with what we know now," Nathan cut in.

Shar walked front of him, her hands flew to her hips. The look on her face probably could have put the enhanced aliens off. "What do you suggest exactly? We're not in any position to save the planet."

"I never said that we should," Nathan muttered.

"Ugh, you're as bad as that thing up there!" Shar snapped at him, pointing up the hill.

Craig rolled his eyes, "well that lasted ten seconds."

Nathan stood up, not put off by her penetrating gaze. "You'd better watch your mouth."

"Or what?" Shar groaned. "If you and the freak want to try to save this planet, don't drag us into it anymore. There's nothing we can do."

"Our planet is dying because of these monsters, how can you say that?" one alien piped up.

"I'm not the idiot who elected them into power was I?" Shar grumbled.

Nathan stared at her in disgust. "In case you have forgotten, a lot of people died a few hours ago. Have some respect."

"Oh please, I'm trying to stop more of us getting killed. Don't make me into the bad guy," Shar said.

"We didn't even elect them. It's all power play," another alien said.

Craig looked up with a frown. "What does that mean?"



"Exactly how it sounds. This government was only picked as our old one was too weak," the first alien replied.

"Too weak? Members of the union were slowly picked off, one by one. They weren't weak, they were assassinated," the second alien said.

Shar sighed into her hand. "Look I'm sorry for your planet and stuff, but see it from our... my point of view. We didn't come here out of our own free will, we've also been picked off one by one. There aren't enough of us left to help. Also if I remember right, Humans aren't supposed to interfere with internal affairs."

"I think there's more going on than internal affairs," Nathan argued. "If you don't want to help, that's fine. Stay in the Flyer and let the ones who do..."

"Listen to yourself. You could barely rescue Jach, how can you possibly help?" Shar muttered.

Everyone fell silent, nobody really had an answer.

One of the aliens broke the silence after a few minutes. "We were way over our heads. We thought that if we got a Slayer to help us, it would be over. We're very sorry." The other alien looked at him sadly.

"Yeah, I have to ask. What was the deal with that? Why would a Slayer help in bombing these towers. You didn't know about the enhanced guys until your team was attacked," Craig questioned.

"All our Commander told us was that these towers would be familiar to a one," alien two replied. "Especially a Chosen."

Craig looked a little uneasy. "The thing he wanted to show him, was just the tower itself?"

"In a way," alien two replied.

Alien one looked down, "if we had listened to your friend, the rest of my team..." His eyes closed as he winced.

"What do you mean? I thought your Commander already knew, hence the shooting us down?" Craig asked, even more confused than before.

"I'm not sure. He told us that the centre tower was the problem, not the small ones," alien one replied. He looked very guilty, "we didn't really let him explain."

"Your Commander was right," Nathan commented. The aliens looked confused at him. "The towers were familiar to James."

"I'm missing how," Craig mumbled.

Shar groaned, "if I were you, I'd be more worried about the experiments they're apparently doing in there."

"We never did find Janet. James only said it was too late," Craig said. "I say that's more than an apparently."

"If we had the Flyer up and running, we may have a chance of killing two birds with one stone," Nathan thought outloud. Everyone looked at him strangely. "Or Voyager. The towers are draining some kind of power, and turning people creepy and strong. Destroy them and problems goes away, at least until somebody comes up with a better way to choose a government."

"Did you ever think for a second that, that's why Voyager gets attacked in the vision?" Craig asked him, shaking his head.

"Vision, what vision?" Nathan questioned.

Shar rolled her eyes as she turned her back on them. "The same one that showed that idiot up there that we'd be shot down and recruited."

"And obviously not the rest, or we wouldn't be here. So why..." Nathan said.

"I don't know, why don't you ask your best friend up there!" Shar snapped.

"Do I really need to mention the ripped apart by demons bit again?" Craig sighed into his hand.

"Maybe it was because if a team didn't go, they'd know that we knew, and would change their plans," James added on. The group didn't catch on right away, when they did their heads went in his direction.

"You've got to stop doing that," Craig groaned.

Shar folded her arms tightly. "Who's they?" She pointed at the aliens. "Them?"

"No. Now that you have your answer, will you stop complaining?" James asked her.

"Ugh, so those three died just so we could do what the bad guys wanted us to. Great plan," Shar huffed.

"That's a no," James rolled his eyes.

"Janet's not dead, right?" Nathan stuttered.

James closed his eyes briefly, "no she's not." The others looked at him with dismay. "Not exactly." Everyone waited for him to continue instead of asking him to. He sighed, "I walked right into that one. I can't really explain it. She's alive, but she's not. It was like an empty shell."

Nathan's skin crawled. "Yeah, that alien we saw... I'd say that was the creeps I was feeling."

"Ok genius, what made you even think that these government guys expected us to even be here?" Shar demanded to know.

The two aliens glanced at each other knowingly, Shar turned her attention to them.

"Well?"

"Well they knew enough to plant a bomb like one of ours, at the station when you arrived. They knew we contacted you," alien two answered. The other alien shook his head. "I wouldn't be surprised if a couple of them work at the station."

"I wouldn't be surprised if they ran the thing," alien one sighed.

"Ok, ok fine. There was still no reason for the training mission..." Shar said.

James groaned. "Tom had to get permission from them to launch the Flyer after the bombing incident. This was all before the vision update."

Shar moved away from the group. This resulted in a sigh in relief from the others.

Craig looked at an imaginary watch on his wrist, "sixty seconds till next whinge."

"All right, so we're back where we started. Do we stay or do we go?" Nathan questioned.

"Stay. I won't, and probably can't order you to..." James said, looking briefly in Shar's direction. "So I'll ask. This planet will be destroyed if those towers remain, who will help me get rid of them?"

The two aliens immediately raised their hands, then Nathan did. Jach looked uneasy, but he eventually raised his.

Everyone but Shar looked at Craig to wait for his answer.

"It's suicide," he answered.

"It's ok, you can use the Flyer to get back..." James said.

Craig butted in, "I'm in."

Nathan cringed, "ooh, I dunno. Helping a guy to kill himself, not cool."

"Please, I'm not him," Craig grunted, gesturing at James. He rolled his eyes. "I'd rather die trying to do something worthwhile, than live knowing I did nothing."

"I could have done without the *not him* comment," James muttered.

Nathan frowned, "I'm not gonna ask."

Craig shrugged his shoulders. "Well I'm not you. If you got something else out of that, not my fault."

James smirked at him, "right." He looked in Shar's direction, who was being unusually quiet. "Looks like you'll be going home alone."

She looked over her shoulder. "No I'm not."

"Oh yey, Shar's coming," Nathan sarcastically sang to himself.

"You're going to need all the help you can get, taking on three towers," Shar said, ignoring Nathan.

James sighed, "actually about that, there's something you should know before we plan anything."

"Maybe you should have told them everything," Craig said.

Him and James stood outside the Flyer, sorting through what weapons they had. Nearby Jach was sitting on the Flyer's nose, repairing the hole in the window.

"We don't have time," James shook his head. "It won't help anyway."

"No, probably not," Craig sighed. "I wish I didn't know. I mean it does explain how this planet got into this mess in the first place."

"It's likely not the only one," James added on.

Craig turned away and looked up into the cloudy sky. "Yeah... I wish you hadn't said that to me either."

James smiled. "Yeah sorry, I'll stick to being secretive."

"You do know that this plan has a really huge flaw," Craig said as he looked back.

"You mean the whole plan?" James commented.

"Nah, it's worse than that," Craig said. "They'll know you're there, like the last tower heist."

"That's why my team will just have me in it," James said.

Craig didn't look too convinced, he shook his head.

A low rumbling got their attention, they looked up into the sky to see where it came from. They couldn't see anything but clouds.

"That's the third one, that's never a good sign," Craig commented.

"I think we'd be dead already if it was what you thought it was," James said as he carried some weapons away.

Craig looked on after him, "you can't say things like that."

"I always say things like that!" James loudly said back, just before he went out of sight behind a hill.

"Yeah, that's why," Craig groaned, looking back at Jach. He looked right back at him, with a worried look on his face. "Maybe we should make the shields a priority instead."

"I like that plan a lot better," Jach commented quietly.

The starlight eclipsed onto the northern half of the barren moon, casting the rest of its surface into complete darkness. Hiding within the shadows, the USS Voyager stood inside a large crater.

On its bridge, the stations and viewscreen were the only sources of light. The room was tense, as every member of Voyager's skeletal crew were there, most of the alien trainees were trying to get their voices heard over the senior staffs'.

"This is ridiculous," Onlan complained.

"I agree, it's crazy," Sonla agreed. More voices overlapped as Stewart and Daniel also joined in with the chatter.

Tom tried to get everyone's attention by waving the flashlight in their faces, but it only aggravated them further.

"Am I the only one who likes this plan?" Kevin asked. This shut up most of the group as they stared at him in disbelief.

"It's all we've got," Stewart had said meanwhile.

"That answered that," Kevin commented, giving him a thumbs up.

Tom sighed in relief, "ok guys, now that we're quiet..." Arguments erupted into life again, making him sigh.

B'Elanna meanwhile shook her head as she worked at the Engineering station.

"Voyager's all about crazy, time to get used to it," Zare commented over the top of the trainees.

"It's easy for you to say, we're not exactly gifted in the Slayer department," Onlan said.

"I don't understand the problem, it's better than fighting to the death," L'Era wondered outloud, at the same time as Onlan.

Leesa raised her voice to be heard, it didn't work though, "we're relying on a silly theory, that's the problem."

"Why's there a sign on that girl's back?" Stewart asked, pointing at Annika. She stood at the station behind the command chairs. Jodie heard him, and she sniggered quietly to herself.

"We're expected to hold these guys off, then what? Voyager doesn't even have a Tactical station," Sonla grumbled, pointing at the rubble Tactical was in.

"My back feels funny," Annika pouted. Meanwhile Daniel was having a look to see what Stewart was talking about. Sure enough a piece of paper was attached to the back of her catsuit.

"L'Era's as right as she is hot. Before we had to fight off hordes of demons, now we've got a chance to block most of them out. Why the hissy fits?" Kevin commented.

L'Era pulled a face, "um, thanks?"

Kevin's remark angered the group even more, by then Tom had given up trying to get their attention.

Ylara's fists clenched, her eyes were closed tightly. In the dark nobody noticed these warning signs.

"Why don't we keep arguing, that'll keep the demons away," Zare grumbled.

Stewart looked around, "um, hasn't anybody noticed we're a Slayer down?"

"This is dangerous. We don't know if this shield thing will block us out too. Maybe you're ok with fighting to the death, but..." Onlan snapped at her.

Zare rolled her eyes, "you volunteered for this, Kevin and I didn't. Don't ever whine at me."

"Good point Zar," Kevin smiled approvingly.

"Ugh, typical *poor me* Slayer attitude," Sonla groaned.

"Oh give it a rest, she's right. You came to Voyager to do exactly this," Daniel piped in.

"What, die for some stupid haunted ship while waiting for a stupid forcefield to come on?" Onlan mockingly asked. The group once again started a yelling contest over each other.

Ylara shoved Onlan out of her way over to the command seats. He didn't dare say anything to her though. Only Annika noticed as she stepped on top of Chakotay's seat, then climbed on to the console.

"Hey, I'm using that," she whined. This earned her a light for Ylara kick in the shoulder, sending the ex-drone to the floor in a heap.

"Guys, really? He's our teacher," Stewart stuttered.

"I dunno about you, but I think if Voyager's the only one that can be invaded, we should just evacuate it," Onlan said. "Who's with me?" Most of the trainees didn't look too sure, Sonla seemed to agree though.

"Then they'll follow us to the Leda, and finish the job. Meanwhile the bad guys get a ship that can open a door to demon dimensions," Zare muttered. "Ligod and Wesley sure picked a bright bunch."

"I'm sure he didn't go on the training mission," Stewart muttered to himself.

"It's better than dying for some scrap of metal," Sonla commented. A phaser fire hit directly in front of her feet, startling her and the others backwards two metres. They all looked to the source.

"If you're quite finished bitching about something that's going to happen anyway, maybe you should go back to your poles," Ylara grunted, still pointing a phaser at the group.

"Posts love," Kevin corrected her.

Ylara's eyes looked up, then rolled to the left. "Whatever." She fired the phaser at his feet too, he stared at her bewilderedly. "Call me that again, and I won't miss."

"Ok, check. The lady's right," Kevin nervously said.

"That's it? If we don't want to fight, we have to?" Onlan stammered.

"You were OK with it when you thought you'd be dealing with lots of demons, weren't you? If it doesn't work, what difference does it make? If it works, there will be less of them," Ylara pointed out.

Tom sighed, "that's what I've been trying to say for ten minutes, but OK, listen to the scary girl with the phaser."

B'Elanna pouted her bottom lip out, nodding in agreement, "seems reasonable to me."

"I guess," Tom said as he headed to her station. "How's it coming?"

"Good news is, we have enough power to secure Deck Thirteen and us when this happens, or Deck Thirteen and Engineering. Whichever you prefer," B'Elanna replied.

Tom frowned, "I'd have asked for the bad news first if I had a choice." He leaned forward to rest his arm on the back of her chair.

"The bad news is our Security/Slayer volunteers will still need to keep our guests from getting too far, for a short time," B'Elanna said. "It wouldn't have made sense to say that part first."

"So again, no real difference to before," Ylara commented. Her eyes narrowed at the trainees, daring them to say anything. She jumped back down to join them. "Right?"

"Right," B'Elanna said with one shoulder shrug. "It shouldn't be long, a couple of minutes."

The opps station beeped. "We're being hailed, audio only," Jodie said. "It's the Leda."

"We should make it quick. We don't want our stalkers to trace our whereabouts," Tom said to himself. "Let's hear it."

Everyone on the bridge cringed as all they could hear was loud static. A voice tried to break the surface, clearing it up a little bit. *"You better still be alive Paris, Voyager's getting old, you know."*

Tom straightened up, then looked back at the group at the centre of the bridge. "Chakotay, I didn't think you cared that much. We're flattered."

*"I assume that because you're still trying to be sassy, there are no demons trying to stick swords in you."*

"Not yet," Tom whispered to himself. Jodie meanwhile sniggered again as she watched Annika try to reach the sign on her back.

"We can't keep chatting, Chakotay. If they detect our communications..." B'Elanna warned.

*"I'll remember not to care next time. What happened?"*

Tom sighed, "we escaped for now. B'Elanna's working on something. You guys should be safe though."

*"Yes, you said that before. Next you'll be telling me that you're a bearable guy who everyone always wants to hang out with."*

Tom pulled a face, "I am." He glanced back at B'Elanna. "Why are you blaming me, it wasn't my vision. I assumed the Leda was intact in it. We must have changed something."

*"Yes, beaming the entire crew onto the Leda. That oughta put a new target sign on us."*

"My back feels funny," Annika commented, scrunching up her nose. She made one last attempt, this time grabbing the paper. "I don't get it," she said as she read it. "Yes I'm Jessie, you can still stab here... what?"

"Damn," Jodie sighed. "Worth a try."

*"Maybe you should quickly tell us what B'Elanna's doing, we may need it," Harry's voice piped in.*

"Actually you won't, you..." Annika started to explain.

*"I assume Annika's taken Jessie's death spot, that's the best plan I've heard in a while," Chakotay butted in.*

Annika pouted, "meanie." Her eyes widened, "wait, what?"

"She's right. They can only open these on Voyager," Tom explained. "They use Deck Thirteen as a sort of conduit, you know between us and demon palooza."

*"Yes, I got it at conduit," Chakotay's voice grunted.*

"If B'Elanna's plan works, all we really need to worry about is fighting off the aliens," Tom explained. "Getting them all may take a while."

*"If we knew the Leda was completely safe, we'd have been able to help with that."*

Tom sighed, "just let it go." He made the gesture to cut him off. Jodie nodded and smiled. "All right, I think now that we're all caught up, we should get to our positions."

Most of the trainees stared darkly at him. He tried not to let it get to him, or show in his face.

"If you'd prefer I can tell B'Elanna to forget all about the shield. You seemed a lot happier then," he finally said in a stern voice. This took everyone by surprise. The more vocal trainees began to head for the turbolifts, lost for words now.

Kevin patted him on the arm, "our boy's grown a pair, it's about time."

Tom ruined it by rubbing his arm, "um, ow."



Meanwhile Zare walked the last few trainees to the second turbolift, she put an arm out to stop L'Era. "If any of them panic or get a change of heart..."

"Slap them?" L'Era joked.

Zare smirked back at her briefly. "Tempting but no. Forget what I said before, just let them go. Yeah they volunteered to be Slayers and help us out, but unlike Kevin, Ylara and I; they can quit anytime."

L'Era silently thanked her with a smile, she turned to join the others.

"Zare, wakey wakey!" Kevin called her, waving like an idiot.

Zare rolled her eyes and then headed back to the centre of the bridge. Now only Ylara, Kevin and Daniel were left. Tom soon joined them, as well as Zare.

"We don't know for sure if they'll open the portals in the same place. There's no reason to assume they would anyway," Tom said, ending with a sigh.

"Apart from Thirteen," Zare commented.

"Typically the only place we know for sure, will be protected first," Tom said.

Kevin looked serious for once in a long time. "What if it doesn't work, it won't be. Maybe one of us should be there, just in case."

"Annika," almost everyone suggested. She pouted.

"Ok, ideally I'd want a team on every deck that's not protected right away," Tom said, looking at Kevin. "If the shield works anyway. If it doesn't, I'd prefer the most vital areas of the ship were protected. As we're short handed..."

"You want us to cover those sections," Zare said.

Tom nodded, "right. Obviously that will be Engineering, if we decide to protect the Bridge first, and vice versa. Deck Thirteen's definitely a yes, Kevin. Sickbay, just in case. I can trust that we can keep the solo Slayer teams, so you guys should be the ones to guard these areas. Daniel, your trainees job is to only cover the ground in between."

"Oh, they're mine now, are they?" Daniel sighed.

"I know you're worried about the warp core, but I think priority should be the bridge. The battle will be outside as well as in, and we know they try to get onto the bridge from the vision, likely to stop you destroying their ships," Zare suggested.

Tom nodded. "I thought so too. I was just concerned we're boarded by intelligent demons, like the ones from ten years ago, or the aliens... they'll try to gain control of our systems."

Ylara sighed, "there were none like that. They just wanted to kill as many as they could."

"We've still got to assume they want Voyager intact for something," B'Elanna pointed out. "Or they'd just attack us normally. Even though their ships could be destroyed in one hit, there's no telling how much damage they'll do while we're picking them off."

"Still, Zare's right... we need the bridge done first. Zare, can you take Deck Five, Ylara and Kevin, one of you at Deck Thirteen, just in case. I'll leave which up to you," Tom ordered. "Daniel, I'd pick whatever team was the most whiny to join."

Kevin turned to Ylara and Zare, "after you ladies." Zare stared at him with a bemused look, Ylara not so much. "What, you're not a lady? Poor Lena." Ylara responded as he expected, her fist flew into his cheek. She then marched towards a turbolift.

"Whiny? I'm sure you'd complain in their place," Daniel smirked at him. Tom was about to complain but he quickly raised his hand. "I'm still on your side, the shield's a good idea."

"Even when you're being nice, you still have that slimy flirter voice. You do know that, right?" Zare laughed towards Kevin as she went to follow Ylara.

Kevin's eyes widened, "slimy? Huh, that explains a lot." He quickly followed as well.

"How did you even come up with it anyway?" Daniel asked in B'Elanna's direction.

B'Elanna sighed deeply, "well..." The Red Alert siren interrupted her, everyone's faces drained of their colour. "Battle stations, Commander?"

Tom quickly rushed to the helm, "yes ma'am." He quickly flipped a few switches, then kept his hand on standby over the lever. "Jodie, what you got?"

"Opps," Jodie tried to joke, but her nervous voice betrayed her a little. "The energy signature that followed us before has entered orbit. They're coming straight for us."

"Straight for the moon, or directly us? I don't want to risk taking off if..." Tom muttered.

"Us," Jodie quickly interrupted "They'll be on top of us in five minutes."

"I guess that is my cue then," Tom said to himself.

Voyager made its presence on the dark moon known with the activation of its hull lights. It lifted up off the surface, the landing struts retreated back into the hull.

Meanwhile the blue energy orb appeared from a flash of light, and zoomed straight over to the moon. Within seconds the tiny silver ships shot out of it in different formations.

Tom watched the viewscreen, his clammy stressed hands still on the controls. All they could see at the moment was the black in front of them.

"Thirty seconds," Jodie stuttered.

Tom acknowledged with just a nod. "Here we go." His hand pushed the lever forward, pushing the ship forward. Everyone else's attention was half on the viewscreen.

The silver ships reached the moon. A few formations remained where they were, two broke off. They skimmed the moon's thin atmosphere and followed it down to where Voyager's old hiding place was.

Unknown to them Voyager was doing the same thing, but going in the opposite direction.

The viewscreen showed the tail end of the attacking ships. Tom smirked to himself, "fire."

B'Elanna smiled too as she pressed the appropriate commands.

Voyager charged its phaser array. Just as they were about to overtake their attackers, it fired short bursts at each ship, destroying them instantly. The starship then rolled onto its starboard side, flying straight towards the remaining ships.

Jodie gripped the Opps station so tightly her knuckles turned red. "I never liked this part."

B'Elanna shrugged, "it's the best part, I say."

"Jodie!" Tom warned her.

"Right, twenty kilometres," Jodie stammered. "Any closer and they'll..."

"B'Elanna, get as many as you can," Tom commanded, his hand holding the control stick tightly.

Jodie started to panic as the ships and energy ball got closer. "Fifteen!"

"Now," B'Elanna said in Tom's direction.

The alien ships began to power up their beam from before. Voyager curved its flight path upward, firing off a lot more of their short phaser bursts. Once the starship had completed half of a loop it straightened up to fly away. The remaining alien ships, which were still in their hundreds, chased after them.

Voyager continued firing as they closed in on them.

"There's still too many of them," B'Elanna reported.

Tom for once didn't seem worried. "We've given ourselves more time, we're ready."

Jodie watched uneasily as the alien ships were back on the screen, overtaking them, then turning around to face them. They fired the blue beam in their direction. The ship shuddered as it was forced to a standstill.

"If it gets too much, we'll just warp away again," Tom commented with his trademark chirpy smile.

B'Elanna shook her head. "I hope you don't like having shields." She looked over to Jodie, "I've transferred weapons control to you now, go nuts."

"Go nuts is good advice," she stuttered.

The intruder alert siren rang around the bridge. The new Tactical station also beeped madly. "Faint energy signature on Deck Thirteen." The station made even more noise. "Now Decks Eleven, Nine, Five, and One."

Jodie and Tom both swung their heads around to her direction. "How long?" Tom stammered.

Jodie's head darted around the bridge. "I don't see anything."

"They'll be tiny, don't panic," B'Elanna said.

Tom pressed a button on the left side of his station. "Paris to all hands. Zare stay on your deck, whoever took Engineering ditto. Whoever's left, report to Deck Nine."

B'Elanna's station beeped again, "wait!"

"Oh god, it's not working," Jodie stammered.

"Not that, another energy signature, Deck Three," B'Elanna reported.

"Did you hear that? Split up the trainee team and get Deck Three covered as well as Nine," Tom ordered.

B'Elanna quickly worked at her station. "They're getting bigger, we should have enough power now."

### **Meanwhile:**

Once again most of the camp were in a heated argument. The two remaining aliens sat halfway up the hill, discussing the situation a lot quieter.

Craig had enough, he got up to walk in James' direction. He was back to keeping a lookout, this time from the trees.

"Next they'll be arguing over which of the rations pieces they want," he grumbled. With a heavy sigh he dropped into a seating position right next to James. "Honestly."

James' attention was still away from the camp, he shrugged to show he was listening though. "Still figuring out who's going to which death trap?"

"I made the mistake in suggesting leaving just one behind to finish the Flyer," Craig said, ending with a groan. "I don't think she'll fly in time, but if we can get transporters or communications on at least..."

"Tell them if they don't figure it out who stays, we will," James said.

Craig managed a slight smirk, he looked up to the sky. "Well I thought about telling them that Voyager might drop out of the sky, on top of them, would be an incentive. Is that going too far?"

James turned his head, and looked down at him. "No," he answered simply, then smirked back.

"Good. I still think it should be one of us, I mean to decide who goes where," Craig said.

"I'd have picked Jach to stay if we left it up to me," James said, turning back to the trees.

"After he got kidnapped the last time we, or rather I left him?" Craig shook his head. "Nathan was an Engineer wasn't he?"

"On the Leda," James muttered with a shrug. "Besides we need as many fighters as we can get, and Jach isn't cut out for it."

"You used to say that about me... or somebody did," Craig pointed out.

"True, but we don't have years to wait for Jach," James said as he turned back to look down at him. "You were whinging before about needless arguments."

Craig sighed before climbing back to his feet. "I know. This is why you left it up to them. We can't ever agree on anything."

"No, I didn't feel comfortable ordering some people to go on a possibly suicidal mission," James said.

"You just didn't want Nathan to get his butt handed to him, and then get yours given to you when Jess found out," Craig smirked.

James shrugged, "that too."

"I'll tell you what. I'll give them five minutes to decide on their own. If they don't, I'll nominate Jach for repair duty," Craig said.

"I thought you didn't agree with me," James commented.

Craig raised his shoulders and hands slightly, "you sometimes can be right."

James frowned as he turned his head away again. His attention went towards some trees in the distance; their branches were swaying.

"I don't mean about Jach. Nathan can fix, and guard himself if needs be. Also Jessie won't be mad at you," Craig explained to him. He hadn't noticed that he wasn't listening to him. "You were just right weeks back, when you said I just like to disagree with you." He then noticed he was talking to himself. "Erm hello? I'm kinda admitting something, which is pretty big of me."

James looked back, "what?"

Craig groaned, then placed a hand across his face. "I was apologising for some of our arguments, kinda."

"Kinda?" James said with a raised eyebrow.

"Well I didn't say the actual word," Craig said with a shrug. The trees nearby rustled, but only James noticed. "I may have if you had been listening."

"Have you got a weapon on you?" James asked.

Craig groaned, "jeez, I'm trying to be the bigger man here..."

"Ok you're sorry, you're forgiven. Guard," James quickly said, before rushing off into the wilderness.

Craig sighed as he raised his phaser rifle to his chest. "That only lasted about five seconds."

James approached a clearing, so he slowed down to a walk. He looked around at every tree surrounding him, to see any signs of movement. In the corner of his eye a shadow darted between a distant tree, and a one nearby.

A figure walked slowly up behind him as his attention was dead ahead. As soon as his arm was grabbed, he used his other arm to elbow the person behind him. The figure ducked down to their knees, avoiding the hit entirely. Just as James quickly swung around to face his attacker, they charged forward to grab him around the waist. His eyes widened just in time to have the attacker's full strength throw them both to the ground.

He swore he heard another second person; a familiar man's laughter as his attacker jumped back onto her feet.

"Good thing you decided against flipping me over your shoulder, huh?"

James got back on to his feet almost as quick as he left them, his face still looked bewildered.

"I had an idea how to block that anyway," Jessie said with a mischievous smile on her face. "That'll teach you, that's not how you greet your wife, is it?"

James didn't say anything, his face said it all. He walked over, put his arm around her waist and kissed her. They either ignored or didn't hear the disgusted cough from nearby.

Jessie smiled once he let her go. "That's much better."

"Not for us bystanders," a familiar voice grunted in disgust. "It's a bit early to be making the next kid, isn't it?"

Jessie scowled as James turned around to face what she was looking at. Damien stood next to the tree James had saw the shadow run to earlier. He then looked back at her, "what's he doing here? What did you do to deserve that?"

"What I didn't do would be a better question," Jessie commented, shaking her head.

"Can you go back to beating him up, that was hilarious," Damien sniggered.

"I thought the laughing was annoyingly familiar," James said, turning back Damien's way. Damien shrugged, still smirking. "But really, why are you two here?"

"Aaaw, is your pride just as sore as your ass. Man, I wish I filmed it," he laughed to himself. He then got disgusted, "I could have done without the make out part though."

Jessie shook her head while James just raised his eyebrow. "You should be asking why are you three here?"

"Three?" James frowned. Damien was meanwhile shoved out the way by an arm from behind the tree. James' eyes widened when he saw the owner of the arm step into sight.

"Hey, long time no see," Kiara said with a small smile.

"Kiara? When..." James looked back at Jessie, with an uneasy look on his face. "This isn't good," he quietly said to her.

"She knows, your mum part of it at least," she whispered back. "As for the other part, didn't ask."

"Bored again," Damien yawned. "Where are the other idiots?" He was about to wander off but Kiara grabbed his arm. "You're right, you're all the same."

"Let him, but keep an eye on him. I may as well catch James up," Jessie said.

Damien scoffed, "is that the code words for make out more? Gross." Kiara pulled a face at him, she walked off towards the camp, dragging him with her.

"I'm amazed he's still alive," James commented.

Jessie sighed, "me too, though he was useful in getting here. Where do I start?"

Meanwhile Craig noticed the other pair heading towards him, but the shade obscured his sight a little. He spotted Kiara, his eyes went wider than James' did earlier, then lowered his rifle. However when he saw Damien behind her, he raised it half way up.

"What the?" was all he could muster.

"Hi Craig. Dare I ask?" Kiara said once she reached him.

"Yeah, no... I'm fine. What are you doing here?" Craig stammered.

"Finished my training," Kiara shrugged.

"And him?" Craig asked, pointing the rifle in Damien's direction.

"Saving their asses, you're welcome," Damien grumbled. "What am I reduced to?"

Craig turned half way around, "we should go back to the camp. What happened to James?"

"The witch knocked him flat, it was funny," Damien commented. He got away from Kiara, then walked passed Craig.

Craig side stepped a few times, then stopped his path with the rifle. "You mean Annika, yeah she can do that to anyone, all she needs to do is jump in front of you." Kiara laughed behind her hand, while Damien stared at him looking disgusted.

"Didn't you think the smooching grossed me out enough!" he snapped. Ignoring the rifle he headed into the camp. Craig sighed, and let him.

"Don't worry, it's not Annika," Kiara smiled.

"Yeah, I got that at smooching," Craig commented. "Nobody's that crazy."

The remaining trainees and the aliens had meanwhile surrounded Damien. Craig and Kiara spotted this, they took their time to go over.

"Identify yourself!" one of the aliens yelled, brandishing their rifle.

"Oh another one for an autograph," Damien gushed, waving his hand like he was swatting flies away. "I'm the thing darkness is afraid of, the controller of worlds, for I am..." Craig swatted him across the head with his spare hand, he cradled his head afterwards. "Ow, you fool. You ruined my speech."

"Exactly," Craig smiled.

Shar marched over to stand in front of him. "What's going on? Is Voyager in orbit, and who's the kid?"

"*The kid* can talk you know, take it easy," Craig snapped at her. Shar didn't back down, the other trainees however backed off and sat back down. "She's with us."

"I'm not, by the way," Damien smirked.

Shar stared at Kiara, "well?"

"Kiara," she answered simply. "You?"

Shar scoffed, "helpful."

Craig pulled her to one side, she snatched her arm back. "She's James' niece, have some respect."

"I don't give him any," she remarked.

Nathan overheard, so he got back up and headed over to Kiara. "Hey, I'm Nathan. Jessie's brother."

Kiara frowned, "another missing sibling? How many's that now?"

"Two, but I'm the best one," Nathan smirked. It quickly left his face, "wait speaking of, where is James?"

"Damien and Kiara aren't our only visitors," Craig replied.



Right on cue, James and Jessie returned. Nathan quickly went over to them.

"Jess, how?"

"Long story," Jessie sighed. "One I've already told."

Nathan shrugged, "shame, maybe later then."

Shar walked over to the three. "Maybe we can hear the shortened version."

"Suit yourself, but it's only going to spoil the full one," Nathan remarked. Shar cast him a dirty look, he just smiled back.

"Um ok. Kidnapped by shapeshifters, Kiara appeared, we escaped, you were the closest," Jessie explained badly. She shrugged too, "we couldn't find Voyager, so..."

Worry appeared on Craig's face. "Wait, what about the Leda?"

"We tried to contact them, but... we were too far. Like I said, here is closer," Jessie replied.

"It doesn't matter. We can't exactly help anyone anyway," Shar muttered, she walked back in the direction of the shuttle.

"Yes we can," James said. "We have more people now, and another ship in our possession." Everyone but Damien looked over at him. "In half an hour, we head for the towers."

"And save the world," Nathan grinned. Most of the group cringed at this.

Damien stared at him in disgust. "Oh god, how did this happen? I was a villain, now I'm with the cheesy heroes. Somebody kill me." Everyone then looked at him, smiling. "Ugh!"

### **Deck Thirteen:**

Kevin stood armed with a large axe in one hand, and a tricorder in the other. Directly in front of him was a blue light, almost the same size as his head. The tricorder beeped just before it flashed, then enlarged to two metres wide.

"Um, I'm assuming the shield's not working, yes?" he said, flipping the tricorder closed.

*"Standby."*

He shook his head, then quickly put the tricorder into his pocket. "Easy for you to say. The trainees will be peeing in their pants by now."

*"It might scare the demons away then. How big is it now?"*

"Let's just say if Junior keeps up this growth spurt, we won't have a ship to put a shield in," Kevin answered. He backed off a metre, then stood ready for whatever was going to come out of it.

The rift flashed briefly a few times, so Kevin backed off again just in time. He didn't get far as he backed into, or rather through a forcefield. "Huh? I have to say, I'm a little disappointed."

### **The Bridge:**

Tom shook his head, "don't be. Stay there until something comes out, we won't know until then."

B'Elanna smiled, "forcefield online around the bridge." She looked towards the Ready Room, "just don't go in there, hmm Tom."

Tom looked back, "Engineering next? Or should we put our trainees on Three and Nine safety first?"

"If this works the way I predicted, it shouldn't matter. Once all of them are putting out the same amount of energy, the fields will go up instantly, as soon as they're all clear anyway," B'Elanna replied.

"It's still all down to our Slayers and wanna-not-be's," Tom commented.

### **Engineering:**

The doors opened, Ylara rushed in holding sharp weapons in both hands.

"Like I knew where Engineering was," she muttered. Then she noticed the same two metre wide portal Kevin had saw on Thirteen. It sat halfway between her and the warp core. She tapped her commbadge quickly, "Bridge?"

*"There's still not enough power, standby."*

"If I understand correctly, that could be a problem," Ylara said as she closed in on the rift. "This one is close to your engine. If it expands another five, six metres... we're dead."

*"You're telling us now? We could have..."*

*"Tom... we would have had demons crawling on the Bridge if we did Engineering first. Don't worry, it should be enough before then. Just make sure no demons get too far from the portal. If they do, we'll have to activate the field anyway, whatever gets caught in it with you..."*

"Yes, I know," Ylara butted in. "They won't get past me."

### **The planet:**

The group were now cramped inside the back room of the Delta Flyer. Whilst everyone were discussing the situation, Jach and Nathan were working on a station at the side.

"Sounds like fun," Jessie commented.

"Yeah, it would be if those two could get the transporters working," Craig sighed. He looked back at them. "Otherwise we're vent crawling again."

Damien smiled deviously, everyone in the group groaned in response. "Perhaps I should ditch you losers and look up their Slayer making techniques. It would be glorious."

James raised an eyebrow, "I don't think that would work on rabbits." Jessie elbowed him and gave him a dirty look. "Ok, are you going to stop beating me up sometime today?"

"Don't give him any ideas," she hissed in response.

Damien meanwhile was staring into the ceiling, his eyes were glazed over. "Rabbits! Of course. Super strong rabbits. My army would be feared across the galaxy."

"How would these super strong rabbits fight? They have no thumbs and I doubt they know how to kick and punch," Nathan sniggered while reaching for a tool.

"You underestimate them, that would be your only mistake," Damien sneered.

Jessie shuddered violently, "anyway!"

"Sorry," James whispered to her. "I thought it would be better than super strong Justin Timberlake or Riker clones."

"Hmph yeah, it's ok. We're even for the tackle earlier," Jessie whispered back.

"As if!" Damien scoffed.

"Yes anyway... we should divide into teams. As someone suggested before, we'll each have two teams per tower," Craig said.

Nathan smiled proudly, "my idea."

Damien rolled his eyes, "I remember saying that you wouldn't be able to destroy those big towers with one bomb, imbecile."

"Yet I remember saying first that we should have a fail safe, just in case a team in a tower is delayed or stopped," Nathan smugly said.

"Which brings me back to the one bomb part. Maybe you should have three teams, I'll lead one," Damien said. Everyone stared blankly at him, even the aliens who didn't know him.

"Wasting time again," James said. Craig nodded, he was going to say the same thing.

"You're damn right for once," Damien groaned. "As soon as we transport in, they'll detect us. It's a shame. You goodie two shoes aren't as sneaky as I am."

"Can we throw him in one of those vents and leave him?" Craig asked.

"What do you suggest then?" James dared to ask.

Damien smiled, "it would be best if I did it, instead of wasting my time explaining it. It would go way over your head."

"Really? So it's got nothing to do with matching the transporter energy frequency to one of the towers', so they think it's one of their own," James muttered.

Damien looked behind him, then he looked back. "Like I'd use a infantile move like that. Just let me sort the transporters, you'll be amazed." He headed over to join Jach and

Nathan, much to their obvious delight. Nathan immediately leapt to his feet, leaving poor Jach underneath the console.

"In that case, I'll give the communications another tweak," he said.

"That I'm an expert in too," Damien boasted.

"You're an expert in talking, shocker," Shar commented.

Nathan coughed into his hand, "hypocrite."

"Transporters are still top priority," Craig said.

Jach moaned, but it sounded muffled to everyone. James shook his head. "Maybe the *genius* should take the communications."

"That's probably the worst idea since going one on eight with badass aliens," Nathan commented. His eyes widened when he realised what he said.

Jessie's meanwhile narrowed, "eight?"

"Yeah Craig!" Nathan pretended to scold in Craig's direction. He rushed over to rejoin Jach. "Hey, take a break. My turn," he stuttered while he nudged Jach's leg.

"All right," Jach complained as he shuffled out.

James couldn't stop smirking, obviously he was trying not to laugh. "We couldn't stop him."

"Uh huh," Jessie didn't believe a word. "I'm impressed that Craig managed to survive against eight super strong enhanced aliens."

Nathan meanwhile had taken Jach's place, he stared at him with a bemused look on his face.

Damien snorted with laughter before going towards a different console. "Wow Slayer boy is so whipped, he's even got the brother in law too."

Jessie half rolled her eyes. "It's not the eight aliens I'm annoyed about. It's the involving my brother in a lie about the four aliens."

James looked Nathan's way, who was now humming in an innocent way. "Anyway, has everyone picked their teams yet?" Most of the group nodded, Nathan continued to hum.

"I had a phaser rifle, I could have. It's not that funny," Craig muttered to himself. He noticed everyone looking at him, "yeah yeah, I'm teamed."

"The transporters should be fixed, we just need to route more power to it," Jach said.

Damien tried to work one console when it suddenly went off. Jach pulled a nervous face.

"Yeah, we agreed on doing that after I warned him."

Nathan pulled his head out briefly, "but you did."

Jach cleared his throat nervously. "Once we transport the teams in, we'll restore power back to communications."

"We'll? I'm not missing this," Nathan smiled. Jessie smiled back at him, not in a nice way. His eyes widened and he returned to the safety of the console. "Jeez, I tried to stop him."

"Just remember, we can't beam you straight into the target areas. There's nothing near them to mask the transporter signature," Jach said.

Kiara sighed, "yup, this will be fun."

"Wait, wait. Jach's bodyguard this time will be Damien?" Craig stuttered. "Nothing is worse than this plan."

James walked over to Jach, who didn't seem particularly happy with what Craig had said. He handed the young trainee a phaser. "If he tries anything, it's on kill." Jach's eyes widened just as he caught sight of Damien in the corner of his eye, smiling deviously.

"Um, just wondering. What if we can't reach Voyager because they're, you know, too busy?" Kiara questioned.

"Or dead," Damien gleefully added on. Everyone stared at him instead. "God you people have no sense of humour."

### **Meanwhile on Voyager:**

The Thirteen rift fluctuated, it now looked half the size it was before. Two fierce looking figures ran out of it. A third one tried to follow them, but seemed to get trapped within it.

Kevin swung his axe around him, slicing at the demons throwing themselves at him. The newer two lunged forward to grab him from behind. Kevin swung around to punch one of them back, the other got a hit in. He quickly grabbed its arm, then pushed it hard into the nearby wall, but not hard enough to damage the wall.

The first to attack swung some deadly looking claws at his chest, but Kevin only saw this at the corner of his eye. He decided to duck, and it slashed him across the face instead. He responded by kicking the demon in its side, as hard as he could. The force threw it across into the forcefield. It screeched as the field burned him, seconds later he disintegrated.

Meanwhile the third one also screamed as the rift fluctuated again. He disappeared as well.

The last remaining demon stared towards the forcefield, then at Kevin. Instead of going to Kevin, it decided to go back to the portal.

"Oh no you don't," Kevin muttered. He grabbed a hold of it by the neck. "We've gone to a lot of trouble to welcome you guys, the least you can do is..." It elbowed him in the ribs, but he kept a tight hold of him. Annoyed that he had interrupted him, Kevin threw him to the side and into the forcefield. "Welcome to Voyager." He tapped his commbadge, "Bridge, Thirteen's clear."

*"Good job, join the trainees, they'll need a hand."*

"Check," Kevin said. He made his way towards the forcefield. Unlike the demons he went through it unharmed, and headed for the turbolift.

### **Engineering:**

The rift was dangerously close to the warp core, but it wasn't the only one. One demon held Ylara against the console around it. As it did, three more of them appeared through the rift. One of them went for her, while the other two looked towards the door.

"I'm getting real sick of..." she grunted. Her hand grabbed a hold of the railing so tightly, it cracked. The demon was too busy trying to hold her down to notice this. Quick as a flash, she pulled away a metre of the metal railing, and swiped it across the head of the demon. It stumbled back into the others, knocking two of them back into the rift. The remaining two looked a bit worried at her, she meanwhile knelt down to pick up one of her dropped swords.

### **Bridge:**

*"Bridge, I'd put that shield between the portal and engine now, if I were you. More will come soon."*

"You heard her," Tom sighed.

"I'll have to use the energy from the other rifts to get Engineering's up first," B'Elanna said.

"I hope everyone else are fine then," Tom thought outloud.

B'Elanna looked back towards the Ready Room, "Deck One's portal has been completely drained, it's gone."

"Thirteen's?" Tom questioned.

B'Elanna shook her head, "it's tiny. The forcefield got enough power from it to protect Thirteen and some of Twelve."

"If we can get that one closed, the others should go too," Tom reminded himself.

B'Elanna smiled to herself, "forcefield established on Deck Eleven. Ylara's going to have to stay there, but the portal shouldn't grow further to hurt the core."

"You hear that? Make sure nothing leaves Engineering until the portal closes," Tom ordered.

*"Yes, I heard you."* The comm beeped to show she'd tapped her commbadge again.

"I'll work on Nine and Three now," B'Elanna said.

### **Engineering:**

"This is actually very clever, for you guys. It does seem more like the rabbit nut's work though."

Ylara lay face down on the ground, blood pooling from her newly broken nose. A lone figure paced behind her, keeping a close eye on the forcefield blocking the rift's path.

"It's not going to help you." He turned around to stare down at her. "It doesn't matter how strong you, or the other two are... there are still only three of you." The figure knelt down next to her, then leaned in close to her head. "And one of me," he whispered.

Four figures rematerialised in a dark, lengthy corridor. Each one of them armed with at least one weapon, and a tricorder. After a brief glance at their surroundings, three of them headed down one way, while the fourth walked off in the other alone.

Meanwhile in a similar corridor, four more figures appeared.

"Are you sure about this, that alien still isn't named and you're a minor guest star," Jessie quietly asked.

Shar nodded while the alien looked on with his eyes wide. "It's fine, it's payback time for what these creeps have done to the others."

"It's payback no matter what team you're in, but all right," Craig commented.

Shar shrugged, "besides, my chances are better than the character whose running gag involves dying a lot."

Jessie hid her clenching fist, but obviously not her narrowing eyes. "What are we waiting for?" She headed off down the corridor, Craig also shrugged before joining her.

The alien looked worried as Shar headed off in the other direction, he followed her. "My name is Foddra."

"What?" Shar muttered.

"I'm named now, my chances have gone up," the alien said.

"Yes I'm sure, Fodder," Shar commented as she turned the corner.

"No, Foddra," Foddra corrected her. She shook her head.

### **Voyager:**

Things were a lot more hectic on Deck Three. The portal had taken up the entire corridor, the walls were charring from its edges and a computer panel was sparking out of control. There were five visitors against Daniel and two injured trainees; it wasn't going well.

Daniel stabbed one of his attackers in the gut, quickly ducking the second one's hit. It shoved him hard onto the ground. Without any effort from it, Daniel could only struggle as it savagely beat at him.

One demon had chosen Onlan to attack, he was pinned to the wall and was receiving similar treatment as Daniel.

The fifth demon had only just emerged from the portal, whilst the fourth was claw versus sword fighting with Leesa. The fifth took advantage of the clear path ahead of him, and ran down the corridor.

"No!" Daniel grunted as he blocked one hit.

Leesa blocked another claw attack. With her other hand she pointed a small phaser towards the wall. It fired, destroying the wall panel. The blast smashed the demon in the face, knocking him clean backwards.

"Leesa!" Onlan yelled, he tried to push his attacker from him.

The other demon was quicker, it swung its not blocked claw into her chest. Before she dropped, Leesa made one last attempt to swipe at him back. It only knocked him back. It turned its attention to Onlan.

"Son of a..." Daniel grumbled. Whilst the demon continued to use him as a punch bag, he tried to reach the phaser Leesa had dropped.

Onlan meanwhile made one last attempt to push his attacker from him, but then he saw Leesa's opponent coming for him too, brandishing its bloody claw. It got ready to swing, but it stopped to screech horribly. It looked down to see a burning hole in its stomach. Onlan's eyes widened as the hole was so deep, he could see right through it. The other demon looked back as well, so he quickly elbowed it, then swung a long dagger at its throat.

The last demon by now had Daniel up into the air, using only one hand. Its other hand grabbed the phaser in his hand, but Daniel wasn't letting go of it anytime soon.

Onlan quickly got away from his attacker as it reacted to its new wound. It growled before charging straight for him. He had no choice but to leap out of its way. Lucky for him its charging path lead him straight into a forcefield. It screamed horribly as it burned him out of existence.

"Phew, about time," Onlan sighed. He quickly checked to see if there were any signs of life in Leesa. Clenching his teeth, he made a growl of his own when he could find none. His attention then went to Daniel.

He had meanwhile kicked the attacker in the jaw, it was enough to get it to loosen its grip on him. He tumbled to the ground. Onlan grabbed a weapon that had been dropped on the floor, he threw the sword as hard as he could towards the demon's neck. He was disappointed when only the handle bumped into the back of its head, and dropped on the floor.

"It's not as easy as it looks," Daniel coughed through his sore throat. "Old fashioned works ok, got it?"

Onlan nodded, "sure."

The demon looked back at him, obviously not happy about the bump on the head. Daniel then aimed his sword and charged forward. It heard this, quickly turning to block. Onlan then picked up the sword he threw to do the same. It smacked Daniel across the face, knocking him flying back into the wall. It did not have time to evade Onlan's attack.

"We should get to the other side," Onlan said, gesturing to the shield. He then went over to help Daniel back to his feet, then dragged him to the forcefield. Daniel struggled then, forcing Onlan to let go. Daniel still had to hold the wall for support.



"No, we still have to defeat any demons that come through until they can't anymore. They may return to tell others about the shield," Daniel said.

Onlan frowned angrily in Leesa's direction, then at him. "In case you haven't noticed, we're not in any state to defend anything now. We're going."

**The planet:**

Craig looked over as much as he could despite his current predicament. "I did warn you," he croaked.

Only a few metres away Jessie lay flat on her back, breathing heavily. Her face cringed as she pulled herself up into a sitting, then kneeling position. "Well it worked on James, didn't it?"

The arm holding Craig in the tight headlock tightened a little, he tried to push his body weight towards the wall but his attacker was not budging. "I have one thing to say to that."

Jessie rubbed her back as she stood back up. "What?"

"Gross," Craig grunted.

Jessie pulled a disgusted face. "Ugh, that's not my fault you went there!" Craig's face went a little red as the alien's grip tightened. Jessie sighed, she quickly picked up her rifle to aim it towards the pair. Craig's eyes widened as she did.

"Um, that's on a very high stun," he stammered. It was too late to object though as she fired. Both the alien and Craig fell backwards to the floor. Despite being unconscious, the alien still had a firm hold on him.

Jessie shrugged as she walked over to them. "You're welcome."

"Uh huh. Maybe if you hadn't have tackled the alien, I may not have..."

"Do I have to say it again?" Jessie said with a smile. She knelt down to try to pull the alien's arms away from Craig, he tried to do the same. "Nobody said these super aliens were stronger than..."

"They're not. He still took out eight or maybe more of them," Craig groaned once he was free. With a grunt he climbed to his feet. "Wait, you didn't? Never tell me."

"It wasn't rude, ok. I think he thought I was some alien about to attack him. Now can we go?" Jessie grumbled. She continued down the corridor, Craig waited a bit before he followed her.

"So you decided to attack him anyway. Glad I don't have a wife," Craig commented. Jessie threw a glare back at him. Luckily for him his tricorder beeped a few times. "The next room."

"Saved by the beep," Jessie shook her head. Her hand went inside her pocket, she brought out a small device from it. Craig stood next to the door to open it, pointing the phaser he held inside. He nodded his head. Quickly she caught up to him and went inside the small storage room. After a brief scan around she decided to stick the device on the back wall.

"Ok, two down, eight more to go."

### **Deck Eleven:**

Everything seemed peaceful outside of Engineering, the only action was the red light flashing on the wall panels.

The wall next to the door and the one parallel to it exploded, shooting smoke everywhere down the corridors.

Once the smoke started to clear, a male figure stepped out of Engineering like nothing happened. He raised his arms into the air, stretching them.

"That's better. It was getting a little cramped in there."

He looked backwards at the forcefield, which was a metre away from where he stood. The rift now was half the size it was earlier.

"Never mind. Another one should be making its way to Deck Ten. If I understand it correctly, if I'm within the area when the forcefield shoots up, I'm immune to it. Unless somehow, someone is there to keep me out of its way. Hmm."

The smoke cleared further, he could see straight ahead of him, through the new holes of the walls. His face frowned, he took a few steps forward.

What he didn't realise was a bruised and bloody Ylara stood out of his sight, behind a part of the wall that was still intact. She raised a large broken piece of metal as he approached her.

"If you're not available, who is the next closest?" the man said. "I wonder if there are any of your trainees still around to be snapped in half." He made another few steps forward.

Ylara swung herself around the corner, immediately swiping the piece of metal in his face. He grabbed it at the last second, sneering at her. She attempted to pull it back, but he kept a firm grip on it. So firm the metal broke in half.

She quickly threw a fist into his ribs, which didn't faze him at all, then aimed a quick kick to his head. Like before he blocked the attack by grabbing her. "Now Lena, you should know better than that." Her eyes widened in shock, but it was all she had time to do. With barely any effort he pushed her leg, sending her flying back. With a crash she fell through another wall, bringing it to pieces as she did.

### **Bridge:**

"Deck Eleven's field has spread to Twelve, it's joined with Thirteen's," B'Elanna reported with a smile. The ship shook lightly.

Jodie shook her head, "another ship's trying to lock on."

Everyone felt the ship roll to the side. "Not a problem," Tom grinned.

"I really need to check the inertial dampers," B'Elanna commented as she clutched her station.

Tom shook his head, "it's much more fun this way. How's the other shields doing?"

"Overall, I believe 47% of the ship's protected. Deck One's portal's been drained, the forcefield is guarding all of One and Two. Three's is growing into Four, merging with Five," B'Elanna read out. "Nine is blocked, but another opened nearby."

"More power for it," Tom commented.

"Yes, but only the trainees would have been there. I informed Kevin, but he said he spotted something *odd* on Ten," B'Elanna said.

Tom frowned, "odd, like a portal?"

"No, it's clear," B'Elanna replied. "Also..."

Tom winced, "also's not good."

"Ylara's still on Deck Eleven. I just checked, and she hasn't moved far since we chatted to her," B'Elanna said.

The colour in Tom's face completely drained. "Does that mean?"

"The only way to know is if we heard from her, or not," B'Elanna said. "And..."

"Oooh, you've got to stop with these also's, but's and... er and's," Tom complained.

"As you wish *Captain*," B'Elanna smirked. "I can inform Zare, the other trainee team are out. I'd expand on that, but I'm not allowed to."

Tom sighed, "one more but or even a however, would be ok."

"Daniel's team is more or less down to one," B'Elanna replied quietly. "Daniel's injured, and another is dead."

"Damn," Tom groaned. He looked backwards at Annika. "You're an ex Borg, go to Deck Nine and help the trainees."

"But, my catsuit..." Annika stuttered.

"Is bloody awful, but what's that got to do with anything?" Jodie butted in.

Annika pouted, "it's flattering." Everyone shook their heads. "Fine, if I die, I'm haunting you!" She stormed off into the turbolift.

"If she dies permanently, I'll throw a parade," Tom commented. "I am concerned about Ylara though. How can trainees survive and she can't? Also..." He shuddered at his next thought. "I don't want to be around when Craig or Chakotay finds out."

"Why, they hate her?" Jodie commented.

"They like her body though," Tom replied. B'Elanna and Jodie both looked grossed out. "Ok, maybe just Craig does," Tom corrected himself, blushing madly. "Shut up and pilot, me."

**The planet:**

Another small device stuck to a light fixture on the wall, while Nathan and one of the aliens stood guard at a doorway.

"I mean I get it, I have the fighting skills of Tom but I'm still better than Craig," Kiara was in the middle of ranting.

The alien frowned in confusion while Nathan just smirked to himself. "Tom?" she questioned.

"Surely he needs more bodyguards than I do," Kiara continued with a frown. She turned around to face them. "Ok, that's the fourth one. Where next?"

Nathan glanced at his tricorder. "Just three doors down, but we should..." He stepped into the room, the alien followed him. With that the door closed behind them. "Wait until our company walks passed."

"I'd say Craig was more in league with Harry, but that's a bit mean," Kiara whispered to herself.

"Really? He must have beefed up a tad since you knew him, but that's understandable," Nathan said.

"It is?" Kiara seemed confused.

The colour in Nathan's face drained. He quickly turned away to hide his widening eyes. "Well you know, he's a Security guy right, on Voyager. He had to become the grouchy pants he is now to toughen up, I assume. Shutting up."

Kiara looked on, suspicious. "Sure."

They stayed quiet for a while as they heard footsteps go by behind the door.

Once it was clear, Kiara sighed. "It's a shame. That's what I liked about him, Lena did too but she'd never admit it. He never really tried to be somebody he's not. I hope he isn't doing it to impress girls, cos it'll not work."

"I hear ya," Nathan agreed. "We should be in the clear." He rushed out of the room quickly, leaving the alien looking a bit flummoxed. She waited for Kiara to go out first.

"That was odd."

Kiara nodded as she moved for the door. "Yeah, like everything else."

**Meanwhile:**

Amongst the piles of rubble outside Engineering, sat a cracked commbadge covered in black dust.

*"Ylara, can you hear me? We've just detected a portal opening on Deck Ten. Kevin may be there, but you're definitely the closest. Respond! Ylara?"*

A large piece of metal fell from the ceiling, landing on top of the commbadge. Directly above it, there was a new hole.

**Deck Ten:**

Another blue orb stood in the middle of a corridor, fortunately it was still only a centimetre wide.

Just around the corner a door opened. Ylara crawled out, then used the door frame to pull herself to her feet. Her face and arms were badly bruised and cut, her clothing torn and bloody. She looked behind her before making a run for it, away from the portal.

Moments later the man who attacked her stepped out of the same door. The only visible injury he had was a deep gouge down the side of his face, starting from his eyebrow down through his eye, to his jaw. This didn't seem to bother him though, as his blood shot eye was still as wide open as his good one.

His nose raised as he sniffed the air, without hesitation he followed her.

Ylara ran up to a door. When it opened, she looked inside but decided to keep going down the corridor.

Seconds later the man reached the same door. He looked down, noticing the trail of blood leading him down the corridor. With a cold smile he followed.

Further down the corridor, another door opened. This time Ylara ran inside.

Still following the blood trail, the man reached the same door as her. It didn't open for him like it did for her.

On the other side Ylara stood looking helplessly around at the two shuttles sitting there. She eventually noticed a computer station. Before she got a chance to move the huge doors blasted inward, sending large pieces of metal flying across the shuttle bay.

Ylara ducked down to avoid getting hit by one of the bigger pieces, then ran for the station. The man saw this, he ran for it too.

Every single panel blinked in a foreign language to her. Frustrated, she went to press any button at random. The man reached her way too quickly, he grabbed her wrist to stop her.

"Oh I see, clever girl. Can't beat me, so lure me to eternal oblivion by opening the bay doors," he sneered. Ylara tried again to hit him, but he blocked her like she was nothing. "That would kill you too, such a martyr."

"It's better than listening to you," she grumbled.

"Noble or just suicidal?" the man said. "Both excellent traits for a Chosen."

"Oh... my god..." Ylara groaned. She kicked him as hard as she could, it was enough to unblock her previous attack. This time she got a punch in. "Don't you ever shut up!" she screamed at him.

The man laughed as he still had a hold of her arm. He followed this up with a punch of his own. This sent her flying backwards onto the ground.

"Is that all you're concerned about?" The man walked across to stand over her. "You're right though. Talking is wasting some of my energy, should I go all out?"

Ylara scrambled backwards, rolled herself over to climb back onto her feet. He just watched her do this, sneering at her all the way. Once she was up, he lunged forward to throw another punch. Luckily she ducked this one by leaping back onto the floor, and rolling away. His fist flew into the nearby shuttle while she ran back for the console.

"Ooops, I doubt this one's space worthy."

He smiled as she struggled to figure out the station. While watching her, he knelt down to pick up a large, sharp piece of door debris. Slowly, he made his way over to her.

"Come on, one of these must open the doors," Ylara stuttered as she pressed every single button. Eventually she got what she wanted, the doors opened. The forcefield however was still on. "Why isn't it working?"

For once the man remained silent as he went to stand behind her. Ylara swung around just in time for him to swing the piece of metal across her chest. Her eyes closed, expecting the worst, but she didn't feel anything.

"Huh, who the..." she heard the man stutter.

Ylara opened her eyes to see the back of another man directly in front of her. He collapsed to the floor a second later, blood pooling around his body.

"Hell was..." the man continued. His nose once again sniffed the air as he looked down at his victim. With a dark smile he looked back up at Ylara. "Another Chosen Slayer in my tally, hmm? One more?"

"No..." Ylara stuttered, her eyes wide in panic. With as much strength as she could muster, she pulled at the station she had worked on, ripping the huge panel off. Ignoring the sparks coming from it, she swung it as quickly as she could at the man's head. It was enough to knock him back a few metres, and through the wall.

"Ylara," a familiar voice spluttered.

Closing her eyes tightly, she knelt down next to the body. When she opened her eyes, she could barely look him in the face, all she could see was the huge gash through his torso.

"Don't fight him, run. Portal..." He coughed, then covered his mouth to stop the blood from hitting her. "Nearby... shield, will be up soon."

"Why did you do that!? You shouldn't have... why? I was supposed to be dead centuries ago!" Ylara angrily stuttered.

"So was I," Kevin managed to smile through the pain. "Go!"

Ylara looked back, she then saw the man climbing through the new hole in the wall. Ignoring the huge lump in her throat, she ran as fast as she could towards the doors.

The man looked back at Kevin as he closed his eyes, then followed Ylara's path with his own eyes. He then walked after her, his eyes filled with anger.

### **Meanwhile:**

Shar took cover around the corner, just avoiding a phaser strike. On the opposite corner

wall, Foddra aimed his own rifle at the shooter. One shot was all it took to get him down to the ground.

"Good shot," Shar admitted begrudgingly. "We'd better hurry."

"It really pains you to be nice to anyone, doesn't it?" Foddra dared to mention.

All he got for a response was a scoff. Shar then headed down the corridor.

"How long have we got?" he asked.

Shar quickly checked the tricorder in her hand without breaking her stride. "Thirty two minutes. That's more than enough time. In here." She gestured at a nearby door.

"We have a saying here. Never insult a bad event by speaking its name or by doubting it, else you can tempt its wrath," Foddra said. The door opened and he went inside.

"Is that just another way of saying; don't jinx it?" Shar asked. She shook her head, "you and Humans are too alike."

"Our version sounds better," Foddra commented once she joined him in the room.

Jessie placed one of the devices onto the wall. She got up from her knees, then moved a couple of boxes in front of it to block the view of it. Behind her Craig stood with a disappointed look on his face.

"What? I let you do the last one," she said once she saw his face.

"It's not that. This just seems almost too easy," he said.

Jessie winced a little. "I thought by now you'd know better than that."

"No offense, but the last time was only bad cos we had to climb through miles of vents, only to be caught cos we had James with us. This time, no problem," Craig said.

"What about the one that attacked you like a school bully. I thought you knew how to fight now," Jessie smirked.

Craig stared blankly in her direction for a few seconds, then he lost his temper. "I didn't rush tackle the guy only to be thrown on the floor."

Jessie tried to shush him. "Keep your knickers on will you! Are you trying to get us heard?"

"I didn't start it," Craig whispered. He turned to walk out of the room.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. In the corner of his right eye he could just see a humanoid shaped shadow staring right at him. Clutching the phaser rifle like a security blanket, he slowly turned on his heel in that direction. His eyes widened in terror as he discovered it wasn't his imagination playing tricks on him.

As if she was a part of the darkness itself, the lone figure stood at the bottom of the corridor. A lone pair of eyes stared into his soul. At least that was how it felt like to him. He didn't understand how that was the only detail he could make out when they were her darkest feature.

If that wasn't bad enough, an inhumane shriek flew from her lips. She ran right at him at a speed he'd never seen anyone run in before. He didn't have time to evade. Pain shot through his back as his body hit the ground. For only a second he was relieved to see only the ceiling straight ahead of him. Soon all he could see was her face, blocking that view. His eyes managed to get wider as the face was more terrifying than her eyes.

Jessie ran through the doors armed with both a rifle and sword, but neither helped her prepare for what she almost ran into.

The woman's head turned to stare straight at her in an almost robotic way.

"Oh my god, Jan..." Jessie stuttered, not believing what she was seeing. Before she could even raise her rifle, a hand grabbed a hold of it, snapping it in half.

Craig tried to pull himself backwards, ignoring the sharp pains nagging at him to stop. The woman raised her foot over his chest. Panicked, he threw his hands up to defend himself.

Jessie looked down at her broken rifle, then decided to swipe it at her head. It was only enough to daze the woman for a second. She swung her arm without even looking. Jessie fell backwards on to the ground, dropping what was left of the rifle and her sword.

The woman pushed her foot down. Craig's screams sent a chill down Jessie's spine. Clenching her left fist, she reached for the sword with her right.

Craig's screaming was interrupted as his attacker covered his mouth and nose with her hand. He struggled but it was no use.

She screeched instead as the blade went through her back. Jessie pulled it back out, then kicked her to the side, away from Craig.

He tried to use his hand to pull himself back up, the pain was too much and he fell back down. Jessie quickly knelt down next to him, "let me see."

Craig shook his head. "There's only one more, you should go. I'll wait here."

Jessie also shook her head, a lot more determinedly. She gently took a hold of both of his arms, "come on, get up."

"No, my hands... they're broken, I can't help," Craig said in a sorry for himself voice.

Jessie clenched her jaw as she climbed to her feet, she kept a hold of him while doing so. "I don't care, I can't carry you out, and this place will blow in twenty odd minutes. Get up!"

Craig closed his eyes in a grimace. He shook his head again. Jessie puffed her cheeks, she crouched down to move one of her hands to his shoulder. She tried to pull him up that way, but it was no use, as he wasn't trying she was pulling dead weight. She let go of his arm and shoulder to kneel next to him again. He didn't expect it but she still slapped him across the face.



"What the... aren't I injured enough?"

"Do you really want to lie there and give up? What will Lena say when you do get to where she is, huh?" she snapped.

Craig looked away from her, cringing slightly. "She'd probably kick my ass back down here." Jessie smiled, nodding slowly. With a huge sigh, he tried to sit up. She helped him by clutching his arm.

Once he was on his feet, she knelt down to pick up the rifle he dropped.

Another door opened, this time a lone figure stepped out of it. He looked to the right, then the left. His gaze lingered on the left for a while. He turned to look back to the right, the man headed in that direction, walking very quickly.

Once he was around the corner and out of sight, a second figure entered the corridor from the right corner.

The next corridor was barely visible as the only light source was a broken, flickering light right at the end. James slowed down for a moment while he switched the torch on his rifle on. His attention rushed to behind him, but even with the torch he could see nothing.

He hurried down to a T junction. As soon as he hit it, he turned left and pressed one of the small devices into the wall without stopping. Turning on his heel, he hurried down the right path instead.

*"Andrews to Stuart. We've got one more to do. I just thought we should pick our rendezv..."*

*"Shh, he may be fighting something. We don't want them hearing this," Kiara's voice butted in.*

*"Oooh, right. Good point."*

James grimaced as Nathan's voice and even Kiara's quiet one echoed down the corridor. "She's right, now's not the best time."

*"Check. If you need any help..."*

"No," James quickly replied before tapping the commbadge in his pocket.

He carried on down the corridor, the sense of somebody following him drained away the further he went. At the end of the corridor stood a huge metal door. To the right of it a small vent near the floor. He knelt down to open it, then crawl inside. Quickly he put the grate back in its place before going down it. The ventway itself only lasted a few metres. Pushing away the grate on the other side, he emerged in a grubby looking office.

With a nervous sigh James walked over to the parallel wall. Using his right hand, he reached for the commbadge in his pocket. A figure casually walked up behind him.

"You know, I'm surprised they've let you get this far."

James' eyes went wide, he tried to look over his shoulder without moving his head too much. His left hand quickly reached for the blade at his side, he swung his whole body around quickly, raising the blade too. All he managed to see though was a fist flying straight for his face.

The strength of it sent him backwards, straight through the wall behind him. The figure stepped over the remains of the wall to join him again.

James started to push himself back up with his hands. His attacker grabbed a hold of his arm, then his neck, using that arm he lifted him up so he was eye level.

"It's been a while, James," he sneered.

"How?" James said so quietly it was like he only mimed it. The man's face smiled darkly. He threw his right arm up and let go. His eyes danced with mischief as his victim flew through the ceiling, out of sight. It didn't even bother him when dust and debris fell over him as a result. With a smirk he decided to wipe dust from his sleeve.

James crashed right into another ceiling, this time only cracking it heavily. He dropped back down, just missing the hole he came through by a few inches. He moved his head to the side to look down. His face grimaced as he counted four holes, and it was so dark he couldn't even see if there were anymore than that. Despite all the complaints his body gave him, he climbed back onto his feet.

With the door only a few metres away, he rushed for it. He missed a pair of hands grab the edge of the hole, but he didn't miss the man push himself up to join him. He turned around, twirling something in his hand.

"Andrews is it? Well, he did tell you he was busy. It's rude not to get the hint," he said into it.

James looked over his shoulder. His hand went straight for the door handle. The man rushed over, grabbing his hand at the last second.

*"I don't think I want to ask but, who is this? So far, the enhanced aliens don't talk."*

"Close, but no Slayer living. Bye," the man teased, his fingers crushed the commbadge lying in his palm. James pushed him back with his other arm, then opened the door. The man kept a tight grip on him though, he violently pulled him backwards, throwing him on to the floor like a rag doll. "Why are you trying to run away? What happened to the James I met the last time? I hope you're not in a rush, as we really do need to catch up."

James dragged himself back up. "You're dead."

"Yeah, for many, many years now," the man smirked.

"You know what I mean," James said.

The man's smirk got even more obnoxious. "I'm afraid I don't. I was even dead when you were lying in your own filth while mummy dearest, rest in peace, drank her body weight in coffee."

This made James' skin crawl, he clenched his fists and his face tightened.

"Ooh, still a touchy subject?" the man sneered at him.

"I saw you turn to dust, good thing I really want to see that again," James grumbled.

The man laughed briefly, his face immediately turned serious. "I can't believe you fell for that. Did you really think you could kill me that easily, even when you're your evil self. Trust me, your Evil persona is just a bigger whiner with black or red eyes. It makes no difference."

James frowned, the grip on the sword handle grew a little tighter. "He certainly acted like you. Talked too much, cheesy..."

"Died by your hand, oh wait, that couldn't have been me. I'm not that weak," the man taunted him.

"Fine," James rolled his eyes. "Who or what did I kill then? Your twin?"

"I'm surprised you didn't find that out while you were snooping in the last towers. All I'll tell you is the turned to dust part was a surprise to them as well," the man responded, shrugging his shoulders. "They did a great job with him, I'll give them that."

"A shapeshifter?" James stuttered. The man smiled as if in acknowledgment. "That's..."

"Ridiculous, impossible?" the man said.

"Pointless," James answered. The man frowned slightly. "If I'm so weak, why didn't you take me on yourself? Why the ruse? Was it the copy or was it you that gave the order to attack my mother?"

The man's smirk came back. "Are we still on about that? I knew I shouldn't have brought her up. Wah, wah... you didn't even like her anyway."

"God, enough! Why do you always have to talk so much?" James complained.

"Because if I don't, Slayers die too soon, and that's a bit boring if I'm honest," the man replied. "Though, I did kill that last one a bit fast. What a pathetic loser he was."

James' eyes widened again, "what?"

"Oh, I assumed you didn't want to chat anymore," the man laughed. He then sighed, faking sadness. "They don't make them like they used to." He then lunged forward, James dodged him at the last second by dropping back through the hole. "Wrong way," he sang to himself before jumping down as well.

### **Voyager's Deck Nine:**

The second blue portal flickered, shrinking to half of its previous size.

The last demon was pushed into the wall, two different swords impaling it at once. It dropped to the ground as Stewart and Sonla backed away.

L'Era tapped her commbadge, while nursing a cut on her chest with her other hand. "Bridge, Nine is as clear as it's going to get." She stepped over another dead demon to reach the other two near the portal.

"Phew, no more portals. There's no more room," Stewart sighed. Sonla nodded in agreement.

"We'll stand guard until it's up, but not that close," L'Era told them. She gestured them to swap places with her. Her eyes went to a nasty stomach wound on Stewart, "maybe you should go behind the other shield."

"No way, it's..." Stewart's eyes widened. L'Era swung around just in time to see one more demon step out of the portal. She quickly pushed him back, he stumbled backwards into the nearby forcefield. "Hey!"

"He can still get out," Sonla warned, gesturing her head to Stewart.

L'Era looked down the clear corridor nearby, "this one can too, let's hurry." The two girls raised their weapons to attack. The rather large demon swung its arm, knocking Sonla back into the wall. L'Era crossed claws and sword with it, trying to force it back into the portal.

Just then they all heard the sound of the other forcefield switching on. Everyone looked towards that clear corridor, which was now blocked by the new shield. The demon growled at the girl.

"Get out of there!" another voice yelled.

Sonla and Stewart looked behind them, they saw Zare rushing towards them.

The demon almost hissed at the sight of her. Without any resistance it swiped the sword out of L'Era's hands, and grabbed her by the throat. "Stop Slayer... or I'll snap her neck."

Zare reached the other two, she pulled Sonla into the shield with her. The demon's hold on L'Era tightened so she didn't go any further forward.

"You've got nowhere to go but back, killing her or me won't stop that," Zare said.

"You're right," the demon sighed. It raised its arm higher, lifting the girl off the ground.

"Stop!" Zare shouted. "Wouldn't you rather kill me instead?"

"I let her go, you'll attack me. I get one. I kill her, you'll attack me. Two for two," the demon growled. Stewart and Sonla couldn't stand it, they began to lurch but Zare put her arms out wide to stop them. "Four?"

"How's this. You let her go, and I let you go back to your portal in one piece," Zare said.

The demon laughed, "no, how's this?" It lifted her up further, then threw her over its shoulder like she was nothing. The three left behind gaped in horror as she disappeared into the portal. "I let her go into the portal in millions of pieces, and you get to try, little Slayer."

"Oh my..." Sonla stuttered, while Stewart looked like he was going to be sick.

Zare clenched her jaw, her eyes filled with rage. The other two could only watch as she ran forward to tackle the demon. It didn't stand a chance, it bowled over on to the floor. It tried to block as she leaned over it and savagely punched it many times. Eventually she got back up, lifting it up by the neck instead.

"Why don't we see how you like it," she growled. The demon flew into the nearby forcefield, screaming in pain for the few seconds it still existed.

"Oh, this isn't happening," Stewart sadly said.

Zare sighed. She closed her eyes to calm herself down, clenching her fists and opening them again a few times. "We don't need to stay here, come on."

### **The Bridge:**

"Nine is on, as for Ten..." B'Elanna said.

"Kevin's still there, we need his OK before..." Tom was saying.

"I know, we can't risk putting up the shield and trapping a demon or two within it," B'Elanna angrily said.

The ship shook violently, then lurched on to one side, everyone clung onto their consoles to avoid falling. Annika's station exploded, as did the consoles behind it.

"Damn!" Jodie complained. "Why did you send her away?"

Tom gritted his teeth as he struggled to keep his hands on the controls. "Never mind that, what happened?"

"Instead of firing one of their portal makers, they fired weapons. Port nacelle's been hit!" B'Elanna reported.

Tom used his left hand to key in commands, while using his right to pilot. "Compensating." The ship levelled off.

"Our shields couldn't take any weapons fire before the battle, we can't..." Jodie said. Her station sparked furiously behind her, making her jump. "Um yeah, forget the shields."

"Warp jump's out then," Tom commented.

"One more shield could drain what's left of Thirteen's portal," B'Elanna said. "They likely know that."

"So much for them leaving us alone once its closed," Tom muttered.

B'Elanna shook her head at the same time the ship shook too. "Kevin hasn't moved, it must be busy down there."

Jodie frowned, "um guys." The pair glanced at her. "That wasn't one of the ships, we're being fired on by something else."

"Oh god, only us," Tom groaned. "Who, what?"

"It came from the planet's surface," Jodie answered.

*"Bridge. Get the Deck Ten shield on, now!"*

Tom sighed in relief, "Ylara? We detect Kevin still in the vicinity..."

*"He's dead. Get the shield up, or we'll end up like him."*

Everyone's faces filled with shock. B'Elanna eventually nodded and worked on the station.

"Damn," Tom quietly said.

B'Elanna swallowed a lump in her throat, "shield activated."

Tom frowned at his station, then looked up at the viewscreen. The remaining two ships firing a beam stopped. "Report."

"Deck Thirteen's portal is draining. The alien ships have kept a close formation around us but they're not firing the beams anymore," B'Elanna reported.

Jodie looked up from her station, "another shot from the surface!"

Everyone clung on as Tom roughly moved the control stick to the right.

With plasma and smoke billowing out of its port nacelle, Voyager slowed to an almost stop, then did an almost 180 degree turn. The alien ships followed. A white torpedo shot from the planet's surface, detonating where Voyager was earlier.

Four alien ships careened around at top speed to catch up, then overtake Voyager again. A brief phaser shot finished off one of them, the other three dodged similar hits.

Voyager twisted again as the rear ships each fired a hit, the starship turned all the way around to fire on its attackers, then fly passed them. While this was happening, another torpedo shot from the surface, it detonated almost in the good nacelle's path. The blast was large enough to char the nacelle, the blue lights in it flickered then powered off.

"Damn!" Tom grunted. "Warp and impulse are gone."

Jodie shook her head, "there are only three more ships left, but we'll be dead in the water, or worse if..." Her station beeping interrupted her. "Another shot from the surface. It's coming from a tall structure, one of three."

Tom's face turned even paler, which was a new record for him today. "Like a tower?"

"Yeah, let's talk about this!" Jodie snapped.

"Thrusters, but they're not enough to escape it all. We need to get out of its range," Tom stuttered.

On the viewscreen, the planet was getting closer. Jodie's eyes widened at the thought that entered her head. "Tom, that's the complete opposite of what you said."

"Don't panic. We were always going to end up at that tower, may as well use it to our advantage," Tom said with determination.

"What!?" both B'Elanna and Jodie blurted out.

Jessie walked around, then knelt down next to Craig. One of his hands had black material wrapped around it, cushioning his fingers. She gently took a hold of his arm closest to her, cradling similar material in her other hand.

"We don't have time..." he said.

She shushed him as she began to wrap the material around his other hand. It was only enough to cover a few fingers, her response was to groan. "Why not, it's already ruined." With a sigh this time she got back to her feet.

"It doesn't matter," Craig tried to stop her. All he got was a hand wave gesturing him to shut up. He knew better than to argue with her.

Jessie picked up what was left of her jacket, then made her way back to kneel in the same place. "I told you, it was already ruined."

"Thanks," Craig said sincerely.

This cheered Jessie up slightly as she tore off a bit more of the jacket, "yeah you should be. I like this jacket." The rest of his hand was soon covered. "I know, you told me not to tackle that alien."

"It can't be long now, we should contact them," Craig reminded her.

Jessie nodded, "yeah, the Flyer may not have enough power for more than two transports." She tapped her commbadge, "Stuart to..." Her eyes widened, "what's her last name?" Craig smirked at her, he didn't know either. "Shar?"

Luckily that worked too, *"yes I know, we got held back on the last one. We were spotted, and we had to lose them first before choosing a new spot."*

"We feel for you," Craig muttered, shaking his head. Jessie passed him a sympathetic smile, then a smirk.

"Well we're at the rendezvous point, so whenever you're ready to join us..." she said.

*"We'll be there, though I'm surprised you are. Shar out."*

Jessie shook her head, "I'm not that bad."

"No, this time you did the stabbing," Craig smirked back at her. He winced as he moved one of his hands. "And the clothes butchering. I'm starting to think you were swapped with one of the shapeshifters."

"Yeah, you're welcome, again," Jessie sighed, allowing herself to laugh a little.

Deep at the bottom of the chasm where the camp used to be, one alien ship stood waiting. It rose from the ground, blowing dust around it. Once it was clear, it took off forward. Dead ahead of them a shuttle with a similar design flew straight towards them. It attempted to swerve to avoid the larger ship in its path. The ship matched its movements to block them. The shuttle was forced to stop. As soon as it did a tractor beam fired from the ship to hold it.

Damien looked over at the comm speaker, Jach looked on. He smiled deviously at the young alien, unnerving him.

*"Did you really think we wouldn't find you on one of our planets. You really are a worthless piece of skin," Galnar's voice growled.*

Jach reached forward to get their side of the communications on.

"As usual, you've made the fatal error of underestimating me. Say adios to Snugglebumps for me," Damien sniggered.

*"You're all talk. What can you possibly do now?"*

Damien glanced over at Jach again, he nodded and keyed in something. Once he was done he hovered over one final command. Damien kept watch as the shuttle was pulled closer to the ship and its opening shuttle bay.

"Boom," Damien raised both his eyebrows and widened his eyes.

Jach shook his head while he pressed the final command.

The alien shuttle exploded from within, tearing it into pieces. The fire engulfed the large ship. Pieces of the shuttlecraft flew into it, spreading the fire through the damaged hull.

Jach raised his fist up to do a little fist pump, "got 'em!"

Damien smirked while shaking his head. "Another one doubting me, so sad."

Jach ignored him, he decided to change his fist into a high five. Damien just seemed happy enough watching the alien ship fall to the earth on the screen in front of him, exploding on impact. He finally looked over at Jach, his face frowned.

"Is that a new salute? I like it." He raised his own palm into the air. "Hail Damien." Jach pulled a face as he lowered his hand, high fiving now ruined for him.



"Um, I'll try again to reach Voyager." Jach rushed to the back of the Flyer where there was an open panel underneath a console. He pressed a few commands. "Ok try the long range communications."

"I don't take orders from a minion," Damien groaned.

Jach sighed, he did again when the egotistical man at the helm did what he was told anyway.

With three more alien ships on its tail, Voyager flew into the atmosphere. Straight ahead of them flew a white torpedo. At the last moment the starship drifted to its left, allowing the torpedo to graze just passed them and into the path of their pursuers.

They tried to dodge but there wasn't enough time to. The torpedo detonated in front of one of them. The blast spread, smashing into the other two. It continued to spread, grazing the back of Voyager itself.

Everyone on the bridge lurched forward, luckily Tom kept his hands still enough on the controls. The view of the planet continued to get closer.

"Uh, we can fly back up now," Jodie whimpered. "They're gone."

B'Elanna shook her head as she looked at the Engineering part of her station, "that torpedo detonated too close, the tail of its shockwave hit us."

Jodie ran from the opps station to the only working back station. Opps itself exploded, knocking her to the floor anyway. Everyone else hung on as Voyager lurched down even further. The lights flickered on and off, then went out completely.

"I can't keep us level. Lateral thrusters are failing!" Tom stuttered.

B'Elanna glanced up at the viewscreen. Panic rising in her as the view of the planet completely filled it now, and they were gaining on the clouds. Jodie climbed onto her feet using what was left of the railing behind the command chairs.

"Good news is that energy signature is gone, there's nothing left to pursue us," B'Elanna added on.

"Goodie, in the clear," Jodie squeaked.

The clouds pushed into their view, the ship trembled. "Don't panic, it's just turbulence, the inertial dampers are mostly still working," B'Elanna said.

Tom quickly wiped the sweat off his brow with his arm. "We're going to need them."

Jodie leapt for the backstation and grabbed a hold of it. She noticed it flashing at her. "We're being hailed!"

The turbolift doors opened partially, Zare fell forward out of it. Nobody heard or noticed her over the noise.

"Unless it's the natives crapping themselves about that ship falling out of their sky, offering to help, leave it," Tom said.

"It's the Flyer," Jodie said.

Tom's eyes widened, "go for it."

*"Hey Voyager, how's this for irony?"*

Everyone looked confused, Tom decided to change that for a face palm. "Damien, how... what the hell are you doing... and what?"

*"Slayer boy says you'll know about these towers and whatnot."*

Tom's face turned very pale, the girls all looked at him expectantly.

*"FYI, I'm only helping you as I don't like these guys. Though I don't like you either."*

The viewscreen cleared up, now they could see miles of the planet's landscape. The haunting view of a city sitting in the centre loomed closer. To the left the large tower was the only building they could clearly make out, surrounded by greenery and the five dots which were the smaller towers. Two of them touched the edge of the city.

"Which tower Damien?" Tom yelled as he let the sweat roll down his forehead.

*"Oooh cranky."*

"We're going to Enterprise D any minute here!" Tom snapped at him as he battled the controls.

*"Ah, well you could aim for it. If you know what I mean."*

B'Elanna shook her head. "I'm detecting a tower network, six of them in total. The city sitting next to it is habited by 250 thousand. There are two more networks like this, a few miles away."

"Tower smashing's sounding better," Jodie stuttered.

Tom shook his head, "there are eighteen towers, Damien. Which one!?"

*"Jeez Parasite, he did tell you. What more do you want?"*

Jodie butted in, "one's firing at us again!"

Tom sighed in relief, "fine. Return fire then Jod."

"What?"

"Aim for the tower that's firing at us, hurry!" Tom ordered.

"Check, but I still don't get what's happening. I feel like one of the readers," Jodie mumbled to herself.

**Meanwhile on the Flyer:**

Damien pulled a disappointed face, "oooh wrong choice. It's one of those other tower networks, the one further west. Yeesh, you didn't listen to your blond, smaller twin, did you?"

Jach frowned. He reached over to swat him on the head with the phaser. He passed him a pathetic puppy dog eyes look, while rubbing his head. "Don't listen to him, two teams are in there."

"Ugh, what does a genius have to do to have some fun around here?"

In the vastness of the city natives stood in the streets, staring into the sky. Panic started to rise as the strange alien ship got closer and closer, with black fumes streaming from its engines. A lot of people began to run in all directions, away from where they thought it was heading.

The ship blocked out the view of their star for a moment, casting an eery shadow over them.

The few who stood still pointed as Voyager careened to the left of them, heading towards the unwelcome tower outside their city.

Continuing on its downward path, Voyager charged its phaser array then fired several phaser blasts towards the giant tower. The people on the ground covered their ears at the deafening sound of the phasers so close to them, some seemed to even cheer as they watched. A shield sprung up to block them all, disappointing the few.

Unknown to the people on the ground, an artillery like shaped torpedo launcher sitting on top of the tower, turned around to aim at the attacking starship. It fired a small white torpedo in its direction, just missing it as the ship slowly inclined on its right. In retaliation a couple of torpedoes slammed into it, sending ripples around the entire shield.

"Their shield is weakening but..." Jodie stammered.

Tom winced as he used all his strength to turn the control stick to one side, "the starboard thrusters are giving me a little attitude."

"I'm on it," B'Elanna said as she worked at the Engineering Station.

"Even if I push her over to the fields around the tower, she'll be down in ten minutes." Tom reported.

Jodie tried to ignore her aching finger as she pressed the fire command a few more times. "I don't think we'll make it, also we're running low on torpedoes."

Tom closed his eyes, sighing deeply. "If you want to go to the escape pods, I'll handle that."

Everyone threw their stares towards him. "What?" they all yelled in unison.

"I'll set a collision course."

B'Elanna couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Tom, we were only defending ourselves here. Crashing into that tower makes that a little redundant."

Tom smiled a little as his controls eased a lot, he guided Voyager into the tower's path. Zare meanwhile frowned as she watched the tower get closer on the viewscreen.

"Exactly, we'll not let you do this. It's..." Jodie stuttered.

*"Oooh Jach my slave, put this on screen. I have to see it, and maybe charge pay per view to the others if they survive."*

*"James gave me permission to shoot you, you know."*

Tom ignored the commotion over the comm. "I'm not getting into this now, there's no time! This is an order, not a debate." He pressed on a few panels with his other hand. "Paris to all hands, abandon ship..."

"Wait!" B'Elanna butted in. "Tom, you have to give us more than that. I'm not abandoning you here."

Tom shrugged his shoulders. "We're about to crash anyway, it doesn't matter where."

"You know it does," B'Elanna said as she stood up. "This is crazy, there's no reason to take the tower with us."

"That's... that's impossible," Zare stuttered, her eyes still on the screen.

"Oh, what now?" Jodie complained.

"That's a Game Sphere tower," Zare answered.

B'Elanna and Jodie widened their eyes in shock. Tom seemed surprised as well, but he quickly hid it with his determined face. "That settles it, we're ramming."

"But there's no sphere. This isn't possible," Zare stuttered.

Jodie frowned in Tom's direction, "wait, you knew about this?"

"Not exactly. Not that, no..." he answered, unsure on what to say. "I knew it was bad but... Never mind that. Escape pods people."

Jodie shook her head, "I may as well finish off our torpedoes first."

Zare swung her head in her direction, she rushed over to her side. "I hope you're aiming for the base, destroying the top of the tower is useless." Jodie just nodded. "Can we transport outside, we could probably still get in by foot?"

"Don't they recommend Chosen's for this?" Tom questioned.

"I'll get Ylara and Kevin then," Zare said as she went back for the lift.

B'Elanna turned her head. "Ylara only. Kevin's out of the game."

Zare's head lowered, she stared near her feet for a few seconds. "I see."

Jodie's head flew up in a panic, "incoming fire from orbit!"

B'Elanna rushed back to her station, she quickly worked at it. "She's right..."

"I see it." Tom maneuvered the control lever to the right. His face frowned, "it's not coming for us."

Some of the citizens on the ground pointed to the sky again, the crowds yelled or screamed as they ran for cover. Shooting out of the clouds, the orange ball of energy flew straight over their heads and headed straight towards the tower. As it smashed into the shield, a couple more followed it.

Everyone on the Bridge saw this as well, they stared in shock. Tom quickly reminded himself to fly the ship.

Jodie's station beeped over Damien's disappointed groan. This snapped her out of her daze, she pressed a button to cut him off.

*"Hey Tom, what did I say about having fun without me?" Harry's chirpy voice rang over the comm.*

Tom's face broke into a grin. "I owe you one Harry."

*"Actually, it wasn't completely my idea."*

*"Think of this as making up for the 8472 battle two years ago," Chakotay's voice said.*

B'Elanna smiled in Tom's direction, he shrugged. "All right, let's finish what we started," he then smiled. "Things are looking up." He looked at the viewscreen, "not literally."

The walls tore apart like paper as a body crashed straight through them. A metal desk broke his fall after breaking into little pieces. He pulled himself up to his feet, then raised the two swords in each of his hands. Straight ahead of him he could see a figure running through the dust, right for him.

"Aaw, are we playing with toys again? Very well," he sneered, ripping a piece of metal already hanging off the wall.

Using it like a sword, he swiped it at him. James responded by blocking with the left sword, he swung with his right towards the man's stomach. He leapt back fast, then swung around to kick him there instead. James stumbled back a few steps.

He quickly threw himself to the floor and rolled to the side, as the man thrust the piece of metal straight forward. It impaled a pillar nearby instead. With just a flick of a wrist, he sliced through it. The ceiling above them weakened from the strain as the top half of the pillar collapsed. Noticing it was falling his way, James rolled forward just in time to avoid it, then jumped to his feet.

The man lunged forward to swipe the metal bar, James quickly blocked it with his left sword. Then he swung his right arm over his head, down at his own attackers'. He pushed the left sword towards James so he could block the right hit with the bar as well.

"Oh, are we getting tired yet?"

"Tired of the Frenit blabber, yeah," James muttered.

His smile grew larger, "I always enjoy our little play fights, you're always such a sport." He pushed against the two swords, James stood his ground. "I don't know why you're against us though, I thought you'd like some more little Slayer buddies, especially to replace that other one on your ship." He pushed himself closer without moving the fake sword he held. "Your little sister didn't look too hot either. They're all dropping like flies, soon you'll be all alone again... so sad."

James withdrew one of the swords with his right hand, then went immediately to plunge it straight forward into his attacker. In retaliation he swiped the attacking sword with his own weapon, knocking his flying out of his hands. James threw the left handed sword into his right, then swung forward.

Frenit's eyes widened. He heard the sound of the metal dropping to the floor. His eyes rolled to the right, then he turned his head that way. His eyes managed to get wider in fury as his weapon lay in front of him, still being clutched by his arm. He looked towards his foe, eyeing the bloodied sword in his hand. His head swung to his shoulder, then to where his right arm should be. Nothing.

His fury darted back to in front of him, it faded to shock as nobody was there anymore. With a demonic growl he ran forward through the holes in the wall, leaving his weapon and dismembered arm behind.

Nathan frantically tapped his commbadge again. "Come on James, this isn't funny."

Kiara looked on with worry planted on her face. "Can't we just ask the Flyer to beam up any Human lifesigns. It doesn't matter about being sneaky now, this'll blow in five minutes."

"I haven't got a better idea," Nathan sighed. He tapped the commbadge again, "Andrews to the Delta Flyer."

James ran around the corner, then headed straight for another hole in the wall. He tried to ignore the reason there were many more directly in front of him, and ran through them all. A few rooms away was the room he was thrown up through the floor in. Before he could reach the last room, the wall to the right of him exploded, he leapt backwards

to avoid it. As soon as the dust cleared all he could focus on was the deadly eyes staring straight into his.

Before he could do anything else, Frenit's hand lunched for his throat. He then pulled him into the wall, forcing him halfway through it.

"Did you really think cutting an arm off a vampire was going to help you? I'm stronger than you without it."

"Then why haven't you killed me yet? You've had plenty of chances."

Frenit snarled at him, "don't flatter yourself. It doesn't suit you. You're only still here cos I liked to play around with you. The best part about killing a Slayer, is to torment them..." James reached for one of his pockets while the man began to squeeze at his throat. "I had thought about killing you, making you like me." He smiled, "exactly like me, but now, we'll just finish things right here."

James' left hand shot out of his pocket holding a dagger, then went right for Frenit's chest. He grabbed just as it pierced his skin. With a growl, he tossed him to his left side. Fortunately he landed close to the hole he was aiming for. His head lifted up to watch as Frenit pulled the dagger's tip out of his chest. While his attention was still on it, he dragged himself to the hole and let gravity handle the rest.

Frenit swung his head in that direction, his eyes fiery as to him he had just disappeared again.

Nathan ran down a corridor, pointing the phaser rifle like it was only a torch. He stopped to peep his head around a corner. His heart skipped a beat as he heard a huge crash in the distance.

*"What was that?" Kiara's voice asked.*

*"Maybe he died?" Damien's voice sniggered.*

Nathan heard a smaller bang, this time over the comm. He shook his head, then ran towards the source of the first one.

*"Nath hurry!" Jach's voice stuttered.*

*"Ooh, almost time," Damien's voice laughed.*

Nathan opened a nearby door, his eyes widened as even they couldn't believe what they were seeing. Face down on piles of rubble, with even more falling from above, James lay, still conscious but struggling to push himself up. Nathan ran over, dodging a small bit of metal falling from the hole.

"Jesus Chri..." he stuttered. "Guys, I got him. Can you lock onto us from here?"

*"Standby."*

*"That means no, tower boom?"*

Nathan ignored the second small bang as he knelt down to put his arm around James' shoulder, and that hand just underneath his arm. "I know I'm probably not supposed to move people in this state but..." He quickly tried to lift him up to his feet, they both stumbled forward just in time to dodge a larger piece of metal fall where they were.

*"Here goes nothing."*

### **The Flyer:**

Damien watched in glee as one of the screens showed one of the towers explode from its lower floors. Kiara meanwhile cringed and covered her eyes as another screen nearby her showed another one. Damien clapped like he was watching a moving movie. Shar and the two aliens had joined him at the front of the shuttle, the aliens watching almost as eagerly.

Jach smiled then looked behind him. Two figures rematerialised at the back of the shuttle, this got Kiara's attention so she uncovered her eyes.

"Damn," Damien groaned. "Oh well, I'll go back to the Voyager one." He pressed a button to switch focus to the last tower.

"Holy crap," Kiara stuttered as she saw the many injuries James had. She rushed over to help Nathan keep him on his feet. They helped him to the other room in the shuttle.

"Anybody got any popcorn?" Damien asked, glancing back briefly. "Pfft, he's probably faking it," he complained. His attention went back to the battle around the third tower.

Voyager drifted passed it, grazing its shields. This roughly pushed the starship onto its right side. Another two torpedo hits from the sky slammed into the same spot. Charging its phasers, Voyager did the same. The shield fluctuated, then fizzled out.

"I think it's time for a Janeway like pun. Anyone?" Tom smirked.

Jodie winced, "oops, I've already fired." Tom placed his hand over his face, sighing in disappointment.

"Could be better," B'Elanna shook her head.

Two blue torpedoes shot out the back torpedo launchers. Each one flew into the huge building, exploding on impact. The tower shook as the explosions engulfed the bottom of the building. Voyager continued its descent, narrowly avoiding the explosions.

"Die my uglies, die," Damien meanwhile laughed as he stared at the screen.

"That's the best line you could come up with?" Shar grimaced.

"Jealous much?" Damien grinned at her. She pulled a face in disgust.



Meanwhile in the back room Jessie was busy treating Craig's hands as he lay on the only bed. She turned her head briefly when the doors opened. Her eyes widened then she turned back to have a better look. "Oh my god... James?"

Craig turned his head to have a look as Nathan and Kiara walked James down the steps. He turned on his side to roll to the edge of the bed, then get off, wincing as Jessie hadn't finished with his last two fingers.

"I think we could do with a Doctor for this one," Nathan stuttered.

Jessie rushed over so she could take over from Kiara, she quickly got out of the way. "Can you finish treating Craig?"

Kiara only nodded as Jessie handed her the regenerator.

Craig shook his head, "I'll live. How are we doing with the towers?" he asked Kiara's way.

Once James was on the bed, Nathan walked over to Craig. "We just made it. Let's hope Voyager did come to our rescue after all, cos..." He looked back at the bed, then at Craig again. "One more tower will kill us."

Kiara nodded, "don't worry, we've definitely got help."

As the final tower crumbled to the ground, the small neighbouring ones emitted a blinding light. Everyone nearby covered their eyes to shield them from it. While this was happening Voyager dipped closer to the ground, inclining to the left to dodge any falling debris. The path they were on led it towards a large open area filled with dead grass and crops. Small farm like buildings were scattered around the entire area.

The ship's landing struts emerged from its belly, the pressurised air from them managed to slow the ship's descent only for a moment, levelling the ship a little. The front landing struts were the first to hit the ground. They crushed themselves under the weight of the saucer still being pulled down by the planet's gravity. This allowed the rear landing struts to touch the ground, but only for a moment before the nose of the ship tumbled to earth. The ground trembled, and even cracked under the strain.

Tom lifted himself up from his console, cradling his scratched forehead. He ignored that to turn and check behind him. Zare lay on the floor nearby, but she soon got up like nothing happened. He just caught B'Elanna using her chair to get to her feet. Jodie meanwhile was stubbornly staying where she was lying, groaning to herself.

"Is everyone all right?" Tom asked.

B'Elanna nodded, "yes." Zare also nodded at him before looking back to check on Jodie.

"I'm fine," she groaned into the floor. "I'm nice and comfy where I am, thanks." Zare rolled her eyes before she went over to join her.

"Well, the landing struts did work," Tom smiled B'Elanna's way. She raised an eyebrow back at him. "It slowed our fall, didn't it?"

B'Elanna sat back down in her chair to look at her station. "Shall I save the damage report for later?"

The back station beeped a few times, Zare decided to go for that instead of Jodie. "That's the Leda and the Flyer."

Tom sighed to himself as he got up out of his chair, eyeing the helm sadly. "I don't think I'll be needed here for a while." He walked to the centre of the bridge. "Just tell the Leda we're fine, and open a channel to the Flyer."

Zare frowned then shrugged her shoulders. She pressed one command, "we're fine." She pressed another, then looked back at Tom. "You're on."

He had buried his face in his hand again, "ugh, too literal. Flyer, can you hear us?"

*"That wasn't as good as the Enterprise D crash. You promised! Hey... this is my seat!"*

The bridge crew heard a small bang, then a few people laughing.

*"Yeah Voyager, we can hear you. Is everyone ok?" Nathan's voice asked.*

*"Ugh, you're boring."*

Tom glanced in B'Elanna's direction. "The number of lifesigns are the same as when we entered the atmosphere. Everyone's in Sickbay at the moment."

*"Damn, full house huh? Can we beam one more?"*

"Why not?" Tom sighed. "Please tell us we don't need to destroy two more towers."

B'Elanna frowned in confusion, "this is weird." Everyone looked in her direction. "I can't detect the other two tower networks."

"That answers that," Tom smiled.

"No, I mean I can't even detect debris. They're just gone," B'Elanna reported with her eyes wide.

Zare didn't seem surprised, she sighed anyway. "Once they're destroyed, they never existed."

"So, they were Game Sphere towers?" Tom questioned, his already sore forehead now throbbing.

"Without a Game, yes. Something's very wrong here," Zare mumbled to herself.

"That would explain those terrorists complaining about their planet dying, right?" B'Elanna said in her direction. "That's what those spheres do, drain the life out of the planet it's on." Zare only nodded slowly.

*"Wait, Game Sphere towers? Have I missed something?" Nathan's voice asked.*

"I think we all have," Tom answered him.

Two shuttlecrafts flew in front of the saucer, each of them firing a tractor beam. Dozens of people stood safely nearby, holding vast amount of repair equipment. Nearby the clouds shifted, then the Leda emerged from them. It soon joined an alien ship hovering nearby the downed starship.

***Lieutenant Commander Paris' Log Supplemental: With the help of our new friends, the Leda and various shuttles are working to get Voyager onto its literal feet. Repair crews are on standby to start what'll probably be a few weeks worth of work to get us back into action again.***

***Even though we've destroyed the three towers, the damage already done to this planet is irreparable. We have been told by researchers here, that the whole planet only had a week or so before it would become uninhabitable. Three and all that would be left would be a debris field like we encountered lightyears away. Once we can continue repairs on our own, the Leda will be tasked with evacuating the people in the affected areas.***

***With so many unanswered questions, all we can do is attempt to put the jigsaw together.***

"Must you do that in my Sickbay, it's a little off putting," Doctor Jones muttered.

Tom stared at him with a raised eyebrow, "off putting, you? Try pulling the other one."

The Doctor smiled broadly, "I meant for my assistants obviously." He got back to work using a regenerator on James' face. Once he was done, he tried to get off the biobed, but a hand on his arm hinted that he shouldn't. "No!"

Tom shook his head. "This isn't your Sickbay anyway, it's the Leda's."

Doctor Jones shrugged. "I am the Chief Medical Officer of the fleet, so it is."

"Interesting," Jessie sarcastically sighed. "Will he be OK?"

"Of course, I'm on the case," Doctor Jones replied cheerfully.

The doors opened for Harry and Chakotay to walk in. Zare and Ylara followed behind them, chatting amongst themselves.

"That's everyone, right?" Tom said, glancing at B'Elanna.

"We're missing Kevin, right?" Jessie said.

James shook his head, Tom looked on with a frown. "I'm afraid not, he didn't make it. Speaking of which, Doc, how are the trainees?" Jessie meanwhile glanced James' way with a look of shock on her face.

"I'm afraid we have two casualties from the battle on Voyager. One we could not recover," Jones replied sadly. "Two from the surface, as well as Mr Li'Chin."

Harry glanced at Chakotay, then back at Ylara nervously. "We're still missing one, but that's on purpose right?"

Tom cringed and clenched his fist, "definitely, one disaster at a time." He tried to shake it off. "All right, I've invited you here as a couple of us are trapped in Sickbay anyway, so..."

"Hey I was fine half an hour ago," Craig complained from afar. Naomi shushed him then waved a tricorder in front of him, he rolled his eyes.

"So, where should we start?" Tom questioned.

Chakotay sighed loudly. "What about the part where you and him knew what would happen?"

"Yes, this is all our fault," James groaned, rolling his eyes.

Tom shook his head, "you were told about the visions, Chakotay, all we knew was the little details."

"Little details, like what happened on the planet, these towers and..." Chakotay ranted, everyone groaned loud enough to shut him up. "Seriously, you're not bothered, even a little bit?"

"Tom and I decided not to share the new details, as they were a mess anyway. That vision was a huge blur," James answered him. Ylara nodded slightly, Chakotay caught that in the corner of his eye.

"You as well?"

"I am the second Chosen of this generation, I'm surprised you've forgotten," Ylara coldly hissed at him. He narrowed his eyes.

Jessie smiled nervously, "I knew too." Everyone looked in her direction, well except the ones who knew that. "Oh please, James is terrible at hiding things from me."

Chakotay groaned, "right. So what exactly did you know?"

"Those towers were featured heavily. There was something about a group of people raiding a room with computers," Ylara replied.

"The planet broke apart," James added on.

Tom pulled a confused face, "what about the Voyager part? You said you saw us flying passed a tower, exchanging fire."

"It doesn't seem that much of a mess to me," Chakotay said.

Harry glanced at him, "it probably makes more sense now that its happened."

"There were other things chucked in too," James said. "So much happened, it's hard to remember the order. You have to understand though that a lot of what did happen, wasn't in the vision anyway."

"You knew the ship would go down, that's why you wanted to evacuate," Harry sighed. Jessie raised her hand meekly, "oh that's right, your idea."

"What about Damien and Jessie's kidnapping. What was that about?" Tom wondered outloud.

B'Elanna shrugged. "We only have a theory. We think that the ones who kidnapped them wanted to stop us from creating that forcefield system."

"That's some theory. Why would that fool help us?" Chakotay asked. Jessie narrowed her eyes in his direction. "Oh please, like I meant you."

"I'm more bothered about the Game Sphere tower part," Craig said as he quickly escaped from Naomi. "Why have a sphere at all if you can just plant these towers on any planet and suck them dry."

Zare shrugged, "the sphere protects it from outside influences such as torpedo and phaser fire. You're right though, it's a little worrying."

"Who attacked us anyway, and why sick demons onto us?" Ylara questioned as well.

"It's simple. Whoever attacked us wanted us out of the picture so we wouldn't discover the towers on the planet," Craig mused.

"I'd like to know how the towers were even built in what, the six months those aliens said?" Jones butted in.

"To make sure we couldn't stop the attack, they kidnapped Damien and Jess. Damien with his demon portal knowledge, Jessie as she's usually the one chucking shields up to stop them," Harry continued from what Craig was saying.

Chakotay groaned, "now it's a mess. Can we focus on one thing at a time, instead of talking about different things at once? It all comes together, it must. We won't get anywhere prattling on with stupid questions."

"Ylara's was answered anyway," James pointed out.

"It was?" Ylara frowned.

James shook his head. "Who else would build life draining towers that disappear when they're destroyed? Only one species would and could do all of this."

Almost everyone glanced at each other knowingly. It was obvious to them who they were dealing with.

Chakotay shook his head. He said what almost everyone was thinking, "the Softmicron."

Ylara frowned, "no, my question is not answered at all." Everyone turned their attention on her.

**THE END**