

## Episode 5.15 Heaven Sent

She was drowning.

It had been dark to her for what seemed like weeks, even the dim light which bounced between the walls she could not even see felt like they were throwing daggers into her eyes. The unseen walls surrounding her felt like they were closing in.

Her heartbeat drummed against her chest as she stared straight ahead of her. The unending darkness was suffocating.

She had no idea how long she'd been there, or clearly remember how she'd even gotten there in the first place. Her thoughts strayed to the last two faces she remembered vividly.

*They'll not even care that I'm gone,* she thought. Her throat closed up, her skin crawled.

It was certainly true. No one would notice her absence, obviously no one has yet. She was going to die here. Alone. At least that part was familiar to her.

*"Ylara!"* she heard a voice call out to her.

She thought she imagined it, a last cling to hope. Nobody wanted her around, they only saw what they lost whenever they saw her. The voice belonged to no one.

As those thoughts rushed through her head the dark seemed to get even darker. The walls were crushing her. She couldn't breathe.

*I need to stay positive or I will disappear into the darkness.*

For a time she was able to breathe again. The painful but dim light hovered over her eyes, casting dark moving spots in her vision.

*The light is what's keeping me here. I can't lose it again.*

All she could do was try to focus on how she got there. She knew she wasn't alone, those two blurry faces popped into her memory again. It was all she had.

The darkness crept in closer so she tried to remember anything. Any little thing that could keep her from falling into despair could save her life. Her last meal, the last smile someone sent her way, the last joke she heard. Anything.

The silence was deafening.

"Hold on, just shhh!" Chakotay tried to settle everyone down. Tom only sighed next to him.

It was no use. The entire Conference Room was in uproar. Everyone seemed to be yelling at one other person at least. Both men were surprised it hadn't come to blows yet. Tom had enough and he knew exactly what to do.

"All right, let's just pull our knickers out of our butts and take a damn chill pill. I'm the Captain!" he snapped at them all.

Like he expected they all stopped just so they could look at him and judge him. He did expect a lot of them to laugh at him like they usually did, but nobody really seemed to be in the mood.

"Knickers," Annika giggled. Well almost nobody.

"Right, now that I have your attention lets just focus on one thing at a time," Tom said. The voices started to raise again. "I'll be the one deciding it. Unless you want me to complain about what Miral did to me this morning and hear about my latest holodeck program." That shut everyone up.

"Wow, his annoying-ness has a use," Chakotay was amazed.

"Good, now... let's start from the beginning," Tom said.

### **Twelve Hours Ago:**

He hated feeling helpless. He loved to be in control of everything and everyone. That was the whole point in being superior to everyone, wasn't it? But all he could do now was watch and wait.

The Doctor hurried around the biobed as the scanner closed around its patient. Nikki meanwhile collected some hyposprays and dashed over to join him. His hand flew out, hinting for a specific one. She handed him one. He didn't waste any time injecting it into the neck. He asked for something else but Nikki didn't respond as quick.

"The round device," he reminded her.

Nikki nodded, "I know." She handed the only round object she had with her.

*Why does the hologram put up with that girl? Perhaps he has her around to make him feel smarter or more useful. I should bring back Riker for him.* The joke didn't tickle him like he hoped. Why was he so angry?

"This should help keep her mind active during the procedure," the Doctor said as he gently placed it onto the forehead. A little twist to the device activated it. "Nikki, start it up."

Nikki quickly walked over to the other side to press one panel on the biobed. The Doctor glanced at the readings he was getting on his side of the scanner, he nodded. "Stable, for now. Keep monitoring her."

"No problem, Doc," Nikki said.

Stable? Who was he fooling? Damien looked over to the other person waiting. *That's for the blond's benefit. Don't want him going all psycho on us. Why the hell not, it would be a fun distraction, could kill off some of the annoying fodder. Win win. Wait, would he even do that over Ylara? Damn.* He sighed in disappointment.

The Doctor walked over to his closer observer, his forehead covered with worry lines.

"She's stable?" James questioned him.

The Doctor sighed. "She's suffered severe neurological damage. It's going to take some time, which we don't have. The best I could do for her was to induce a coma."

"So the opposite of stable then," Damien had to say. The Doctor and James both heard anger in his voice, but neither of them believed it.

"If I had left her the way she was, the shock would have destroyed the rest of her higher brain functions," the Doctor responded. "I'd call that stable compared to what she was before."

Damien couldn't believe what he was hearing. *Surely the freak's not that stupid. Rest of means some of her brain functions are fried. She's not Paris or that idiot blondie with the spikes on her head, she would need those. She's done for.* His fists clenched within the fold of his arms.

"What caused it?" James asked.

The Doctor shook his head, "that's the mystery. She had no history of any neurological problems, discounting telepathy." Damien chuckled grimly, the pair looked over to see him shaking his head. "Like you the telepathy doesn't cause any damage unless that skill is under direct attack. I know where to look for that, and it's not the issue here."

"It's not the temporal chip backfiring or anything?" James asked.

"No, I would have seen it. I realise that this is difficult, but I know what I'm doing," the Doctor responded a little impatiently.

James breathed in deeply and sighed out twice as much, at least it felt like it to him. "What are the odds that she'll come out of this?"

"It's too soon to tell," the Doctor replied. He waited to see if anymore questions would be fired at him. When he got nothing he made his way over to Damien. "So, while I have five minutes, what can I do for you?"

*What!?* *What kind of stupid question is that?* Damien stared at him angrily, his eyes were very wide.

The Doctor meanwhile checked his memory to see if he said anything about dissecting rabbits instead.

"You could get back to work, that's what you can do hologram," Damien spat back at him.

"I don't understand," the Doctor was taken aback. "I am working."

"No, you're screwing about annoying me," Damien muttered.

The Doctor glanced back over to James who was watching all of this as well, he didn't seem like he was going to help him. "You're here for a reason, what's wrong with you?"

It all made sense to him now. "Oh I see, I see what's going on here," Damien said. "Fine, I'm just here to watch the death scene. I'm waiting for the moment you're not watching to do it myself. I'm here to steal medical supplies to kill others."

The Doctor again looked towards James, his eyes begging for some help. The Security Chief just rolled his own eyes and returned his attention to Ylara lying on the biobed.

"I'll have to ask you to leave then," the Doctor said.

*You can ask but I don't take commands from anyone, bag of light.* "Piss off," Damien hissed at him.

The Doctor gave up, he made his way back over towards James. "We have a problem."

"Relax, Damien's not serious," James groaned.

"Then why is he here?" the Doctor said in a cautious voice.

James shook his head. "He's worried."

The Doctor didn't believe him, his eyes were back to being wide. "His words and attitude say otherwise."

"You're half right," James commented.

The comm beeped, it was deafening compared to the eery silence in Sickbay. *"Rex-Stuart to Stuart... god I hate saying that."*

James would have usually smirked at something like that, but he wasn't feeling up to it. He just tapped his commbadge. "I told you Jess, if you don't like Rex, use Annet. Or I can set you up as Stuart again and me Taylor-Stuart if you want."

*"Annet Stuart, I dunno what's worse. At the very least if we're calling each other I can use Stuart, the computer can't be that dumb,"* Jessie's voice muttered.

"What's up Jess?" James asked her to change the subject.

*"I'm outside the nursery. I was just wondering if you're going to meet us at some point cos we're going to the Mess Hall."*

James covered his face with his hand, groaning quietly. "I lost track of time. Yeah sure, I'll be there. Sorry."

*"No worries, I assumed you were busy. See you later."* The comm cut off.

"It's all right, if there's any change I'll call you," the Doctor said.

"Thanks," James managed a weak smile before turning to leave.

The Doctor quickly blocked his path, "can you take him with you?" James pulled a face as a response. "Or at least take him outside."

"I told you, he's not going to do anything. As usual he's all talk," James said before walking around the Doctor to leave.

The Doctor sighed as he turned around to glance at Damien. The troublemaker had sat himself down on an empty biobed. "Interesting," the hologram mumbled.

*Lieutenant Commander Paris' Log, Stardate 58679.7: Due to an unknown power drain and surge, the USS Leda was destroyed by a warp core breach, killing three of its crew. Despite the disaster we're still pursuing what we believe to be the Enterprise. As we have a clue to their mission we know they'll be making a stop at a planet at some point. Hopefully at the very least we'll break up the gap between us. In the meantime we will be investigating the breach and its cause.*

"Phew, managed to get through another log without a joke," Tom sighed in relief. "Not that my jokes aren't hilarious or anything."

B'Elanna was using her judgemental stare she used when he did something stupid. As his own stare tried to escape he noticed she wasn't the only one.

"What?" He asked just in time to get some mashed potatoes thrown in his face.

Miral giggled, "much better."

B'Elanna resisted a smirk for now. "Seriously Tom, you thought the dinner table was appropriate for that?"

Tom wiped the potato from his face, "I didn't have time before."

Bryan seemed to accept it and returned to his dinner, though Johnathan wasn't quick to let him off the hook. "Enterprise huh?"

Tom's eyes widened, "uh no, that's just a nickname or a code name we've given it." B'Elanna shook her head as she continued to eat her dinner. "You know cos it looks the same."

Johnathan laughed, "wait till I tell everyone that."

"Don't," Tom groaned loudly. "We're trying to keep it between senior staff." It was too late. Johnathan was already at another table breaking the news to the people there. "Johnathan! I'll tell you something juicier if you keep it hush."

"I'm listening," Johnathan said as he jumped into his seat. At his size, Tom was impressed he could do all that so fast.

"This is why you make logs in your office," B'Elanna said to herself.

"Noted, now for the rumour..." Tom sighed.

At another table the Stuart family were only just starting their meals. James was barely touching his though.

"So she was fine one second and the next?" Jessie whispered to him. He only nodded grimly. "God, how awful. The Doc will help her though."

"I don't know," James slowly shook his head. "He gave me some claptrap about it being too soon for a prognosis. I heard him though, he must think I'm too stupid to understand him. Her higher brain functions are mostly destroyed, a coma's what is keeping her alive."

Jessie looked down at the table, she briefly checked to see if their kids were still focusing on their dinner. They were. "I see."

"He didn't want to tell me the truth. Fair enough," James shrugged.

"It's a little convenient, don't you think?" Jessie whispered. James' head moved a little to the right where she was sitting. "You said the Doc didn't know how it happened."

"No, but how is that convenient?" he whispered.

Jessie sighed, she decided to lean in closer just in case the kids heard her. "Think about it. Kiara brings a book full of resurrection and death related spells to our home. It disappears. Then Ylara suddenly drops to the floor with no hope of recovery."

James stared straight ahead of him as he finally got what she was getting at. Not only that, but he knew she was very likely right. He felt his anger rising to the surface, the hand lying by his side on the seat curled into a fist. The children sitting opposite him helped him keep it from building any further.

"I hate to say it but a few people could have done this," Jessie still whispered.

"Yeah, and I think I know who," James also whispered.

Jessie's head dipped down, her face turned a little paler. "Kiara, Craig..."

James looked directly at her this time, he seemed a little shocked. "I... I doubt it."

Jessie turned her own to face him. She tried to give him a light reassuring smile. "I know Craig talked her out of it but we can't rule either of them out."

"I think we can. What happened to Ylara was barbaric. It wasn't a pain-free soul swap, this was a destroying her brain while she's conscious spell. Lena wouldn't have a living body to come back to," James disagreed. "Whoever did this didn't want Lena back or knew they couldn't, they just wanted Ylara dead."

Jessie's shoulders slumped a little as she thought about what he said. "I didn't see anything like that in the book." Her head shook. "This could have been a spell gone wrong, or they didn't know that this would happen. Craig may have talked Kiara out of it only for her sake. Kiara may have thought that this way would keep her out of trouble with the Q."

"What about Chakotay?" James suggested. "You know what he did to my mother, what he did to you..."

Jessie nodded grimly. "I haven't ruled him out."

"There's also Daniel. He's got a questionable past, and I've seen that for myself. Watchers like to do horrible stuff all the time," James whispered.

"Like killing their own Slayers?" Jessie cringed slightly. "Yeah, I'd definitely check him out." She looked down towards the floor, biting her lip. "I know you don't want to think Kiara and Craig could have done this, I don't either, but if the spell is reversible we need to cover as much ground as we can."

"Right," James nodded. "After the kids go back to nursery or school we should talk to them, one by one."

"Sounds like a plan. The only issue is, who gets who?" Jessie said, daring to smile.

James sighed, "if I promise not to throw Chakotay around, can I interrogate him while you do your usual threaten the watchers with Daniel?"

"That started like a question but it turned into a bribe," Jessie's eyes mockingly narrowed.

"Just your imagination," James said.

Jessie continued to squint her eyes at him. "Yeah yeah. Fine."

*"Hang on. I thought we were going to discuss what happened to my ship," Harry's voice chimed in.*

#### **Present Time:**

Everyone looked at Harry like he had just admitted to everything. He was a little too angry to really let that get to him.

"Three of my people are dead, we're down a ship, we're chasing another. I thought..."

"Already dead, already destroyed and already chasing. What we're talking about is still ongoing," Chakotay said in a surprisingly calm voice.

Harry was adamant that the Leda wasn't going to be forgotten. His fists were constantly clenching. "We don't know what caused it, it could very easily happen here. Besides we still need to decide which Leda crewmember takes which job. First Officer for example."

"Oh god, we don't have time for the pet Harry's ego game," James groaned.

"Since when does anyone give a crap about Ylara?" Harry was not giving up.

Craig cast his gaze down to his feet, almost like the guilt was weighing his head down. Jessie glanced over as he did, giving him a sympathetic stare.

James meanwhile went to close the gap between Harry and him but Chakotay of all people quickly stopped in between them. His hands raised into the air as a stop motion, while his head turned to look towards Harry. "That's still technically my daughter you're talking about. She will be gone forever if we don't find out who's responsible for this spell."

"Lena died a long time ago. She wanted to. She's not coming back," Harry said defiantly but his voice shook a little.

"The point is someone has tried to make that happen," Tom said as he rushed over to the trio. He was relieved that James hadn't just shoved Chakotay out of the way to get to Harry, but he knew if this continued it would happen. "I consider what happened to Ylara an attempted murder and it must be investigated. We have two Engineering staff researching the accident. Voyager is still on course following the Enterprise warp trail. We as a team will focus on this while they do that, understood?"

#### **Twelve Hours Ago:**

Tom sat in his Ready Room staring up at the two men bickering in front of his desk. They had been at it a while and his attention was starting to drift to his computer.

"Oh so you'll take orders from Tom but you didn't want the first officer's job on the Leda," Harry said.

"Well it's either take orders from him, or take orders from both of you," Chakotay explained.

"You're a deserter, a criminal. Why would Tom pick you over me?" Harry snapped.

"I'm sorry, did you say that I'm not Tom's girlfriend, why would I be picked over you? You have a good point," Chakotay commented.

Harry looked confused for a second, "but B'Elanna's not..." He got it finally, "oh haha, we're gay for each other. Hilarious."

"Finally!" Chakotay sighed. "Doesn't it feel better to admit it?"

The gay comment got Tom's attention back, he moved his tempting computer to one side. "Listen if I was, I wouldn't pick Harry. He's not my type. Second..."

Chakotay couldn't help but snicker, which interrupted Tom. "We both know what your type is; aggressive, doesn't take your crap. I know who you'd pick."

Tom's face turned beetroot red while Harry decided to chime in with the laughter. "Please, James is not good enough for me." That didn't help at all. "I'm not gay, it doesn't matter!"

"No use getting so worked up about it. There's nothing wrong with it," Chakotay smiled.

To his and Harry's surprise Tom started to smile as well. "Oh I see what you two are doing. You think that by joking around about me and James that I'd be too embarrassed to have him as first officer anymore, and I'll pick one of you." He climbed out of his chair and leaned on his desk. "Well Tom's way too smart for you, so tough."

Harry and Chakotay glanced at each other, still smirking. When they turned back they both said the same thing, "no comment."

"Great. Now, we have the entire Leda crew that needs to be assigned to Voyager somehow. I'm in dire need of a new opps officer as my current one likes to eat everything, the station's all sticky and..."

Tom muttered, pulling a disgusted face. "So that's you sorted, Harry. Chakotay, I'm sure the morgue will love to replace Damien with you. Although he is only doing the paperwork."

"That was the Leda morgue, Voyager's is staffed," Chakotay said. Tom sighed as he hoped he would have rose to the bait.

Harry however did, his hands flew to his hips. "Opps? I'd be right back where I started!"

"Maybe you should consider this; with the Leda gone there is more crew than positions on Voyager. You've got your first officer taking care of Security so he very rarely does it. Either way he can't have two jobs," Chakotay said.

Tom sighed in disappointment. "Oh come on Chakotay. After all this time you don't see when I'm messing with you. As soon as James found out about the Leda, the second thing he said was about giving away that job to a Leda crewmember."

"Second, what was the first?" Harry was curious. Chakotay shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"Again you spoil my fun," Tom pouted. "*As long as it isn't Chakotay.*"

Harry's face lit up while Chakotay rolled his eyes again. "Naturally," he groaned. "Surely he wouldn't stay in the job he dislikes just to spite me."

"Probably," Tom nodded. "It's not his call though. I'll decide during the meeting tomorrow morning. Whoever it is has to help me figure out the rest of the Leda assignments. Still want it?"

**Present Time:**

"You didn't listen to me at all," Tom muttered.

Harry shrugged, "no, but it was important."

"How?" Tom asked.

"Well it explains my confusion about this meeting being about Ylara," Harry replied. Everyone in the room groaned.

"It's about one in the morning Harry. Do you really think we'd have a meeting about that at this time?" Jessie snapped.

Harry sighed, "no, but it's not like anyone told me about this subject until I was here. Besides I think it helps."

"Again how?" Tom also sighed.

"Well if we were too busy arguing in the Ready Room for an hour, we couldn't be doing some spell," Harry said. "Not that I could."

"Oh so you were giving me an alibi?" Chakotay was surprised. That soon faded, "you're just making that up so you don't look stupid and self centered."

"Doesn't matter. The spell might not have taken effect immediately. Until we know more about the damn thing, we don't know for sure," Jessie pointed out.

Chakotay turned his attention on her, her eyes narrowed a little. "I wouldn't hurt my own daughter."

Damien decided to chime in. "Why not? You tried to vaporise her only a few months ago." Everyone's head slowly turned in his direction. They'd forgotten he was there as he'd been uncharacteristically quiet.

Chakotay glanced back towards Jessie and then James. "This is why you threatened me over some book? You really suspect me of this?" They didn't answer, they just stared at him coldly.

**Eleven and a half hours ago****The Bridge:**

Chakotay couldn't help but roll his eyes. Tom always knew how to shorten his nerves. Despite his good argument James was still being considered for the first officer role, and the thought of him keeping that job made him shudder.

"Oh so *Killed numerous people, beaten three times as many* is still an option, but *only screwed up once* isn't?" he had to make sure.

"James is rarely here for it to make any difference," Tom said, smiling casually. Chakotay's stare in his direction chased that away. He laughed and patted Chakotay on the shoulder, "had you going, big guy. We'll discuss it but remember, whoever I pick has to have the backing of the crew. They won't listen to someone they don't respect."

"Learned that one finally, have you?" Chakotay smiled back. *This is almost too easy.*

Tom's smile turned into nervous laughter, "please, this isn't about me."

Harry smirked at the two of them. "That's why he needs a first officer the crew will listen to, cos no one listens to him."

For once he had a point, Chakotay thought. He knew nobody would listen to him anymore, and he deserved that. He had to mend a lot of bridges before anyone would respect him again, and he was

willing to do that. Having Harry in charge instead of him, he could just handle. James on the other hand deserves it less than he does.

"Exactly, and who's going to defy the killer with the super strength? Not many and..." Tom said, then he finally got it. "Hey!"

"Relax, he's just talked himself out of the running," Chakotay smirked in Harry's direction. He just heard the sound of the turbolift door opening over the sound of Tom's resulting chuckling.

Harry scowled in the ex Commander's direction. He very rarely could take Harry's angry face seriously. It reminded him of one of Kiara's tantrums as a baby.

"I have better odds than you do," Harry said.

"Funny thing is, you probably don't," Chakotay laughed. He knew he was right. Nobody respected Tom, at least not until the demon invasion a few months ago. Harry seemed to go from defiant but idiotic to green Ensign every other day, so no wonder his crew took his orders more often than the ex-Ensign's.

A horrible thought occurred to him. Tom had an excellent point. With these two and him as choices, why wouldn't the crew pick somebody like James over them? Like his mother a lot of people fear, but like and respect him. Of course he didn't understand why, but he figured fear probably still had a lot to do with it. He would never admit it to his face but his aggressive and impulsive methods of doing things reminded him of Kathryn, it was one of the reasons he was so rude to him. The two were a lot more alike than he or James would admit outloud. He hated thinking that, it made him feel sick.

Tom shrugged, "you never know, I may choose Damien over you two. He's been a Captain before." Chakotay's thoughts screeched to a halt. *Did he just say what I thought he did? He's joking, he always does. Maybe I misheard.*

Chakotay noticed that Harry had stopped his baby scowling and was just staring at Tom in horror. *Nope, obviously not to the last one.*

"That qualifies as the stupidest thing anyone as ever said, ever. No surprise it comes from Tom," Chakotay commented.

"It was a joke! Yeesh, lighten up!" Tom complained.

"Speaking of jokes..." James' voice said, out of nowhere. The two men turned their attention on him, jumping at the suddenness of him appearing. Chakotay however could see him clearly behind and in between the pair. "I need to speak to Chakotay."

"Great stuff," Chakotay muttered. He stepped forward to stand in between the other two. He knew what the answer was but he wanted to hear it from the horse's mouth. "Would you really want to keep the first officer job if Tom picked me to replace you?"

"I'd rather have Annika in charge than you," James replied while rolling his eyes.

Chakotay shuddered at the thought, but he expected an answer like that.

James gestured his head towards the Conference Room door. "Today please."

Chakotay pretended to look surprised as he watched him walk towards the Conference Room. "Please? There's hope yet." He soon followed.

Once they were both gone Tom sighed in relief and patted his friend on the shoulder. "Don't worry buddy, you were always going to be my number one."

Instead of the smile or thanks he was expecting, he got a disgusted and awkward stare back. "This is why people think we're gay, don't."

Tom sighed and pulled his hand away. "Somebody's just talked himself back onto Opps."

In the Conference Room Chakotay walked passed James to turn and sit on the edge of the table. James remained near the door. He quickly studied his face to see if he could predict the conversation. He didn't have a stupid smirk on his face so he could rule out a pisstake. *Just ask, but for once try to do it without insulting him. Let's see if we can mend this bridge, for Kathryn.*

"What do I owe the displeasure?" Chakotay asked. *Great job.*

"I'll keep it brief. Somebody broke into my quarters and stole something," James answered.

*Well I'd never have guessed that one.* Chakotay shook his head. "You think it was me? That's new. There's nothing of yours I'd want."

"It wasn't mine. Apparently it belonged to Kiara," James said.

"I see," Chakotay's face tightened a little at the mention of his granddaughter's name. He wished he could be there for her in her darkest time, but all he did was push her away. He did not want to be accused of doing more to her. "You're looking in the wrong place. I wouldn't steal from her."

He walked forward to leave but James moved to the side to get in his way. *Ohno, don't start that.* Tom mentioned that having two daughters had calmed him down, but so far Chakotay hadn't seen the evidence of that. "Don't even think about it. You have my word, I didn't steal anything."

James nodded and took one step to the left. *Maybe Tom was right after all.* Chakotay was about to continue for the door when he was grabbed by the front of his shirt, then dragged and pushed into the nearby wall. The pain shot down the whole of his back and through to his ribs. He was thankful though, his usual encounters with James usually ended up with him literally into the wall.

"Your word means nothing to me. You violated my mother's grave, you tossed her body to the Tolg..." James growled.

Chakotay only sighed and shook his head. *No one will ever forget or forgive that. Why should they?* "I'm not that man anymore, I swear to you. All I can do now is to try and make amends for what I've done. I can't fix it."

"You think this is the way to make amends? You don't know the meaning of the word," James said.

"I know I did something terrible..." Chakotay said as he tried to get out of his grip. He knew he wouldn't be able to but he wasn't one for giving up either. *If I just prove I'm sincere it could be a start.* "But I won't be judged for it by somebody like you." *Really? Do you ever listen to me?*

"Fine, but I'm not the only one," James said as he roughly shoved him to one side. "If you're really behind this..."

"I know, you'll make me wish I wasn't or I'll be getting acquainted with the walls again. I assure you I didn't take anything..." Chakotay said. James left before he could finish his sentence, "worth beating me up over." *All of this over a stolen object? What's really gone missing, one of his kids lego creations, a doll? What?* He frowned, "why the big fuss?"

The door opened to someone he didn't expect. He gave her a smile anyway. "Jessie? I hope you're not here for another age botch spell."

Jessie did her fake sweet smile. Despite her using it a lot Daniel didn't recognise it and smiled back. "No, as you can see I'm book-less." She forced her way inside his quarters, all it took was a light push on the arm. "Unless you happen to have anything."

As her back was on him he showed a little worry in his face which he was very aware of. He tried to get his smile back. "No. Wesley is the bookworm."

"Really?" Jessie said with her back still on him.

"Do you really have to ask? What can I do for you?" Daniel tried to change the subject.

"One of my books is missing. You haven't seen it, have you?" Jessie asked.

He was relieved that she had her back to him at first, but now it was making him uncomfortable. Arming his usual confident face he walked over to and in front of her so he could see her face again. To his surprise she still was using her sweet smile. It quelled his nerves a bit.

"No, why would I?" he answered.

"It was a death and resurrection spell book. That doesn't sound like something you'd be interested in, is it?" Jessie asked, her smile threatening to crack. She held it together, only just.

Daniel wasn't doing much better. Blood was rushing to the surface, turning his whole face red. His heart thumped so hard he figured it'd jump out at any moment. He tried his best to steel his nerves. *She knows? She couldn't. She wouldn't be smiling.* "No, not at all."

"No," Jessie sighed. She turned around to leave, once again aiming her back to him. His shoulders relaxed as she made her way to the door. "It's not like you have any dead girlfriends or anything." Suddenly she stopped and turned around. He was not prepared for the deadly glare she sent his way. "Oh wait! You do."

Daniel chuckled nervously, he tried desperately to get that cocky expression back. The stare he was getting melted it away instantly. "Oh please, I'm over that whole thing. She was way too young for me anyway, you know. Also dating a Slayer, big no." His nervousness increased. *Jesus, get it together Daniel. She'll see right through you!* "As a watcher I mean. You... as a witch that's totally okay. No consequences there." *No, don't go there. Really.*

"Be more nervous and suspicious," Jessie said, narrowing her eyes. She slowly stepped closer to him. "You did it, didn't you?"

"Did what?" Daniel asked with a fake smile of his own. *She can't have known it was me, I covered my tracks perfectly. Surely there's others that are more likely than me.*

"Why don't you tell me, huh? I tell you, if something happens it's always the bloody watcher," Jessie's voice raised.

*If something happens?* Daniel frowned slightly, his nervousness seemed a distant memory. "What happened?"

"Please, you're going to have to do a lot better than that," Jessie rolled her eyes. She looked around the quarters for the book, she couldn't even find a book let alone the one she was looking for.

"I told you," Daniel almost sighed in relief. For the first time he was happy the book was ripped apart by the warp core implosion.

Jessie's head shot around to glare at him again, he couldn't help but jump a little. He wondered how her husband could live with her, even before the pregnancy. *I suppose only a Slayer could handle a woman like that.* "What did you do, toss it away?" she hissed.

"I didn't do anything!" Daniel protested. "Wesley's the watcher who likes to screw with people with books. If you'll recall I was the one that killed mothers."

"Yeah I wouldn't use that argument to defend yourself here," Jessie said. "I hope you're happy."

Daniel stepped forward, his curiosity was getting the better of him. If this was just a case of a missing book, surely she wouldn't be getting this angry over it. He remembered her previous accusation. "What's happened? Surely something has or you wouldn't accuse me of tossing the book."

Jessie studied him carefully. To her he seemed genuinely confused. "Why don't you find out for yourself." She gave him one last death glare before turning to leave. Daniel waited for a while before rushing out himself.

### **Present Time:**

The room were busy yelling over each all over again. The only two being quiet were Damien and Tom. Well three if you count Harry lying unconscious on the floor with a broken nose.

"I wouldn't risk my daughter's body to kill Ylara. I lost my head a long time ago, I'm still getting better. Don't..." Chakotay ranted.

"I told you twenty times already, no Barbie vampires allowed in my Engineering!" B'Elanna screamed and pointed at Annika.

Neelix tried to offer people the food he brought one last time. "I'm telling you I replicated these, just eat them!"

"Why am I not called Doctor Jones anymore?" the Doctor snapped.

Craig's head shook, his voice barely rose to a shout. "We're never going to help her like this."

"Because it makes my boobs look bigger. Duh... oh Damien's over there," Annika's yelling turned into a crazy giggle. She shoved poor Neelix out of the way.

"I only tapped him!" Jessie snarled. "He talked over my flashback!"

"Oh for god's sake, put them away. No one wants to see them anyway!" Kiara growled.

"Oh you're getting better, are you? I suppose I'll just take your word on that and forgive you, shall I?" James yelled Chakotay's way.

"I was thinking about bringing Fair Haven back," Tom said. A collective gasp took over the Conference Room. He grew a little nervous as everyone had their killer glares on him. "Great, got your attention again. Once again we're jumping ahead. We'll return to the suspects later. Doc, is there anything else you can tell us about this?"

The Doctor nodded grimly, "I suppose I can. We had hid a brick wall..."

### **Eleven hours ago:**

The Doctor and Nikki stared at the brick wall in front of them, clearly flummoxed as to why it was there, especially in Sickbay.

"So that's why you should crack it open and take a peek," Annika finished saying.

"Um," the Doctor was speechless.

Nikki squinted her eyes at it. "I think I see him."

The pair heard Damien's voice shush her. Annika didn't though.

"Why on earth would you look for him inside a wall? That doesn't make sense," the Doctor said.

Annika smiled broadly, of course showing off her many teeth. "Last week I found him hiding in a drawer. Crafty little smoochums, isn't he?"

The Doctor was thankful he was incapable of gagging or worse, but he somehow still felt close to doing it. Nikki was too busy trying to imagine it.

"Let me know," Annika winked at them and skipped out.

Damien somehow jumped out of the wall like it wasn't real. "Quick, I need to move this somewhere safer. Now!" The Doctor stared blankly.

*"Not hid a brick wall, hit a brick wall! Damn typo's that look like other words," the Doctor said.*

*"Oh," Annika sighed sadly.*

Everything rewound, the wall disappeared. Damien and Nikki stood at the biobed Ylara was on instead.

He shook his head as he read the latest scan. Nikki watched him from the other side.

"There's no head injury, no radiation or any other dangerous substances inside her. It makes no sense."

"Don't tell me you're stumped, Wonder Doc," Nikki said.

The Doctor glanced down at Ylara's face which was still contorted with the pain she endured. "It's almost like an attack. If I can figure out the cause, it may help with the recovery. For now, we only seem to be stalling the inevitable." He didn't notice Damien walk up behind him, staring bullets into his back.

Nikki sighed, "what do you mean? The coma stops it from getting worse, the procedure..."

"Isn't working, can't you see that!" the Doctor snapped at her. "Honestly, I need to find a nurse who has an IQ point."

Nikki pouted and stomped off through to the office and then to the lab next to it.

"The solution is simple," Damien snarled.

The Doctor rolled his eyes and turned around to face him. "Is it? I'm the best medicine has to offer, but I'm sure Damien has the answer."

Damien didn't break his glare, he didn't even blink. "All we need to do is find her a new body. I'll take care of the rest."

The Doctor scoffed, "don't you think it was hard enough for her that she was in Lena's body, and now you want her to intentionally steal another?"

"Why not? We just pick out someone that nobody will miss," Damien said. He looked over towards the office. "I doubt Nikki there will have any brain to damage."

"No," the Doctor said. "The patient decides on what treatment they get, and when they're unable to answer..."

"It's up to people who know them well or family to answer for them," Damien finished for him.

The Doctor resisted the urge to laugh at him, "so what makes you think that you qualify? The only people close are Lena's family, and we all know that only one will stick up for her."

"Right, I'm the closest she has to an ally," Damien said. "Besides do you have any options of your own?"

"Not yet, but I will," the Doctor replied. He pushed passed the villain to head for his office.

"Well I do. Find the person responsible for this and I'll force Ylara's soul into them," Damien muttered. He was almost at the door when the Doctor rushed back to grab his arm. "Oh please, all I have to do is pull you further out and you won't be able to hold onto me hologram!"

"I can't believe I'm saying this to you of all people, but if you really care about her you won't do this to her," the Doctor said.

Damien pulled him closer to the door, the Doc pulled back. The villain smirked at him. "You're a walking medical database, I bet you don't even believe in a soul."

The Doctor looked very offended, he tried to shake it off. "I have no explanation or proof as to how you managed to survive death and possess people. I can't see any reason why Slayers are stronger than others. I also can't tell the difference between Ylara's medical file and Lena's, other than the obvious age difference. It doesn't mean I blindly ignore it. Eleven years on Voyager has taught me to keep an open mind."

"Yet you still haven't considered that something mystical is behind this," Damien said as he pointed towards Ylara's bed. "A lot of people wanted her dead, all of them were Lena fans. If we save Ylara but not Lena too, then that'll sting the asshole that did this more than saving both ever could. If you think that whining about Ylara's diddly feelings is gonna stop me then..."

"So this is about doing something evil, not rescuing the only person you care about that doesn't have long ears and fur? That makes more sense," the Doctor nodded.

"Why do you keep thinking I give a crap about Ylara? She bossed me around, hit me, demeaned me. This isn't about her, this is about who did it. Imagine how funny it would be to see him possessed by the girl who murdered his daughter. Priceless," Damien smiled bitterly.

"Hmm," the Doctor sighed. "James believes that you do actually give a damn about her..."

"Then it must be true," Damien scoffed.

"Well I don't. If you did you wouldn't add to her guilt by forcing her into somebody else. If you really want to do something more your style, then go to the holodeck and run in a meadow with rabbits," the Doctor said.

Damien's eyes drifted off elsewhere. The Doctor groaned, silently assuming he was imagining his last sentence. He let go of his arm and headed for his office once again. Damien remained where he was, deep in thought.

### **The Security Office:**

Kiara stared out the window watching the stars go by. She was so engrossed in it she barely heard the door behind her open. James and Jessie walked through it. They didn't notice her as they were too busy talking.

"... obviously a good liar," James was saying.

"I can't say the same for Daniel though," Jessie said.

Kiara overheard them and turned around. Though the words were mostly muffled to her as she hadn't been listening.

"So, should I take Craig next?" Jessie sighed.

James then noticed the other person in the room. "Kiara?"

"Kiara, well whatev..." Jessie said, only then noticing as well. She grew a little nervous. "Oh, didn't see you there."

"Yeah hi," Kiara said while awkwardly avoiding eye contact with her. The things she said to her the other day, they still weighed heavily on her. Those whole few days did. "Sorry, I can come back later."

James briefly glanced towards Jessie, then he walked over to his niece. "No it's fine. How are you doing?"

Kiara shrugged her shoulders. "Crappy, but I'll live."

"Maybe I should go handle that Craig thing while you two..." Jessie said nervously. She slowly backed away towards the door. "Talk, okay?"

"It's okay, you don't have to go," Kiara felt a little bad.

James turned back around towards the door and Jessie. She was already in between the frame. "Jess, what's the..."

"Nothing," Jessie quickly said. She lightly smiled at him right before taking one last step backwards to close the door.

Kiara bit her lip nervously. "That's my fault." James moved back around to face her. "The last time we talked I was a little rude to her. She was trying to talk me out of *it*, you know and I got a little defensive."

James shook his head, "Jessie's not one to avoid people who've argued with her."

"Yeah but I kinda am," Kiara said.

"I see," James understood. "So is this a casual visit or is something on your mind?"

"Second," Kiara answered, her head dipped. He was her only real family left, at least that's how it felt like to her. After her harsh words the other day, she wanted to include him so he wouldn't think she meant any of it. She couldn't bare to lose anyone else. "Q stopped by. He knew about what I almost did and..." James looked a little concerned to say the least, she noticed that and quickly shook her head. "It's all right. He promised to keep it from the Continuum. It's Q dad that's in trouble."

That didn't bother James in the slightest, he even smiled a little. "Please tell me he's getting ripped apart by something, then constantly revived to go through it again. Something like that."

*That does sound like fun. My dad deserves nothing less.* Kiara's shoulders raised, "maybe. He only said he'll be punished."

"Well I can imagine it," James said. "So you're staying, he's getting his ass kicked. I'm still waiting for the problem."

*Yeah what about me?* "I'm still waiting for my punishment," Kiara said quietly.

James frowned at her. "What, why?"

"Why?" Kiara's eyes widened. *He can't be serious. I risked everything just to bring Lena back to a life she hated, nearly killing someone in the process. The Q would have likely destroyed me for doing it. Why? Is he naive or does he not know yet?* "Somebody did tell you what I almost did, right?"

"You're in a lot of pain, grieving. No one's going to punish you for that," James said.

Kiara's bottom lip edged its way out as her eyes glazed over. She tried to hide it by turning back towards the window. That was too nice a thing to say to someone like her. "You should," she whispered.

"Maybe you should stop punishing yourself. Nobody needs to do it for you, you've done enough," James said.

*Hardly.* "But you warned me, I didn't listen," Kiara stuttered.

James managed a smile as he took a few steps forward towards her. "Do you think I would have listened?"

"Well, yeah," Kiara answered.

"No. When I decided to bring Jessie back nothing was going to get in my way. I'm just as stubborn as you are," James said. "It's nothing to be ashamed of. It's a Janeway trait."

Her lip curled a tiny bit as she turned her head to one side. That was true of Lena and him; they never did as others told them, once their minds were set they'd do it. They were so much like their mother and she was jealous of Lena for it. She always felt like an outsider in comparison, Kiara blamed her weaker side on her monster of a father. "Really? But I changed my mind."

"That probably just means you're better than the rest of us," James said with a shrug.

Kiara finally let herself smile, even if it was only for a minute. *That makes no sense. I think he just likes being corny on purpose. It makes people think he's stupid when he's really not. I know he prefers to be underestimated. Yeah that's it.* Still Kiara appreciated it. It was nice to know that someone still cared about her despite her crimes. She looked back over her shoulder. "Thanks."

James walked forward to join her at the window. "Don't worry about it, we're family."

"Yeah. So what did you and Jess want to talk to me about?" Kiara asked.

"What?" James mumbled. He turned his head towards her. "What do you mean?"

Kiara felt a little embarrassed. She swore that Jessie grew nervous when she saw her, and she didn't leave to help her avoid the awkwardness like she told James. They wanted to talk to her, after Craig. It was probably to do with what happened. "She said something about chatting to Craig first, you said my name and she thought you meant me," Kiara replied.

James shook his head. "No, it's not about the Q thing. You can relax. Jess just needs to ask Craig about something." It was as if he kept reading her mind and was countering to keep her off track. He was a telepath so it was possible. Though he admitted once that he avoids using it. *Nah, if he wanted to talk to me and Craig, it was obvious what it would be about. Stop being silly.* "I wouldn't worry about it."

"Oh," Kiara sighed. She knew first hand that Jessie's pregnancy had riled her up and it was sometimes a little terrifying to be on the receiving end of it. Craig was in a fragile place, she could tell, so she hoped he hadn't done anything to upset her. *I owe him my life.*

He pushed yet another plate to one side. Once every three or so hours Craig would replicate something to eat, but he would instead just stare at it until it had long gone cold. The thought of eating even a mouthful made him feel sick, although his stomach would growl everytime.

*What have I done?*

No, he had to escape that thought. He had to think of something else, anything but that. If he didn't his mind would not stop going over the events, over and over again. He would imagine the three people who didn't survive the Leda and their last moments. The flash of light that consumed the ship. He'd imagine himself stopping Daniel from even starting the ritual. Each time he'd do something different. Pins and needles struck at his chest, his heart thumped louder and faster, the butterflies in his stomach did cartwheels.

*Why didn't I stop him? I could have. The least I could have done was not done anything at all. No. I was weak. Selfish.*

"Stop it," Craig said quietly out loud. His head shook, as if that would help. All he could do to distract himself was focus on his meal. Without even trying it he could tell it had gone cold.

The fork dropped to the plate with a loud clatter. The whole room turned to look at him for only a second, to him it seemed longer.

*What have I done?*

"Craig?" a familiar voice nearby said.

Craig inwardly sighed in relief. They were just in time. He glanced up to see who it was. The relief was nice while it lasted.

"Jessie," he could only muster.

The new arrival pulled the chair out beside him and sat herself down in it. She sighed as if she'd been walking for miles. "Do you have time for a chat?"

Craig was sure he was already late returning to duty. What difference did it make? "Sure."

"I know that you were the one..." Jessie said. The butterflies were back and they felt like they had grown. His heart raced. "... who talked to Kiara." *Oh. Let her finish before you panic again, you idiot.* He breathed in as deeply as he could through his nose without giving that away. "So I assume you know about the book."

There it was again. His heart couldn't take much more of this. "Book? She was going to use her powers." *Good don't lie but don't give yourself away either.*

Jessie's eyes kept squinting, her head tilted too. Craig felt like she was trying to find something, anything in his face to give him away. "I thought I'd ask. I wasn't sure," she said. "Somebody stole it."

*Daniel.* How did he know about it, he didn't before he saw the blasted thing. He did wonder where he got it from. *Did it belong to Jessie? Why mention Kiara? Ohno.* "What's a book got to do with Kiara?" he had to know for sure.

"Because it was hers, sort of," was the answer he expected yet dreaded. "Obviously using her powers wasn't her first idea."

Craig shook his head. He didn't want to believe that Kiara would want to use that same spell, but he could see it though. "I see, so it's one of those books, huh?"

"Uh huh," Jessie answered. She seemed to relax a little for some reason. Craig couldn't do the same yet. "Do you know of anyone who would want to and could use that book?"

*Yeah, me.* "Not off the top of my head," he lied instead, he didn't even think about it. *Why are you protecting him? You just don't want her to know you and him used it. Daniel was right, you're a coward.* Once again there were two voices warring in his head; one that he believed was his conscience and the other that was what was left of himself. Neither were really winning. "Sorry."

"Why? I have a good idea who did this," Jessie said, finally smiling. He still couldn't relax though. The book was gone and she'd find that out eventually. "I just thought I'd ask if you knew anything about it since you talked to Kiara."

"I didn't even know she considered it," Craig said to avoid lying to her again. "I hope you figure it out." He wasn't sure if that was a lie or not. In that second he realised that a part of him wanted to get caught. Maybe it was the only way to hush one of the voices in his head. "You know before anything happens."

Jessie's eyes drifted to her left, her shoulders tensed up slightly. He felt his own do the exact same thing, the prickling feeling around his heart came back. When her eyes returned to him he could see

the concern in them. He swore he felt his heart stop. "Yeah that would be nice," she said. She faked a smile as she stood up. "I'll see you later."

Craig couldn't let her leave now. Something was horribly wrong, it was obvious. Maybe she knew about how the Leda met its end, maybe it was something else. He couldn't do this, it wasn't him. "Wait," he timidly called out for her. She only just heard him and stopped. *Just tell her, admit it.* "I... erm..."

"What?" Jessie frowned as she re-approached him.

"I... know what..." his voice began to crack. *Come on!* "I know, something's happened hasn't it? Cos of the book." *You coward.*

"What makes you think that?" Jessie asked.

*Cos you know it did! You killed them.* "You look worried," he could only say.

Jessie sighed, she sat back down again. "It's just a theory, I really don't want to worry anyone else until I know for certain."

"So something has happened," Craig said.

"Relax Craig. I don't think this has anything to do with you," Jessie smiled, this one looked genuine. "I'll see you later."

He did nothing more than watch her leave. Again he got lost in his own thoughts of guilt, only there were a lot more of them to throw at him.

Soon he was the only one sitting in the Mess Hall.

"I'm telling you, this has got Chakotay's name written all over it," James said. He was speeding away from her again, she had enough of trying to keep up with him. Jessie figured if she stopped he'd eventually realise he was talking to himself and slow down. He was almost around the corner when he seemed to notice.

"Do that again and you're on piggy back duty for the next two months," she said once he doubled back to where she stood.

He looked down, shame was on his face. As usual it was easy for her to forgive him. "Sorry, I just..."

"It's okay, I get it. You're worried about her," Jessie said. "We'll find the book and fix this. We won't if you keep going on like this."

"Right," James nodded. He looked calmer on the outside but she knew better than that. It was all in his eyes. Jessie figured that if they didn't find a cure for Ylara soon he'd do something he would regret later, not that he'd admit to it.

"Chakotay may want to do something like this but he can't," Jessie said. "This is the work of a witch, or a watcher."

"You really think it was Daniel?" James didn't look so sure. She really had no idea why.

Jessie thought a small smile would reassure him. "He was definitely nervous. He stuttered and looked all panicky..."

"But?" James said.

Jessie sighed. She hoped he wouldn't notice that. "But he seemed genuinely surprised when I hinted something happened. He's the closest, but I'm not really sure now."

"Well, at least you've ruled out Craig and Kiara," James looked a little relieved.

"Yeah." *But we've gotten nowhere. No book, no suspect.* "I wonder which spell they used. I didn't really look at them all, I had just flicked through to find the one Kiara hinted at. It wasn't that one. I didn't have time to look at it all before it was stolen. The only thing really sacrificed was the host, well attempted to anyway." She slapped herself internally for that last sentence. Ylara wasn't gone yet. James wasn't going to calm down anytime soon if she kept mentioning it. When she shook her head and looked up at him she noticed he was deep in thought. *Hopefully he didn't hear me.* "What?"

He looked directly at her, barely shaking his head. "It's nothing. Silly even. We should keep going." He turned his back on her. For a moment she had no clue why, then it clicked with her. She couldn't help but laugh at him.

"Don't be silly. If I jumped on your back I'd just bounce off before my hands reached you."

James turned back around. For some reason she expected him to be embarrassed, she should have known better than that. He was smiling, even laughing a little. Her laughter died down as she could still see the pent up anger in his eyes. *I can't believe he still thinks he can hide that from me, how many years has it been?* She tried to contain the shudder so he wouldn't know what she was thinking. *No don't even think that, I sound so old.*

"Too bad, cos that was a one time offer," he smirked at her.

She made herself go along with his facade for now, her hand reached out to give him a playful shove. "Oh really? Just like all your other one time offers like the foot massages, the carrying my shopping bags, the bath incident," she said just as two people walked by them. The two smirked as they did, prompting James to get a little flustered. Jessie could never stop giggling whenever he did.

"You mean run the bath, not... that's what she means," he stuttered. "You swore you'd never mention the foot massage ever again," he leaned in close to whisper.

He was so close and she thought he needed it. Jessie quickly closed the gap to give him a brief kiss. As she expected his face got even redder.

"Surely you must be used to that by now," she pretended to scold him.

"No," James admitted as he straightened back up.

Jessie reached out to take his closest hand, she gave it a little squeeze. "Come on, let's see how she is." She didn't give him a choice, her hand led the way down the corridor. As they walked down it, Jessie felt just a twinge of resistance from him. He was slowing down, she was no longer simply leading him, she was pulling. In the end she had to stop as his whole weight and strength was against her. She'd have more luck pulling a shuttle. *Yeah that's not offensive at all.* She shook her head and turned around to see what was the matter.

His blush had faded, the fake smile and smirks were long gone. He stared directly ahead of her, the eyes full of anger before just looked lost. She couldn't shake off the look of dread on his face. Everytime she saw it something had happened or was going to. Jessie reluctantly looked behind her. She didn't realise that during her struggle they had still reached Sickbay, they were standing right at its door.

"Wait here," Jessie told him. With some doubt she let go of his hand and entered Sickbay alone. The Doctor and Nikki both looked towards her in almost perfect sync, each with the same grim look on their faces. Jessie slowly approached, very careful to avoid looking at the biobed they stood next to. She didn't want to see her, not like this. She had to know though. "Is she..."

The Doctor glanced down and closed his eyes. "She suffered another seizure." His head shook. "The damage before was extreme, now..."

"Ohno," Jessie stuttered. Her eyes closed tightly as the door behind her opened. "When?"

"Just now, we've only just stabilised her," the Doctor answered quietly. "Even if we find the cause we may not be able to reverse the damage."

"You mean you can't," James said.

The Doctor shook his head, "I said may not, there could..."

Jessie cringed, her eyes squeezed closed even tighter. *He's not stupid, stop.*

"Why don't you tell me the truth, I'm not a child," James snapped.

"James," Jessie said in a hushed tone. She walked over towards him to re-take his hand. "We'll fix this, I promise."

His head slowly turned towards her. "How?"

"Easy. This is a spell. We'll find the book and reverse it. Then you can do whatever you want to the person who did this," Jessie said softly. She sensed the Doctor about to complain about the last part, she shushed him loudly. "Okay?"

"Okay," James wasn't convinced but he nodded anyway.

"Right, it's not over yet," Jessie smiled at him.

The light was merely a tiny dot in the distance. Darkness surrounded her, crushing every inch of her soul. She tried to scream but no sound came out.

The light disappeared.

The Doctor leaned over his patient, device in hand. He carefully opened one of her eyes, the device lit up as he pointed it at it. He sighed as he didn't get the response he wanted. He quickly straightened up when he heard the door open again.

"What's up..." Tom said cheerfully.

"Doc," the Doctor finished for him to Tom's disappointment. The look on his face chased away the smile. "I have some bad news."

Tom then noticed he had a patient, he had to look twice to see who it was. His eyes widened. "Oh god, do we have another demon problem?"

"No," the Doctor replied quickly. He thought about it afterwards. "Possibly, we're not sure yet."

"Oh great," Tom groaned.

The Doctor stepped away from the biobed to walk towards him. "Ylara collapsed earlier today. Long story short her higher brain functions have been damaged. We have no cause for it, no cure. I just thought you should be aware before her body gives up and we have an angry brother on our hands."

Tom nodded, he understood. His eyes were still very wide. "Angry brother? Does he think that somebody did this to her?"

"It's the current theory yes. Jessie has convinced him that it's the work of a spell," the Doctor replied.

"Great job Jess," Tom muttered under his breath. "This could easily be some sort of neurological issue between Ylara and her host. Nothing more."

"If this was something that happened soon after the takeover, I'd agree but then find no proof of it. She's psychically fine, her previous scans back that up. I have no explanation," the Doctor said.

Tom's hand curled into a fist as it rested against his chin. "Hmm, Jess probably has a point."

"Probably?" the Doctor's eyebrow raised.

"Ylara isn't really well liked amongst some groups, plus being a Slayer she gets a few non-Humanoid fans as well," Tom explained. "The least we can do is eliminate the humanoid ones."

"Most demons appear humanoid in..." the Doctor said.

Tom cleared his throat to interrupt him, "fine eliminate the mortal ones, and Annika. I have a meeting to arrange anyway, I might as well pull it forward and put a few people on the spot."

The Doctor couldn't help but smirk a little. "No offense Mr Paris, but if the Stuart duo weren't able to get the truth out of the culprits, how can you?"

Tom smiled deviously, "easily. We tell a little white lie."

### **The Conference Room:**

Most of the Senior Staff for both vessels were packed into the room. All of the chairs were already taken so a few people had the choice between standing or leaning on the table. A lot of them looked a little irritable, some were exhausted, and the rest were a bit of both. Tom sat at the end of the table patiently waiting for the last pair to arrive, his hands folded underneath his chin, elbows leaning on the table.

"What's this about Paris, it must be important," Chakotay asked.

Tom's shoulders shrugged. "I may as well wait until everyone's here."

The door opened on cue. The Doctor walked in with James right behind him. The former nodded at Tom before moving to stand beside the window, nearby Tom. James decided to remain near the door and lean against the wall.

"Good, we're all here," Tom said. His hands lowered to rest on the table. He armed his best serious command style face. "You may be wondering why I called this meeting at midnight. Well I'd only do so if there was something serious going on." Tom looked around the room, making eye contact with every person in the room. "As you know over a year ago we lost one of our Chosens. A few months ago we lost another." He glanced towards the Doctor, then at James. "As of one hour ago we're right back where we started; with only one."

Most of the room erupted into loud talking, almost everyone seemed to be talking to somebody. Their voices started rising. Tom looked around, he wasn't the only one doing so, to study the reactions. He made a mental note that Craig and Damien weren't saying anything. Craig's jaw was threatening to drop, his eyes glistened. To Tom, Damien just looked his usual smug self, minus his talking. He looked back to James and the Doctor to see if they noticed the same.

"Ok that's enough!" Tom tried to shush them.

James rolled his eyes and approached the table. Tom grew a little worried about what was going to happen next. He was right to as the Slayer's fist slammed down onto the table, creating an almighty bang and a crack on the defenceless table. The room stopped as soon as they heard it. James turned to Tom like nothing happened, "go on."

Tom nodded nervously, "right. Until we figure out what happened, nobody is leaving this room. As soon as our table breaker walked in the doors were locked..."

Chakotay almost leapt out of his own chair. "Do you mean just Ylara's dead, or is Lena..." Tom winced a little, he quickly looked back at the other two. "Is my daughter gone? Why did no one tell me sooner?"

"It all happened very quickly, brutal but quickly," Tom answered. "If it wasn't for the Doctor we would never have suspected it."

"Suspected what? You still haven't said how she died," Neelix asked for everyone.

"Oh god," the people near to Craig heard him whimper.

Tom turned to the Doctor and gave him a nod. "I'm afraid there's nothing left. The attack destroyed her higher brain functions. Even I could not treat damage like that." James turned away to stare out the window, his fists clenching tightly. "Whoever did this intended to destroy Ylara... and Lena."

"You think one of us did this?" B'Elanna was surprised.

Chakotay's stare flew towards James, his eyes narrowed. "I'm sorry but only one person on this whole ship is capable of beating a Chosen Slayer to death and that's another Chosen Slayer."

James swung around. Before he could march over to the ex Commander, Jessie rushed over to stop him. "No, no... wait. There's a bit we're forgetting," she said, flashing her eyes towards the Doctor and Tom.

Tom looked very uneasy by this point. "Yes, well erm... Doc, maybe explain it in a different way, yes?"

"You're over simplifying it Commander," the Doctor nodded. "The attack was all in her head. As Mr Paris hinted, if any other Doctor treated her they may not have spotted it. I did. It was made to look like an accident, when in fact it was murder."

He paused to inspect everybody's response, Tom did the same. Almost everybody looked a little shocked. The only exceptions again were Damien and Craig. Damien just rolled his eyes and mouthed *duh*. Craig had covered his face with one of his hands so neither them could really tell. They both glanced at one another, Tom gave him a nod to continue. Chakotay spotted this exchange, his eyes narrowed slightly.

"I'll do a little show and tell," the Doctor said as he made his way over to the wall panel. He pressed one panel to bring up a scan of a brain. "This is before." Another tap changed it to a different one, most of the room couldn't really see the difference. "This is the scan I took before she... passed on. Ignore all the damage and focus on the... er, this part." He pointed at the front of the brain. "To keep it simple this caused her whole body to go into spasm. The brain could not contain it and it spread even further. As I'm an expert I was able to pinpoint where it began and I found the cause." His finger tapped the panel to zoom in to where he pointed before. "If you look carefully you'll see the tiny impla..."

"No," Craig interrupted him. Attention was all on him now. "That's not what happened." He swallowed the large lump in his throat and forced himself out of his seat. "I did it."

Tom was the first to really widen his eyes, but for different reasons. "Wow that worked. Man I'm good."

Craig felt everyone's stare on him, his head dipped down to avoid them. He could feel Chakotay's intense glare piercing his soul. He dared to look around with his eyes, but kept his head down. He could just make out James shaking his head and turning his back on everyone. Jessie's jaw had dropped. He eventually got to Kiara and his resolve wavered. Just as well as somebody behind him slapped him across the back of his head so he wouldn't have seen her anyway. Craig turned it to see that it was Damien of all people. He was the last person he expected to be angry.

"Craig..." Jessie was the first to speak up.

"I'm sorry. I couldn't lie anymore. Do whatever you want, I deserve it," Craig stuttered. His sore head dipped even further. "What does it matter anymore."

The Doctor, still a little shell shocked, turned the computer panel back to normal. "Maybe we should..." he said in Tom's direction.

"Yeah, maybe we should," Tom agreed.

Annika raised her hand, "I have a question. Who's Ylara?" As usual she was ignored.

Tom was about to continue when Chakotay pushed his chair into the wall and stomped over to where Craig stood. Damien pushed him forward to close the gap sooner. Chakotay grabbed the younger man by the front of his shirt. "What did you do to my daughter, you twisted little..."

"Wait!" Tom tried to stop it. He quickly climbed out of his seat. "Ylara's not dead." As he expected the people who didn't know that gave him the same angry yet confused stare. "Yet. I figured it was the best way to get somebody to either fess up or look guilty as hell."

Craig found himself thrown to the floor. Chakotay stepped over to him to go towards Tom instead. Jessie was the only one really in his way, she didn't budge either. "Jessie," he snarled.

"It worked, didn't it? Sit down," she hissed back.

Chakotay stared at her in shock, then at James and the Doctor as well. "You all knew?"

Tom sighed in relief. He never thought he'd see the day when Jessie would stop him from getting pummelled. He gave her a nod as a thanks. She gave him a head shake that told him she'd make up for it later.

"Most of what was said is true. It was only the dead and implant part that was forged," he said nervously.

"I see," Chakotay scoffed. "So, what's being done about it?"

The Doctor glanced down at the floor sadly. "There isn't. I'm afraid it's inevitable."

"Oh, so can I get back to what I was doing?" Chakotay said, pointing back at Craig.

"No," James answered.

Chakotay scowled at his back. "I'll leave plenty for you."

Tom dared to walk away from his chair to approach him. "This whole thing wasn't just a witch hunt." He frowned, then noticed Jessie resisting a smirk in the corner of his eye. "Found one, I win." Nobody was in the mood to laugh. It seemed that way until Annika laughed a few seconds later. Tom shook his head, "but the point of this was to find the culprit so they could give us the cure."

Craig found everyone staring at him again as he pulled himself up from the floor. The image of the Leda being destroyed and the book being left behind flashed in his mind. The butterflies in his stomach had gotten bigger and faster. His chest ached. "Ohno."

"Ohno what?" Damien rolled his eyes.

Jessie shook her head. She shoved Chakotay to one side. Tom's eyes widened as he was free to go for him first. Jessie stepped a little closer to where Craig was. "No, I'm not buying it." Chakotay was already in front of Tom, ready to grab him as well. Luckily her words stopped him but not Tom from ducking.

"What?" Craig was a little confused.

"Craig you couldn't have done this. Who are you covering for?" Jessie asked. Her first sentence was soft, but the second one sounded a little harsh to everyone.

Craig finished his climb to his feet, using the table to push himself up. "I did."

Jessie closed the gap even further, she stood directly in front of him. "No, you didn't." She turned back around. "Craig has no powers, there's no way he could have done a spell by himself."

Chakotay frowned slightly. "Spell? First an implant, now a spell."

"It's the current theory," the Doctor nodded.

"No, it's the only thing that makes sense," Jessie corrected him.

Craig shook his head, "no. I mean yes it was a spell, but I didn't need any magic. Some spells just need chants and ingredients."

Jessie was staring towards him again. "You're lying. Who would you protect?"

Tom instinctively turned his head towards Kiara, Chakotay caught him and roughly shoved him to the floor. "Ow, I landed on the chair leg!"

Craig still couldn't bring himself to look at Kiara. Jessie did though, her shoulders sank as she did. The young girl was fighting the tears and avoiding eye contact with everyone, her lip was trembling. She could see the anger slowly building up in her face.

"Whoever did this has access to magic," James said. He turned his attention away from the window for a second. "Accuse Jessie and I'll throw you outside Chuckles." His head turned back to the window. Chakotay knew exactly what he really meant by that and decided to keep that brief thought to himself.

Damien walked over to Annika, "there's only one moron left who can do magic." She licked her lips at him which made him groan in disgust.

"Oh you're so sexy when you're all dark and stuff," she purred. Everyone shuddered.

Tom shook it off quickly. "She doesn't even know who Ylara is. Besides why would Craig cover for her? Did she threaten to strip for him?"

Craig shuddered again. "No, but I'd deserve it."

"Nobody does," B'Elanna said.

Chakotay shook his head. "How do we know that this is a spell done by a witch, or magic type person? I remember somebody doing a resurrection spell and he's definitely not magical."

"I'll still do it," James muttered.

"It just proves what he's saying. Craig admitted it, he did it," Chakotay said.

Craig nodded. "See. He's right."

"Fine, you did it. How do we reverse it?" Jessie asked. "Better yet, where's the book?"

"Gone," Craig said so quietly she only just heard him. "I'm sorry," his voice cracked.

The whole room turned deathly silent. Nobody knew what to say. The only thing that broke the silence was a loud knock on the door.

"Hellooo! Sorry I'm late. Why is the door locked?" Harry's voice called from the other side.

James groaned. "Nobody noticed he wasn't here?" A few people shook their heads. "Should I?" He didn't get an answer, he went to open the door anyway.

"Craig, tell me who helped you or you helped," Jessie whispered. "The spells in that book were powerful, there's no way somebody without magic can do them alone."

"I'm sorry," Craig shook his head.

Harry stepped inside, the door shut behind him. James tapped something into the panel.

"Hey, woah who else died?" he winced. Everyone stared at him in such a way he almost peed himself. "Oh."

**Present Time:**

"So we're right back where we started," Tom sighed.

Chakotay groaned angrily. "For god's sake. Why admit to it but not tell us who helped you? All you care about is yourself!"

"That's not true," Craig said quietly.

B'Elanna climbed out of her chair. "Okay why don't we make this simple. Why don't we figure out who didn't or couldn't, if they're not involved in anyway kick them out of here. Cos this..." she gestured her hand to the whole room. "Is ridiculous. Would Neelix really do something like this? Harry?"

"She's right, she always is," Tom said with a light smile. "All right." He turned to Chakotay, he shrunk a few inches at the stare he got. "You've done something stupid like this before, staying." His attention went to B'Elanna, "not a chance. You can go."

"Great, cos we both know what Miral does in her sleep at this time," B'Elanna sighed as she went to leave. One tap on the door panel from James opened the door for her.

Tom's eyes were a little wide. "Poor Johnathan. Anyway, uh... randomly pick er..." His finger pointed at Damien. "Do I really need to ask, staying." He thought about who was next then he realised something, "wait a minute, I'm not a suspect. Can I?"

"There's all my respect points for you gone," Chakotay commented.

"Fine!" Tom groaned. "It's not like it would take long to earn one point."

"Oh it would," Chakotay said.

"Neelix may have poisoned her, staying," Tom continued. Neelix looked shocked, everybody did until they thought about what he said. "She's not very clever and not from this time. I've never seen her use a replicator. Sorry Neelix."

"But Craig admitted to a spell," Neelix squeaked.

"Doc we need you here. Craig definitely staying," Tom ignored him. He continued his glance around the room. "Annika god I wish it wasn't a staying, but it is. Jessie, sorry."

"Fine, I'm the other witch. Whatever," she said much to his relief.

Tom turned to Kiara, the look on her face made him rethink what he was to say. "Um, maybe we should give her a pass."

"I wouldn't," Damien scoffed. He pulled a face as he noticed James glare at him. "Yeah yeah, I'm scared."

Tom breathed in deeply as he thought about it some more. It pained him to think that Damien was right. "You did try to kill Ylara before, he's right."

"It's okay," Kiara barely made any noise.

"Harry can go," Tom said.

Chakotay disagreed, "no." A few people looked at him in surprise. "He waltzes in late and is indifferent to what's happening. All he cares about is his bloody ship."

"I had no issue with Ylara," Harry tried to defend himself.

"He didn't do it, but yeah he should stay just in case I need to beat on someone else," James said. Harry's eyes widened.

Tom shook his head. "The mob has spoken."

"Hey, you're supposed to be my friend!" Harry protested.

"I am but I'd like to stay unbeaten. Being shoved was bad enough," Tom muttered while he rubbed his sore back. He barely looked towards James just in case he had just jinxed himself. "Did that resurrection spell on Jess, suspect."

"Yeah I would have accused me too," James said.

Tom wiped the sweat off his brow, "pew okay. Who else had a beef with Ylara, who else would mess with magic? We should drag them in here too."

"What difference does it make?" Craig stuttered. "The book was destroyed with the Leda." Harry's head swung in his direction. "Medicine can't cure her, she's going to die... cos of me."

*This is it. I remember this place.* How could she forget? She'd been here before, long ago. Drifting in the nothing just like she was doing now. She had killed so many innocent people she assumed that was her punishment. But to be here again she mustn't have done enough to redeem herself of those crimes.

Ylara wasn't surprised. Nothing could have erased the blood on her hands.

*Wait. Those watchers sealed me away in that statue the last time. This can't be the same place. Think. What was the last thing I did, where was I, who was I with?*

Damien and James, their worried faces suddenly became clear. She remembered now, the dizziness, the pain. Something hit her before that. Something just as dark as the place she was in. Then she fell. The body she stole fell, but she fell even further. Everything had faded, gotten smaller until they didn't exist to her anymore. *Maybe someone finally did it. Good, I didn't want to die any other way.*

"Ylara."

*There's that voice again, the one that called out to me before.*

Using all her remaining strength she tried to focus on the voice and where it came from. Slowly she started to make out a faint edge even in the black. *That must be it.*

"Hello?" she tried to call out but again her voice was missing. She tried again with a lot more force. "Who's there?" Again, there was no sound.

"No one," the voice spoke again.

Ylara recognised the voice, she had heard it before. She couldn't figure out where it came from or who it belonged to. Nevertheless it was something to hold onto. She tried to answer back but the abyss once again swallowed her voice.

*Why can't I answer? What's happening?*

The outline she was seeing faded back into the darkness. The faint hope she felt went with it. *What am I doing? I'm dead, accept it.*

The voice appeared again, this time a lot clearer, "don't give up."

*That voice. That's why I couldn't figure out where I'd heard it before.*

*It's mine.*

*That's why I couldn't speak. I can answer her now.*

She hadn't used her real voice in thousands of years, she hoped it would still work. *One way to find out.*

"Lena?" this time she was heard.

"You son of a bitch," Harry growled. This time he was the one charging forward to confront Craig. Nobody expected it so he wasn't stopped until he reached Jessie, who was still right next to him. She was surprised she had to actually use some of her strength to keep him back. "You destroyed my ship, you nearly killed us all!" he yelled, pointing at Craig.

"That's ridiculous," Tom stuttered. He couldn't believe what was happening.

Craig stared at the floor, the guilt was too much for him. "I'm sorry."

"It's true?" Jessie was surprised. Harry used that to his advantage, he managed to push her a little to one side. He knew he'd pay for that one later but at that moment he didn't care.

Craig only stood there as Harry lunged forward to push him into the wall, the chair nearby stopped him half way.

"I didn't know that would happen. I tried to stop it, I'm sor..." Craig stuttered.

"Sorry, we know!" Harry snapped. He raised his right hand but another hand grabbed his wrist in time. It was a tight grip, it pulled him backwards. His feet even left the ground for a second. Next thing he knew he had James almost in his face.

"James it's fine, it was barely a shove," Jessie quickly said.

Harry huffed as his wrist really started to sting. "Like you only tapped me before?"

Jessie's eyes narrowed a little. "Last time I stick up for you."

"It's not just that," James said, he turned his attention to Craig. "I don't believe for one minute that Craig would make Ylara suffer like she did, and risk the lives of the Leda to do it." He turned back to Harry as he was trying his best to squirm out of his grip. "How did you even make that leap? Is that all you think about? The Leda wasn't your girlfriend you know."

"That would explain a lot if it was," Chakotay muttered.

"The energy drain, the build up afterwards. It came out of nowhere. He admitted the book was on the ship," Harry said. "Look, I can't feel my hand anymore."

"Fine," James groaned. He let his hand go but at the same time lightly swung his hand back. Harry went flying into the table with a nasty thud. Tom cringed for his friend.

"The spell had to take power from somewhere," Craig admitted. Harry could only groan. "He sai... I read the spell needed a sacrifice, I figured it would be the obvious. But I noticed the ship's systems were overloading and I tried to stop it. It was too late." He had tried to cover it up but there was no way nobody noticed it.

"He?" Jessie confirmed his fears.

Craig's eyes shut tightly. "It doesn't matter, that's the truth of it."

James took a few steps closer to him, his eyes seemed to be looking straight into him. He shook his head. "If you think I'm letting you take the full blame just because you want to be punished, then think again."

Craig's eyes widened, "what... how?"

"I cheated," James replied.

"But, why didn't you just read my mind before?" Craig stammered.

Chakotay shrugged, "yeah why? It would have saved us a few hours."

"I wanted him to tell me," James said. He turned to face everyone else, well except Harry. "I'll be right back." Everyone watched him walk to the door, open it and leave them behind.

Chakotay sighed, "did he lock us in again?"

Damien decided to see for himself. He walked over to the door, it opened instantly. "I'm not missing this," he said, that smile was back on his face. Before he could leave he was almost trampled by the resulting stampede.

Jessie was the only one staying behind. "I'm glad I waited," she muttered to herself. Her hand instinctively went to her bump. "Aren't you?" She then followed everyone else.

She had looked all over for even a faint glimpse of the outline she saw earlier. Everywhere she looked she thought she saw it but it would fade immediately. *I wonder if it's really her.*

"What are you doing here?"

There was no answer for a long time. *Of course it wasn't. Why would she be here? What did she do to deserve an eternity of this? She wasn't like me.*

The darkness crawled all over her, she felt her sense of self being pulled down somewhere. Ylara didn't fight it even though her fear screamed at her to do so.

*Wherever it's taking me, I'm sure I deserve it.*

"Stop."

*Again?*

It stood out from the never ending black, a tiny white dot straight ahead of her. It reminded her of a single distant star in the sky. Now it was all she could focus on. It seemed to get brighter the longer she stared at it. The pull wasn't as strong, her soul began to drift once again.

The white grew or she was getting closer to it. She couldn't tell.

Once again she was saved from her own despair. Was it her own doing or was somebody helping her?

It didn't seem likely to her. *Why would she want to help me?*

All he could hear was a bell ringing. It got louder and louder until it changed into a loud door chime instead.

His eyes opened. He hoped he was just dreaming it.

The door chime didn't go off again, he sighed in relief and closed his eyes again.

Instead a loud bang opened his eyes, wide. That definitely wasn't a dream. He heard footsteps, they were getting closer.

Daniel's training kicked in. His arm reached down to the floor, just under his bed. His hand clutched a weapon handle. The door opened. He rolled out of his bed, landing straight on his feet at the side of the bed. The weapon pointed towards the intruder. Now that he could see who it was he started to think he needed more than a measly sword.

"James... don't you knock?" he said as casually as he could.

The look on James' face told him everything he needed to know. He knew. He was also blocking his only escape. They stood face to face, only a bed and a sword in between them.

"No," he answered coldly. His leg flew forward. Daniel only had time to think one word, *what...* The bed barely took the brunt of the blow, it flew up onto its side. Gravity soon helped it back down, but the wrong way.

Everyone from the Conference Room arrived, barely squeezing through the broken door. They just caught the bed smash through the wall as it fell, destroying everything else in its path.

"Ooh I hope he wasn't in that," Tom cringed. Damien shoved him to one side so he could take a peep.

"I still don't know who," Neelix pouted.

The Doctor was the only one remaining behind, he looked very worried. "Oh god, what has he done? In what? I don't want another dying patient."

Damien and Chakotay quickly got out of the way of the door as James turned around to leave the bedroom. Jessie chose that time to arrive, trying desperately to get her breath back.

"God, pregnancy and one lung... takes it toll," she wheezed.

James seemed to calm down a little, he walked over to her. His hand went to her upper back, rubbing it as gently as he could. "Sorry."

"No, I could've stayed there," she sighed with a smile.

The Doctor figured it was safe, he rushed into the quarters to assess the damage. "Good god," everyone heard him complain.

"I hope you left some for me," Chakotay said in James' direction.

He shrugged, "who knows, I didn't do it that hard."

"Can I have some help in here! Oh god, I can't transport this to Sickbay too," the Doctor's voice complained.

Tom sighed, he decided if he didn't do it nobody else would. He quickly rushed inside to join the Doctor. Neelix shrugged and did the same.

"What did you do?" Jessie asked.

**Sickbay:**

The Doctor sighed as he glanced between the two patients lying either side of him. There was nothing he could do for one of them, so he focused all of his attention on his newest one. He caught Nikki giggling and blushing a little on the other side of the biobed.

"What's so funny?"

"I'm just imagining what happened," Nikki answered. She almost drooled, "he's so... mmmm, badass."

The Doctor again thanked his programmer for being unable to throw up. "The bed not only crushed him against the wall it destroyed, but then fell on him again."

"Don't be so dramatic. It probably happened so fast it was only one hit," Nikki scolded him.

"One..." the Doctor stared at her blankly. That was the moment he gave up on her. "You know what, I can do this on my own." He looked down at the large scanner locked over Daniel.

"Plus there was a mattress," Nikki said.

The Doctor groaned. "Do you have any idea how... Oh forget it!" He tried his best to ignore everything she said from now on.

Tom walked over pushing the medical tray with him. "This is just temporary Doc, don't get used to it."

"We'll see," the Doctor muttered.

Tom shook his head as he handed him yet another regenerator. "That's the last one, the rest are charging."

The Doctor nodded as he took it away from him. He used it immediately on his patient. "Almost every bone in his body... I don't know how he survived."

"I told you. Mattresses are soft," Nikki huffed.

Tom's eyes widened as he glanced in her direction, then back at the Doctor. "Wow." He cleared his throat, "do you need anymore help?"

"I can handle the rest, thank you Mr Paris," the Doctor replied.

"Are you sure?" Tom squeaked. The Doctor looked at him, puzzled. "I have to go tell off James for knocking our suspect into a coma. Considering that Daniel may have the cure for Ylara, I'm expecting to be here a few minutes after it."

"No... no," the Doctor complained. "Why don't you do what Captain Janeway used to do when he misbehaved."

Tom's eyes shifted side to side nervously, "I overheard her threatening to spank him. No thanks. I like living."

"No. Drink coffee until people think you're drunk, then embarrass the hell out of him," the Doctor explained.

Tom's eyes still managed to get wider. "What like chase him around the ship for a hug. Look Doc, you've got enough on your plate as it is."

The Doctor sighed in annoyance. "Mr Paris. He only found out that Mr Lavine was responsible by using telepathy. Do you really think he'd risk losing the cure without checking that first?"

"Uh yeah!" Tom said in a duh voice. "He's always been a punch first, ask questions later kind of guy."

"What do I have to do to get you to leave?" the Doctor asked frankly. It took Tom by surprise. "You're distracting me."

"Be in a nicer mood when you have to treat me," Tom answered, shaking his head. He didn't waste time leaving.

### **Meanwhile:**

Craig only sat there, his head buried in his hands. He didn't know how to answer. His whole world had crumbled around him. He just couldn't.

"You didn't have to help him," Jessie told him. He barely nodded. "But he would have done it without you, wouldn't he?"

Damien scoffed. "So? I can't stop Barbie from trying to hump my leg, doesn't mean I help her out!"

Jessie tried not to laugh, it was breaking her seriousness. "Not the same thing."

"Yeesh, fishing around for a backup just in case Slayer snuffs it?" Damien taunted her. He smirked as a growl escaped her throat.

"If the book's gone there's only one obvious option," James said, passing one dirty look Damien's way.

"Crush Daniel to death with a bed? Oooh we tried that," Jessie giggled.

James shrugged, "I use what I can find."

Kiara stood at the door, leaning on the frame. She only had been quietly staring ahead of her grimly until now. "What's the option?"

"We go back to where you got the book. Surely there's another copy or someone may know what to do," James replied.

"Do we even have time for that?" Damien didn't ask, he said it mockingly. "Only you can live with one remaining brain cell."

"Haha I'm a blond, I'm stupid. That's original," James pretended to laugh. He shook his head afterwards.

Jessie walked over to the sofa, sitting down next to some books. "I'm going to have another look through my stuff. If there's a cure or not for it, there maybe something else we can do to fix it."

Kiara stopped leaning, she stepped forward to join the others. "I can do it."

"No," James quickly said. "I don't want you risking your life for this, Ylara and Lena wouldn't want that."

"I know but..." Kiara stuttered.

"Surely it wouldn't hurt to ask the Continuum if she or they could help," Jessie said. "The worst that would happen is you'll lose two chances to use minor powers for a month."

Kiara smiled gratefully at her, then turned her head towards James. She tried to plead with him using only her eyes. He sighed and nodded.

"You don't need to ask his permission, he's not your daddy," Damien groaned.

"I'll still have enough to seal your mouth again," Kiara grumbled at him. She walked over to where Craig sat. He dared to look up at her, his eyes drenched in tears. He got what he expected; a nasty slap across the face. His cheek stung as it turned a rosy pink. She turned her back on him to look at everyone else. "I'll see you soon." Her fingers clicked, one flash later and she was gone.

*Where am I now?*

She still could not see a thing. The darkness had obscured everything. At least that was what she thought earlier. Now all she could see was a brilliant white everywhere she looked. At first she had tried to squint to avoid being dazzled by it, but she soon discovered there was no need. The white was soothing. Unlike the darkness which felt like she was trapped in an ever changing current, constantly being dragged under, the lighter colour calmly brushed past her like a warm gentle breeze.

Ylara once again tried to see if she could even see herself in this void. As before all she saw was nothing.

*I wonder what I'm supposed to do. This place is better but to spend eternity here? No, it's just another hell.*

*It's no use complaining about it now. This is for the people you've killed. You can't fix that.*

"There's still time." The voice from before washed over her. The isolation she felt vanished with it, she sensed a presence floating in front of her. Although she could still not see anything.

"Time? I'm dead," Ylara was confused.

"No, only if you give up."

"I... I don't understand." That was an understatement. "If I'm dead, where am I and how are you... How are we talking?"

She started to see a faint outline again fluttering in the non-existent breeze. "You aren't."

*What?*

"Your soul was pulled, ripped from your body..." the voice said.

Ylara couldn't let that one slide. "Your body."

A sigh floated over to her. "You're not dead but not alive either. It has nowhere to go. What happens next is up to you."

None of this made any sense to her. If she wasn't talking to her host, who was she talking to? The last time her soul was taken from her body, her body perished. She did however get trapped in a void just like the black one for so long she lost any kind of track. At least that part was consistent.

"So if you're not who I think you are, who and what are you?"

"I don't exist. I'm just a shadow." Ylara sensed the pain in the voice at that moment. "I'm just a voice, a guide to help you back."

"But why? I don't belong there. That's not even my body, I stole it."

Ylara sensed the hesitation before the voice spoke again, "she gave it to you."

No. "You... she didn't. Lena didn't fight for it because she was unhappy, it was not something as simple as handing over the reigns."

"No." This time she felt frustration.

"For a time we shared the same space. I know what she felt. If you're not her then you couldn't know, so how can you say otherwise?"

The voice again sounded impatient, "you're mistaking her feelings for yours, just like you are mistaking me. You were given a second chance."

"If that's true then that's over," Ylara countered.

She didn't want to play along with this anymore. It was obvious to her she wasn't talking to herself, imagining it. It wasn't somebody else either. The presence ahead of her felt more real to her than everything else that had happened to her in this void, familiar too. Why else would this presence resist her in this way?

"I get it. You felt alone, dragged into existence, lied to, deceived, toyed with," Ylara told her. "You thought because of that time implant that you didn't belong. But you do. The people who love you still feel your loss."

Jessie knelt down beside Craig as he buried his head in his hands again. They could not hold the despair in, his head fell to his knees. Jessie didn't know what to do, all she felt she could do was place a comforting hand on his hunched back, her other hand rested on the closest arm.

*"It's been two years and the pain's still raw."*

James stared out through the window, but he wasn't really watching anything. The anger brewing inside him was starting to make him tremble, he tightened his fists even more to stop it. It was so hard his own fingers pierced the skin of his hand. He didn't care.

*"Some would turn their whole world upside down just to see you again."*

The five shadows loomed over Kiara, glaring down at her. She wasn't frightened though, she had to convince them. A figure slowly approached from behind, he stopped to stand beside her.

*"Others looked to vengeance and hate."*

He waited until the Doctor went into his office. This was his only chance. Chakotay walked over to the nearest biobed, trying his best to avoid the image of the other used one. The Doctor had done a good job, the wounds had mostly healed. He would live, he thought. His sleeping face looked smug to him. *No hesitation, no regret.* One hand, a few minutes is all it would take.

Chakotay's right hand reached over to his daughter's murderer's face, covering his mouth and nose as tightly as he could. The body jerked as it tried to draw breath.

For the first time in a long time he felt a twinge. Slowly he repeated the same thoughts out loud, "no hesitation, no regret."

*"All I bring to their lives is a harsh reminder. I'm an old scar, the twinge in the back that won't heal."*

"I'm the one who doesn't belong, not you."

The voice was in a lot of pain, it tried to hide that. "Why, why do you still believe I'm who you thought? I'm not. She's gone."

"Then you wouldn't mind telling me who you are," Ylara said.

"You."

That calm answer set Ylara back. When she could not speak before she assumed that she had to summon her own voice from so long ago. Hearing the voice she'd been using for two years helped her figure that out. If this voice was just her own psyche trying to cling to life, it would be her own not Lena's.

"I'm not buying it."

"There isn't much time," the voice ignored her. "If you don't find your way back the body will die anyway."

"I won't. It's not my life." *Never again.* "You're asking me to go steal Lena's, no, your life away, again. I can't do that. I can't commit that sin again, I just can't. I have enough to amend to add to them now."

The voice sounded impatient again, "there is no choice."

"You're wrong," Ylara said forcefully. "You can take my place. Go home."

The outline she'd been seeing seemed to get bigger, the presence grew closer. That soft breeze she felt became a lot more forceful. *What now?* She struggled against it as her spirit was pushed to who knows where. She wasn't going anywhere by force.

"I can't. Haven't you been listening?" the voice sounded angry. "I do not actually exist. I'm just your will to live, the child that doesn't want to die yet. Stop fighting it."

*Nice try. I don't believe you.* "Tell me, has being here helped you?" Ylara continued to fight. The breeze seemed to soften only for a second as if it hesitated. "You wanted to escape your life, you thought it would be easier. Is it?"

She didn't get an answer, apart from the gap before nothing changed. She wasn't going to give up that easily.

"No one can really understand the isolation, the loneliness of being what we are. We're different, from the moment we're born our path is set. I believed this is why we're paired up with a brother, so we don't sink into despair, we're not alone." The current got even stronger, she could feel the presence fading the further she was pushed. "But you, you were not only born into the Slayer line, your life was altered, wiped clean to fit that path. I can't imagine how that must have been. If that wasn't bad enough the people you love were being slowly stolen from you."

"Leave," she heard the voice in the distance, just barely.

"No. Answer me first. Has your suffering eased, has it gone completely? Did abandoning your life work out for you?"

The current hesitated again, this time for a few seconds longer. It seemed to ease off when it returned.

"You want to know why I know you're not me? Cos I already know the answer to my questions, nothing's changed. The pain you feel, I can feel it too. I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay here for an eternity if I have to..."

"You're making a big mistake," the voice was a lot clearer and forceful now. "We don't want to die, we want to live. Lena is not even here. She cannot take your place. All you are doing is allowing the body to die. Stop resisting."

"No," Ylara's mind was made up. "I'm finally doing something right." As soon as she said that she felt lighter, but the breeze didn't push her any further away. She escaped it.

"You can't," the voice almost pleaded. "We'll die."

The Doctor and Nikki pulled Chakotay away by his arms. He didn't resist them.

"What are you doing? He's in a coma, he's not waking up anytime soon!" the Doctor snapped at him.

Chakotay pulled his arms out of their grips. He sighed in defeat. "He did not care who he was hurting when he decided to bring my daughter back. Now she's dead."

"Does that sound like anyone you know?" Nikki asked. The Doctor and Chakotay both looked at her in surprise. She looked surprised too. "What, I listen."

"Check his vitals please," the Doctor ordered her. She nodded before doing what she was told.

Chakotay sighed and covered his face with his hand. "I know, I know. I hated her and months ago I tried to get rid of her but now that she's dying, I can't stop seeing her as Lena. I failed her as a father, it should be me."

The Doctor quickly glanced at Nikki for confirmation on Daniel, she nodded. He turned his attention back to Chakotay, his hand went to his arm to guide him to his office. "It's not over yet. I haven't given up. Why don't you sit down, okay." Chakotay timidly nodded. His large shoulders had sank so far down, he didn't have the strength to lift them back up.

Not long after they stepped into the office there was a brief flash of light in the middle of the room. Kiara appeared in its place as it faded away. Nikki almost jumped out of her skin as a result.

"Sorry," Kiara muttered like she didn't mean it. With a sigh that could have been heard outside she turned herself around to face the two biobeds. Her jaw clenched and her eyes started to water as her gaze settled on Ylara's. She had hoped that she would only look like she was sleeping, that's not what she saw. Her skin was deathly pale, the eyes were puffy with black bags underneath them, the lips were almost blue. Ylara's face seemed to be locked in a permanent grimace as if she was still feeling the pain while she was unconscious. The Doctor had several devices attached to her forehead, as well as two flickering ones; one on her arm and the other on her chest. The scanner was still locked over her body, beeping slowly as it kept a check on her vitals.

She slowly walked over to stand at her side, watching her face intently. "The Q said no, they didn't want to get involved in *trivial* things." She growled at the thought. "Trivial, they didn't think it was so trivial when they tossed her back and forth through timelines and Borg ships, did they?"

Nikki's eyes widened a little, she decided to leave her alone and follow the other two to the office.

"I blamed everything on you, and I'm sorry for that. I hope that you don't go thinking we all hated you enough to do this. A lot of us are angry and not just for Lena." Kiara wiped a stray tear before continuing. "I'd be lying if I said I was one of them, I just wanted my mother back. Now that will not happen. I just don't think you deserved to go out like this. The same thing could have easily happened to James or Zare. Like them you didn't decide to turn evil, it just happened to you. You were dragged here against your will, just like Lena was. I should have realised that sooner."

She shook her head as anger took over again. "Craig told me about why you turned in the first place. There I was plotting your death when I was no better. I just wish that Daniel or even Craig realised these things, you'd still be here. There would still be a chance to bring her home, but keep you here

too. That's the way it should have been." Kiara allowed herself to sigh while she tried to find the right words. "I hope you can forgive all of us."

*"It's all right. Everything's fine now."*

Kiara heard a voice she had not heard before, but at the same time she found it familiar. Her head darted around to see where it came from. She couldn't.

The beeps increased in frequency, an alarm started to blare. Panic started to set in and she wasn't the only one. The Doctor and Nikki ran straight over to tend to whatever it was. Chakotay followed but a lot more slowly.

Kiara looked across at him, she hadn't seen him so scared before. She thought about going over and getting out of their way as well. The Doctor was barking orders at Nikki, but his voice was drowned out and muffled. All she could hear was the beeps getting faster.

Suddenly they stopped. All there was, was silence.

Ylara smiled. "I have no regrets..."

*"It's up to you now,"* Kiara heard that voice again. She didn't care about that now, all of her energy was being used to stop herself from falling apart. Her tears fell down her cheek. Her left hand lifted to brush them aside but something stopped it. Another hand clutching her wrist. Startled she looked down at it, expecting the Doctor or Nikki trying to hint at her to get out of the way.

Her eyes grew wide. The hand came from the biobed itself. Slowly her gaze followed the arm up to the head of the bed. She was greeted by a pair of weak eyes struggling to open.

"I don't believe it," the Doctor stuttered. He turned to the scanner which was beeping normally again, the alarm had gone.

Chakotay hadn't seen any of what Kiara did. He walked over to join them, only then seeing the hand weakly clutching Kiara's arm. Suddenly a weight had been lifted.

"Good work, Doctor," he said, almost in a whisper.

"I didn't do anything," the Doctor stuttered. "The treatment was failing, how... how is this possible?" He looked to Nikki, she didn't know either.

Kiara felt a smile slowly start to form on her face as she remembered the voice from before. Her other hand reached over to take a hold of the hand holding her, she clutched it tightly.

"Thank you," she said.

**THE END**