

B4FV Episode 3.15

Facing Fears

The Mess Hall:

The senior staff sat at a group of tables joined together, Kathryn and Tuvok sat on each end. Kathryn was in the middle of a long boring speech so most of the table weren't paying attention.

"Then he blamed something about a Borg Cube on me, and started yelling at us," Tom said to Harry sitting next to him.

Harry smiled, "yeah Tom. I was there remember, and it was you."

Tom glanced briefly at B'Elanna, who sat opposite him. She had her eye on him as well, but looked away as their eyes met.

Meanwhile Damien walked through the far door, with a familiar old man following him. "Do you mind, you're cramping my evil image."

"In my day it was called a villain image, and..." the man rambled.

Damien groaned, "look Tim you old coot. Yeah that's your new name by the way. If you don't stop that..." He turned around to find the man had gone. "I wish he wouldn't do that. Oh wait, no it's *I wish he wouldn't come back.*"

Danny giggled behind her hand, she whispered in Ian's direction. "Did you see that?"

"I know, Damien has to talk to himself now," Ian said.

"No, Tom and B'Elanna keep exchanging glances," Danny muttered.

Ian raised an eyebrow, "yeah so?" He turned his head to watch Tom. He moved his glance toward B'Elanna, then to Harry who was talking to him. B'Elanna then decided to look at Tom again. "Oh right."

Kathryn finally finished her speech, she looked around expecting an applause or a cheer but all she got were a few unenthusiastic claps. Pouting she sat down in a huff, "hmpf, here's to Lieutenant Commander Tuvok, whatever."

"Thank you, I think," Tuvok said. He stood up to start his own speech. Everyone quickly cleared their seats and started snacking on the food on the other tables.

"Any excuse for a party ey? Harry said with a mouth full of cake.

Tom nodded his head as he stared directly at B'Elanna, "yes yes, you are right, always."

"Ok then. Am I allowed to use your replicator rations whenever I want?" Harry smirked.

"Yes yes, you are ri... always," Tom mumbled. "Excuse me." He rushed over to B'Elanna.

"Of course," Harry smiled. "I'll just go and treat myself to a four course meal and expensive wine."

B'Elanna noticed Tom advancing on her, she quickly turned her back to him. He stopped beside her. "We need to talk."

"Really don't," she blurted out. She sighed, "can we do this outside?"

Tom nodded his head, "sure." The couple headed for the nearest exit, passing Kes, James and Jessie.

"So how's the shoulder?" Kes asked.

"It's getting better," James replied.

"I've told you once before, I'll tell you again," Jessie muttered.

"Don't steal Janeway's coffee, yeah I know," James meekly said.

"I can't believe she managed to pull the cup that way, while you had a hold of it and without spilling any," Jessie said.

Kes smirked at her, "and that she could keep such a hard grip on a hot coffee in a metal cup."

"I'm not really surprised, she's probably had lots of experience," James said. "I don't even like black coffee either."

Jessie smiled as she snuggled into him, her chin resting on his shoulder, "then why do you do it?"

"She does it to me and I do like annoying her," he replied.

"Annoy her in a less fatal way next time," Jessie said. She pulled a face while glancing over Kes' shoulder, "come on, that guy behind Kes is making me sick." She dragged James away with her. Kes glanced back, behind her there stood a man snacking on a hamburger in a piggish manner. Next to him was the sandwich table. She picked up a few pieces and put them on a plate.

James and Jessie stopped by the window, Kes rushed to rejoin them. "Look Jess, tuna sandwiches."

Jessie took the plate off her, "oh thank god, there's nothing else for me to eat here." She put half of one of the sandwiches into her mouth but looked a bit sick afterwards. "Uh, what else is in this?" she mumbled with her mouth full.

James took the rest off of her, "looks like melted cheese."

Jessie put her hand over her mouth, "crap, excuse me." She dashed out of the room.

"I thought..." Kes nervously said.

"No, recently cheese has been making her feel sick too. I think she ate too much of it," James said.

Kes cringed, "oh so much for pizza later then. What can she eat now then?"

"Um chips, most veggies, mostly all sweet stuff, pastry and bread. Luckily she's very um, creative with the stuff she can eat," James replied.

"Ohno, she doesn't mix stuff together, does she?" Kes said, looking worried.

Jessie walked back into the room slowly, "ok those tuna sandwiches better be gone before I get back over there."

James managed to get two of the sandwich pieces in his mouth, Kes smirked as she took the last one. "On it," he mumbled.

"Pig," Kes giggled.

Jessie pulled a disgusted face when she stood back in between them. "If you want me to go near or kiss you later, you'll have to clean your mouth out."

"So noted," James said.

"Don't worry Jess, it won't be as bad soon," Kes said.

"Really? It's like this kid wants me to suffer," Jessie muttered.

Kes smiled, "I doubt it."

Kathryn marched over to the group with her hands on both hips. "You steal my coffee one more time mister and I'll ground your butt."

"Um I didn't, I'm still recovering from yesterday's attempt," James said. Kathryn frowned in confusion. "You pulled my arm out of place."

"Oh I'm sorry," she cooed, patting him on the cheek. "But stealing is wrong, you should learn that."

James looked disgusted, "um, you do it to me."

"Yes I know, but taking coffee off someone is taking it back to its owner, not stealing," Kathryn said.

"Yes it is. I pay for my coffee therefore it's mine," James muttered.

"Aaaaw," Kathryn cooed again. "It's true though."

"Fine, you steal mine and I'll continue stealing yours," James said.

Kathryn gasped, "you are so grounded."

"You can't ground members of your crew," Jessie said with a smirk.

"No, but I can restrict holodeck access and increase work hours," Kathryn said. "That's similar to grounding." She patted James on the arm, "this time you're let off."

She walked off toward the nearest door. It opened for her, the look on her face grew disgusted and a little annoyed. "Do you mind, this is a public place!"

Tom and B'Elanna, who were busy kissing just a second ago, jumped and turned to face her blushing madly. "Captain uh, we were just discussing something secret," Tom stuttered.

"No you weren't, this is such a bad example to the rest of the crew. You're senior officers for crying out loud," Kathryn grumbled.

"Um, senior officers are not allowed to uh kiss?" Tom questioned. "What about James and Jessie, most probably and you and Chak..."

Kathryn blew a fuse, "I mean in public, now get the hell out of my sight!" Tom and B'Elanna glanced at each other nervously, they didn't waste any time leaving. She however calmed down instantly, "aaaw, isn't it sweet when two people fall in love and get together." She walked off.

Meanwhile:

The elderly man, aka Tim followed Damien into Cargo Bay 2, Damien was either ignoring him or hadn't even noticed his presence. "Hmm, there's got to be some free food around here that isn't *cooked* already."

"Why free food?" Tim questioned. Damien stopped and jumped about two miles. "In my day you could get a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine and a haircut for a nickel."

"Nickel, just one. God you're older than I thought," he groaned as he turned to face him. "Why do you keep following me?"

"You were responsible for my death, in my day we always revenged our attackers or betrayers," Tim replied.

"Uh huh, it doesn't count if you were killed. Back then nobody could be revived or be immortal, so the rule doesn't apply," Damien said smugly. Tim frowned in confusion. "Ok you think about that, I'm going to find something heavy to hit you with in the meantime." He walked off.

"While you do that let me tell you a story about one of my discoveries," Tim mumbled, he continued rambling on.

Meanwhile Damien picked up a cord, he loosely wrapped it around his own neck and pretended to pull it hard. "Nah," he tossed it over his shoulder. Then he discovered a toolbox that looked pretty heavy, an evil smile appeared on his face.

Tim continued his ramblings, not noticing Damien walk towards him with the toolbox. The ceiling began to crack, it creaked loudly. Damien stepped back with a frown. Then the ceiling collapsed just above Tim, a big cloud of dust blocked Damien's view.

"Oh well," Damien sighed, he dropped the tool box in front of him. A figure emerged from the cloud of dust, his eyes widened as it walked closer. It walked through the dust. He sighed in relief as it was Sid with a grin on his face, of course covered in cuts and a bruise or two.

"That was so cool!" he grinned. "I couldn't have done that better if I had planned it."

"Uh huh," Damien mumbled. He pointed at the toolbox, "that's pretty heavy."

"Oh thanks, you're a pal," Sid laughed. He picked up the toolbox, then walked off with it.

Damien sighed before walking out of the bay. As soon as he left the rubble moved, Tim managed to pull himself out of it. He didn't even have a scratch on him, he did not look like somebody who just had the ceiling fall on him. "Interesting."

Deck Two:

Only a few crewmembers habited the Mess Hall. Neelix was clearing up in the kitchen while Kes stood nearby eating a bowl of rice.

"Nobody should really know so..." Kes said.

Neelix turned around, "I gotcha, don't worry." He winked at her as he put down a bowl he was cleaning. "It's in the cupboard to the left of me, but I don't get why it has to be unalcoholic."

"Jessie doesn't drink anymore," Kes replied, glancing away nervously.

Neelix looked at her suspiciously, "uh huh, why's that?"

"I don't know," Kes stuttered.

"You do though, I can tell," Neelix said.

"She just can't anymore, that's all I can say," Kes said.

Neelix widened his eyes, "can't, is she pre..."

"Shhh," Kes shushed him. "Keep it down."

"Sorry I didn't mean to say it that loud," Neelix said. He watched James and Jessie walk in holding hands, talking quietly to each other. They briefly looked around to see how many people were around. Then they sat down in the corner by the window.

"Don't tell anyone," Kes whispered.

"I won't, it isn't my business to," Neelix said. Kes smiled at him, he stepped away for a second and came back holding what looked like a bottle of wine. "Tell them *enjoy*."

Kes took a hold of it, "will do." She headed over to the couple. "Hi guys." She put the bottle onto the table in front of them.

"That is non alcoholic right?" Jessie questioned.

"Yeah it is," Kes nodded. "What are you celebrating?"

"Oh just a few little things," James replied.

Jessie held onto his arm, "one of the things is just the baby, you know before I'm too big to be in public."

James glanced at her, "what are you talking about?"

Jessie raised her shoulders, "we can't just have me wandering around the ship while nine months pregnant, for example. Everyone will know."

James shook his head, "so when are we going to tell everyone? We can't really hide it."

"I don't know, I know I'm not ready now," Jessie replied. "I don't know if I could deal with all the staring, the whore comments."

Kes pulled a face, "ookay, I'm going to go over here." She rushed over to the other side of the hall.

"What do you mean, who would call you that?" James questioned.

"Everyone, they'll all think we're just friends and I'll just be the whore who slept with a friend and got pregnant from it," Jessie muttered.

"Well I suppose it would be a good idea to tell people we're together and that there's a baby coming. No one will really think anything bad of you then," James said.

Jessie stared at him, "you'd be ok with that?"

"Yeah kinda. Part of me wants to tell everyone, you know cos guys will get really jealous that I'm dating and living with the best girl around, or ever for that matter," James replied.

Jessie smiled, shaking her head, "a lot of guys are already jealous of you, you know."

"Oh, then more people know than I thought," James said with a frown.

"No silly, they're jealous cos they want to be strong and stuff like you," Jessie smirked. "Sorry, go on."

"Go on?" James said. "Oh, telling is good cos we can make every guy on the ship wish they were me, now that is cruel in some ways."

Jessie tried to keep a straight face, "I doubt that unless you mean the stuff with your dad, or mum."

"No but that's a good point," James said. "Anyway it's also good cos it'll be nice not to have to be over careful, and there's nothing to be ashamed of. But there's people like Tom."

"Who just can't keep their mouths shut, yeah exactly. Even if we did come out there will still be the same amount of rumours, just different," Jessie said.

"But we can't hide the baby when it's born, it'll have to be before or they'll find out then," James said.

Jessie sighed, "yeah, but that's still another four months."

"Yeah there's still plenty of time," James smiled. He pulled out a box of chocolates from behind his back, "here this is yours."

Jessie grinned while taking them off of him, "aaw thanks." She opened it, inside were lots of Belgian shells. "Oh great, these'll last for about five minutes only," she giggled. She held the box out after taking one of the chocolates out, "go on, this way I won't eat them all."

"Um ok," James mumbled with his eyebrow raised. "Just one though," he took one of the chocolates out.

Jessie took a quick look around the room, then decided to rest her head on his shoulder and hold onto his arm. "Just help yourself, you bought them."

"That beats the point of getting you them," he said.

Jessie smiled while picking up another chocolate, she hovered it in front of his face. "Here, go on."

James turned his head away, "no, I had one already." He lightly pushed her hand back toward her. She rolled her eyes before moving around so she could kneel on the seat, and face him. She put the chocolate directly in front of his mouth, he took a hold of her hand. "No Jess, they're yours. You can just save the rest for later."

"You know me, I feel guilty eating almost a full box myself," Jessie said with a smirk planted on her face. "Now open."

"Ok fine," James muttered, he put a hand over his mouth to block Jessie's attack. He managed to mumble something while looking a bit too smug.

"All right, suit yourself. You can just watch me eat them."

Kes headed over to the replicator, watching them over her shoulder. Two crewmembers were standing in front of her while somebody else did their order.

"The mess is getting busier," Jessie whispered.

"Damn, I really think we should tell all sooner, then we don't have to worry," James said.

The two crewmembers at the replicator backed away from it, pulling confused faces at each other. "What the?"

Kes stood in between them, "what's the matter?"

"Look," one guy pointed at the replicator, which now was the home of a live white rabbit.

"Huh, I don't even know where to begin on that one," Kes stuttered. The queue behind her quickly headed over to the kitchen or the replicator on the opposite side of the room. More crewmembers walked through both of the doors.

"We'd better leave," Jessie said.

James nodded his head, he stood up then held out his right hand. Jessie took a hold of it and climbed to her feet.

"Hmm, that was gentlemanly," she smirked at him.

"Gentle me? Never," James commented. They both headed for the nearest exit, with their arms around the others. The queue for the second replicator and the kitchen blocked the way.

"Maybe you're right," Jessie muttered. "Can't we just beam to our quarters." She blushed a little as she glanced at him, "I didn't mean to do... I just want to hang out without prying eyes."

James did a quick scan of the room then glanced back at her, "I'll sort it." His glance moved toward the nearby door, his eyes widened. "Oh god." He moved away from Jessie who watched him looking confused. "Everyone, I just got word that Neelix's drink was spiked, he's coming."

Everyone started screaming, some hysterically. They all scrambled for the nearest door. Jessie was about to follow, James put his arm out in front of her. "No no, that's called a distraction."

"Oh, silly me," Jessie laughed. "Come here," she purred while stroking his chest. Her right arm went around his neck. By this time everyone had cleared the room. They again closed the gap between them and started kissing. What they didn't realise was that Neelix had just ran back into the room, he dropped his jacket by the kitchen. They pulled away but only a little bit, it was enough for James to notice Neelix, his eyes went wide again.

Jessie frowned, "what's the matter?"

Neelix started fiddling with his trousers not far behind her. Luckily the drunk Talaxian ran straight out of the room.

"Why did you..." Jessie muttered.

James smiled nervously, "let's just say I won't get wrong for tricking everyone in the mess."

Jessie cringed, "eww gross." She glanced away, something on the floor caught her eye and made her scream. She jumped behind James.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

Jessie shakily pointed in front of them, on the ground. "What is that doing here, it's horrible, get rid of it."

James looked down at what she was pointing at, the rabbit hopped toward Jessie. She grabbed onto James' arms tightly. "Get it away!"

"Ok don't look," James said, about to raise his left foot.

"Oh god don't do that, eww, not like that," Jessie mumbled.

"Well you go home. I'll meet you there," James said while kneeling down.

"Right," Jessie stuttered. She ran like her life was on the line.

"Ok little guy, where did you come from?" James muttered. He picked up the rabbit by the scruff of the neck.

Meanwhile:

Tom and Harry stepped out of a turbolift. "Why didn't you tell me Tom? I figured you'd have told everybody aboard by now to gloat," Harry questioned.

Tom shrugged his shoulders, "I don't know, it was probably for B'Elanna's sake. It's not like this has been going on long."

"How long?" Harry raised an eyebrow.

"She told me a few days ago, but today we're an item," Tom dreamily smiled. Harry rolled his eyes. "The way she was treating me was only cos she liked me, and didn't know what to do about it."

"So you're trying to say that everytime a girl rejects you in the most violent way, it means they like you," Harry muttered. "You must have more female admirers than I thought."

"That's what I've been saying. I've always thought that Jessie was the one with the biggest hots for me," Tom said.

"I dunno, she seems more hung up on James," Harry said.

"Well that's her loss," Tom groaned.

"Why cos he's gay?" Harry questioned sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

Tom laughed, "oh I only call him that to annoy him. He's really not, people would have to be blind to not notice the way he looks at and acts around Jessie. If he's gay, all guys are in trouble."

"What, is it like you with every girl?" Harry smirked.

Tom pulled a face, "eww don't ever say that, unless Janeway doesn't count as a girl as she's old."

What he didn't know was that Kathryn was directly behind him. "Tom!" she screeched. He and Harry stopped dead in their tracks.

"Oh you're dead Tom," Harry whispered.

To their surprise Kathryn put her arms around both of their shoulders. "How's my favourite helmsman and opps boy doing today, ey?"

"Um aren't you mad?" Tom stuttered.

"Mad about what sweetie?" Kathryn cooed.

The two men shuddered. "Um we're fine Captain," Harry mumbled.

"Good good," Kathryn smiled.

"You didn't hear what I said then?" Tom asked.

"Yes, you asked if I was mad," Kathryn smiled. She gasped, then pushed passed the pair. She followed a female crewmember that was about to turn the corner. "Lhileny, how did you get your hair so silky smooth? What's your secret?"

"What's the matter with her?" Harry asked.

Tom glanced at him with an evil smile on his face, "well she's acting a lot like a pregnant woman who's hormones are going crazy."

Harry turned pale, "oh god no. I hope not, can you imagine what a Janeway child would be like?"

James walked up behind them, "ok guys, you're blocking the way."

Tom and Harry jumped, then turned half way around. "Why do people keep coming up behind us?" Harry muttered.

"Well I don't know, maybe cos you're standing in the middle of the corridor," James replied.

"I wouldn't go down there if I were you," Tom said. "Janeway's really hormonal."

James frowned, "uh, I hope you don't mean what I think you mean."

"Yeah, Janeway's pregnant," Tom sniggered.

Harry rolled his eyes, "no he just thinks that."

"Great again, well I hope it goes better than last time," James muttered.

Tom and Harry widened their eyes. "Again? Oh god, where does she hide the other baby?" Harry squeaked.

"In her hair maybe," Tom said. "Though she did chop it off, maybe it ran away from home."

"It wasn't recently, it was a long time ago," James said. "Like mine and Harry's age ago."

"Ooh juicy," Tom smiled.

"Did I mention the baby's long dead?" James muttered.

"No," Tom's face fell. "Man that sucks, but we would have had a second Janeway that's you guys age around, or a male version I suppose."

"Not really, he or she might not have been like her at all and like the dad," James said. "Now don't tell her that I told you that."

"Hmm I don't know, I'll have to think..." Tom slyly said.

"Tell her and you'll lose a body part," James said.

Tom smiled nervously, "um yes sir."

Harry shook his head, laughing to himself. They all jumped to the sound of a woman's ear piercing scream. James was the first to run toward the source, Tom second and Harry about twenty seconds after him. He bumped straight into Tom, who stumbled forward and bumped into James, he managed to remain still.

"Ow, what are you made of?" Tom grumbled.

James didn't answer him, he was staring ahead of him looking a little paler than usual. Tom easily managed to look over his shoulder, while Harry moved to his side. "Oh god," Harry stuttered.

Only two metres ahead of them a young female crewmember's upper torso was only seeable. She had her back to them, was remaining deathly still and had a look of pure terror on her face.

"Um where's her legs? Looks like they're in the floor and next deck," Tom stuttered. He nudged James in the left arm. "What are you waiting for, pull her out."

James shook his head, "I don't think so, there's no hole in the ground." He stepped a little closer, then knelt down next to her. "It looks like the ground disappeared for only a part of a second, then reappeared when she was falling through it."

Harry put a hand over his mouth, "how, that's impossible."

"It's happened once before on another ship," Tom muttered. "This isn't good."

The Bridge:

Chakotay climbed out of his chair, "what do you mean by screwy?"

Danny shrugged, she turned away from the helm. "I mean screwy. The console won't do as I tell it."

"Sir," an unknown crewmember called from the back of the bridge. Chakotay turned toward him. The entire back station had sparks coming from it, and the power in parts were flickering on and off.

"What's going on?" Danny muttered.

Chakotay sighed, "you never know with this ship."

"Commander. Reports are coming in from all over the ship," Tuvok said while working on his station. "There's similar station problems on Deck 4 and 6, spots on the walls on Deck 10 to 12 are fluctuating like they're made of liquid, and a crewmember fell through the ground on Deck 11."

"Holy crap," Danny commented.

"Indeed," Tuvok raised an eyebrow. "Also the replicators are malfunctioning. For example the one in the Mess Hall created a live rabbit."

"That's not so bad," Danny said.

Chakotay groaned, "Danny, shut up."

Danny pouted, "god fine."

In: "Janeway to the bloody bridge."

"This'll complete everything," Chakotay sighed as he tapped his commbadge. "Yes Captain?"

Deck Eleven:

Kathryn stood with her hands on her hips with the most ferocious look on her face. She appeared to be standing in a rather large puddle of dark liquid that trailed all the way down the corridor.

"Who's been spilling coffee all over Deck Eleven?" she asked angrily.

In: "No one's that suicidal, how much?"

"I'd say about ten litres worth," Kathryn grumbled.

In: "Oh so only half your daily intake then."

"Stop rubbing it in Commander, do you want to be demoted back to Lieutenant," Kathryn said.

The Bridge:

Everyone glanced at Tuvok looking surprised. "I was just telling the truth, none of you have ever measured how much she drinks."

"True," Chakotay shrugged. "Um Captain, there is a few strange things happening on the ship."

In: "Just what are you implying Commander?"

"Uh that coffee leaking on Deck Eleven is strange," Chakotay muttered.

In: "Oh, well call a meeting in half an hour and I'll be there, I have to clean this up first. Janeway out."

Danny sniggered, "it won't take her that long as long as she can find a straw."

"Great, maybe we should have the meeting now," Chakotay said.

"Good idea," Danny nodded.

The opps station started beeping madly, Ian looked nervously at it, "uh that's not such a good idea."

"Why not?" Chakotay groaned.

Ian eyed the wall beside the station warily, "crap." He backed off as some of the wall itself turned into what looked like liquid. "That's why."

"Put a containment field around it," Chakotay ordered.

Tuvok nodded, he keyed in a few commands. "It'll take about an hour to recover Commander."

"Great," Chakotay said.

Later

The Conference Room:

Kathryn stood by the window holding a coffee, B'Elanna stood next to the wall panel, everyone else were sitting around the table.

"Voyager's being torn apart from the inside," B'Elanna said.

"By what?" Chakotay questioned.

B'Elanna sighed, "I don't know."

"What do you mean, you must know," Neelix stuttered.

"All I know is that we've got less than twelve hours," B'Elanna replied.

Harry nodded, "the only thing out of the ordinary is a strange energy reading on Deck Thirteen that doesn't belong there."

"Great, that sounds ominous," James muttered.

"Yeah. What is up with that deck?" Tom questioned.

"An energy reading is hardly cause for alarm though," Kathryn said. "Sid could have just started a fire."

"True but whatever it is, it's increasing," Harry awkwardly said.

B'Elanna sat down in the nearest empty chair, "if it keeps this up it'll have reached the outer hull in twelve hours."

"Maybe we should send a few people down to investigate. If we figure out what it is we may be able to stop it," Chakotay said.

Kathryn turned away from the window, "good plan. Harry, B'Elanna take a few Security members with you to Deck Thirteen."

"Yes ma'am," both Harry and B'Elanna said in unison.

Deck Thirteen:

The turbolift doors opened for B'Elanna, Harry, James, Sid and Damien. They headed down the corridor.

"I don't know James, why bring these two? It seems a bit daft," Harry wearily said.

"It's not, if something happens Sid will run to it. If he doesn't or it's not enough to stop us getting hurt, we can push Damien into it," James said.

Harry and B'Elanna agreed, glancing at Sid. His eyes were wide, his hands clasped together in front of his chest.

"Oh yeah, this is like a field trip," he giggled.

They turned their attention to Damien, he wasn't really listening and was eyeing the walls. "This place would be perfect for a secret lair." He then spotted the two were looking at him. "Lair of fun, for Sid, got to make rations somehow."

Sid continued talking to himself, then pulled out a big bag from behind his back. "Snacks, drinks, we could have a picnic."

"Now we just have to hope something does happen," James said.

Harry cheerfully put his hand in Sid's bag. "Oh I don't know, maybe something less obvious pain wise then we could just skip to pushing Damien." Sid slapped his hand as it brought out a chocolate bar. "Ow hey."

"Push who and what now tar hair?" Damien grumbled.

"These are for the picnic!" Sid snapped at Harry. He glanced between the two, who walked on both sides of him.

"Sorry, it was James' idea," he moaned.

B'Elanna smiled, shaking her head. "In here." She headed into a large room that looked like it used to be two quarters, with the wall separating them tore down a little messily. She and Harry took out tricorders, then spread out.

Harry walked closer to a small floating ball of white light. "Here it is." B'Elanna joined him.

"Well that doesn't look ordinary," James said.

Damien glanced briefly at him, "what are you talking about, there's no mirror in front of you."

"Oooh witty," James sarcastically muttered.

"What is it?" Sid asked.

"I'm not sure. Whatever it is we shouldn't go near it," Harry replied. "That includes Sid too."

"Don't tell me it doesn't hurt, but is dangerous," Damien groaned.

"Sorry to disappoint you," Harry muttered. Both tricorders started screeching, their owners backed off a step. The light increased in size from about a centimetre to a metre.

"What's making it bigger, there's usually a catalyst," James questioned. B'Elanna and Harry stared at him. "What, I'm not that stupid."

Damien sniggered, "what an ass." He was soon unconscious on the ground, sporting a new black eye.

"Oooh, ooh!" Sid jumped up and down. "You're an ass."

"That won't work," James said.

Sid calmed down, then pouted. "Um, you're so gay you dress up as a woman so you can get off with straight men."

James rolled his eyes, "nope."

"Oookay?" Harry muttered.

"You are right though, there usually is," B'Elanna said. "My guess is since it's interfering with ship systems it could be plain simple power."

"We can't cut all power, we'd still die," Harry said. "There's not enough space suits for everyone."

"We'd better inform the Captain. I've got all the sensor data we need for a full analysis," B'Elanna said.

The Bridge:

The ball of white light now was on the viewscreen, it looked between two metres wide now.

"The phenomenon has increased in size in the last two hours and is continuing to grow," Tuvok said.

"Can anyone please tell me what it is so we can get it off my ship," Kathryn grumbled.

Chakotay sighed, "try moving us away from this area Mr Paris."

Tom nodded, he keyed in a few commands at the helm. "Moving away, one quarter impulse." The left side of the station turned completely black, sparks flew from it. Tom moved his chair away, squinting his eyes. "I was going to say that helm's not responding, but it just did."

"Harry, can you get through?" Kathryn questioned.

"No ma'am, the whole navigation system is fried," Harry replied.

Chakotay tapped his commbadge, "Bridge to Engineering."

In: "We're trying to fix it now Commander but that's not our only problem. It does look like the circuits themselves have been burnt out."

"Told ya it was fried," Harry smugly said. Kathryn death glared him.

"Tell us when it's all fixed," Chakotay said.

"Wait, are you any closer to determining what it is?" Kathryn quickly asked.

Engineering:

B'Elanna sat down at one of the stations nearby the warp core. "Sorry Captain. The best name I can give you is energy rift. Our power seems to be feeding it. When it gathers enough power it expands."

Ian, who stood behind her, glanced back briefly. "Um B'Elanna, check this out."

B'Elanna turned and stepped over to stand next to him. "Oh, the more it grows the easier it is to scan the damn thing."

In: "Report."

"New scans show that it's sending out radiation that would disintegrate anything biological that touches it," Ian said.

In: "Well now, that's not so bad."

"No it's not. It's the breaching the outer hull part that's getting me," Ian muttered.

B'Elanna shook her head, "the bigger it gets the more radiation it sends out, that's why we didn't detect it earlier. By the time it gets to Decks Twelve and Fourteen it'll be enough to rot away anything close by. Hence the hull breach when it gets to the outer hull."

In: "If we're feeding it can't we cut power to Decks Twelve to Fourteen?"

"I already have to slow the process down but it's still feeding on us. To stop it we'd have to fully power down everything," B'Elanna replied. "It would take half an hour to destroy it that way at its current size."

The Bridge:

Kathryn groaned, "we can't do that, it would take a while to evacuate the ship and by that time it'll be bigger."

In: "All we can do is slow it down until we can come up with something. Minor systems should be shut down, and the crew should remain on Decks Seven and above, excluding the path to Engineering, and Engineering itself."

"All right. Tuvok take care of that," Kathryn ordered. Tuvok nodded.

"Can't we just go into escape pods or shuttles and get it over with?" Tom questioned.

"Somebody would have to remain to monitor and then reactivate everything," Jessie said.

In: "That's true but I still wouldn't recommend it. Anybody could just come by while we're doing this, and with the systems playing up thanks to this thing we can't be sure the escape pods would behave."

"There will be another way anyway. I'm not going to let some stupid ball of light beat us when we've come this far," Kathryn muttered. She looked around at everyone, "if anyone needs me I'll be in my Ready Room." She headed for her office.

Engineering:

Tom strolled in looking a bit too pleased with himself. "You wanted to see me Lieutenant?"

B'Elanna turned away from the warp core, "yes I did. I thought you could help with the navigation problem."

"Oh I see," Tom's face fell. B'Elanna nudged him with her elbow, raising her eyebrows briefly. "Ok we should get on that right away." The two quickly headed for the lift.

Only seconds later James walked in, then made his way toward the warp core. "Has anyone seen Tom?"

One crewmember glanced at him, "he just went up to the Deck Ten part of Engineering."

"Great thanks," James said, eyeing the empty lift shaft. Instead he headed for the ladders on the other side. Near the top of them he could hear lots of buttons being pressed, heavy breathing and what sounded like kissing. James got to the top and slowly went over to find Tom and B'Elanna lying on the station in front of the core, making out.

"Uh Tom," he mumbled.

The two quickly separated, they turned to face him blushing madly.

"You didn't ask me to meet you here to do that, did you?" James muttered with a raised eyebrow.

"Yeah you wish," Tom said.

"I wouldn't even wish that on my worst enemy," James said. "So what's wrong with her?"

Tom frowned, "wrong?"

"Well yeah, something must be wrong with her if she's kissing you," James replied, smirking slightly.

"Nothing's wrong with me, don't insult me," B'Elanna grumbled.

"No you did that to yourself," James said.

Tom stepped forward to stand in front of B'Elanna. "Ok you've had your fun. Anymore insults and I'll be forced to do something."

James stared blankly at him for a minute, then he and B'Elanna burst out laughing. Tom glanced at them both separately. "What, I would. If you got me mad enough I'd kick his ass." The laughter got louder.

B'Elanna wiped tears from her eyes, "Tom please, I can't breathe."

Tom pouted his lips, "ok but you gotta admit that I'd try and he wouldn't expect it."

"I'll give you that one," James smirked. "That doesn't mean you'll kick... my ass." B'Elanna laughed again.

"Oh come on, what about the size difference. Surely that'll help me a little," Tom muttered.

"That's all you've got on me though," James said.

B'Elanna sniggered, "Tom you should be thinking that size doesn't matter, you might have to say it a lot."

Tom blushed as he glanced at her, "thanks, it's nice to know how you think of me."

James pulled a disgusted face, "oh god, you haven't already."

"Yeah he wishes," B'Elanna said. "I thought it would be an appropriate comment to shut him up, that's all."

"Didn't work," Tom grumbled.

"Yeah nothing does. Let me know if you do find something that does," James said as he turned to leave. "Besides knocking him unconscious that is."

B'Elanna shrugged once he left their sight, "I'm pretty sure that's it." Tom continued to pout in her direction.

The Ready Room:

James sat opposite Kathryn who of course was behind her desk. She was busy reading a padd holding a cup of coffee, while James fiddled with one of her small ornaments in his hands.

"It did look like a slow week, I did say to Chakotay yesterday that things were bound to pick up," Kathryn muttered.

"Yeah when it's quiet for too long, something big usually happens," James mumbled. Kathryn then jumped to the sound of an ornament cracking, she looked up at James. He widened his eyes looking nervous, "sorry." He put the pieces of the ornament on the desk.

Kathryn sighed, "that's ok, with all the battles I'm surprised it lasted as long as it did."

"Can I use the replicator?" James meekly asked, fidgeting slightly in his chair.

"God no, not after last time," Kathryn snapped.

"All right whatever," James groaned. He reached out to grab the coffee she put down by the handle, she kept a firm grip on it.

"No, get off," she growled. "Stop cheating!"

"I'm cheating, what about you with your asbestos hands," James said.

"You dare pull and you'll be in the brig for a week," she muttered with her death glare on full.

"What, you mean like this?" James teased, he pulled the cup right out of her hands. It spilt a little on the desk.

"Two weeks," Kathryn growled, almost jumping to her feet. He started to down the coffee, pulling a face while doing so. "Three!" His feet went up onto the desk. "Four!"

"Ugh that was awful," he groaned when he finished. Kathryn slapped him on the leg.

"Get off, that's five."

"All right but who's going to enforce it?" James questioned. "Nobody really cares about coffee theft." He lowered his feet back to the ground.

The lights dimmed, the red alert lights and sirens turned themselves on.

In: "Bridge to Janeway, we uh, have a situation."

"Another one?" Kathryn groaned.

In: "There's some uh, I want to say aliens, on the bridge. They appeared out of this white thing."

"There are no ships or systems in the area," Kathryn said.

In: "They're asking for someone, a he."

"That narrows it down," James said.

In: "Ok hey, you can't go in there. Oh yeah, I forgot you had that."

"Tom, go in where?" Kathryn asked.

Right on cue the door opened. Five large demons holding compression rifles squeezed through the door, only just, damaging the frame. "Slayer," one hissed. "I thought I heard you."

James groaned, then he eyed the rifles each one cradled in their large arms. "You brought phaser rifles to attack me. I don't know who I'm more embarrassed for." He climbed out of his chair. "No wait, I do."

All the demons pointed their rifles at him. One smirked in his direction, "why do they always choose the soft looking ones who are about a foot tall."

"Dunno, it's almost like they want them to die," another sneered.

Kathryn growled, she went halfway around the desk. "Hey now, I'm not having this. If you don't leave..."

"What honey, we don't have any hair to pull," one demon said.

"You don't want to make her mad, she's crazy," James said.

"Thank you, I think," Kathryn muttered. "Now leave, I will not have you threaten him like that."

"Ookay, why don't you tell your old mummy to leave before she gets hurt," demon two said.

James had to bite his lip to stop from laughing out loud, "she's not my mummy."

Kathryn's cheeks flushed bright red, her eyes were now wide and fiery. "I'm not old!"

"Whatever mum," demon two said. "Now Slayer hold still, this won't hurt a bit."

"He has a name you know!" Kathryn snapped.

"Well I don't know it or care for that matter," demon three said.

"You do realise that those things are never permanent. You shoot me and I come back, then you get killed," James said.

"Not really, we kill you then we destroy the body before any revival," demon one said.

"Oh, all right then, go ahead," James said. Kathryn turned her head to stare at him. "I just wanted to spare you from some embarrassment, but ok."

"James don't you dare, you're better than this," Kathryn snapped at him. He glanced back at her with a confident look on his face, then looked back at the demons.

They fired their rifles, at the same time James quickly grabbed the computer on the desk to block the shots, then he threw it at them. Three of them charged forward to attack.

"Screw this," Kathryn grumbled. She marched forward to tap one of his attackers on the shoulder. It turned only to get her bony fist in his face, that took it by surprise, it pushed her into the wall. One of the still demons took that demons place, while the last one stood around messing with his rifle.

James pushed demon one away, it crashed into the coffee table. He ducked one punch, it hit demon two instead. It quickly recovered, and grabbed him by the arms. Demon three continuously punched him. Kathryn kneed her demon, then hit him with both hands clasped together.

Demon three was kicked away into the one with the rifle, James backed into the wall so demon two was crushed into it. It's grip loosened so he was able to get away, turned around to punch him.

Kathryn then noticed the demon with the rifle was aiming again at James while his back was turned. Her eyes widened, she ran to get in the way of the phaser fire, then collapsed to the ground. He turned around immediately, the demon tried to re-fire but the rifle got kicked out of it's hands.

Ducking demon three's fire, he picked the dropped rifle and quickly changed the setting. He fired the rifle at the two, turned to hit the last one in the face with it. Just in case he fired at the two who looked unconscious. Every demon disintegrated.

"Taylor to Sickbay," James said after tapping his commbadge.

In: "Kes here."

"Medical emergency, Janeway's been shot," James said. He knelt down to check Kathryn's pulse.

In: "Sorry transporters are down, plus the Doctor's acting weird."

"Weird?" James said, raising an eyebrow. "Never mind, I'll bring her, just prepare ok."

Sickbay:

Kes frowned, she looked behind her. The Doctor was screaming at the wall while flickering on and off. "Don't take that tone with me, you're my patient!" He shut off for a few seconds. "Don't take that tone with me..."

Kes sighed, "all right." She tapped her commbadge. "Sickbay to Engineering."

Bridge:

Chakotay stepped out of the turbolift, "report."

"Some alien guys appeared," Tom said.

The ready room doors opened crookedly for James, he had Kathryn lying in his arms. "Demons actually."

Chakotay rushed over to him, "what the hell, what happened!?"

"She got in front of phaser fire directed at me, I'll get her to Sickbay," James replied.

"I don't think so," Chakotay grunted, holding his hands out.

James sighed as he handed her to him. "I'm sorry, I didn't think she'd help me. There were five of them and I couldn't..."

"Well of course she helped you, not everyone's like you," Chakotay grumbled, he charged back to the turbolift.

"What do you mean by that?" James asked. "I didn't let her do that or put her in my way as a shield." Chakotay didn't answer, the turbolift doors closed after him. Everyone then turned to stare at James.

"So er," Tom mumbled.

"Yes they're dead," James groaned. Tom sighed in relief. James headed toward the other turbolift. Just as he stepped inside he said quietly, "probably."

Tom's eyes widened, "wait, what?"

Sickbay:

The Doctor opened up the tricorder in his hands, he began to scan Kathryn. She sat on the biobed looking a bit on edge, while Chakotay stood at her side.

"You're lucky the phaser fire wasn't directed anywhere serious," the Doctor said. "Just take it easy today, ok?"

"I can't take it easy, my ship's in danger," Kathryn said.

"I'm sure Commander Chakotay can handle the more demanding jobs, Captain. Please take it easy," the Doctor said. He headed towards his office.

Kathryn glanced briefly at Chakotay, "don't start with me."

"Sorry I'm going to have to disappoint you. What were you thinking?" Chakotay said.

"Chakotay they were about to shoot my son, I might not have been able to stop them after he had been shot. They had threatened to do more damage afterwards," Kathryn said, shaking her head. "I just did what any other parent would have done. Well mostly, I really wouldn't like to be one of the parents who wouldn't."

"Oh believe me, I understand that but you're carrying a second child. You have to be more careful. What you did was decide that James was more important than our unborn one," Chakotay said. "That's not right."

Kathryn sighed, "I know that. I didn't really have time to think about it, it really was just instinct. He was in danger, I helped him."

"I bet he won't even thank you for it," Chakotay muttered.

"Do you think I care about that? As long as he's ok... wait, is he?" Kathryn stuttered.

"He certainly looked ok. All of the demons are dust if you're wondering, he must have put the setting up for the rifle," Chakotay replied. "What I meant by the thank you part is that he probably would

never appreciate anything that you do for him. I know he's your son but sometimes I think any attempt you make is futile."

"You're unbelievable," Kathryn muttered angrily. She pushed herself off the biobed, "I would have still saved him even if he hated me more than anyone else. He's not a total lost cause anyway, he didn't have to save my life that time when Frenit kept me captive but he did. I haven't told him you know and he won't remember me from his childhood that much, he just thinks I'm his Captain. Yes it hurt when he's laughed or made comments when people have guessed the truth, like earlier, but it's excusable. He thinks of Susy as his mother."

"I never said that you shouldn't bother saving him ever again, pregnant or not," Chakotay butted in. "I'm sorry if you thought I meant that."

"I know you don't like him Chakotay, but you're going to have to get used to him. I do intend to tell him sometime as I want to get involved, even just a little bit with my grandchild," Kathryn said.

"It's not that I don't like him," Chakotay said.

"Then what is it?" Kathryn snapped.

"It's exactly what I said. He doesn't treat you that well. I really, really doubt he's going to hug you and ask you to be his babysitter as soon as you tell him. It's going to be argument after ranting, after feeling sorry for himself, after questions. You get the idea," Chakotay said. "It'll take him a long time, I know it."

"I know that too," Kathryn sighed. "But he's my son and I do love him more than anything else. My first instinct was to protect him, I'm sorry if I worried you by doing that."

"That's ok," Chakotay said. "You're right though, I don't like him. He's a little too cocky and rude for my taste."

"A lot of boys are like that," Kathryn said with a sly smile. "Seriously, I don't know why you don't. He's stubborn, strong willed, witty. Like his mother really and you don't mind her, do you?"

Chakotay smiled back at her, "don't mind? I think she's amazing and her rude little son can only hope to be even a tiny bit like her."

"Little? Don't be daft," Kathryn muttered. "You'll be surprised Chakotay, he really does take after his mother. Though I do think that his attitude could be worked on."

Chakotay grinned showing off his dimples in full force, "finally we agree on something."

Kathryn pretended to tap her commbadge, "ohno Janeway to bridge, Red Alert." She laughed, he laughed with her as he sat down next to her.

"I hate to ruin the moment but do you have any plans on what to do?" Chakotay questioned.

"We still have the option of abandoning the ship and settling somewhere. Hopefully we won't have to use it," Kathryn replied. Chakotay nodded his head.

The Shuttle Bay:

Harry and Tom sat in one of the shuttles, working at the stations.

"This is just great," Tom grumbled. He slammed his hand on the station. "The helm isn't responding, the computer is telling me the engines are broken."

"I know, it looks like everything that we need is fried," Harry said. He got out of his chair with a frown on his face, he scanned the hull while heading for the door. "Tom!" Tom rushed to his side. "The hull's overheating, we have to get away." The pair ran out of the shuttle, and watched as smoke or steam rose from it.

"Oh boy," Tom muttered. They ran out of the bay, within seconds they heard an explosion from the bay and were thrown to the ground by the force of it. Tom tapped his commbadge, "Paris to bridge. I think shuttles are out of business, one's just self destructed."

James/Jessie's Quarters:

James stepped out of the bathroom, while taking off his jacket. He put it down on the back of the nearby chair, and pushed his fingers through his hair to push back strands of hair out of his face. The bathroom door opened for him. The sound of water pouring from a height echoed around the bathroom, the source being the sonic shower.

A device was attached to the sinks taps, connected to a thin pipe that hung over the top of the sonic shower. Of course that was the source of the running water sound.

Meanwhile Kathryn walked down the corridor outside, keeping a close eye on the ground. Crewmembers passing avoided getting in her way. She stopped outside one of the doors, then pressed the door chime.

After a few minutes she did it again. James' voice came over the comm, "who is it?"

"It's me, can I come in?" Kathryn asked.

In: "Uh ok, but you'll have to wait five minutes or so."

"Why?" Kathryn frowned.

In: "Cos I'm in the bathroom."

"Oh," Kathryn muttered, pulling a face.

In: "No guess again."

"Oh sorry, yes I'll just wait," Kathryn said. She stepped inside. "I thought the sonic showers were broken," she said to herself.

Inside the bathroom the air was stuffy due to the heat from the water. The mirror by the sink was steamed up, two large finger streaks went through it despite there being nothing there to do it.

The taps vibrated a little. James stuck his head out of the sonic shower just to peer at it, it stopped just as he did. The water coming through the pipe began to slow down, then only come out every two seconds. "Damn," he grumbled, his hand reaching out for the tap. While he was looking toward it, the water coming from the pipe turned red and thick. The water on the shower floor started to stain, it all seemed to build up and soon overflowed.

Meanwhile Kathryn stood waiting nearby the sofa. She heard a loud thud come from the bathroom, concern grew on her face. "James?" She rushed toward the bathroom door, "are you ok in there?" She waited for a reply for about a minute but didn't get one. The concern on her face turned to panic. "Computer open the door, authorisation Janeway Pi110."

The computer responded with a garbled broken voice, "unable to comply."

"Why not?" Kathryn snapped, slamming her hand next to the door panel.

"The door will not open cos you're a bitch and I don't like you."

"Just great," Kathryn groaned. She rushed into one of the bedrooms. Moments later she re-emerged with the manual door opener. Once she got to the door again, a frown appeared on her face. "Why does he have one of these?"

Kathryn shrugged it off, then stuck them on both sides of the doors. Once the door opened a large cloud of steam went into her face, ignoring it she rushed into the now flooded bathroom. She glanced down, and noticed the water was stained red.

"Crap, James?" Her eyes followed the steam back to the sonic shower, only then she saw the back of James' head and shoulders just lying out of it, mostly face down. Kathryn carefully stepped over to kneel down beside him. His head was mostly submerged in the water that looked deeper than the rest, it looked to her like he had weakened the ground just there when he fell but just around his head.

She carefully lifted his head out of it, turned it more to the side and rested it on her lap. Then she quickly checked his pulse. "Janeway to Transporter Room." All she got was a crackling noise. "Sickbay? Bridge, anybody?" she stuttered. "No," carefully moving back onto her feet while holding his head above the water. She tried to drag him to the shallower end of the room. Once there he was placed back down.

Quickly Kathryn went back over to the sink which continuously creaked under the strain. She turned it off, then grabbed a towel off the side of the small bath. She gently covered him as much as possible with it, then knelt down beside him. "It's ok, you'll be just fine. Just hold on."

His head was tilted back a little, she opened his mouth while taking in a deep breath herself. Then leaned down to breathe out into his mouth. She raised and started to press down on his chest a few times. "Come on, come on, please breathe." She took in another deep breathe to give him mouth to mouth again. As soon as she backed away he opened his eyes weakly. She backed away a little as he coughed up water. "Thank god."

He looked up at her relieved face, she stroked away the wet strands of hair from his face.

"Are you all right? What happened?"

"I dunno," James replied faintly. He tried to sit up, holding the back of his head with one hand, "wait, how... what are you..."

Kathryn smiled, "don't worry, I covered you up and I didn't look. You can relax."

"Ok, how did you know?" James muttered.

"I knew you'd be more concerned about that," Kathryn replied. "Are you hurt anywhere?"

"Just the head, I'm fine," James replied. He cringed as he fully sat up, placed a hand on his right side. Kathryn still managed to see a bruise through his fingers, then looked up at the one on his shoulder.

"You don't look fine. I'll be outside while you get changed." She stood up, then headed for the door.

"Uh wait," James quietly said.

"Why, what's wrong?" Kathryn questioned, glancing back at him.

"Look over there," James said, beckoning his head.

Kathryn looked around to see where he meant, then noticed a few bits of clothing on the ground, obviously soaked in water and blood. "All right, I'll be right back." She stepped outside, there she tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Bridge?"

In: "Chakotay here, good timing, we've only just fixed the comm system."

Kathryn sighed, "typical. Have there been anymore strange reports, other than the broken sonic showers?"

In: "I dunno, I'll check."

"Also can you lock onto James and I when I give the word, we need to get to Sickbay," Kathryn said.

In: "Transporters are still down. What happened?"

"Looks like somebody attacked him in his quarters, there's no one else here though," Kathryn replied. She headed for a different door, it opened up. "That's not all..."

The Bridge:

"Eugh," Tom muttered.

In: "Yes well, it looked like somebody set this up. The water and blood wasn't draining, the floor was weakened in places."

"Now that is strange," Chakotay said. "When you get him to Sickbay, I'll send someone over there."

"Captain there are reports coming in from the deck below you. They say red water is leaking from the ceiling. Also on your deck some people are reporting blood from the taps," Tuvok said.

"Ok surely that thing on Thirteen can't be affecting the water like that," Harry said.

"Never mind that," Tom muttered. "Captain are you telling us that you saw James naked?"

James/Jessie's Quarters:

Kathryn stepped out of the bathroom again, "just so you know he heard that Tom, and grow up."

In: "It's not a bad experience anyway."

In: "Danny, you scare me."

Kathryn shuddered while tapping her commbadge, "James, are you decent yet?"

"Nearly," James' voice replied from behind the door.

"Why did you have that pipe attached to the taps? You could have just used the bath," Kathryn asked.

"I don't like them is all. Now you know why," James' voice said.

Kathryn smiled lightly, "next time you need to bathe, and the sonic showers are broken, use the bath and don't leave clothes on the floor."

James stepped out, barefooted while slipping on a jacket. "Yes mum."

Kathryn narrowed her eyes mockingly, "don't start."

"Come on, if I went in the bath the same would have happened," James said.

"Yes I guess you're right," Kathryn said.

"But you wouldn't have heard me fall and nearly dying," James said.

"Who said anything about dying, yes you did drown but I got there in time," Kathryn said.

"No you didn't," James said.

"And how would you know?" Kathryn muttered.

"After a few minutes I can tell, but the big give away was the taste of coffee in my mouth," James replied.

"Oh I see," Kathryn uncomfortably said.

"You know twice I've been close to and actually dying today. I don't know if the second was a subtle attempted murder or bizarre coincidence, but I do know that you are the reason I'm ok," James said.

Kathryn just stared blankly for a moment, "well..."

"Thanks," James said with a shrug.

Kathryn smiled warmly, "you're very welcome, but you didn't have to thank me."

"Yeah I do. The first time I got you killed," James said. "And that doesn't make me feel good considering."

"Considering what?" Kathryn questioned.

"It's just a rumour," James muttered. Kathryn looked on worried. "You know, the whole *baby come out of nowhere* thing. It's not true right?"

Kathryn nervously laughed "no of course not. Do you want to go and get something to eat, my treat?"

"What about Sickbay?" James asked with a smirk on his face.

"Right right, yes of course," Kathryn stuttered, she quickly stepped out. He followed her, shaking his head.

Engineering:

Jessie walked through the main doors, happily humming to herself. She stopped next to one crewmember, "have you seen James?"

"James who?" he mumbled as he turned to her.

"Uh Taylor," Jessie replied. The crewmember just frowned at her. "Blond, this height." she raised her hand about five inches above her own head. "Very handsome, big upper arms."

"Boyfriend I'm hoping," the crewmember said with a slight smirk. "A blonde guy went up to the next deck ten minutes ago."

"Ok thanks," Jessie said. She went up to the lift, it headed up to the next level. She heard console buttons being pressed and yes you've guessed it, liplocking. "Ookay, wrong guy," she muttered as she stepped off the lift.

Only metres in front of her were Tom and B'Elanna again kissing on top of the station.

"He's not even a little bit cute, never mind very handsome," Jessie muttered to herself, shaking her head.

Tom and B'Elanna just then heard her, they quickly broke apart and turned to face her. "Jessie, what are you doing here?"

"I was looking for James," Jessie replied. "A guy down there said he went up here, but the idiot must have got mixed up."

"Yeah um, he's not here, can you go now?" Tom mumbled.

Jessie raised an eyebrow, "it's ok, he told me. Your secret's safe with me, but apparently not him."

"Good, just make sure it is with him and I won't tell anyone about what I heard about you two" Tom smirked.

Jessie stared blankly at him, "huh, what about us?"

"I heard you and him were flirting in the mess, plus not long later everyone but you guys left. I wonder what you were doing alone," Tom said.

"Why would we stick around when Neelix was streaking?" Jessie muttered in disgust. "And we weren't flirting, we were just messing about in a friends way."

"Yeah whatever, I still won't tell if you..." Tom said.

Jessie shook her head, "whatever, doesn't matter if you tell anyone or not."

B'Elanna rolled her own eyes, "you two, let's just settle it now. Tom we should go somewhere else."

"Good idea," Tom said.

"Neh I doubt you really want to do that, I think you two just want to be caught," Jessie said.

"I could say the same thing about you and James recently," B'Elanna said.

"There's nothing we can be caught doing," Jessie said. She spotted Tom and B'Elanna touching hands and giving each other longing looks. "Ok I'm just going to leave you two to it." She rushed away.

Later that night:

The entire senior staff were sitting on a large table that was pieced together with small ones.

"I think it would be a nice thing to do for the last night," Kathryn was saying, cradling a coffee cup against her stomach. A lot of the group stared at her with bored expressions on their faces. "I know some of you would rather be doing something else but..." Tom and B'Elanna gazed at each other, Danny and Ian were already flirting with their eyes, and probably holding hands under the table.

"But I thought it would be nice for us all to hang out."

"It's not going to be our last night Captain, we still have a shot," Harry said.

"Enlighten me," Kathryn said.

"I'm working on the remaining shuttles tonight, and we've still got the escape pods and power down option. That's why I'm..." Harry said.

"Ok ok, whoever's working can go," Kathryn groaned. Harry and Chakotay got up and headed out. "Everyone else just relax, this isn't a night for worry or what have you."

Jessie sighed while standing up, "if you say so." She walked off towards the nearest door. James quickly got up and followed her.

"Maybe we could do that, act moody or depressed and storm out," Tom whispered to B'Elanna. She raised an eyebrow at him.

Jessie stopped outside, she hit her fist against the wall then rested her head against it. James stood beside her. "I'm fine, well as fine as I can be right now."

Danny and Ian stumbled out toward them, talking quietly to each other. They stopped when they saw the other couple. "We're not, we're just..." Danny stuttered.

James glanced back at her, "I eugh, really don't want to know either way." The pair quickly rushed off. James turned back to Jessie. "Dumb question, but are you ok?"

"Super," Jessie muttered. She turned back around, "it's easier this way right. Neither of us has to go through the pain of losing the other. I always knew it would be me anyway."

"Why, cos I'm a Slayer or used to be suicidal?" James questioned quietly.

"No, don't be so... why didn't you just say why?" Jessie snapped at him, her face tightening.

"Sorry, why then?" James said even quieter than before.

"The question is why not. I'm unlucky enough for it to be me," Jessie muttered. She looked directly into his eyes. "And probably it was the Slayer thing recently. The thing is it was always something with you."

"Sorry," James mumbled.

"For what, oh forget it," Jessie sighed. "The thing is we're going to die together, that's what I kinda wanted. I didn't want to lose you and suffer, but didn't like the possibility of you suffering if it were me. It's super, really."

"The possibility. Of course I would, you don't have to be modest. It's different now anyway, the baby," James said.

"Yeah exactly. This isn't what I want anymore, and I feel terrible cos a part of me is relieved still," Jessie said.

"Jess we still have a shot at getting out of this," James said. "I don't think we're going to die tomorrow."

"Well I do. I've got this feeling something horrible's going to happen," Jessie muttered. "You know that feeling in my gut, it's awful."

"I know what you mean but I got a feeling that it's going to work out, only one of us can be right," James said. "I'll be helping the others anyway, we have to avert this. It's demony and I could probably help."

"No way, they've tried to kill you twice. You should stay out of it," Jessie said. "I don't want to risk you getting killed."

"Yeah but tomorrow," James muttered.

"I don't mean this to sound rude or anything but what can you do about this, that someone else can't?" Jessie asked. "It's not like there's something to hack or beat up."

"Still I've got to try," James said.

Jessie shook her head then turned it away. "Fine. We've got what, a few hours left until we either die in a fire, get crushed or be the lucky ones who get it last and are blown apart when the ship's hull goes. I'd rather spend my final hours with you, not on my own being scared to death about what exactly is going to happen to us."

James walked over to stand directly in front of her. He reached out to gently caress her cheek, "all right, I'm sorry. What do you want to do then?" She glanced up to look directly into his eyes. "I'll probably help out if I think of something ok, but that's it. But when it's time we'll stick together, promise."

Early the next morning

Deck Eight:

James and Jessie rushed out of their quarters into the chaotic corridor. Panels were sparking, the red lights were flickering on and off, and crewmembers were running in both directions.

"How long?" Jessie asked.

James looked at his wrist, "not for another hour." He turned his head and found a shadowed man's face right in front of his.

"You haven't figured it out yet, have you?"

"What?" James muttered.

Jessie frowned at him, "what, what?"

"Didn't you hear?" James stuttered, glancing back at her then at the guy. Jessie followed his glance.

"There's no-one else to hear," she replied.

"She can't see or hear me. Are you really that dense?" the man sneered.

The wall nearby them exploded, a beam from the ceiling collapsed nearby them. "Ok time to go," James mumbled. He and Jessie ran down the corridor.

A lot of crewmembers were going toward the lift. The first person to get there walked through the doors, but the shaft was empty and she just disappeared out of sight. Everyone then decided to go to the nearest Jeffries tube entrance.

James and Jessie had already chosen that route, they were at least a deck ahead of everyone. Eventually they got to the top, then crawled through a hatch into the bridge. It was very dark there, except for the small fire near the Conference Room.

Jessie headed for the Tactical station which was off, James was about to follow her but the man appeared in front of him. "It's you, you know."

"What do you mean it's me?" James muttered.

The wall by the Ready Room blasted open, a raging fire was surging through it. "Crap," Jessie stuttered, she left Tactical. Carefully she made her way passed the fire and stayed near the command chairs. James looked around the bridge, he saw a still body burning by the newly made hole, people lying with burns near the Conference and then Harry lying nearby his station, face black from all the smoke.

"Jessie we should just go back," he said.

Jessie nodded her head, then glanced at both of her exits which were blocked by the fires. "Um that's a problem."

"No it's not," James said. He jumped over the railing and over the Captain's chair.

"Um wrong way," Jessie said. He slipped an arm around her.

"Just keep a hold of me," James said. She held onto his other arm while he stamped his foot as hard as he could, the floor started to cave in. Soon there was a hole big enough for them to get through. He then lead her right up to it and dropped down Deck Two.

They proceeded to run through the corridor, ducking wall consoles exploding and falling ceiling pieces.

Eventually they got to the Mess Hall, where other crewmembers were either hiding or were already dead. James eyed the dead nearby in distaste. "That couldn't have been an accident." One man he was looking at had three deep claw marks down his face and neck.

"What the?" Jessie stuttered as she looked around at similar corpses.

"It must have been..." James said. A tall, mean looking demon walked up behind him and swiped large claws at him. The blow knocked him to the ground.

"Son of a..." Jessie growled at it. To its surprise she threw a nasty punch at its stomach, and a kick to the leg. The demon twice her size stumbled to the ground after a few more blows. She rushed toward the kitchen. James meanwhile jumped back onto his feet like nothing happened. "It's ok, I'm getting a big knife."

"Good. By the way, nice job," James said, eyeing the now crippled demon.

Jessie glanced at him, smiling sweetly while holding a big knife in her hands. "Thanks." She started to head back, two crewmembers nearby her looked worried as they watched the ceiling.

James glanced at her then the demon, but the dark man was in his way again. "It's you it wants."

"What?" James muttered. He heard a loud crash behind him. He swung around to find the kitchen area was now gone, instead was a pile of rubble. "Jessie?" he looked around frantically as he rushed to the scene. "You got away right?"

A crewmember lying half under the rubble tried to pull himself away, "no, she was right behind me."

James' face now was a ghostly white as he eyed the heavy wreckage. The frightened crewmembers behind him, who probably knew what was going to happen next, cowered a little as he turned to them. "You, help me move this."

"But," they all stuttered.

"Now!" James snapped. He turned back to throw off all of the heavy debris. Eventually he got to the last beam. It was lying directly on top of one man who must have died instantly, the end of it was on top of Jessie from the stomach down to her knees. She was alive, but just barely.

He knelt down beside her, "hang on Jess, I'll get this off."

"No you can't," she weakly mumbled.

"I can. Freak remember..." James said, trying to hide the fear in his voice.

"No, there's some... a part, in me..." Jessie mumbled.

"But we can't just leave it there Jess," James stuttered.

"It doesn't matter," Jessie slowly said. "We are going to die anyway."

"But we promised each other we'd go together. Just hang on, please," James stuttered with tears forming in his eyes.

Jessie turned her head a little to look up at him, "I can't, sorry." She weakly raised her only moveable arm. He took a hold of that hand with both of his.

"Jess please, I can't, it's too hard."

"It's only an hour, less prob..." Jessie mumbled. "You can."

"No I can't. I can't watch you die, not like this as well," James stuttered. "An hour without you is too long."

Jessie tried to smile at him but it looked like it hurt her. "I'm sorry. I don't want to... hurt you."

James brought the hand he was holding closer, he kissed the back of it then brought it to his chest. Then leaned over so he could be closer to her. "I love you Jess," he whispered. After a minute of

silence he got worried, and sat up again. Her eyes were closed, and head was resting on the left side. James reached out to stroke the side of her face, while clutching her hand tightly. He then leaned over again to kiss her gently on the cheek with tears streaming down his own.

The shadowed man stepped up behind him. "Why do you think they tried to kill you? Well I suppose you didn't figure it out so they shouldn't have bothered."

"What the hell are you talking about?" James almost growled.

"You can stop this," the man replied.

"It's too late, I don't care," James grumbled.

"It's not, this isn't real. I am just showing you what will happen if you don't stop it," the man said.

James sat up and looked over his shoulder, "how?"

"I'll show you," the man replied. He placed a hand on James' shoulder. He then fell unconscious next to Jessie's body.

After a few minutes he woke up to see her face directly in front of his, but this time she was breathing and sleeping peacefully. He also couldn't feel the pain of the claw marks on his back and neck from the demon. "What the?" He quickly sat up to look around. They were both lying in their bed, everything seemed to be normal.

The Conference Room:

Everyone sat looking rather depressed, and most of which were worn out. Harry and B'Elanna stood by the wall panel.

"It's confirmed. The ejection system was given false signals. The escape pods are probably at the nearest planet by now," Harry sighed.

Danny burst into a loud snigger, "premature ejection."

Jessie shook her head, "there's always a plus side in every situation. At least I won't have to put up with anymore dirty jokes when I'm dead."

"Unless you get stuck in hell together," Tom laughed quietly.

"In that case it doesn't matter if I kill you now, I'm already damned," Jessie grumbled, passing him her own death glare.

"Look we're not going to die. We've suffered worse," Kathryn scolded. "Tom, how's it coming with the shuttles?"

"Not very good so far ma'am. Obviously one's out of business, the other two's systems are still offline. It looks like they were sabotaged," Tom replied.

"B'Elanna, Harry, anyone, heck even Danny or Neelix have any ideas?" Kathryn questioned.

"Hey, I'm not in the same league as Neelix," Danny grumbled.

"Yeah you're really proving yourself with the ejection jokes," Jessie said.

Neelix pouted, "in fact I do have an idea. Pack everyone into the shuttles we have left. Have a few engineers in those suits, tell everyone to hold their breath or find away of getting shuttle life support on. Then hope for the best."

"What, for more than half an hour? It has grown over night you know, hence we need more time to be powerless and airless," Jessie said in disbelief. She slapped him across the head. "Idiot, why am I sitting next to you?"

"I think it's cos you saved the seat for James and he didn't come," Ian said. He shot a quick glare at Danny. She smiled sweetly at him.

"Where is he anyway?" Kathryn asked.

Meanwhile

Deck Thirteen:

James stood about a metre away from the rift, holding a tricorder. Behind him the wall slowly ripped unnaturally apart like a jacket unzipping. On the other side it was just black, like there was nothing on the other side. It didn't seem like he noticed it though.

The tricorder started screeching at him, "what now?"

The rip in the wall widened, a demon stepped through it. James looked up from the tricorder as it slowly made its way toward him. He rolled his eyes with a sigh, "you know it's getting really tedious now."

The demon raised a bit of damaged metal that looked as if it were ripped from a wall. It was then swung toward James' head. He ducked last second, turned about ninety degrees on his left foot and kicked it with his right. As it hit the ground, he pulled out a large knife and plunged it into its chest.

Like nothing happened he got back to the tricorder scan. He tapped his commbadge, "Taylor to Conference."

The Conference Room:

Kathryn tapped her own, "James, where are you?"

In: "I just thought of checking the portal thing for anything new."

"And?" Chakotay questioned.

In: "It's slowing down, it's weird. It fluctuated when I walked in and slowed right down."

"Are you saying that people slow down the growth?" Tom questioned.

B'Elanna frowned in confusion, "when we visited it, it was going at a slower rate."

Harry shook his head, "no no, Ian and I went an hour ago. Nothing changed."

"Damn so close," Kathryn grumbled.

In: "All right, but something's slowing it down. Just thought I'd let you know. Oh and another demon attacked."

"Are you ok?" Jessie asked.

In: "Yeah, no problem, he wasn't very good at sneaking up behind me."

"Maybe the demons and rift are connected," Tom said.

In: "How, they attacked on the bridge the first time."

"You know what I mean," Tom said. "They're probably causing it."

In: "Maybe, or maybe they're just taking advantage of the situation. Taylor out."

"All right but nobody is seeing what I'm seeing," Tom grumbled.

"And what's that?" Harry asked.

"It's really quite obvious. The escape pods escape, helm is broken, one shuttle blew up. Somebody is doing this to us," Tom replied.

"I think we've all figured that out already," Chakotay said.

Jessie raised an eyebrow, "ok yeah we got all that but there's one thing I don't get. If the demons went to all that trouble to kill us with this thing, why bother trying to murder James twice?"

"Good question," Kathryn mumbled, staring blankly.

The Shuttle Bay:

Inside one of the remaining shuttles, Tom stood by one of the walls with a blackened hole in it. He had a hold of a laser scalpel, while fiddling with a few wires coming from the hole with his other hand. James meanwhile worked underneath a blackened station.

"This'll take too many hours, we need more time," Tom grunted. He slammed his hand on the good part of the wall. "Damn I can't believe this, so close. How are you doing anyway?"

"Nope, same problem. Even if we had a team working at it non stop it wouldn't be fixed until tonight," James muttered. He jumped to his feet with an angry expression on his face. Tom watched him with a more or less identical look on his face.

"Things were going so great, it's bloody typical," Tom grumbled.

James turned to face him, "careful, you're starting to pick up some English words."

"And there's another typical annoyance," Tom said.

"Yeah I thought you'd hate that," James said.

Tom shrugged his shoulders, "neh I'm just not in my full humour mode. Everything about this, it just makes my blood boil."

"Tell me about it," James sighed. "And you just recently got together with B'Elanna, didn't you?"

Tom groaned before dropping into the nearest chair. "It happened when you and Jess were in that prison. You know I just wish there was something I could do to stop it, for her you know." He turned the chair toward the other black station. "Screw it, I'm going to continue trying to fix it, maybe somebody will delay this thing and doing this may come in handy."

"Still on your own, that could take days," James said.

"I've got to try," Tom muttered.

Ian appeared at the shuttle entrance, he frowned slightly before moving a little out of sight.

"It may be pointless but I'd do anything right now," Tom said.

James stared in his direction, "yeah, I get that."

"What are you going to do?" Tom asked. He knelt down to work under the station.

"What do you mean?" James questioned.

"You know what I mean," Tom replied. "You and Jess."

James groaned, "she's my friend, you're getting the wrong idea yet again."

"I'm really not. I see the way you look at her," Tom said.

"What way?" James carefully asked, sitting down on the other chair.

"Like you wish you never wasted, what nineteen years of being just her friend," Tom replied. He sat back in the chair. "Like you wish you could see her every morning, every night for the rest of your life." James only could look away from him. "You'd be prepared to do anything for her, even die for her." He looked back at him directly.

"I know what you feel cos I feel it too. Don't beat me up, it's not Jessie, I mean B'Elanna."

"I know," James mumbled, his eyes stared toward the ground.

Tom frowned in confusion, "and you're not beating me up or scowling at me for going too far. Why?"

James looked up, "I gotta go, do something." He climbed back out of the chair.

"Uh okay," Tom muttered. Ian then frowned before walking completely out of sight. "I figured you'd help, unless you plan on helping another way."

"Yeah I am, another way," James mumbled. He walked out of the shuttle leaving Tom even more confused.

The Mess Hall:

Jessie and Kes stood talking near the kitchen, one of the doors was blocked with rubble and the ceiling above it there was a gaping hole in it.

"You shouldn't be so pessimistic Jess, we've gotten out of worse."

"Maybe I just have this bad feeling. It doesn't help when stuff keeps happening," Jessie muttered. "Last night we were woken up by that light sparking and going off. Oh and did I mention the replicator turning a simple glass of coke into a bomb that exploded soon after?"

Kes cringed, "I'm guessing cos of the lack of burns you got away in time."

"Yeah but let's just say it's a good thing we won't be using that replicator again," Jessie said.

"There's nothing good about it," Kes sighed, glancing toward the door briefly. "You can stop worrying, well at least about one thing."

Jessie's face lit up only just a little, she glanced to her left. James walked over to stand beside her. "Good or bad?" she asked.

He just shook his head. "There's only one thing I can think of, but I'm not 100% sure about it."

Kes glanced behind her, she looked back with wide eyes, "ok if Neelix asks, I didn't come by this deck at all today." The two glanced at her in confusion. "He wants a last kiss." She dashed off.

"Um, what's the thing?" Jessie asked.

"I've only got a, what could I call it? A hunch I suppose," James replied awkwardly.

Jessie frowned, "what's wrong, is it dangerous or something?"

"What, more dangerous than our current predicament?" James said. "Really not."

"Ok I'll rephrase, will it get you hurt or anything?" Jessie questioned.

"Jess don't worry. If it works we won't have to worry about the promise we made each other," James replied.

Jessie raised an eyebrow, "ok, this must be a good plan or something. What is it?"

James glanced to his left, "I'm not exactly sure yet, I don't even know if..." He looked back at the kitchen itself, his face turned a little pale and he shuddered only slightly. "Why don't we sit down somewhere," he headed over to the sitting area. Jessie glanced back at the kitchen with a frown before following. They both sat down at the nearest empty table.

"You will still meet with me if it doesn't work, right?" Jessie asked. He didn't answer her, his eyes were still focused on the kitchen area. She placed a hand on his arm. "James, what's the matter?"

"I'm fine," he mumbled, then he glanced back at her. "What did you say before?"

"How long will this take? I wanna know if you'll still be able to meet with me before it all gets really bad," Jessie replied, looking a little worried.

"Yeah, if it doesn't work I'll see you again," James said. He took a hold of both of her hands. "Look Jess I wanna tell you something, before anything happens."

"It's ok, you can tell me anything. Well almost, you can't say that I'm fat, ugly or that you hate me or something," Jessie said, smiling slightly.

"I like the way you picked realistic things that I'd say," James muttered, raising an eyebrow.

Jessie shrugged her shoulders, "can't think of anything realistic. What did you want to tell me? Remember there's only so much I'll be able to take only an hour or so away from death. So no deciding to tell me big secrets, no big us in the future things, or what you would have gotten for my birthday. Ok I didn't leave you much did I?"

James glanced down at the table, "no not really."

"So it was one of those then, huh. Sorry," Jessie mumbled.

"Basically I just wanted to remind you of how great I think you are and... uh stuff," James said.

Jessie raised an eyebrow, "James, it's ok, you can just tell me."

"All right um..." James said. "I just wanted to say you mean a lot to me, you're the only thing that's gotten me out of bed every morning for the last decade or so. Without you there wouldn't have been any point really."

"Yeah I know the feeling," Jessie said with a smile.

"Look just so you know, if things were different I would have spent the rest of my life with you, unless you didn't want me to. Even then it would take a lot to get rid of me," James mumbled.

"Like I'd ever not want you around, don't be silly," Jessie said, rolling her eyes. She tightened her grip on one of his hands, "I really wish we could fix all this."

James glanced briefly toward the window, "I always thought the last thing that'd be on my mind is *what if's* about you. After we got together properly I thought it would be something else involving you." He glanced down at the watch on his wrist, he sighed like it was time for a meeting with a coffee deprived Kathryn. "I really wish I didn't have to go."

"It's ok, we'll still have a little time later, right?" Jessie said.

James just stared at her for half a minute. He finally spoke but much quieter than before, "you're my everything, Jess, remember that."

"I will, you just remember to meet me later ok," Jessie said while trying to stop tears from forming.

"Yeah if it doesn't work," he said, standing up. He kept a tight hold of her hands.

"And if it does?" Jessie said.

James moved around to her side, one hand pulled away to instead place across her face. Then he pulled away completely and headed for the only door. Jessie turned to stare after him. Neelix walked up behind her with a frown on his face.

"The situation's getting to him huh?" he said.

Jessie jumped a mile, she glanced back at him, "don't do that, and what?"

"It looked like he was saying goodbye for good there," Neelix replied.

"No, either way we'll see each other later," Jessie said. "And no I haven't seen Kes."

"How did you know?" Neelix asked.

Jessie shrugged, "there isn't much time left, Kes is the person you like the most so..."

Neelix smiled, "like isn't a strong enough word. I'll see you later Jess." He walked away leaving Jessie to ponder everything that had been said.

Not long later

The Bridge:

The atmosphere was smoky due to a fire nearby the Conference Room, all you could see were the remaining console lights through the smoke. The red alert lights and sirens were going off out of sequence, the siren was distorted.

"Report!" Kathryn ordered.

"Um there's a fire, dumb ass," Danny muttered as she stood by the helm. Kathryn tried to glare but she could obviously not see it.

The crewmembers by the back stations backed away from them. "These stations are getting hot," one said. On cue the stations themselves began sparking out of control.

"They're overheating," Harry said. Most of the stations around the bridge flickered on and off. "It's the beginning of the end all right."

"Don't say that," Chakotay scolded.

"Captain. Deck Thirteen Alert," Tuvok said. Kathryn swung around to stare at him. "Somebody temporarily activated life support to get in, there's two lifesigns but both went down at different times."

"Who?" Kathryn demanded.

Deck Thirteen:

The door to the turbolift opened crookedly. James stepped out through them. Only five metres down the corridor was the edge of the anomaly. He pulled out a tricorder. "Eighty minutes until hull breach." With a sigh he stepped forward, his sight was blocked by something larger standing in front of him. He stopped in his tracks.

"What do you think you're doing?" a familiar voice angrily asked.

James looked up to see Ian directly in front of him, "how did you, where did you come from?"

"Just around the corner, now you answer mine," Ian replied.

"Um my last resort is begging it not to grow anymore," James said sarcastically. "Now I think you'd better leave, it's going to expand again soon."

"I'm only leaving if you are too," Ian said. "You see none of this makes any sense to me. With only an hour, probably less to live why bother attempting to kill yourself now."

"Ian," James muttered.

Ian quickly butted in, "just cos you're different than the rest of us, doesn't mean you can go for a little walk around. You go near it and there won't be anything left of you. You'd be lucky if there was dust."

"I know that," James snapped. "But it doesn't mean that it's pointless."

"It does. I don't see any point. It's not like you're poisonous to it," Ian said. "Did I miss a memo about this thing? I have been keeping up to date with it every fifteen or so minutes, as it scares the crap out of me, so I doubt it."

"I haven't got time to explain it to you. Voyager's just going to get more and more damaged, people have already died. Stopping it now makes the most sense, while I'm explaining somebody could die in an explosion, fall through walls or ceilings," James said.

"What makes you so special, huh? Are you some kind of anti-power diet snack that'll make it lose weight, so to speak?" Ian grumbled. "You'd better have a damn good reason."

"Since when did you give a damn about what happens to me, I thought you hated me?" James questioned.

"I don't hate Jessie," Ian snapped back. "She's one of the few things in this universe that's decent, you know that more than anyone. And here I was thinking that you cared the most about her. Your recent track record suggests otherwise."

"You've got it wrong Ian, I'm doing this so she'll live," James said.

"Oh yeah, live. That's a good choice of words," Ian muttered. "I don't even believe that you jumping in is going to stop it, but what if you did? Just imagine how you'd feel if it were her, and you were left with the baby. That's exactly how she'll feel if you do this. Do you hate her that much?"

"I don't hate her at all. I can't bare to see her die again, I just can't. She deserves to live, this is the only way," James replied angrily.

Ian took one step closer, "what do you mean by die again? And how do you know that this, what it is, is the only way?"

"Because I saw it, I saw it all. People dying or already dead, me and Jessie fighting for our lives. She moved away from me for just a minute and she was crushed by a ceiling collapse," James muttered, shuddering a little at the memory. Ian looked a little pale and uncomfortable at this point. "I tried to save her but it was too late, I told her I loved her but she died probably before she heard it."

"What makes you think that you can help?" Ian uncomfortably asked, glancing down at the ground.

"He showed me, some man in my vision. I can't explain it. All I know is that only Slayers can close the rift, I don't know how. It's my last resort, and if it fails it won't matter. If I don't it means having to watch Jessie die again, not the way I described cos I'd prevent it. I can't do it again," James replied. "It was stupid of me to think I had a future with her anyway. I've already passed the life expectancy of past Slayers."

"If you do this and she survives because of it, she's going to be messed up for a long time," Ian said. "You know her James, she'd probably rather be dead than live like that."

"What about my child then? It wasn't just her I saw die you know, it died with her. She'll be in pain for a while yeah, but she'll know that it was for the best for our child. It's not like she'll be alone," James said.

Ian shook his head, "no, I'm not going to let you hurt her like this. This makes no sense whatsoever."

"What and me being freakishly strong does? This is demonic stuff Ian, it's not in any Science subject at school," James muttered. "I know it's going to work. Nobody's going to find the cure in time, and over a hundred people are going to die, most horribly. This way it's just my life."

"And Jessie's," Ian added on. "But if I were in your position, I'd probably be doing the same thing."

"You, Danny and Kes will look after her for me, won't you?" James quietly asked.

Ian stared at him for a short time, then he nodded, "of course. But I'm not telling her that I let you do this."

"Like you could have really stopped me anyway," James said.

"True," Ian sighed. He stepped against the wall. James walked passed him, but stopped once he was only a few steps ahead. He glanced back at him. Ian could then see the look of fear and grief on his face thanks to the light shining on one side of it.

"Can you tell her something for me?" he asked. "I was going to tell her but..."

"What is it?" Ian asked.

"Tell her that I've loved her for a long time, and that I'm sorry," James said. Ian nodded slowly. James turned back to face the anomaly. What either of them didn't realise was the turbolift doors re-opening.

Ian squinted his eyes as he ran toward the light, then an ear piercing scream from behind them both made Ian turn around. He quickly caught a figure running right toward him, it took all of his strength to hold her back. "James!" she screamed at full strength just as the anomaly started to die down. It took only thirty or so seconds to disappear completely leaving Ian and the new arrival alone in the corridor.

"Oh god," Ian muttered, glancing down at the hysterical girl in his arms. She fell onto her knees, dragging him with her, tears streaming down her face.

"No," she cried.

Bridge:

Harry looked very relieved as he returned to his station. "It's gone Captain."

"Good, how did you do it?" Kathryn asked.

"I didn't," Harry shook his head.

Kathryn frowned, "must have been Ian or James. Don't know how but..."

In: "Richards to Bridge."

"Good timing," Kathryn said, tapping her commbadge. "Go ahead."

In: "It's gone Captain."

"Good but how did you do it?" Kathryn questioned.

In: "I didn't. James he, I don't get how but he... it stopped."

"Ian get to the point," Chakotay muttered.

In: "I can't, he said he was the cure or something, then he er... went."

"Ian!" Kathryn snapped, turning a very sickly pale colour.

Deck Thirteen:

Ian glanced down at Jessie, she just stared at in front of her, not moving a muscle. "He's er dead, Captain," Ian quietly said. "It closed when he went near it."

Bridge:

Chakotay nervously looked towards Kathryn, while everyone else looked around at the nearest to him. Danny looked close to tears, "what?"

Kathryn's face turned red, her eyes fiery, "what did you say?"

In: "Sorry, I can't. Jessie's here. I can't, Richards out."

"Oh god," Harry mumbled. "She's going to kill us all."

"Who, Janeway or Jessie?" Tom questioned awry. He glanced briefly at Danny and whispered her name in Harry's direction. She left the bridge as quickly as she could.

"Commander, you have the bridge. For good," Kathryn icily said before marching into her office.

Chakotay watched her, "Tuvok." He nodded. Chakotay quickly followed her. "Kathryn do you..."

"No, get out," Kathryn snapped once the doors closed.

"I understand," Chakotay said softly.

"You don't, just leave me alone," Kathryn said.

Chakotay glanced down at his feet briefly, "do you want me to get a proper report from Ian."

"Yes check Sickbay, there still might be a chance that he could be ok," Kathryn said.

"Um you heard B'Elanna, anyone who goes near it..." Chakotay said.

"Just do it!" Kathryn yelled.

"Yes ma'am," Chakotay said. He quickly stepped back out.

Sickbay:

Kes raised the tricorder and the scanner in her hands to begin scanning Jessie. She still was staring ahead of her, barely moving. Ian stood next to her, with an arm around her back.

"I think she's catatonic," Ian said.

Kes nodded, "you thought right. What happened?"

Chakotay walked in through the main door, he headed straight for the Doctor.

"She saw it happen. She tried to run after him but I stopped her. Then she seemed to go limp in my arms, it's weird."

Chakotay glanced over at them briefly. "No he didn't Commander," the Doctor sighed. "The Captain is aware that close proximity would have destroyed any biological..."

"Yes she is. I just don't think she wants to believe it," Chakotay replied.

"I see, well there's nothing left to save. I'm sorry," the Doctor said.

Chakotay glanced over at Jessie. Kes stood by her side while Ian gently shook her. "Jessie come on, snap out of it," he muttered.

"You're not going to get her back that way," Kes said.

"Then what do we do then?" Ian asked angrily.

Chakotay headed over to them, "maybe I can help?"

"How?" Kes questioned.

"There's some techniques my people use to cure catatonia," Chakotay said.

"Ohno, it isn't a vision quest thingy is it?" Ian asked.

"Not exactly the same thing Ian," Chakotay said. "I have to help her find her way back to us, vision quests you do alone. I'll need some personal things of hers, and we'll need to get her to her quarters."

"All right," Ian sighed. "She'll be ok afterward then?"

"It's not a miracle cure Ian, it'll get her out of the catatonia. Her recovery will have only just begun," Chakotay replied.

"I know that, that's what I meant," Ian groaned.

Chakotay shook his head, "we can't rush things. Now tell me, what happened down there?"

"He said the rift would only close if he went into it. Something about a vision," Ian replied. "He saved us, in a nutshell."

"And Jessie saw it happen, that makes it a whole lot harder for her but it should help her accept it quicker," Chakotay said.

"Ok I may be a bit worn out mentally most of all, but did that make sense to anyone else?" Ian muttered.

The Ready Room:

Tuvok walked in to find the computer broken, coffee cups smashed, padds scattered all over the floor and a chair pushed onto it's side. He looked around for any sign of life. Kathryn stood by the replicator with her back to him.

"What happened?"

"You better have a good emergency to bother me with, Commander," Kathryn grunted. He heard her drink something quick and sloppily.

"Your Ready Room, did another demon attack?" Tuvok questioned.

"No. Have you got a problem with my housekeeping, cos if so you're welcome to clean it up," Kathryn muttered.

"Captain, you've never made such a big deal about any other crewmember, why is Taylor any different?" Tuvok asked.

Steam or smoke rose from Kathryn's head, even Tuvok looked nervous as she turned to face him. "You really want to know? I am tired of losing people, good people and getting left with unfeeling people like yourself!" she snapped.

"I am Vulcan, I..." Tuvok said.

"Yes yes, I know and can't seem to care at the moment," Kathryn grumbled. She grabbed a big cup of coffee from the replicator. "James was a member of my crew. He went behind my back as always and did an incredibly stupid thing."

"If he didn't the entire crew would have died," Tuvok said.

"That's not really the point, is it? If I were to wish for things, I would have took his place," Kathryn grumbled. She drank the entire cup within seconds.

"The truth is he was too young, and had his whole life ahead of him, like everyone else we've lost. But I just thought five minutes ago that he really didn't. He was doomed to die young, and that makes me angrier than you can imagine."

"Maybe you should..." Tuvok said.

"No, you don't tell me what to do! I knew him, that's why it's different. I was there when he was a baby, while his mother cooed over a dumb violent cat and his father spoiled their eldest, I spent two years looking after him," Kathryn said, slowly getting tears in her eyes. "Everyone here treat him like a circus freak, inhumane, and sometimes like a monster. But he still sacrificed himself for them. He was more human than anyone on this ship."

"As a child he was so normal, but I could sense he would grow up to do something incredible. I never imagined that a child who was such a troublemaker as such would really have the most gentle soul inside him. I loved him more than anything else. I'd hold him, watched him play, wake him up in the morning and he'd make me feel so content."

"I must admit when we were reunited I wasn't impressed with his behaviour and the way he treated me. At first I thought it was a different person with the same name. But with his past who can blame him for the way he behaves."

Tuvok had both eyebrows raised, "what are you saying?"

"A lot of the crew will never appreciate what he did for them. All he ever did was for someone else, nobody understood that but I did," Kathryn muttered. "He probably knew that but did it anyway. He probably could just think about Jessie and their child, but it was still very selfless."

"I did not know Miss Rex was pregnant, that explains her recent behaviour," Tuvok said.

"It's the only thing helping me breathe right now, knowing that he still exists in some way. But with Jessie grieving for a long time, he or she will be affected," Kathryn sighed.

"I was going to organise the memorial for him, do you want to?" Tuvok questioned.

"No you do it. I don't know if I could bare the thought of going to my own..." Kathryn replied. "I mean James' memorial, I can't."

"Going to your own crewmembers', you've done it before," Tuvok said.

"Just go," Kathryn groaned angrily. Tuvok stepped out with a nod.

Deck Thirteen:

The two quarters where it all began now was dark and dingy. Wreckage, piled up dust and soot lay all over the floor and walls like there had been explosion years previously, but was just left alone.

In the centre of the floor James lay, face down on the black ground. He groaned while lifting his head. "What the?" Using his hands to push himself up a little, he rested on his knees and straightened up. "This is weird," he muttered, while looking around his new surroundings.

******THE END******