

## **B4FV Episode 3.14**

### **Bad Coffee Week**

#### **The Mess Hall:**

The lights were off so the room was in complete darkness. A lot of crewmembers could be heard whispering as they attempted to hide, or guarded their hiding places.

One of the doors opened, Neelix and a young woman walked in talking. "Neelix, the power's down," she tapped a commbadge. Neelix tried to keep a straight face. "Jetal to Torres."

"Uh, go ahead Ensign," B'Elanna's voice nervously said from nearby. "Or should I say..."

The lights came back on, everybody jumped out of their hiding places. "Surprise!" almost everybody yelled.

"Oooh sandwiches," Lee had said instead. He rushed over to the snacks table.

The girl laughed. "I'm going to kill you," she muttered to Neelix.

It didn't take long for the party to get into full swing. Everyone was either standing in a group chatting, standing at the snack tables, or at least trying to. Lee was rushing from one bit of the table to the next in record breaking speed, picking up food items. Everyone at the table were not too happy about being pushed out of the way or have their favourite dish blocked.

Kathryn strolled over to the Doctor, "ah Doctor, enjoying the party."

The Doctor continued beaming, "yes I am Captain. It's nice to get out of Sickbay every now and then."

"I see. How is your patient?" Kathryn asked.

"Miss O'Tani's treatment will take a while, for now she has daily counselling appointments with me and her quarters have been cleared of all coffee and reflective material. Obviously she was seeing the girl differently to Jessie was, but we have to start somewhere," the Doctor replied.

"Uh huh, uh huh, where's the coffee?" Kathryn asked.

The Doctor stared blankly, "her prognosis is good though. It's much easier to treat her now that the spirit has left us."

"Yes yes, I apologise," Kathryn said, shaking her head.

"It should have been added to the usual supplies," the Doctor muttered.

"Thanks," Kathryn said. She rushed off. She passed James and Ian, they were talking nearby the window. James kept on glancing behind him every now and then.

"She keeps making comments and looking at other guys. I'd ask for advice but I don't know if you ever had that problem," Ian said. "Plus I still have that seething hatred for you thing going on."

"Yeah I got that, and no I haven't," James muttered, again glancing behind him.

"What's the matter with you?" Ian asked.

"Nothing," James blurted out. Neelix walked over to them holding a cup.

"Here's your black coffee," he said.

James took it off him, "thanks."

"That's convincing," Ian commented. "Did that dead girl experience creep you out too much? It looks like you haven't slept in days."

"I haven't," James said. "It's not the girl no, it's Jess."

"What's wrong with her?" Ian asked.

"No no, it's too embarrassing, especially for her, no," James said.

"Well I'll just ask her then," Ian said, smirking a little.

Jessie quietly snuck up behind James. "Hi baby," she said as she wrapped her arms around him.

"Public display Jess," Ian continued to smirk.

"She doesn't care about that right now," James muttered.

"That's right," Jessie said. She began kissing him softly on the cheek. He tried to push her hands off, but she kept putting them back around him. She started to whisper in his ear.

"Yeah, this is what's the matter with her," James uneasily said. "Very hormonal," he whispered.

Ian smiled, "sweet, why are you complaining?"

James glared at him while Jessie decided to kiss the back of his ear instead of whispering into it. "Jessie, not here."

"Where then?" she asked softly. She whispered something else in his ear, he grew even more uncomfortable. She wrapped her arms around one of his. Ian just continued to smirk.

"Jessie, no not now either," James muttered quietly.

Jessie started to pout, "oh come on, I'll even pay you."

Ian burst out laughing, "pay your boyfriend for..."

"Shush!" James snapped at him. "Later." Jessie's response was an arm around his waist, and more cheek kissing. "Ok see you later Ian." James quickly put the coffee cup down on the nearest table, Jessie grinned as she dragged him away.

"Sweet," Ian said.

The smell of the strong black coffee lured Kathryn over to him. "What was that about?" She tried not to eye the coffee.

"They're off to play um, checkers," Ian sniggered, he walked away.

Kathryn's face turned very pale, "but it's still day time." She grabbed the coffee, a few seconds later the contents was gone.

The Doctor and Chakotay stood at the other side of the room, Harry hung around nearby pulling a face at the glass in his hand.

"I want you to go along on a few of the shuttle surveys," Chakotay said, smiling slyly. "How can I talk you into it?"

The Doctor smiled, "an away mission, me? Certainly."

"Don't get your hopes up doc, it isn't the most thrilling of missions," Harry butted in. "But at least the birthday girl and I get the pleasure of your company."

"Oh well, good for you," the Doctor said. He wandered off.

Chakotay frowned at Harry, "are you drunk or something?"

"I was being polite," he replied. He handed him the drink, "do you want, whatever this is?"

Kathryn walked, ok rather stumbled over to the two. "I've never heard anything so disgusting in my life, well ever since I heard that joke Danny told me."

"It's worse than that joke?" Chakotay questioned in disbelief. He snatched the glass off Harry, "thanks, now shoo." Harry pouted, he walked off.

"To me it is. Nice coffee though, that boy has taste," Kathryn replied. She giggled as she stared at the cup. "Maybe alcohol was in it."

"God I hope not," Chakotay groaned. He took the cup off her. "What was so disgusting?"

Meanwhile the Doctor had moved on to the birthday girl. "Aah ensign, I haven't seen you in a while. Lower decks been keeping you busy?"

"Too busy, we've been working on updating a shuttle. Someone thought it was a good idea to add Damien to the team, supposedly he knows a good deal about ship design," Jetal replied with a smile. "He wanted to rename it the Shuttle Damien."

"He has a bit of an ego doesn't he? My condolences," the Doctor said.

## **The next day**

### **The Security Office:**

James sat down in his chair holding a big cup of coffee. He drank quite a bit of it before putting it down on the desk. He then rested his chin on his hand, struggling to keep his eyes open.

The door opened, Kathryn stepped in looking pretty cheerful for once. "Morning." All she got was a tired groan. "Oh dear what happened?" she asked, sitting opposite him.

"I just didn't get any sleep," James replied.

"That's getting to be a regular occurrence," Kathryn said. "Is something bothering you?"

"No it's, you don't want to know," James replied.

"Why not?" Kathryn questioned. "Look maybe I can help, I've had lots of sleepless nights."

"I doubt this has happened to you. It doesn't really happen to girls, not exactly anyway," James said.

"Is it Jessie? Is she doing something in her sleep, or can she not sleep either?" Kathryn asked.

"No, supposedly she sleeps during her lunch breaks, plus once it's over she falls straight asleep. It takes me too long and by the time I do, the alarm goes off," James replied.

"Once what's over?" Kathryn questioned. He just raised an eyebrow at her. "Oh, but you two left that party in a hurry, that was just during the day. Couldn't have been that long."

"What? Oh no, that was a different. It wasn't enough for her," James said quietly.

Kathryn couldn't get any paler than she currently was at that moment, "oh, my god."

"Yeah well, now you're where I am, kinda. She's just, uh extra friendly at this point in the pregnancy," James said.

"Oh that's what it is," Kathryn sighed.

"Yeah. Kes warned us both. She said it's good for her if I don't turn her down so much, but I haven't slept in days and she doesn't accept a no," James said, he had some more coffee. "Kes said if she gets too bad she can have a drug to calm her down but..."

"You don't want her full of drugs, I get it," Kathryn said.

"That's not just it though. I've heard horror stories where girls like this go for anyone," James muttered.

"Don't be silly. She cares about you and everything, she wouldn't," Kathryn said. "Don't you trust her?"

"Yeah I do, it's just I don't know what those hormones can do to her right now if I said no," James replied.

"She'll be ok. I think you're giving away too much. Maybe a little rejection will calm her down," Kathryn said.

"Really? You think so," James said.

Kathryn nodded her head, "yes, just put your foot down. You can do it, no problem."

"I wouldn't be too sure. It doesn't seem like I have much will power when it comes to this kind of stuff," James said.

"Hmm no, a lot of men don't," Kathryn muttered.

James narrowed his eyes, "hey it's not like I'd give into anybody. It's just, well it's Jessie."

"Then you'll have to live with the result," Kathryn said.

James glanced down at the cup of black coffee on the desk, "all right, I'll try."

"If you're so tired how do you even, um you know have the energy. No actually I don't want to know," Kathryn muttered.

"No I'm just tired mentally," James said with a raised eyebrow. "Oh and I can't keep my eyes open that easily."

"Well I suppose Slayers have to be able to miss one or two nights sleep a lot," Kathryn sighed. "Just try it anyway, it might work."

### **Engineering:**

The Doctor wandered in with a cheerful look on his face, clutching his new holo-camera by his chest. He started taking random shots of crewmembers, most of which didn't look very happy about it.

B'Elanna and Tom were busy arguing nearby the warp core.

"I don't care Tom, I'd rather be single and childless for seventy years than lower myself to be with you," she grumbled.

"Oh come on B'Elanna, can't you give me another chance. I'll treat you nice," Tom said.

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, "somehow I don't think so."

Meanwhile one girl was voluntarily posing with Engineering equipment, while sitting on the console she was working on. The Doctor was busy snapping away. "Excellent now look like you're working."

The girl stared blankly, "what, I work here? Since when?"

Her console neighbour stared at her, "er since two years ago."

"Crap, I thought I got away with having no job," she muttered. She still continued to pose.

"What did you think you were doing here then?" the man bewilderedly asked her.

"Furthermore, I don't think a holodeck program involving Klingon monsters and whatnot is a good first date," B'Elanna muttered.

Tom still looked determined as ever, "I thought you'd like that, you're Klingon. That must be their version of a first date." What they didn't realise was that the Doctor was busy snapping pictures of them.

One picture had B'Elanna with an angry look on her face, Tom still smiling all confidently. The next picture had her raising her fist, again Tom was smiling like a prat. The third one had B'Elanna's fist a little higher, Tom's face suddenly realising what was going to happen. The fourth just caught the fist colliding with Tom's face, it looked twisted, a bit of blood was just coming from his nose. The fifth picture just had B'Elanna standing there. The sixth had B'Elanna staring angrily towards the camera, and an arm reaching towards it.

"What did you do that for!" the Doctor protested.

"I would ask you the same thing!" B'Elanna snapped. She stormed off.

Tom groaned from the ground, "damn, what went wrong?"

The Doctor sighed, "I think you need my expert advice Mister Paris, why don't you come with me and we'll discuss it during your treatment."

### **The Security Office:**

The door opened, Jessie stepped in between them. "Hey you."

"Hi Jess," James said as he quickly pretended to work hard at the computer.

"What you doing?" Jessie asked. She leaned her hands on the desk.

"Working, really important work," James replied.

"Uh huh," Jessie sighed. She made her way around the desk, she sat down on it and pushed the computer away. "Is it more important than me?"

"Um well it needs to be done very soon and you're supposed to be on duty too," James muttered. Jessie pouted. "No no, don't do that." He quickly got out of his chair. "I'm sorry Jess but you can't expect me to just drop anything I'm doing and, and you've asked for it every night, and you won't take no for an answer and now I'm tired..."

"Anymore ands in there?" Jessie giggled.

"Do you even care?" James bewilderedly asked.

"Care about what?" Jessie innocently asked.

"That you're wearing me out. You won't let me sleep at night, you won't even leave me alone during duty where I could have a sneaky nap or..." James replied.

"Oh, I manage to sleep fine afterwards and stuff, what's your excuse?" Jessie said. "Now stop being a baby and come home with me."

"Baby? How am I a baby?" James stuttered. "Can I have this one day off?"

"But you're a big strong Slayer, full of energy right? Why are you making a big fuss?" Jessie said. She gasped, "oh god, you're repulsed by me."

"That's really not the case, I'm just out of energy," James muttered.

"Then why are you... You think I'm ugly," Jessie said, pulling herself off the table.

"I don't, I still think you're gorgeous. I just need sleep, even just a little," James said.

"Sleep during the day, yeah right. You have trouble getting to sleep at nights," Jessie grumbled. "Prove you still like me."

"Oh I see, good idea Jess," James groaned. "Look it's no, you'll just have to have a cold shower or something. The same goes for tonight."

"Fine all right," Jessie said in a huffy tone. She eyed a PADD, she picked it up to look at it. "Hmm interesting," she let it slip from her hands. "Oh look what I did. I'll just pick it up for you."

James groaned into his hand, "I need help."

Jessie leaned over to pick the PADD up, but she could barely even reach her toes. "For god's sake," she grunted, she bent her knees a little to try again. Her left knee buckled, making her fall to the ground. James rushed over, knelt down then helped her sit up. She developed a certain smile on her face that he recognised immediately, "aaw I knew you'd change your mind, baby."

"Ugh," he groaned, letting go of her. She fell back onto her back.

"No, James I'm sorry, help me up," she moaned.

"All right but we're going to Sickbay," James said.

Jessie struggled to sit up on her own, "but why?"

"Two reasons. One it shouldn't be that hard to pick something up from the floor," James replied.

"Short arms," Jessie pouted.

"Yeah, you always kneel or bend your knees a little to do that," James said.

"I was trying to show off my butt silly," Jessie snapped.

James was about ready to headbutt the wall at this moment, "that's the second reason!"

"What's the first exactly?" Jessie pulled a face.

"I think that the baby's growing faster than it should, or else you wouldn't have fell over before," James said.

"Oh," Jessie said, glancing down at herself. "Maybe it's twins."

"That would explain the over the top flirtiness," James muttered.

Jessie smiled, "no that's not it, have you seen yourself in a mirror?"

"We're going now," James said.

Jessie groaned, "fine, after that can we..."

"No!" James snapped.

**Sickbay:**

"You're right it is, but I wouldn't worry about it," Kes said, putting her tricorder back down.

"Oh I am, what if by nine months the baby is really big," James questioned. Jessie giggled as she stroked his arm. "Never mind, Kes the other thing."

"Are you sure? It'll only have to be taken every few days, it's strong stuff," Kes said.

"Oh we're sure," James nodded his head.

Jessie pouted again, "I'm not."

Kes pressed a hypospray into her neck, "it should take a minute or so to work."

"So did you say it was twins or just fast growing baby?" Jessie asked.

"There's just one Jess," James said.

"Oh ok," Jessie sighed, fidgeting a little.

"So in answer to the earlier question," James said.

"Some babies are born bigger than others, it's not a problem. This just shows that it's perfectly healthy," Kes replied.

"Good. I'm not looking forward to labour day as it is," James said.

Kes smiled, "you're not? Even if it is a little bigger than normal it shouldn't make any difference, it'll still be..."

"Yeah I know, painful. Why do you think I'm not looking forward to it," James said.

"Just remember it's all worth it in the end," Kes said.

Jessie pulled herself off the biobed, "oh god." Kes and James glanced in her direction. She looked at them both with a tint of red in her cheeks.

"Is it working now?" Kes asked.

"Yeah um, gotta go, you know back to duty," Jessie stuttered. She rushed towards the door.

"Wait Jess," James said a little too late. "Oh great."

Kes frowned, "what's wrong?"

"She's probably not happy with me," James replied. "I didn't exactly have good restraints until today."

Kes sighed, "she didn't seem mad, she seemed more embarrassed."

**James/Jessie's Quarters:**

James walked through the main door. The living area was empty and dark, the only light came from the computer on the desk. It was on but was only showing an error message.

"Crap," he muttered, walking over to it. With a few presses against the keypad it turned off. "Computer lights to 50%." The room lit up. "Jessie?" He headed into the bedroom, and found Jessie sitting on the floor nearby the bed, shaking. "This may seem like a dumb question but what's wrong?"

She looked up, "yeah it is dumb, dumb of me. I just saw the computer and freaked."

"Oh," James said as he sat down next to her. She edged away an inch. "Ok I was right, you're mad at me."

"No I'm really not," Jessie muttered.

"Yes you are. You're thinking I should have said no a lot of the time, and stuck with it," James said.

"You got it all wrong James," Jessie said. She used the bed to pull herself onto her feet. "You said no lots of times yes, but I wouldn't leave you alone. I'm just dirty." James stood up and stepped closer to her. "Just a dirty little slut, you must be disgusted with me."

"I'm not, it wasn't your fault," he said.

"You are. I remember how mad you were with me," Jessie muttered. "I'm sorry, I'll get out of your sight." She rushed back out, James could only sigh as he followed her.

### **Sickbay:**

The Doctor paced backward and forwards in front of Tom while doing a big massive speech, he stared at the mad hologram with wide eyes while secretly edging off the biobed.

"Another good way to get a woman's attention is tell her how great you are," the Doctor said. He stared at Tom, "ok maybe we'll skip that part for you."

Tom narrowed his eyes, "thanks doc."

"Then woo her with wine, chocolate and or flowers," the Doctor said. "And you have to dress appropriately, always look your best. Of course I don't have to do that as I'm always this dashing."

Tom rolled his eyes, "whatever you say doc."

"And learn your prey," the Doctor said. "Find out what her main interests are, her favourite things and most importantly her peeves."

"Right now mine is you," Tom muttered.

### **The Bridge:**

"She kept moving away from her station, she'd either jump first or you'd hear her gasp and back her chair into the wall loudly," Chakotay said.

James closed his eyes and covered his face with his left hand, "she's still a little shaky about that ghost. A computer screen must have been on when she went into our living room."

"Yes well, like Faye I sent her home but I doubt that'll help. There are computers all over the ship. We're only an hour away from a planet that we were going to stop at, but we'll have to leave the area as soon as Harry and the Doc's shuttle comes back," Chakotay said.

"What's happened this time?" James asked.

"The locals don't really appreciate aggressive people in their space, something about a terrorist movement. They fear people like us will get involved," Chakotay replied. He shook his head, "they only think we're violent because that station we were at spread rumours that we harbour vampires, intentionally."

James frowned, "are there any other planets nearby that are not in their space?"

**Later**

**James/Jessie's Quarters:**

Jessie lay on her side on the sofa, busy fiddling with a few chips on a plate in front of her with the fork. The door opened, James came through it. "Hi."

"Hey," she sighed.

"I heard what happened," he said as he sat down on a chair nearby her.

"Yeah I'm a big wuss. Scared of a few stupid computers," Jessie muttered, slamming her fork onto the plate.

"You have a right to be though. You've been through something, Faye's much worse right now," James said.

"I know that, but it's still stupid. We know the girl's moved on, there's nothing to be afraid of," Jessie said.

James stood back up, then knelt down in front of her. He took a hold of one of her hands, "I've got the perfect solution."

She sat up, "oh? What's that?"

"A three day trip away, just the two of us on a warm planet away from everything," James replied.

"That sounds nice. Don't tease," Jessie muttered, pouting her lips.

"I'm not teasing," James said with a smirk.

"I didn't know the holodeck was free for that long," Jessie said.

"It probably isn't," James said.

Jessie raised an eyebrow, "you said you weren't teasing."

"I'm not," James said as he sat next to her. "I got you exactly what I said."

Jessie stared with her eyes widened, "really but how?"

"Doc and Harry's mission will keep them away from the ship for three days. Voyager's off doing some survey thing until they're finished," James replied. "Chakotay said we have the three days."

"Really?" Jessie questioned. He nodded, her face lit up, a grin developed quickly. She threw her arms around him, "oh thank you, thank you. You're the best."

"I'm not really. You deserve a break," James said. "I wish we could go longer but..."

"It'll more than do," Jessie said. "Really, thank you."

"It's fine. Do you think you can keep calm long enough to pack, only a little," James questioned.

"I think so. I'll try to pack like I'm only going for an hour or so," Jessie replied.

"We're taking a shuttle so you can pack what you need for the weekend, just don't go too nuts. We'll get stuck going at impulse if you don't," James said.

Jessie narrowed her eyes, "I'm not that bad." She playfully punched him in the arm, "if I think I'm going for an hour, I won't overpack will I?"

"Ok fair enough, it's just if you're going for an hour, you wouldn't pack nightwear and stuff," James said.

Jessie smiled, she put a hand across his cheek, "I won't need any."

James raised an eyebrow, "ok we'll have to take those hyposprays with us."

"I'm set for a few days remember," Jessie said with a smirk on her face. "Imagine what I would have been like without it."

"It's for the best if I don't," James said. "You'd better start packing, we'll be leaving in an hour."

"Oh that's not nearly enough time," Jessie said, climbing off the sofa. She rushed into the bedroom.

### **Shuttle One:**

"Ok autopilot's set," James said. Jessie walked over to lean on his chair. "We can only manage Warp two. The Shuttle can't take the weight of your bag."

Jessie narrowed her eyes and messed up his hair with one hand. "Don't be cheeky, you managed to carry it right."

"Yes I did, but I can't go at warp or carry two people either," James said as he fixed his hair.

"Three, and you probably could. You can lift yourself up easier than most people can," Jessie said. She walked to the back of the shuttle and sat down.

"True, you and the kid are a lot lighter than that bag," James said as he got up.

"Ok no more jokes about my bag," Jessie pouted.

"I'll try," James said, he sat down next to her. "When did I run at warp anyway?"

"I didn't mean that part," Jessie laughed. She leaned forward to kiss him briefly on the lips. When they parted he sat closer to her. "Did I thank you for the trip?"

"Lots of times. You can thank me by relaxing and enjoying yourself ok," James said.

"All right, all right," Jessie sighed. She closed the gap between them on the chair, and placed a hand on his arm. "Are we still in communications range?"

"Yeah why?" James questioned. "I think a neer neer is a little too mean."

Jessie smirked, "no, I want to tell everyone what a great guy I have, and then do the neer neer."

"All right, who is the guy, I'll kill him," James said, pretending to sound angry. "Though if he made you happier than I did, I'd have to leave it."

"James stop it," Jessie giggled. She placed her other hand on his cheek, caressing it with her thumb. "You're the only guy I want, and that's never going to change."

"Even if I make too many bag or suitcase jokes?" James questioned.

"I'll tolerate that, yes," Jessie replied. "How long do I have to flirt and touch you before you'll kiss me back?"

"Hmm maybe a few more seconds," James said. He leaned into kiss her, one arm went around her waist. The kiss was interrupted by the shuttle shaking rather violently. The consoles started beeping madly.

"What the?" James muttered. He got up and rushed over to the station he was at before. Jessie walked over slowly.

"What is it?" she asked.

"We were just hit by a shockwave," James replied as he worked. "It came from the nearby planet."

"Ok I hope that's nowhere near where we're going," Jessie said.

"It's not," James said.

The shuttle shook again. "What now?" Jessie groaned.

"Some idiot's firing at us," James replied. He keyed in a few commands. "Alien vessel, why are you firing at us?"

A rough male voice came over the comm, "lower your shields and prepare to be boarded. You're being arrested for the bombing of the Lactivia Canteen."

"You mean the bombing we've just arrived at and were hit by a shockwave by?" Jessie muttered.

"Ok you got the wrong ship, better luck next time," James said.

In: "Lower your shields or we'll do it for you."

James rolled his eyes, "he cut me off." The firing continued. Jessie sat down at the other station. "Sorry about this."

"Don't, it's not your fault," she said.

The weapons fire grew more intense. James eyed his station with wide eyes, "crap, an overload's building."

"Where?" Jessie questioned, she raised from the chair just in case. They both could hear the sound of the overload building up. James also stood up, he glanced at the station Jessie was standing at. He quickly grabbed a hold of her and pulled her away from the stations. Just then they exploded, sending sparks and smoke everywhere, and them to the ground.

The room quickly filled up with smoke as the station itself caught fire. Jessie groaned as she lifted her head off the ground, she only managed an inch or so. The smoke got into her lungs, she put a hand over her mouth to stop herself from breathing in anymore. She tried to pull herself up but a heavy weight was pressing most of her down.

"James?" she coughed, turning her head to the left. The smoke cleared a little with a wave of the hand in front of her face, she caught sight of James' head resting right next to her, but unlike her he was unconscious with a nasty looking burn across his left cheek. Then she realised he was in fact the weight holding her down.

The sound of a transporter beam came from behind her, two men's figures appeared in the smoke. Jessie just managed to catch a quick glimpse of them before passing out.

Jessie awoke to the sound of men cheering, hooting or yelling coming from all around her. She looked around at her blurry surroundings, her vision then started to clear. Standing all around were scruffy, dirty looking men with Klingon like forehead ridges except a little less pronounced. A few were fighting with one another, a lot were watching her like a piece of meat.

One of the men marched forward to grab her by the arm, he dragged her up onto her feet. He pushed his scarred unshaven face right into hers. He appeared to sniff the air. "You'll do," he spat.

She looked disgusted as she wiped directly underneath her left eye. "No I won't, whatever it is you want." A few other men ran forward two of them grabbed a hold of her.

"Not this time Pit, you got the last one!" one snarled.

"You'll get her when I'm done with her," the first man snapped.

"I'm not having one of your pity hand me downs," another growled.

"Ok none of you are having me in anyway," Jessie muttered. She tried to pull away, but the three continued playing tug of war with her. The man named Pit pulled her roughly in a different direction, tossing her back to the ground while pulling a sharp bit of metal out.

"I claimed her first! Do you have a problem with that?"

The two growled as they backed away. A hand grabbed a hold of Pit's arm from behind, he was pulled backwards. He turned around only to a different piece of sharp metal pressed against his neck.

"I knew I'd seen her race before, she's one of yours."

"You're right, she's mine," James said in a different tone voice to usual. Jessie looked up at him with a shocked expression on her face, she turned away in disgust.

"I claimed her first," Pit hissed.

"Claim all you want, you know you can't act on it," James muttered. He pushed him away and headed over to Jessie. He leaned over to help her to her feet.

"Go on, take her for now," Pit said, backing away.

"Come on, let's go." James took a hold of Jessie's arm and dragged her away with him as gentle as he could.

"Ow hey, there's no need for that," she grumbled. They got away from the crowd, James let go of her arm.

"Sorry, didn't mean to," he said.

Jessie stopped in front of him, "mean to what? Hurt my arm, talk about me like I'm something you own."

"Both yeah," James meekly replied. She put her most strongest glare on her face. "Look I'm sorry. The people here, they treat women a little differently. If I act normal around you, guys will challenge me for custody. And if you're yourself they'll be more interested in you."

"Great, my favourite kind of men," Jessie muttered sarcastically. "I get the first part with you, if they think you're soft they'll think they have a shot. The second part I get less, wouldn't they prefer weaker girls who do as they're told?"

"Some do, but most of the guys here love a challenge. Don't take this the wrong way but you're a good challenge for them," James replied.

Jessie sighed, "great, so you have to act like them and I have to..."

"Be your opposite," James said. They continued walking down a *corridor* of tatty shelters covered with big blankets, and prisoners sitting around, most of them arguing with each other. They watched one guy slap a girl hard, she ran into the shelter.

"I'm not loving this one bit," Jessie pulled a face.

"No neither am I, but it's the only way to avoid more fights," James said. "I'm not going to go as far as that guy though."

"Good, cos I'd like for you to keep all your parts," Jessie said.

James smiled, he slipped an arm around her, "you don't know how much I missed you, three days of being on your own in a place like this."

"Aaaw, you are keeping your pieces, it's just if you hit me," Jessie said.

"I know," James said.

Jessie frowned, "wait, more fights. That wasn't even a fight. Wait again, three days. I think I just answered the question I was about to ask there."

"I think it's been three, you lose track of when one day ends and another. I just didn't like everyone's attitude, I still don't but you know I'm not fighting it anymore. Plus I wasn't too happy cos I didn't know if you were ok," James said.

They passed two aliens, both of which looked at James in fear and picked up speed.

"Ok they looked pretty soft," Jessie commented.

"No they're not. They just stole the food I managed to find," James said. They stopped outside one shelter, in front of it stood a few heavy looking containers. He pushed them away to reveal the entrance. They both went inside, he closed it back up.

"So, who did you punch for this place?" Jessie asked.

"The ones we just walked passed, they always steal food and shelters so it's only fair," James replied. "So, what happened to you after the shuttle attack?"

"Well I remember you saving me from the overload, men beaming aboard. I must have passed out from the smoke. I woke in this brig where they interrogated me, there was this court hearing with a judge. He said you had confessed doing the bombing for the both of us," Jessie replied. "I don't know what happened after that, I just woke up at the bottom of that slide thing."

"The same thing happened to me, I don't get why they waited a few days to put you in here though," James said.

Jessie shrugged her shoulders, "I definitely didn't wait that long in the brig, so I'm not sure what happened."

"You said they interrogated you, are you hurt?" James asked.

"They treated most of it, it wasn't that bad. You said they treat women badly, it was almost like they were hesitating," Jessie replied. "You?"

"Yeah they treated the worst for me. That chute thing was the worst part for me though, I didn't land too well," James said. "It seems to be the only way out of this dump though."

"You know I can't climb up those things," Jessie muttered.

"I know, even if you could it's blocked by a forcefield. It only opens to let newbies and food in," James said.

"What kind of food?" Jessie asked.

"They're like the rations Voyager have," James said as he picked up a small bag. "Those guys didn't leave much though." He pulled out what looked like a pale yellow bar of soap. "This is the last one."

"No thanks, I couldn't eat that," Jessie muttered.

"You have to, there's nothing else," James said.

Jessie pulled a face, "I'd rather wait until Voyager..."

James forced the so called food into her hands. "We could be here for days, weeks. This isn't the time to be picky!" he snapped at her.

Jessie widened her eyes, "ok calm down, I will."

James sighed and shook his head, "sorry, it's this damn chip, mark two that is, not the other one."

"You've got another chip?" Jessie questioned as she sat down. She made an attempt at eating the so called food.

"You should have one too," James said, sitting down opposite her. He brushed away some of the hair away from the back of his head, revealing an implant about a centimetre in width. Jessie put a hand on the back of her own.

"Oh great," she groaned, scratching at it. James quickly took a hold of that hand.

"No don't do that, it makes it worse."

"What does it do exactly?" Jessie asked.

"All I know is that it makes everyone easily irritated. That's why everyone's so aggressive," James replied. "I wouldn't try taking it out, one guy hasn't really been up since then."

"Oh... right, so what should we do?" Jessie asked.

"Find a way out. I was going to go and look for supplies that could help lower that shield, or maybe another exit other than the chute," James replied. "And maybe some food to keep us going."

"Food here?" Jessie said. "Anyway shouldn't I do it, this race thinks that women do the shopping."

James raised an eyebrow and smirked, "maybe but I'm sure most human women actually like doing it. You're not going instead of me, it'll be safer if you're here."

"Why not, I can take care of myself," Jessie muttered. "Oh yeah, I forgot. I have to be a helpless little girl don't I?"

"Unfortunately," James said. "I'll be back soon, the door will be sealed so you should be fine."

James quickly pushed through the little gap in the doorway, then sealed it back up. Jessie marched over to him, "where have you been! I've had people banging on those things at the door, trying to get in."

"It's ok, they're about seventy plus stone each or something," James said. "There's no big strong muscley guys here, or Slayers."

Jessie eyes were now wide and fiery, "it doesn't mean you should leave me alone for that long!"

James put a hand on her shoulder, "Jess calm down, this is a big prison and a few morons kept me. I didn't mean to."

"Sorry, I don't know why I..." Jessie muttered, fidgeting a little. "That's weird."

"It'll be the clamp, that's what they call it by the way," James said. "They really shouldn't have gave that thing to you."

"What does that mean exactly?" Jessie asked, eyes narrowing again.

James smiled nervously, "you know, pregnancy mood swings and um you know. You don't really need one."

"You can talk mister," Jessie grumbled. "Well, how did it go?"

"Well some of the natives are friendly, kinda, but none of them have any food," James replied. "Though they are only friendly cos..." he trailed off, glancing away briefly, "I don't know why."

"You've got quite a reputation here I know. Those men who tried breaking in were after you," Jessie said.

"That's weird, the only ones who know I'm here were the ones that stole our food," James muttered, walking passed her. "I did find something though." He turned around and pulled out something from behind his back.

"Um, a pipe, does it have water in it or..." Jessie muttered.

"Well I was thinking if we could find some loose wires somewhere, I can use it to short circuit the forcefield," James said.

"Huh, ok then, don't ask me to help. I have no idea how you'd do that," Jessie said. "You think you can do it, for sure?"

"Hopefully, at the very least it'll keep me distracted until Voyager finds us. Most of the prisoners here would agree that I need a distraction," James said.

"And you had the nerve to hint that I was the violent one," Jessie muttered, raising an eyebrow. She sat down, "how are they ever going to find us here?" She put her hands over her face, "I can't stay here for the next five or so months, we can't have the baby here."

"The longest we'll be here is another few days. We've been gone for the three days so they're probably looking for us now," James said as he sat down next to her. "And FYI I meant the clamp makes your mood erratic, and the mood swings do that anyway." Jessie cried into her hands, he put an arm around her. "I'll promise we'll get out of here." He kissed her on the forehead, "I promise."

Jessie looked up from her hands and stared at him.

James and Jessie were lying on the ground next to each other. Jessie turned onto her back in her sleep, James had one arm around her stomach, her head was resting on his other arm.

An alarm went off in the distance, a lot of men started cheering and hooting. Jessie woke up suddenly, "what's going on?"

"Hmm, are you hungry?" he replied with a smile.

They rushed back towards the chute, they weren't the only ones there though. Surrounding it were most of the prison population. The chute opened up, a good few dozen of the soap looking things dropped out of it. Everyone scrambled to get their hands on some of their own.

James knelt down to get an armful. One guy tried to stand on his hand as he reached out to get a few more, he just grabbed his ankle tightly without even looking. The guy screeched, then stumbled backwards as he let go of it.

"Are you ok?" Jessie questioned.

James stood back up, "yeah, he didn't get a chance." Another guy walked passed them with an armful of food. A second man grabbed a hold of him, put a knife to his throat. James and Jessie watched him kill the man, he dropped the food and then dropped himself. The killer knelt down to pick it all up. Like he didn't do anything, he began snacking on one of the bars.

"He wasn't going to eat it all anyway," he said, walking away.

Jessie glanced up at James, "and he seemed the most normal, and tame ones."

"Yeah, the worst ones are always the ones that don't look it," James said.

"Yeah I know that too well," Jessie said, smiling at him. She walked off. James frowned as he watched her, he then followed her.

"Ok what does that mean?"

Jessie stood next to James, he worked on an open panel full of wires. A few extra wires were attached to the pipe he was messing around with.

"How's it going?" Jessie questioned.

James sighed, "not good." He slammed a hand into the wall, and I mean into it. "I just can't concentrate, my head's all blurry and..."

"Yeah I know what you mean," Jessie muttered. "Just think about getting back."

"No I tried it," James grumbled. He glanced at her, "have you tried eating again?"

"Not since I nearly threw up while eating the last one, no," Jessie muttered in response. She sat down to pick up one of the rations, turning a shade paler. "I can't, I don't know what it is but it makes me feel sick. Typical."

"Just try to think of other food when you eat it, that's what I used to do with Neelix's," James said as he turned back to the panel.

Jessie groaned, "no I can't, you know I have an aversion to almost every kind of food right now."

"You have to, you can't not eat any food. If thinking of other food won't help just think about the baby, do it for it," James said, trailing off a little. He turned to look at her again, "sorry I... it can't be made of anything you have an aversion too or anything with taste. It's just tasteless, I know you don't like food like that. That's all it is."

"Yeah," Jessie sighed. "I hope Voyager actually noticed we're, they will have by now right?"

"Maybe, I lost track of time," James replied. "Just think about what you're going to eat when you get back."

Jessie stared at the ration she held in front of her face, "ok, um..."

"Tell me, it might help me concentrate better," James said.

Jessie smiled, looking up at him. "Well maybe a tuna casserole with pasta. Then followed by a rice pudding." She took a bite out of the ration, pulling a face as she chewed it. "With a strawberry jam, chocolate and slices of banana." She managed to finish it off, "what will you be having?"

"I'd better not, red meat's one of the things that make you feel sick," James replied. Jessie pulled a disgusted face. "I'll probably eat anything right now anyway, even some of the crap you eat lately."

"Hey," Jessie moaned with her pet lip showing.

"You know me, I'll probably have one of those English brunches, heck I'd even eat those egg salads Ian insists on having every morning," James said.

Jessie shuddered, "eugh, no way."

"No I'll probably have the brunches, and lots of chips," James said.

"Hmm, do chips go with tuna in anyway?" Jessie asked, trying to look innocent. James glanced at her briefly.

"I'm sure you'd find a way," he said with a smirk on his face. Turning back to the panel, his face lit up slightly. "Oh, I think that's it."

"Are you sure?" Jessie questioned.

"One way to find out," James replied. He headed over to the chute entrance. He slowly moved his hand towards it.

"Careful," Jessie said.

His hand bounced off a shield, he only shook it off. "Ow, mild shock. Well it's a start right?"

Jessie walked up to him, "what happened?"

"It's ok, it's a good sign. It means I'm getting somewhere with it," James replied.

Pit and two other men appeared. "What are you doing?"

Jessie groaned, "great, acting time." She took a hold of James' arm, and hid behind him.

"It's none of your business, want to make something of it?" James muttered.

Pit smirked at him as he walked over, "maybe I do."

"You've got to be kidding right. I haven't got the patience to take it easy on you right now," James said, rolling his eyes.

"We should go," Jessie whispered.

"I think you should hand over the girl," Pit snarled.

"Well I think you should stop pissing me off, especially right now," James muttered.

Pit laughed, "you're just afraid to accept my challenge." He pulled a sharp bit of metal from out of his sleeve.

James stepped forward as he took out his own bit of metal, "fine, have it your way."

"James don't," Jessie said.

Most of the inmates started to gather around to watch.

"It's ok Jess," James said, dodging ever punch Pit threw at him with ease. He grabbed one of his wrists, twisted it a little to the side to make him drop the metal.

One guy rushed over to the fight, passing Jessie. She noticed the metal in his hands so she kicked him in the back of the kneecap. He fell to the ground.

James grabbed a hold of Pit's fist as he threw another punch. "Ok now I'm getting bored." He pushed him clear away. Jessie headed over to stand beside him.

The man on the ground suddenly lunged forward to stab him in the leg, Jessie pushed him out of the way. She screamed briefly at it plunged into her leg instead, just above the knee. The audience all burst into hideous laughter that echoed around them. She fell onto her knees, James caught her before she fell any further.

"Jessie, why did you..." he stuttered. He put a hand on the wound, she rested her head on his shoulder. "Oh god." The crowd closed in a little, all laughing and sneering at them. James took a hold of Jessie's hand that had the pipe in it, he took it off her and rested the hand on the wound. He stood up, raising the pipe. "Get the hell away now, get away from us!"

Everyone backed off, except one. He lunged forward only to get an almighty smack in the face with the pipe. Noticing the guy was now unconscious sporting a badly broken nose, and bruise on his face, the crowd backed off even further or ran off. The stabber himself crawled away to avoid the wrath too.

The throat slitter from before walked up behind them, James swung around ready to hit him too but he held up his hands. "No fight, no fight." The two men knelt down next to Jessie. "If she doesn't bleed to death she'll die from infection."

"What do you suggest then?" James snapped at him.

The man smirked, "let her die happy, you could get a lot for her." James' eyes widened in anger, he gave the guy a hard punch in the face, knocking him unconscious. This scared away everybody else that was left.

James gathered Jessie up in his arms, stood back up then headed away back to the shelter. "It's going to be ok Jessie, it's just a leg wound ok," he stuttered.

"He said infection, I'm sorry I had to," Jessie mumbled weakly.

"No you're tough, you'll be just fine," James stuttered. He eyed their shelter with wide eyes. The containers had been moved just a little, enough for someone to squeeze through. A middle aged man's head appeared in the crack. "What the hell are you doing in there, get out!"

"Get away, get out, get out!" the man screeched as he stepped out. Other men that were similar ages scrambled out too to surround it. They all started banging on the shelter walls. James just looked on helplessly as Jessie fell unconscious.

The throat slitter sat in his own shelter, scribbling away at some gritty looking paper. James stood in the doorway, still holding Jessie in his arms.

The man looked up, "you're blocking my light."

"I don't care about your stupid light Zio," James grumbled. "You're getting room-mates."

The man turned his head around, "let me discuss that with the giant bruise on my face, and a broken cheek bone."

"I can't say you didn't deserve it," James muttered.

Zio smirked at him, "I'm not letting you stay here without a price."

"Touch her and you won't have any reason to," James said.

"Hardly," Zio grunted. "I have more important things to think about."

"Ok here's the deal. You're going to let us stay here, share food and bandages," James said. "Everyone says that you're..."

"Everyone's right. What do I get then?" Zio asked.

"You get to live," James replied.

Zio got onto his feet, "you know what you want, and you'll do what you have to, to get it. I respect that."

"So we have a deal?" James questioned. "Either way I get the shelter."

"No. You'll get the shelter but that's it. You've got one of the few girls left here alive, and you accept any challenge made to you," Zio said. "You'd lose the shelter without me, just like your last one."

"But you kill people, I haven't," James said.

"No, not yet," Zio said with a cold look in his eyes. "Do you even know the only reason I have food and bandages, and why you're shelter-less?"

"Fine, what do you want?" James asked.

"That pipe interests me," Zio replied.

"There's no way I'm giving you that," James muttered.

"Then get out of here, I have work to do," Zio said, turning his back on him.

"Too bad. I know a way out of here, I'll just have to find someone else to help," James said.

"I've been here for six years, there's no way out," Zio said.

"The chute," James said.

"Anyone who tries to go through it gets hit by a high voltage force field," Zio turned back around.

"I know but I have a way to disable it. I can't do it and protect Jessie at the same time. If you let us stay here you can escape with us," James said. Zio stepped forward, looked down directly at his face. "What are you staring at?"

"I'm trying to see if you're lying or already crazy," Zio replied.

"I'm not either. Let us stay or I will kill you," James said. "I don't care about keeping the shelter forever, we need your supplies now."

Zio smiled, "you're not ready for that step yet. We have a deal, but if you're lying it'll be me that'll be doing the killing."

"You can try," James muttered.

James put a blanket over Jessie, she lay on the ground struggling to keep awake, sweating. "James this guy cut someone's throat, and suggested selling me as a prost," she mumbled. "I don't trust him."

"Neither do I but he needs us," James said. He ripped off a bit of his sleeve, he dabbed her forehead with it.

"And you're just going to leave me here alone, while you work?" Jessie questioned.

"Jess I've been here for days. Nobody will dare to break in, Zio's the most feared here," James replied. "After his comment earlier they won't expect you to be here too. You'll be fine."

Jessie fidgeted slightly as he dabbed her neck, "I don't feel too good, what's wrong with me?"

"I think you've just got a little fever. Just rest and eat something, you'll be ok," James replied.

Jessie narrowed her eyes, she slapped him across the face.

"Ok, what was that for?" James asked bewilderedly

"He's going to kill us, they all want to," she muttered. "You can't just leave me so they can get me, you're in on it."

"I wouldn't do that Jessie, I promise you're safe," James said.

Jessie looked like she calmed down, she put a hand on the top of his right leg. Before he knew what happened she had that piece of metal pointed at his face.

"Jessie, what are you doing?" he asked, holding out his hand. "Give me that."

"Idiot, you know exactly what I'm doing!" she screeched at him.

Zio appeared at the doorway, "she's too weak."

James rolled his eyes, "so you're suggesting beating her up, yeah right."

"No she's too weak now to resist the clamp," Zio said. "Just leave her, she'll calm down."

James glanced back at him, Jessie grabbed a hold of his left arm, dropping the metal on the floor. "Sorry I didn't mean, don't leave me."

"I have to work on our escape, I will be back though," he said, picking up the bit of metal. He put it back in his pocket. "Promise."

Zio stood with his back to the chute, James again worked on the panels. Zio was rambling away to himself, "you want to know what it is?"

James slammed his hand on the wall, growling, "ugh, I can't concentrate." He turned around to look at Zio, "what are you muttering on about?"

"Don't fight it, use it," Zio replied.

"How?" James rolled his eyes.

"Why should I tell you, you weren't even listening," Zio muttered.

"No need to be a drama queen," James groaned. He turned back to the panels.

"Well, don't you want to know what it is?" Zio questioned. James glanced over his shoulder. "The clamp?"

"Fine," James muttered.

"It's an experiment," Zio said. He walked over to stand beside him. "The clamp drives everyone insane. They need to cut down the prison population." James glanced back at him with a raised eyebrow. "We kill each other off."

"Whatever," he said.

"Why else would they put it in our heads when we're stuck here in this prison? It hit me one day, like a light switching on in my mind," Zio said. "They're all afraid of me cos I know the truth, now you know."

"Yeah great," James sarcastically muttered.

"If you let your emotions take over you the clamp wins, and you'll end up like those crazy men who took over your shelter. However if you learn to control it, you'll survive like me," Zio said.

James' face lit up a little, "I'm thinking I'll be out of here before either happens." He turned towards the chute, "go on, touch it."

Zio stared at him suspiciously, glancing briefly at the chute. He reluctantly moved his hand towards it, it went passed where the shield usually was. James walked around him, and climbed into the chute. Zio went straight after him.

The chute itself was about five metres long, Zio struggled to keep up the speed he started with after the first two. James managed to get to the top, which was just a one and a half metre squared area. Straight ahead from the chute was a small hatch, with a circular dusty window in the middle of it.

"What do you see?" Zio yelled up the chute.

"I dunno, a hatch," James replied. He rubbed the window to get the dust away.

"Well, are we at the surface?" Zio yelled.

James looked through the window once it was a clear enough to see through it. His face dropped as he stared at the stars and space outside.

Jessie moaned in her sleep, her face twitched. James knelt down next to her, began to dab her face with a bit of material soaked in water. She stirred, but didn't open her eyes. "Hey, how are you feeling?"

"I was dreaming. We were at this buffet and you had..." she mumbled, trailing off near the end.

"Sorry I woke you," James smiled.

"Did you find a way through the shield?" Jessie asked.

"We're still working on it," James replied.

"Ok that's good," Jessie sighed.

James put down the cloth, he shuffled down to carefully take off the bandage on her leg, with his spare hand he picked up clean ones. Jessie looked down with her eyes widening, "what, what happened?"

"It's ok Jess, I'm just changing your bandages," he replied.

Jessie sat up a little, "how did I... what..."

"Easy, you got in the way of a guy trying to stab me remember," James said.

Jessie stared at him, "no, it must have been you. How could you?"

"No, that's not really what I meant. Lie down," James said, putting a hand on her arm.

"You did it!" Jessie snapped at him. She tried to push him away, but right now she was too weak. Instead she settled for slapping him on the arms, chest and at least twice in the face. "You twisted little asshole!" she screamed as she tried to shake him roughly, tears streaming down her face.

"Jessie I wouldn't hurt you, you know that," James said as calmly as he could considering. "You tried to help me, yeah?"

"Yeah um..." Jessie stuttered when she finally stopped. He lay her back down, brushing her hair out of her face. "What happened to me?"

"You were stabbed, not by me," James replied. He quickly finished off the work on the bandages.

Jessie stared at him with wide eyes, shaking uncontrollably. She placed her right hand on the back of his neck and she pulled him closer to her. They were only about a centimetre or less apart. "Please don't leave me here, please!" she said in a begging voice.

"I told you, I won't," James said.

"Am I going to die?" she asked quietly.

"No, I won't let that happen ok. We should get some sleep ok," James softly replied. He got out of her grip, lay down beside her then put an arm around her.

"What if I don't wake up again?" Jessie whispered.

"You will, promise," James whispered back. "Shh, close your eyes."

Jessie did as she was told, "I'm scared."

James sighed, "I know."

Zio worked on his notes while sitting on top of a scaffolding that was two metres tall. James stepped out of the shelter, still looking like he hasn't slept in about a week.

"So how's your girlfriend, is she dead yet?" Zio asked.

James glanced up at him, "no." He climbed half way up the scaffolding, to Zio's surprised he grabbed his arm and threw him off the whole thing. "She's not gonna."

Zio pulled himself up, brushing dust off his clothes. His notes were still firmly in his hands. "It's really getting to you isn't it? I was just asking."

"This is nothing," James muttered. He jumped back down to the ground. "Look that chute must open when a ship comes to deliver supplies, all we have to do is wait around in it until one comes by."

"And what then, get shot?" Zio grumbled.

"They won't be expecting it, they're probably never armed. We just need to overpower them, it's easy enough," James said.

Zio headed over to him, "I've never let anyone read this before, but I want you to read my manifesto. It'll tell you everything you need to control the clamp." He held out his notes.

James stared blankly at him, "if I wasn't controlling it, you'd be dead by now, and so would the guy who stabbed Jessie."

"You're not a killer," Zio said, shaking his head.

"That's where you're wrong," James muttered.

"Here," Zio said, gesturing his notes. "Read it."

James knocked them out of his hands, prompting a growl from Zio. He knelt down to gather up his notes. James headed back into the shelter. He found Jessie lying on her side, pulling the wires out of the pipe.

"What have you done?" he asked slowly.

Jessie looked at him with a childish, innocent face. "Nothing," she said quietly.

James walked over to her, he dropped to his knees then snatched the pipe off her. "You broke it, why did you do that?"

"It's mine," she mumbled, grabbing it back off him.

"Give it back Jess," James said.

Jessie shook her head, she kept a tight hold of the pipe with both hands. He tried to take it back off her but he couldn't get a hold of enough of it to keep a firm grip. She loosened one hand to hit him in the face. She also tried to knee him with her good leg, he backed off in time. She raised the pipe as he went forward to grab it again.

"Jessie I mean it, give it to me now," James muttered.

"No!" she snapped back. "Stay away from me, you freak!" She swung the pipe at him as hard as she could, it hit him across the cheek. It knocked him back slightly, he stared at her with wide eyes as she clutched the pipe against her chest. He lunged forward, he took it off her with ease. She quickly shielded her face while backing off as he raised it, his eyes filled with rage.

Zio stood by the doorway. Jessie lowered one arm a little so she could look at James with her wide frightened eyes, he stared at her with his, the rage in them immediately faded away.

"Go ahead, get rid of her," Zio coldly said.

James dropped the pipe onto the floor, he scrambled to his feet. He gave Zio a look that could freeze lava as he left the shelter. Zio followed him.

"You wanted to kill her, didn't you?" he said.

James stopped dead in his tracks, he turned around to face him. "No, she's my best friend, she's my life. Why would I?"

"You had the pipe raised, you were going to hit her with it. With your strength you could kill her in an instant, if you wanted to," Zio said.

"I'd never kill her, you're out of your mind," James grumbled as he walked away from him.

"What does it matter? That thing in there is not your girlfriend, she's just what's left. The clamp has eaten away everything she was, all there's left to do is get rid of it!" Zio snapped.

"You'd like that wouldn't you? You don't have any idea what you're saying, do you?" James muttered.

"Maybe you should explain it a little better," Zio said as he stopped in front of him.

"If she dies then so does everyone in this prison, including you," James said. "You say I'm not a killer, no technically I'm not but there's two sides of me. One has killed people, and if something happens to her the same will happen again. Back then I didn't have two chips in my head."

"You're just as weak as her," Zio snarled. He handed him a piece of sharp metal.

"What's this for, to kill you with?" James said. "I doubt I'd need it."

"I'm not having that rotting carcass stay in my shelter anymore. Either you get rid of it or I will," Zio replied.

James narrowed his eyes and stepped closer to him, "you do realise that if you even go near her, I will kill you, and it won't be quick either."

"I don't think so, you're just a small petty little boy that is weak and pathetic. You let the clamp and that girl control you, kill her now and I may change my mind," Zio said.

"I may be weak when it comes to her, but you don't stand a chance against me. I won't kill her, but go ahead, you can try," James said. "You do remember how you got that bruise right, that was my weak punch."

"Somehow I doubt that," Zio scoffed.

"Fine, I don't care if you don't believe me," James muttered, he handed him the metal back. He then turned away to head back to the shelter.

Zio narrowed his own eyes, "get her out of there, or I'll kill you both." He followed him, holding the metal ready to either attack or defend himself. James ignored him, he passed the scaffolding. He pulled one of the two metre long metal bars away from it with ease, the whole structure collapsed nearby Zio. He quickly backed off to avoid getting hit.

James turned around with the bar in his hands, "remember if you come near us..." He folded the bar, it split in half, "this'll be you." He stepped into the shelter.

Jessie rested against a wall, barely conscious while James stood guard with the metal bar. Pit and a few others were surrounding them, not any closer than a metre away.

"I'll give you all of my food for the girl," one guy snarled.

Pit slapped him, "never mind that, I'll gladly sell both of these guys."

"You've got to be kidding right?" James muttered. "She's not an item for sale."

"Does the price go down when she's dead?" one guy asked. He tried to get closer but James swung that bar to make him back off.

"Do you want your body and head separated?" he grumbled.

"I want the girl, give her to me now!" Pit snapped.

"No, where I come from we don't treat girls like slaves. If you want her, you'll have to kill me first," James muttered.

Pit eyed him up and down, sniggering slightly. "Not a problem. Your race must be full of scared little men, letting the women walk all over them."

"There's still prats like you in my race unfortunately," James said.

"Ah ha, so maybe it's just you," Pit said. "Give her to me now. I'll share her around afterwards, I don't care if she belongs to you."

"She's not an object, she's not here to do what you or others want. The only person she belongs to is herself," James snapped.

Pit laughed, "I don't think she'd really notice if I asked her anyway."

The chute alarm echoed throughout the prison. Everyone started charging towards it, most of them yelled, "new prisoner!" Pit joined them, leaving James and Jessie alone.

The shield dropped, the chute opened. A body fell out of it, it landed right on its feet, aiming a phaser rifle. She fired it at a few prisoners who tried to jump on her. A few more people dropped out, one of them was Tuvok but the leader was the only one with a rifle.

"Put your hands on your heads!" he yelled, aiming his own regular phaser. Surprisingly all of the prisoners did as they were told.

"Do it now!" Kathryn bellowed, her angry eyes looked around the crowd. They rested on two men who were pushed aside, James came through in between them, carrying Jessie. Kathryn calmed down in an instant, she rushed over to him. "James, are you ok?"

"I'm fine, Jessie needs help," he replied.

In: "Neelix to Janeway, we've got company."

Kathryn glanced at Tuvok, "you and Harrison help get Jessie up the chute." He nodded, he lead another security member over to James. He handed her over to Tuvok. The two men headed for the chute.

"Are you sure you're ok? Did anyone here cause you any trouble?" Kathryn asked.

James looked at her with a raised eyebrow, "quite a few did actually." He looked around, eyeing a few prisoners as he did.

"Hmm ok," Kathryn said, she raised her rifle to get ready to fire. James quickly put a hand on the end of it.

"What are you doing? You don't have the clamp excuse, surely," he muttered.

Kathryn sighed in disappointment, "fine. You'd better follow Tuvok." James shook his head before climbing into the chute. Kathryn soon followed, then the Security members did.

### **Sickbay:**

The Doctor and Kes were busy treating James and Jessie respectively while Neelix rambled on, Kathryn stood in between them clenching her fists.

"I think I was the hero of the hour don't you think?" Neelix muttered on.

"Hell no, you annoyed the Aquitiri so much with your prattling, they started firing on us. We barely got out alive!" Kathryn snapped.

Neelix cowered, "maybe they had a clamp too."

"Um yeah, what was those clamps doing anyway?" James quickly butted in before Kathryn exploded again.

The Doctor's face lit up, "ah yes, the clamps seemed to stimulate acetylcolene in the brain."

"That would explain the agitation," Kes added on.

"Maybe it was because you took prisoners out and yelled at them for messing your hair up," Neelix muttered quietly.

Kathryn blew a fuse or maybe three, "that was after they started firing at us, and your job was to make them think we weren't taking their prisoners! You didn't have to say anymore than *oops wrong station, I'll be going when I fix my navigation*, but nooo you just love to tell everyone about Kes not being with you and..."

James quickly interrupted again, "um, what's acetylcolene?" The Doctor's face lit up again.

"Ohno no no," Jessie muttered as she sat up, "I'd rather hear Janeway and Neelix arguing."

The Doctor frowned, "fine, I won't tell you."

Kes smiled, "let's just say that clamp was designed to irritate the prisoners, probably to encourage violence. No doubt they just leave prisoners in there for the rest of their lives, and..."

"Zio was right," James said.

Jessie nodded, "yeah maybe." She pulled herself off the biobed, "come on, we've got several days of rations to blow." She headed out. James reluctantly followed her. "Why don't we replicate a big pizza you know from those replicators in the cargo bay, they'd be big enough. We could get some chips too, you can have that English brunch thing afterwards if you're still hungry."

"Jessie wait," James muttered.

"Yeah I know, you will be. Stupid thing to say," Jessie said as they stopped at the turbolift.

"No, uh we need to talk," James said.

Jessie frowned, "ok, about what?" She stepped into the turbolift, James followed her. "Deck Two."

"Why are you even talking to me at all?" James asked.

Jessie looked confused, "um the question is why not?"

"I was about to kill you, don't you remember?" James replied. He shook his head and turned away, "I keep nearly hurting you, most of the time I do and everytime there's an excuse." He turned back to face her, "you know being drunk, now the clamp. I'm surprised I didn't hunt you down to kill you when I was evil years ago, or went to find you when the chip was active."

"James don't, please don't do this again," Jessie muttered, shaking her head.

"No it needs to be said. Isn't it obvious? I can't keep blaming the incidents that make me be violent, I should blame myself. Obviously something deep down wants to hurt you, I really don't understand why though," James said.

"That's not true. You didn't go after me while evil or was under the chip's influence because I wasn't involved, the clamp got to you only because of what I did," Jessie said.

James shook his head, "no Jess, don't take the blame."

"I'm not. I'm just saying it's not your fault, there was that split second where you were going to hit me but that passed straight away. You obviously don't want to hurt me or nothing would have stopped you," Jessie said. "Besides if you didn't care you wouldn't have protected me the way you did."

"When and what do you mean?" James questioned.

"Before we got rescued. You threatened to kill anyone who came near me, and you stood up to them. Not just the physical way, you stood up to their beliefs too. You didn't care about fitting in anymore, you just wanted to protect me," Jessie replied. "Now stop being so hard on yourself."

"But Jess I can't just," James muttered.

"Yes you can. Both of us weren't ourselves in there, I should be apologising to you for keep attacking you the way I did. No wonder you lost it for half a second, you have more restraint than me," Jessie said. She smiled as she put a hand on his arm, the turbolift stopped then. "What do you say about the pizza then?"

"What happened to your tuna casserole idea or your chips and tuna?" James replied, smiling a little back at her. They both stepped out.

"You can put tuna on pizza, oh why don't we put chips on the pizza too?" Jessie said.

James glanced at her, "I don't think so."

"Oh come on," Jessie said as she put an arm around his. "It's not as bad as what I kept in my head. I was thinking of putting chocolate in."

James shook his head, "please tell me your weird cravings will end soon cos, eugh that's just gross."

Jessie smiled sweetly, "it sounds nice actually. I'll settle for tuna and chips pizza but if you're not interested I'll put chocolate in."

"Chips suddenly sounds like a good idea," James said. They turned into the Mess Hall, the doors closed behind them.

**\*\*\*\*THE END\*\*\*\***