

## **B4FV Episode 3.17**

### **Fantastical**

A blackened door opened slowly in a crooked fashion. Three demons marched into the dingy, worn out blackened brig, single file.

"I think a few more sessions could kill it. Clean it up, you've got ten minutes," the largest snarled at the shortest one. It charged straight back out. The middle one stood by the door.

"Don't fully cure it, it needs to suffer."

"Yes sir," the shorter demon acknowledged. It carried a tool kit bag while heading to the cell. Inside it James lay on the ground with lots of deep cuts, bruises, burns all over the visible parts of his body. Clothes were torn from knives, phaser and even gun shot wounds. Large strands of dry and wet blood stained hair slumped over his bloody, unshaven face.

"Next time, don't beat him up so much," the smallest demon muttered while kneeling down beside him. It rolled him onto his back, then began a scan. "It looks like there's no external heavy bleeding this time, good. Internal's another story."

James narrowly opened his eyes, one was swollen and bloodshot. The demon doctor then started to hover a device across his chest.

"How long was it unconscious?" the demon doctor asked.

"You're not much of a doc, he's just pretending," the guarding demon muttered.

"So nobody's won yet then?" demon doctor questioned.

"Paryain thinks he did," guarding demon replied. "Slayer just didn't want more punishment. I'll be outside." He stepped backwards through the door.

The demon doctor moved his treatment down to the stomach.

"Why are you doing this?" James quietly asked.

"So you don't die so soon, the next competition has to be fair," demon doctor replied.

"Not that," James mumbled.

"Sythian isn't happy that you still got in our way," demon doctor said.

"In the way of what?" James asked.

"Enough," demon doctor snapped. He got to his feet, and headed out of the brig. The guarding demon stepped back inside.

"Five minutes to go, this should be good," he smirked.

#### **One Week Later**

##### **The Ready Room:**

It was another long day in the dark, dank office of Kathryn Janeway. The woman herself sat behind her desk, cradling a cup labelled *Drink Coffee - Do stupid things faster with more caffeine* in her hands. The desk itself was cluttered with similar cups. Other labels were *Keep your hands off bitch, If you can read this you are in weapons range* and *Tolerate idiots with more coffee*.

The door chimed. Kathryn decided to ignore it as she finished the coffee in her current cup. Ignoring the nervous coughs from outside of the door, she picked up a flask and refilled her *Tolerate idiots with more coffee* cup. "Come in! Bitch," she snapped, whispering the last word.

Tuvok and Chakotay walked in, both holding pads. Tuvok hesitated for a moment to count the number of cups on her desk. Chakotay spoke up first.

"Uh Kathryn, whatever happened to one a day?" he asked.

Kathryn slammed the flask down, staring toward him with her death glare working on overtime. Without looking away she picked up her latest cup. Chakotay tried to avoid her stare, Tuvok however kept his own stare toward her desk.

"Why should I give a damn what you think, Chumpakotay?"

"Um cos I'm the father of that child you're drowning in coffee," Chakotay said. The two men clearly heard the sounds of the entire crew gasping in horror.

"Tuf\*\*k can you leave Mr Chump and me alone for a minute," Kathryn hissed.

"I can't Captain, we now have a Security threat," Tuvok said, raising an eyebrow. "And I do believe you mispronounced my name."

"Leave or there will be two dumbass," Kathryn grumbled.

Tuvok nodded, "yes Captain." He quickly stepped out.

"You know the only parts of this pregnancy thing I liked the sound of were the following. One, he or she would be able to play with it's niece/nephew, my upcoming grandchild. Two, I'd have told James by the time of birth and despite him being probably mad at me our baby would still have it's big brother. Thre.." Kathryn said.

"I get the idea, you're upset about James but you have another child to think about," Chakotay butted in.

"Three!" Kathryn snapped. "You're treading on all my coffee supplies here Commander." Chakotay tried to swallow a big lump in his throat while sweating slightly. "Now you made me forget the third, god damn you." She quickly downed her latest cup, and reached for the flask again.

"It mustn't have been that important then," Chakotay said.

Kathryn poured the flask into the *If you can read this you are in weapons range* cup. "Well well, it looks like both parents of this child are being very careless."

"Um yes, I can't help but... What does the first have to do with James, Jessie can be told surely. You won't even need to, there's only three kids aboard," Chakotay said.

"When I imagined it I was happy, and didn't have about thirty cups of coffee in my system by the afternoon," Kathryn muttered. "Do you really think I'm in the right state of mind to look after, remember to look after, or even remember to let our baby play with Naomi and my grandchild?"

"There's me," Chakotay muttered. "And you'll get over this sooner..."

"What makes you think you'll be alive to even see a baby bump develop on me, let alone the baby itself?" Kathryn hissed, eyes narrowing. "This is your fault."

"Mine? I didn't tell James to do a long jump into a dangerous anomaly," Chakotay said.

"That I'm in this situation you moron. If I wasn't pregnant I could drink as much coffee as I want or need," Kathryn said.

Chakotay's eyes widened, "you mean that's not enough for you?"

"Hell no, if I wasn't caring about this baby in the slightest I wouldn't have the time to say a complete sentence. Not a long one anyway," Kathryn muttered. "Now if you ever suggest I'm heartless and only care about my first child, I'll personally see to it that this child never has a living sibling."

"Um I never suggested the first one," Chakotay said. "As for the second one I only suggested you cared more for your first, not only."

"Fine, my threat still stands," Kathryn said, smiling deviously at him while bringing the cup to her lips.

"Does that mean that you'd do the same to you?" Chakotay quietly asked.

Kathryn shrugged casually, "probably. I have this thing where stupid vain chimps get me pregnant, and I'm the one who always gets the punishment for it."

Chakotay's eyes shifted nervously, "I'd say James probably suffered more than you did with him."

"It was even until he decided to save this sorry excuse for a crew," Kathryn grumbled. "If he wasn't dead I'd ground him for life."

"Don't start blaming the crew," Chakotay said. "Oh and I'm not vain, or stupid."

"Then why do you keep talking?" Kathryn asked. "And why the hell are you here?"

"Um pad," Chakotay said, stretching his arm out to put the pad on the desk without getting much closer.

"What's on it?" Kathryn asked.

"I don't remember anymore," Chakotay muttered.

"Then go, you're giving me a headache ten minutes ago," Kathryn said. "Tell Tuthrash to come back later."

Chakotay frowned as he backed out of the office.

Kathryn sipped at her cup while looking directly at it's contents. Once it was lowered she noticed she had another guest standing in front of her.

### **The Bridge:**

"The Captain seems a bit more on edge than usual," Tuvok commented.

Chakotay sighed while taking his seat, "I know. I was hoping she'd be getting better not worse. Why didn't anyone tell me how much she was drinking?"

Tom shrugged his shoulders, "maybe cos Tuvok and I's the only people who have braved her presence lately."

"Again I ask, and braved. You should never say that word about yourself," Chakotay said.

"She always drinks coffee sir, I didn't see that part as particularly abnormal," Tom muttered.

"I guess not," Chakotay said.

### **Engineering:**

B'Elanna marched from the lift nearby the warp core, her face red in slight rage. "Where is Crewman Marsen?"

Ian turned to look at her briefly, not daring to look her in the eye though. "He just left."

"Left, in a middle of a shift? I hope for his sake he was just going to the bathroom," B'Elanna growled, standing beside him.

"Nope but he will need to when he returns," Ian muttered. He glanced at her again just in time to receive a brief glare. "He said something as he left, I think it was to somebody called Jack. I don't know anyone here who's called that.."

B'Elanna frowned in confusion, "not anymore anyway. Did you see who he was talking to?"

"No, I was working," Ian said.

B'Elanna sighed, she walked over to the neighbouring station. "Crewman, did you see Marsen leave?"

The Engineer who was working there turned to face her. "Yes ma'am, but just as he was going through the doors."

"Was anyone with him?" B'Elanna asked.

"No ma'am," the crewman replied.

B'Elanna tapped her commbadge, "computer locate Crewman Marsen."

The computer responded, "Crewman Marsen is on Deck 11, nearby Engineering."

"Well this'll be easy," B'Elanna muttered, continuing her march to the exit. Before the doors opened for her everyone heard a loud crash come from outside. She glanced behind her briefly, "what was the source of that!?"

Ian turned back to his station, "uh.. a ceiling collapse just outside Engineering."

"What how, that's not possible," B'Elanna said. She rushed outside.

"Um I'm not sure either," Ian muttered to himself.

B'Elanna only had to turn the corner to find the source of the noise, and her missing Engineer. Buried underneath a pile of debris were two crewmembers, both still alive but trapped. "Sickbay, we have a medical emergency."

**Sickbay:**

Kes tapped her commbadge, "acknowledged, can they be transported?" The Doctor emerged from his office to stand beside her at the station.

In: "Both crewmembers are trapped under debris, I don't know if it would be wise to move them manually or by transport."

The Doctor nodded his head toward Kes, "you take biobed two, I'll take one. Be prepared for anything."

"Yes Doctor," Kes nodded. She rushed over to one of the three biobeds. The Doctor headed to the main one, tapping his own commbadge and opening a medical tricorder using his other hand. "Lieutenant tell the transporter room to transport to biobeds one and two."

In: "Acknowledged Torres out."

Two figures dematerialised on the biobeds the Doctor and Kes stood beside. They immediately began treatment. Kes' patient was bleeding heavily from his chest. "Doctor!"

The Doctor glanced briefly at her, "his injuries aren't as severe, he'll have to wait." He rushed to Kes' side.

The Sickbay doors opened. A man walked through them and headed straight towards Kes and the Doctor. "Kes."

Kes froze on the spot, "this can't be."

"Kes, I need your help here," the Doctor snapped.

Kes ignored him, slowly looking up from her patient to the man nearby. "Daddy?"

The Doctor frowned, "daddy?" He looked up briefly.

"How can you be here, you're dead," Kes quietly stuttered.

"How do you know, I appeared to be alive in Caretaker," the man casually replied.

"Kes I'm sorry but you'll have to have your mysterious reunion later, we have a patient," the Doctor said.

"You're right, I'm sorry Doctor," Kes mumbled. She looked down to continue working.

The man looked a little annoyed, "aren't I important enough to you Kes?"

Kes hesitated only for a second. "A man's life is at stake."

"A stranger? I'm not going to be here forever," the man said.

The doors opened again, Faye stuck her head through the door. "Um have you guys seen a big dog around?"

"No and a big dog better not be in Sickbay," the Doctor muttered in response. "Unless it's sick of course."

"Oh you'd notice if he was here, trust me," Faye said. She backed off a little, "Strider.. come here." Everyone heard a loud bark, and a few guys screaming hysterically in the distance. She giggled, "oh there he is." She ran out of sight.

"Interesting," the Doctor muttered.

Faye ran back into Sickbay, panting heavily and looking freaked out. "Uh doc.. you won't believe what just happened."

"Look Miss O'Tani, if that dog of yours has ate, bitten or just licked those men to death you'll be in the brig for a while," the Doctor groaned. "Now what is it?"

"He didn't get a chance to. They disappeared," Faye stuttered.

The Doctor sighed, "Marsen is going to be fine." He turned away from the biobed, "disappeared?"

"Well I thought that, so I got closer. There was a huge hole in the deck floor," Faye replied. "Those two guys were lying in rubble, and I think someone else was under it."

"And your pet?" the Doctor asked.

Faye put her hands on her hips, looking annoyed. "Hey I didn't bring him aboard, he just appeared. He died when I was a pre-teen you know."

"And it didn't occur to you that, that was in the least bit strange?" the Doctor asked.

Faye smiled sheepishly, "I was just happy to see him."

Kes looked up at where her father once stood, he had gone. "Like my father.. he just appeared too, now he's gone."

"Kes, Faye.. one of you contact the transporter room. We're not done yet," the Doctor said.

"Fine ok," Faye mumbled. She walked back out.

**Meanwhile:**

The demon leader Sythian and the demon Paryain stepped into the brig as a different demon was busy going punch happy on James.

"Five minutes are up Shak," Sythian hissed.

"Aaaw damn, I didn't even get any new blood," the demon moaned.

"Well you shouldn't be so weak," Paryain said.

Shak got to his feet and marched out of the brig.

"How long do we have now until the next window?" Sythian asked.

"Half an hour," Paryain replied. "Don't worry, after Rhyian and Argon we've only got the best in the queue on this deck. They'll no doubt win before then."

"Rhyian, why waste five minutes on him? The Slayer just has to breathe on him to win," Sythian laughed. "Should be amusing, never mind."

Paryain nodded, "do I still get my prize despite it just pretending."

"Yes, we need a few to go early," Sythian replied.

Paryain nodded again, he stepped out briefly. He reappeared with a small weaker looking demon. "Five minutes remember, though it'll take you longer than that to even go near him." The two larger demons stepped out.

"Great finally," Rhyian muttered to himself. He opened his thick jacket revealing weapons and gadgets. He took out one sphere gadget and a large dagger, then keyed in some commands at the station. "I'm going to need your help here." The green shield went down.

"Yeah I'll get right on it," James muttered while he sat up to rest his back on the wall.

"Well now the door's locked, I need to make a new exit," Rhyian said.

"Why should I help, and why me?" James mumbled.

Rhyian walked around the station with the dagger ready in hand, "oh I don't need you to help only me to escape. I need you to help you escape."

James stared at him with a slightly raised eyebrow, "what?"

"There's a Jeffries tube nearby, long ago the entrance was sealed, too many escapees," Rhyian said.

"You're a demon, why ask me to help?" James muttered.

"I bruise worse than humans do, and I have as much strength as one. No offense," Rhyian replied. He stepped closer, but jumped back when James climbed to his feet.

"Ok one of us isn't being clear, but I'm unsure of which one," James said.

"Me most likely, I stutter too much," Rhyian mumbled.

"Is this a new competition, I escape and the winner.." James said.

"Tug the chains," Rhyian butted in.

"Ok this is really cheating," James muttered.

"Ohno, just do it.. here," Rhyian said, handing him the dagger and closing the gap between them. "If it shocks you, you'll still be able to stab me in the gut."

James took the dagger off him, then tugged a little at the chains but nothing happened.

"See," Rhyian said. "It's expected if you still don't trust me, that's ok. But if you want to save your crew again, this is your only chance." He began to unlock the chains.

"Why are you helping me?" James asked with a frown.

"You don't know what it's like to be a weak cowardly demon when we do those kind of attacks. I won't kill anyone, and that's enough for my leaders to kill me and it's never quick," Rhyian replied.

"If you're serious about this, you're hardly a coward," James said.

"Shak says only cowards choose to die just to save a mortal," Rhyian said. "Ok the wall is weak so you can do this without any noise. I've only got two minutes left."

"All right," James said while stepping out of the cell. Then he knelt down next to the wall.

"The opening should be.." Rhyian said. James simply put his right hand through the wall like it was paper. "Oh.."

"Not my first time," James said. He cleared away the wall to reveal the open Jeffries tube opening. "Wouldn't they kill you just for this? Surely this is worse."

Rhyian took out another tool, "you first. I need to reseal this."

James sighed as he climbed into the tube, taking bits of the broken wall with him, Rhyian crawled in after him. He reattached the bits of wall pieces, covering the cracks with energy from the device. "Let's go."

"Ok I don't get you," James said while crawling away. Rhyian soon followed.

"Nobody does."

### **The Conference Room:**

All of the remaining senior staff plus Faye sat around the table.

"He chased two guys down the corridor, then poof.. they disappeared, only they didn't. They fell down this hole in the floor, no sign of my dog either," Faye was saying.

Chakotay sighed out of boredom, "uh huh, I hope you gave up your writing career plans."

Faye pouted, "yes."

"That's similar to what happened with Marsen. He walked out talking to a crewmember called Jack, he died during the rift incident. Moments later the ceiling collapsed," B'Elanna said.

Kes nodded her head, "my father also appeared. Nothing happened but he did distract me from treating Marsen."

"So we're haunted, oh boy," Tom stuttered. "Please tell me it's not going to be as creepy as that girl haunting that file."

"I really doubt we're being haunted here," Chakotay said. "Doctor did you scan anyone to see if they were hallucinating or.."

"No, I saw Kes' father myself and I can't hallucinate like humans do," the Doctor replied.

"Well you can't from the same thing.. somebody could easily program you to or a virus could damage your program," Harry said.

"Still, if I was seeing things I highly doubt I would be seeing the exact same thing as Kes," the Doctor said. "Apart from the injuries from the ceiling collapse, Marsen seemed normal."

"Any theories?" Chakotay questioned.

"Um somebody's trying to kill us by pretending to be dead people," Tom said.

"Did Kes' father really die though, I was very confused about that," Harry said. "The original Resolutions said so but we saw him in Caretaker."

"Oh who cares about that," Chakotay muttered. He glanced at Kes, "sorry I didn't mean it that way."

"I hope there's other theories besides Tom's, I hate the idea that he could be right," Ian said.

Tom rolled his eyes, "I'm smarter than you, get over it."

Chakotay sighed, "it seems to be the only one anyone can come up with, with the information we have so far. B'Elanna how did both of those ceilings collapse?"

"I don't know Commander, we're looking into it," B'Elanna replied.

"All right let's just pretend for a second that Tom's theory is correct," Chakotay said. Tom smiled smugly. "I know it's like trying to imagine Neelix cooking a decent meal, but still try."

"Charming," Tom grumbled.

"If somebody is leading us into traps, how could they be doing this and are they actually responsible for the accidents too?" Chakotay questioned.

"It's probably telepathy, how else could they know how to trick us?" the Doctor replied.

Neelix muttered to himself, "I do cook decent meals."

"What was that Neelix?" Chakotay demanded, narrowing his eyes slightly.

"I said wouldn't Faye, Kes or Mr Vulcan have noticed any telepathic activity by now if that were it," Neelix replied.

"The other theory is the crew's records," Harry said. "Whoever it is could find out about deceased relatives, and use it to their advantage."

"Does the crew's records mention Faye's dead dog?" Chakotay asked.



"Hey, his name is Strider," Faye angrily muttered.

Tom stuck out his bottom lip while nodding his head, "hmm Lord of the Rings."

Faye stared at him with wide eyes, "what, oh god.. I hate those movies."

"We're getting off track here," Chakotay groaned.

"No sir it wouldn't have mentioned that. Two of the victims have been telepathic crewmembers, I find it hard to believe that whoever's doing this could scan their memories without them noticing," Harry said.

"Both Kes and Miss O'Tani's telepathic abilities are undisciplined, it's still a possibility," Tuvok said. "O'Tani is half human as well.."

"Hehe you're Troi," Tom teased.

Faye glared in his direction, "take that back. I don't sense stupid emotions, I have the read people's minds part."

"You could be right Mr Tuvok, but Kes has sensed a lot of presences in the past.. why is now any different?" Neelix asked.

"No doubt we'll find out. Doctor, Kes return to Sickbay. Tom you assist them just in case," Chakotay ordered. "Tuvok get your best Security members on double duty, we need more teams around the ship to keep tabs on everyone."

"Aye Commander," Tuvok said. "Should I inform the Captain?"

"Do you think she'll care at all?" Tom questioned.

"Probably not but she'll probably be mad if we don't tell her," Chakotay replied. "Though she'll be mad if we interrupt her, we may as well just tell her."

Tuvok tapped his commbadge, Chakotay nodded his approval. "Tuvok to Captain Janeway."

In: "I'm busy.. get lost."

"Captain we have a situation on our hands," Chakotay said. "Crewmembers are seeing.."

In: "Janeway out."

"I'd better go brave her," Chakotay muttered, slowly rising from his chair. Everyone nervously watched him leave to meet his doom, once again.

"He's either very brave or very very stupid," Harry said.

"Bravery and stupidity are usually the same anyway," Ian said.

"We may as well be dismissed Commander, unless you have any further orders," Harry said.

Tuvok nodded, "that'll be all. Remember, do not follow anybody who should not be here. Including dead pets."

"Well I hardly think that my grandfather would have worked the same way as my dog," Faye muttered. "Maybe my Nana, she always spooked people out by talking in their heads, never aloud. She's not dead though."

"Oh brother, even though that all sounded really stupid she's right," Tom said. Everyone got up and headed for the nearest exit.

**Meanwhile:**

Chakotay slowly walked into the Captain's Ready Room expecting the worst to happen. He looked around to find no sign of her, strangely enough there was an unfinished cup of coffee sitting on the desk. It was the same one she filled before he left earlier.

"Computer locate Captain Janeway."

The computer responded, "Captain Janeway is on Deck Thirteen."

Chakotay's eyes widened, "what?"

"You heard me," the computer responded.

"Uh.." Chakotay said, now looking confused.

"Now you sound like a chimp, Chimpotay," the computer said.

"Ookay," Chakotay muttered, slowly stepping back into the bridge.

"How did it go Commander?" Harry nervously asked.

Chakotay marched toward the nearest turbolift, "Tuvok you're with me." He stepped inside, Tuvok followed him without uttering a word.

"Couldn't have been that bad," Harry said.

**Meanwhile:**

James and Rhyian had stopped in the middle of the Jeffries tube, Rhyian was working on another two gadgets.

"What are those for?" James questioned.

"One is designed to hack into any system, this is to help hide us from the sensors which isn't a challenge really," Rhyian replied, gesturing at the smaller one.

"So many questions," James muttered to himself. "You're not like any demon I've met before."

"I'm not surprised. I'm no fighter, I'm only still alive for my expertise," Rhyian said. "Me and two others keep the ship running, if they kill us and the ship's systems are broken then they're stuck. But if they get onto your ship, they can just keep smarter humans alive."

"So that portal I came through was just to let your friends through," James said.

"Not exactly. It alters the space around the source and causes a few distortions in random places. Only six got through last time, one returned safely," Rhyian said. "He's specialised in invisibility though, if you saw him you'd beat him easily, he's my size."

"That explains my shower," James muttered. "Damn perv."

"Perv?" Rhyian mumbled. He shook it off. "The portal was designed to destroy your ship while give us extra power. By that time we'd have enough to take your ship's place, if we had just destroyed you in a simple way we would have been destroyed while entering your space time."

"Ok you're from an alternate reality or time, so where is my crew then?" James asked.

"You've got the right idea. We share your space and time, we're just separated by a small minuscule dimensional shift. Our kind exist here, no-one else does," Rhyian replied. "Your crew never existed on

this Voyager, we can sense them only barely but you can't sense us. Though a few months ago there was an incident with two of your kind, well three."

"Oh you were the invisible demons. Tell me, did you cause the loops?" James questioned.

"If we interfere with your shift the way we did then there's a fifty nine percent chance of a temporal disturbance, on both sides," Rhyian replied.

"So, why are we just sitting here? You mentioned saving my crew again," James said.

"We can't do anything yet, if we do we'll lose our chance. They're creating another portal," Rhyian said.

"So it has to be big enough for me to get through again," James said.

"It's barely big enough to be seen, plus we need a plan to fight off the guards they'll have when they realise you're gone. We'll need to destroy the machine so it doesn't happen again," Rhyian said.

"How long do we have until it's big enough again?" James asked.

"Six hours roughly," Rhyian replied. "I wouldn't worry, only I know that our crap sensors can't get through the interference on Deck Thirteen. However I feel better with a fail safe." He activated the small device. "This'll mask our lifesigns."

"You must know enough about what made the anomaly to destroy it.." James said.

"I know what you're thinking, and no I didn't create it. Carden did, he's not as smart as me but he's got the whole mystical expertise that our crew rely on to cause trouble," Rhyian said.

"Ok but do you think you could sabotage it if nobody bothered you?" James questioned.

"Impossible, a few will be monitoring it and they'll have their best guys guarding it this time," Rhyian replied. "Remember I can't fight."

"You're forgetting that I can, and I know my way around a computer," James said.

"You can't do both. It'll need to be destroyed after you've gone through," Rhyian said.

"I wasn't planning on doing it alone," James said.

"No offense but I didn't know Slayers had plans that didn't have nothing but violence in them," Rhyian said.

"I just said that as we need to think of a distraction or two," James said. "What kind of weapons do you have anyway?"

### **Normal Voyager:**

Tuvok and Chakotay stood in the turbolift with one unknown crewmember.

"Why would she go there for?" Chakotay asked.

"There's no logical reason as nobody's worked or lived there for over a year," Tuvok replied. "Perhaps it is one of the 'ghosts'."

"Deck Thirteen is unstable due to the rift, it's the only place that hasn't been touched by repair personnel," Chakotay said. "Let's hope we're not too late."

The lift stopped, the doors opened. The unknown looked scared to death, "Darren, oh god.."

Chakotay grabbed her arm, "if he's dead don't follow. Computer keep going to Deck Thirteen."

"Follow? That guy choked me twice, why would I follow him?" the unknown said.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "interesting." Just then the lights went off, the turbolift creaked for a second.

"I thought the ghosts lure them out not.." Chakotay said. "What's going on?"

"Logically the entity would adapt.." Tuvok said.

"Tuvok what the hell do you mean by that?" Chakotay snapped.

Before Tuvok had a chance to respond the turbolift began moving again, but much faster than usual. The three occupants were thrown into the door.

"Computer, halt turbolift!" Chakotay yelled.

### **Engineering:**

Everyone working stopped what they were doing as loud crashing sounds got louder, then it stopped. B'Elanna raised her hand in the air, gesturing everyone to stay where they were. She slowly headed for the main door. She turned a different corner to the last event, there she saw something she never thought she'd ever see. The turbolift now was standing in the middle of the corridor with a trail of destruction behind it, everyone who was in it had fell in a crumpled heap by the wall like they'd had been thrown clear from the lift.

"I think I'd rather have been choked," the girl muttered.

Tuvok tried to sit up but the girl had landed on his legs. "Crewman, will you please."

"Sorry sir," she muttered.

"What on earth happened?" B'Elanna asked.

"After we stopped at Deck 8 the turbolift decided to go speeding," Chakotay groaned. "Tuvok, will you get the hell off me!"

Tuvok raised an eyebrow while looking down at the man he had landed on. "I apologise Commander." He climbed to his feet.

"Obviously the turbolift ran out of shafts to go along. We're lucky it didn't decide to go down to Deck Thirteen like we asked or we'd be floating in space," Chakotay muttered. He pulled himself to his feet.

"Um you're on Deck Ten, if you were going along then you should have ended up on Deck Nine," B'Elanna said.

Chakotay frowned, "that's impossible."

"Indeed Commander. The turbolift should not have even gone 'speeding' in the first place, let alone go down the vertical shafts after Deck Nine's horizontal ended," Tuvok said.

"And you forgot the best part, deciding to go horizontal again just so we crash here," the crewmember muttered.

"Ok you guys just figure that out, I've got to rescue the Captain," Chakotay said, he rushed down the corridor.

"Indeed," Tuvok said, he followed.

"Next time I see him I'm just going to say something stupid, just so he replies with 'indeed'," B'Elanna said, rolling her eyes. "Sickbay?" The crewmember nodded. "In the meantime I think the turbolifts should be shut down until something.." A creaky sound interrupted her, and then a familiar voice.

"What the.. I just got out of a turbolift for god's sake!" Kathryn's voice screeched.

"Else happens," B'Elanna continued. She walked closer to the damaged turbolift. "Captain? Why is Tuvok and Chakotay off to rescue you?"

"I don't know but for their sake it better be hunting down extra coffee supplies, I'm already getting bloody withdrawals," Kathryn's voice replied. "Now what the hell happened here!?" B'Elanna sighed in response.

### **Deck Thirteen:**

A Jeffries tube door opened, Tuvok climbed out first with Chakotay right behind him. "Let's try in here," Chakotay said, gesturing his head toward the room where the rift once was.

"Do you know what the Captain's ghost might have been?" Tuvok questioned.

Chakotay glanced back at him briefly, "I have a good idea yes." He frowned as he entered the room, "Tuvok.. did you bring a tricorder?"

Tuvok took a tricorder from his belt, "aye Commander."

"I think we know what happened to the turbolift and ceilings," Chakotay said.

Tuvok stepped further forward, scanning in front of him. "I do believe that they're linked with the ghosts crewmembers have been seeing."

"But how? For one thing that girl said.." Chakotay said, it hit him mid sentence. "It adapts like you said, so telling the crew to stay away from their ghosts won't help everyone."

"It is intelligent, there's no way to know how it'll strike next time," Tuvok said. He stopped directly in front of another small ball of light, the tricorder beeped at him. "Confirmed Commander, it's another rift."

Chakotay sighed, shaking his head. "But how, it was closed."

"Perhaps when Ensign Taylor went through it, it only stunned its growth temporarily and it's starting fresh," Tuvok said.

"Things were bad enough the last time, now this time we have aliens luring our crew into any disaster this rift causes," Chakotay muttered.

"This alien is either responsible for the first and the current anomaly, or it is taking advantage this time around," Tuvok said.

Chakotay turned on his heel to leave, something stopped him at the last second. "Tuvok, that thing couldn't have done anything to the Captain.. I mean directly?"

Tuvok continued to scan, "we are the only people on this deck." He tapped his commbadge, "computer locate Captain Janeway."

"Say pretty please," the computer responded.

Chakotay groaned, "her ghost lured her here, and now we can't detect her lifesigns. I'll search this deck and.."

"Commander, I am the Chief of Security.. with the Captain in her current condition you are in command. I should search for her," Tuvok said.

"Why do I get the feeling you'll not back down from that?" Chakotay questioned.

In: "Janeway to Chumpotay and Turash, report to my Ready Room.. NOW!"

"Um.. how come those names came through to us?" Chakotay asked.

"Hmm I wonder, hehe," the computer giggled.

"Interesting," Tuvok commented. "The Captain seems to be unharmed, maybe she saw through the ghost and returned before anything happened."

"I don't know, if it was the one I thought it was we wouldn't be having this conversation," Chakotay mumbled. He headed back the way we came.

### **The Ready Room:**

Kathryn paced backward and forward muttering angrily to herself. Chakotay and Tuvok watched her nervously, fearing the worst. "Now I don't know where to start gentlemen."

"Um Deck Thirteen Captain?" Chakotay suggested.

Kathryn marched over to stand in front of the two men. "I'll decide where to start Commander! Now why didn't either you tell me about these so called ghosts?"

"I tried Captain but you told me to get lost," Tuvok replied.

"Oh.." Kathryn said awkwardly. She shook it off and got angry again, "I bet you had the Conference meeting before then, you should have told me sooner."

"Damn she's good," Chakotay whispered.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "indeed. Captain you have shown no signs of interest of anything that has happened aboard ship since Ensign Taylor's death."

"I still would like to be told Commander," Kathryn muttered.

"Excuse me, but what happened on Deck Thirteen?" Chakotay asked.

"Simple I was tricked, but I figured out it wasn't real and left," Kathryn replied. "Only to end up at Deck Ten blocked in by another turbolift that had crashed."

"So nothing happened to you? Odd," Chakotay said. "How did you figure it out?"

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "now I want to know why that damn anomaly is back, I want an answer right now!"

"We don't know for certain Captain, we can only theorize," Tuvok said. "I do believe that it's growth was stunned, and now has sufficient energy to regrow again."

"Tuvok also believes that whoever's responsible for the ghosts are using the malfunctions to it's advantage," Chakotay said. "Or was actually responsible for both, and is deciding to step up it's attack this time round."

"No no," Kathryn grumbled. "I want to know why on earth James' death was in vain, damn it. It was bad enough that he saved your arses but now it seems he just died to delay our deaths for a while."

Chakotay glanced nervously at Tuvok, "we already have a head start from the last time we tried to find a solution. We may have time to actually save ourselves."

"Indeed. The anomaly hasn't affected the escape pods or remaining shuttles, we must act now if we are going to shut down power to drain it," Tuvok said.

Kathryn groaned, "what's the point, it's just going to appear again."

"Well now that we have somebody or some people messing with us like this, we have the possibility that someone's doing this to us.. that maybe our way out," Chakotay said.

"We didn't find any ships the last time, we're still nowhere near any planets. What do you suggest brainiac?" Kathryn asked.

"Um investigate, but I do think we should listen to Tuvok," Chakotay replied.

"No.. we've already had a turbolift crash, you said that we have some kind of presence. Do you really think something that can do that much like this will let us just evacuate the ship, and fix it?" Kathryn said.

"Captain if this alien isn't responsible for the rift there's a good chance they can't interfere. They can probably only influence us," Tuvok said.

"If they can appear as the dead, there's no stopping them from appearing as living crewmembers," Chakotay added on.

"So what are you saying, we can't trust anyone?" Kathryn questioned.

"No, it's just a word of caution," Chakotay replied.

Kathryn sighed, she made her way back over to the desk. "Commander it would have more success doing that in the first place. If it could do that, it would have done it already."

"Captain, how did you know it was a trick?" Chakotay asked.

Kathryn stared at him bewilderedly, "cos the person was dead you moron. I only followed out of curiosity."

"Who was it?" Chakotay asked.

"Enough," Kathryn snapped. "I want that anomaly slowed down, the dead poser captured at the very least. Am I understood?"

"Yes ma'am," Chakotay and Tuvok responded.

"Now get out, I want to have a coffee alone," Kathryn said. The two men quickly left her sight. She stood still for a few minutes, her face slowly filling with rage. Then when her face couldn't get anymore red she swung her arm at the numerous cups on the desk, they all smashed onto the floor. With that she marched out of the Ready Room via the door on the left.

### **The Conference Room:**

Chakotay, Harry, Tom, and Ian stood around nearby the wall station, having a discussion about the situation.

"With every ghost incident we figured there must be a pattern," Harry was saying.

"Unfortunately we'll have to wait for one or two more, maybe more, to happen," Ian said.

"We have to wait for any member of the crew to get killed and/or injured, I hope you have a good reason," Chakotay grumbled.

"Yes sir. Because the anomaly is playing havoc on the ship's systems our inward sensors were giving us misleading information. We've fixed it for now," Ian replied.

"Every member of the crew's been notified, everyone should be in pairs at least and should report any visitors," Tom said. "We scan and hopefully we'll find something that'll help us find this guy or gal."

"Everybody's been notified, are you sure?" Chakotay questioned.

"Yes sir, everyone will have received the message through their stations, or off duty computers," Tom replied.

"We couldn't risk broadcasting it over the comm, our alien will probably hear it," Harry said.

Chakotay groaned, "we have one crewmember who's off duty who won't look at their computer. Take it from me, the last thing she needs is a visitor from our ghost maker."

Ian's eyes widened, "oh my god, Jessie. Sir I'll handle it." He quickly ran out.

"She's an easy target, we may be too late," Tom said.

Chakotay sighed, "if I remember right Danny's looking after her. She should stop her from leaving unless.."

"Unless there's something to hurt and/or kill her in the comfort of her own room," Tom said.

"Not in her room no, but James'.. he has weapons," Harry said. "Too many. She wouldn't get in there would she, Danny will stop her, unless the ghost can emulate strength and stuff."

"I'd better go with Ian, keep me apprised you two," Chakotay muttered. He walked out.

Tom glanced at Harry looking worried, "just how many weapons?"

"A whole big bag full, probably more. He always seemed to carry one or two on him," Harry muttered. "Why ask, he's gone."

"Would it be too morbid to recycle them into the replicator?" Tom asked. Harry groaned, shaking his head while walking away from him.

### **Meanwhile:**

Rhyian peeped his head around a corridor corner. James just walked out after him, and started down the corridor. Rhyian quickly ran to catch up with him.

"You're not on your Voyager anymore."

"I noticed that yeah," James muttered.

"You can't just walk around like you are," Rhyian mumbled.

"You don't have to check, I know when they're around now," James said.

"You do, how? Some are smart enough to not make any noise," Rhyian said.

"There's a distinctive smell I didn't notice right away," James replied.

"Since you were so confident no-one was around I'm going to take it as a compliment," Rhyian said.

"Take it anyway you want," James sighed, he stopped at a door and opened it.

Rhyian glanced at the device in his hand, "this thing won't last long, we have to be quick."

"It shouldn't take long," James mumbled as they both walked through the door. It closed behind them, Rhyian stood in front of it while James went towards the weapons lockers.

"I hope you don't plan on going through with this, there's got to be a better way," Rhyian sighed.

"For example? I don't know a way that won't get us killed before we get anywhere," James said.



"I don't know. If you get killed, captured or injured enough, you won't be able to close the portal. No offense but you're hardly in good condition to fight," Rhyian said.

"Then you'll just have to destroy the machine to do it," James muttered.

"Um, I thought you wanted to get back home," Rhyian said.

"I do but Jessie's safety is my priority," James said.

"Jessie, she's... you mentioned her earlier," Rhyian mumbled.

James glanced back at him, "probably. If I can't get back but still can save her it's good enough for me."

Rhyian smiled, "she's your, what do humans call it? Partner?"

"Nah I don't like that term," James said. He opened one of the lockers on the wall. Instead of the usual phaser rifles, there were knives, swords and other more bloody weapons stored inside.

"I'm amazed though that a Slayer's risking an awful lot by uh... dating," Rhyian mumbled.

"I'm really not risking anything," James sighed. "I'm not, let's just say it works for me."

Rhyian stepped forward, "you know I do have weapons already."

"I know, we need a lot more," James said while taking a sword out of the locker. "There's got to be something I can use."

"I think you've got plenty," Rhyian said.

"No... we need something in case the worst happens, like you dying or something," James said.

"We don't keep ready made bombs," Rhyian sighed.

James glanced over his shoulder to look at him again. "I know, we just need material to make a few."

"I've got enough to make a couple," Rhyian smiled, patting the side of his coat. "Let's get back to our stronghold, if you're finished that is."

"How long do we have left?" James questioned.

"Not long, we need to draw a battle plan," Rhyian replied. He headed back to the door at such a speed so James didn't have time to reply. He took a few more smaller weapons with a sigh, then followed.

### **Jessie's Quarters:**

"Ian calm down, she's still here," Danny said. "I checked her after getting that message on her computer."

"Dan this is really important. Do you think if the ghost took James' form it could make her do anything?" Ian asked.

"Don't be stupid. If she thinks he's back from the dead she wouldn't do anything stupid," Danny replied.

"I guess, but she'll probably see right through the fake," Ian said.

Danny sighed, "of course she will. Stop worrying will you. If I suddenly see James walk out of there with her, I'll stop her from leaving... unless the ghost has left a bomb or something." Ian turned a

shade paler. "Ian don't worry, a James ghost won't do her any psychical harm but it may make her recovery harder."

"Then maybe you should keep her company, or at least tell her about this. Haven't you?" Ian questioned.

"No she was sleeping. I wasn't going to disturb her, she hasn't slept properly in two weeks," Danny replied. "And she doesn't want company, do you think I haven't tried?"

"We've got to do something, who knows what'll happen if we leave her alone," Ian said.

Danny frowned, she stood up to stand in front of him. "Uh, where did she come from?"

Ian slowly turned his head back, then he turned himself fully around. "Uh, I don't think Jessie's the problem..."

"Don't tell me," Danny muttered. The two stared directly at a young teenaged girl standing at the door.

"Amy, it's not really you," Ian mumbled.

"Amy? Oh... sister, right," Danny said.

The girl stepped closer, Danny and Ian backed off a little. "What are you talking about big brother? I need help, what is this place?"

"Ohno, don't do that," Danny said.

The girl looked upset as she glanced toward Ian, "what's happening? Why do you look older?"

"You don't know?" Ian mumbled.

Danny roughly shook his arm, "Ian don't engage it. We have to ignore it... though that could kill us, we don't know."

"I was fighting with these men," Amy quietly said. "I was up on the wall, oh god James... the shuttle was going toward him."

Ian shuddered slightly turning away, "no, stop it."

Danny stared at the girl bewilderedly, "you heard him you sick asshole, stop it. How do you know so much of the details, Ian wasn't even there when you died."

"Died? I can't be dead," Amy stuttered. "Big brother... help."

Ian covered his ears with his hands, "no no no."

Danny marched over to the young girl, "you heard me, stop doing this to him and answer my question. How do you know what happened to her?"

"Danny," Ian said, turning back around.

"Don't go protective brother on me, this isn't her," Danny muttered walking back over to him.

"I don't understand, big brother. What's going on?" Amy asked.

"Why don't you tell us," Danny said.

"Dan, whatever she wants us to do, we have to do the opposite," Ian whispered to her.

"Ok gotcha," Danny whispered back. "Listen, we know what you really are, you can stay the hell away from us."

"Danny," Ian pretended to scold. He stepped closer, "this is all a bit weird, we're all confused. Amy, what's the last thing you remember?"

"The fight I told you," Amy replied in a scared tone of voice. She wrapped her arms around herself, "the shuttle was about to hit him. Is he ok?"

"Well he was ok from that but..." Ian replied awkwardly. He bravely stepped closer to her, Danny looked a bit uneasy as a result. "He's fine, you know him, he'd probably survive a brutal stabbing or disintegration."

Danny rolled her eyes. "Oh very smooth Ian," she quietly said to herself.

"Oh good, now what is this place. It looks like a starship," Amy said. She walked forward toward the two, both of them looked very uneasy as she passed them and stood by the window. "It really is beautiful out here."

"Um yeah," Ian said, looking toward Danny with wide eyes. She nodded her head. "Would you want a tour of the ship, or maybe catch up?"

"Catch up? I don't understand this," Amy said, glancing back at the two briefly. "You look older, we're here, if I was in a coma I would have grown too." Danny edged toward Jessie's bedroom, she typed in something on the side panel then edged back to Ian's side.

"Amy, what were you and James doing exactly?" Ian asked, gesturing his head toward the door. Danny nodded again. The two slowly backed off.

"We were defending somebody, these men were attacking her," Amy muttered. She frowned to the sound of the doors opening and closing, then turned around quickly. Her expression changed from frightened teen girl to a devious creepy smile. "Hmph, humanoids."

Danny and Ian headed down the corridor as fast as they could. "What about Jessie?" Ian asked.

"If the spirit thing set a trap like we thought, the lock on that door should keep anything contained," Danny replied. "I hope."

"Just in case we should beam her out," Ian said.

Danny stopped dead in her tracks, she sniffed the air while glancing around at their surroundings. "Do you smell that?"

Ian stopped just ahead of her, "yes I do, it's smoke." Danny stared at something behind him with a horrified expression on her face, he slowly looked behind him. "The ghost, it wanted us to leave," he stuttered.

"Damn," Danny managed to squeak.

### **The Bridge:**

"Commander, a fire has broken out on Deck Eight," Tuvok said.

"Cause?" Chakotay questioned.

Before Tuvok could answer, Harry and Tom rushed in from the Conference Room. "Sir I think we've found something," Harry said.

"Not now Ensign. Tuvok, get anybody in danger out of there," Chakotay ordered. "I take it the systems responsible for putting out fires has been affected."

"Aye Commander," Tuvok said. He headed into the turbolift.

"You take it right, that's what we were reporting, mostly," Tom said.

"Don't you mean more or less?" Harry muttered.

Tom glanced at him weirdly, "no cos I'm not reporting less. Mostly."

"Whatever. What's the other thing?" Chakotay asked impatiently.

"I was scanning the area when we noticed the fire, we found two strange readings, one in someone's quarters on Deck Eight, and in the corridor right where the fire started. The second one was moving away, the first one didn't leave until just now," Harry replied.

"Do you have any ideas what it is?" Chakotay asked.

Tom smiled slightly, "we think it could be our ghosts sir."

### **Deck Thirteen:**

The turbolift doors opened crookedly to reveal Kathryn. With an annoyed sigh she stepped out holding a tricorder. Immediately she began scanning while slowly going down the corridor. "Come on, what happened here?" The tricorder beeped as she reached the rift. "Come on, you were luring me here for a reason. What was it?"

### **Meanwhile in Sickbay:**

The Doctor and Kes were busy treating five patients, two of them being Danny and Ian. All of them were black from the smoke, a lot of them were having trouble breathing and were coughing most of the time. One of the five was badly burnt.

Chakotay walked inside, "report Doctor."

"Five crewmembers suffered smoke inhalation, however Johnson here suffered third degree burns on sixty percent of his body. He was found at the source of the fire," the Doctor said.

Chakotay glanced briefly at B'Elanna who stood nearby, "and what was that exactly?"

"Johnson and I were working on the turbolift systems," B'Elanna replied. She turned to stand close to him. "I was going to go into the turbolift itself and investigate the wiring, but he volunteered to do it for me. While I was working outside I'm sure I heard him talking to somebody. Then it happened."

"So the fire started in the turbolift itself?" Chakotay questioned. "How did it spread?"

"When I stood up the doors opened automatically, I hate to say it but I was lucky to get out with just smoke inhalation," B'Elanna replied. "It shouldn't have spread that far sir, that anomaly seems to be working faster than the last one. It's already compromised a lot of the systems."

"I doubt Johnson caused the fire, it must have been the rift that caused it," Chakotay said.

"He was talking to somebody other than himself Commander, I heard another voice in there. That turbolift never moved anywhere while we were there," B'Elanna said. "Why else would the aliens talk to him in there."

"It probably knew something was going to happen, and kept Johnson in there longer by talking to him," Chakotay muttered.

Danny moved off her biobed to join them. "Commander, Ian and I were visited by a ghost as well."

"You were?" Chakotay said.

"It decided to be Ian's sister. We weren't sure what to do sir, we tried to do the opposite of what it wanted us to do, so we left as it seemed to want to stay in the quarters," Danny said.

"It tricked you," Chakotay groaned. "Tom and Harry detected strange energy readings coming from not far from where the fire was, and someone's quarters."

"Jessie's," Danny said. "Damn it, she still doesn't know."

"Go with somebody Danny, for god's sake be careful," Chakotay commanded.

Danny nodded, she then ran out. The Doctor sighed in annoyance, "Commander, she hasn't been fully treated."

"I'm sorry Doctor, but her life's not at risk, Jessie's just might be," Chakotay said.

### **Engineering:**

B'Elanna walked from station to station, giving out orders to her staff while Kathryn followed and talked to her. They both finally stopped nearby the warp core as B'Elanna started work on the small station on the banister around it.

"I'm telling you, B'Elanna. I need to know for certain," Kathryn said.

B'Elanna sighed in annoyance before turning to look at her. "Why would the same creature who's luring to disasters and distract others so they still get caught in it, waste their time to give us hints?"

"I think there's more than one of them. One's playing games, the other trying to help us," Kathryn replied.

"Captain the one that lured you to Deck Thirteen probably was taking you somewhere. You just probably did the opposite of what it wanted you to do, so the accident on Deck Thirteen still happened," B'Elanna muttered.

"Nothing happened besides that blasted portal forming," Kathryn said.

"Strange, I thought the anomaly was causing all the incidents," B'Elanna said, rolling her eyes.

Kathryn forced her death glare on to medium power only. "This isn't the time for that. You knew what I meant. Apart from the obvious, nothing's happened there. I even returned later to find out why it lured me there, there was nothing."

"But we would have seen the anomaly without its help," B'Elanna said.

"We don't know if that's what it was doing. It might have given me a hint on how to stop it, but I left too soon," Kathryn said.

"Conveniently you seem to be the only one who's not been tricked into an injury," B'Elanna muttered. "A lot of people know it's a lure, but they all pick the wrong option. Why are you any different?"

"I don't think I am in that aspect. I do think I was never in any danger," Kathryn replied.

"So what was it you wanted me to check?" B'Elanna sighed.

"Is anyone looking for any patterns in these luring incidents?" Kathryn questioned.

"Tom and Harry, I'm not sure if they've found anything though," B'Elanna replied. "I did ask any of my staff if they see any ghosts, that they scan it."

"And?" Kathryn said.

"I'm still waiting for Chaplan to deliver the tricorder from Sickbay," B'Elanna said. "I'll inform you if I find anything."

"Thank you. That'll be all," Kathryn said. She turned around to leave.

"Captain?" B'Elanna said, stopping her. "The anomaly has interfered with systems relating to power shut down. I'm afraid that plan is out until it's fixed, by then it may be too late again to attempt it." Kathryn continued on her way.

### **Deck Eight:**

A repair team were busy working on cleaning up the area. One of the men turned the corner scanning away at the burns on the wall. His eyes looked up briefly, they caught sight at a blurry figure in front of him only just for half a second.

### **Meanwhile in Jessie's Quarters:**

The bedroom doors opened, Jessie walked through them. Her face showed confusion but at the same time looked as if she didn't care or want to be. She looked back at the doorway, the lights in that room continuously flickered on and off in a random fashion. The doors closed crookedly. "Danny? You still here?"

The main doors chimed, loud frantic knocks soon followed. "Um... come in?"

The same frightened crewmember scrambled through the door, "oh god you've gotta hide me."

"From who, or what?" Jessie asked.

The crewmember glanced at her briefly, "a Cardassian, it's got a phaser on kill."

"Oh brilliant, thanks for luring him or her here of all places," Jessie said.

"Oh I'm sorry," the crewmember sarcastically said.

Jessie headed toward the door, "why the sarcasm. I mean it, thanks." She stopped as the door opened, the crewmember instantly dove for the sofa to hide behind it. "Wait, Cardassian? That's not right."

"No, none of this is right. You should hide too," the crewmember said.

"Weird, I'll take my chances," Jessie muttered. The doors closed behind her as she left.

"Unless it wants us to hide. God damn it..." the crewmember said to himself.

### **The Conference Room:**

Tom and Harry stood by the wall panel, Harry leaned against the back of one of the chairs, holding a padd in his hands. The two were seemingly hard at work.

"Harry, you can't think of anyone dead that'll effect you right?" Tom questioned without looking away from the panel.

"Not off the top of my head, no," Harry replied. "These things are so elusive. One minute they're there, the next..."

"At least we know they're detectable. Maybe we can only scan them when they're playing their tricks," Tom said.

Harry looked up from the padd, his face lightening up a little. "If we can keep constantly scanning, we could transport any crewmembers in danger."

"Not really, they'd probably figure out a way to use the transporters against us too," Tom muttered.

"I don't think they're causing the accidents at all though," Harry said.

"Yeah but it's only a matter of time before the anomaly interferes with that system, and these things always seem to know when there's trouble," Tom said. "Besides we can't rely on the sensors all the time, they could break again."

"Aren't you Mister Optimistic," Harry sarcastically groaned, shaking his head.

"I'm just being Mister Realistic," Tom said. "We've done this all before, and we lost several people. All we could be doing is delaying the inevitable."

"That doesn't sound like you at all," Harry said. "We're just trying to keep the crew alive and in one piece here, everyone else are working on the problem."

"These guys are a problem. I say we focus on one of them, and try to catch it," Tom said.

Harry shook his head, "easier said than done. I told you, they disappear after they've done the deed."

"We've got to stop swapping over," Tom smirked. "Now you're the Pessimist."

Harry smiled, "ok fine. What was your idea?"

"The same thing happened two weeks ago, we can at least try to guess what's yet to happen. Also these aliens won't move too far to their next target now, the anomaly disasters are more common the bigger it is," Tom said. He pointed a finger at the wall panel, on it was a schematic style picture of the ship. "Look there's one now on Deck Eight again, there's obviously a lot of activity there for this thing."

"Good idea," Harry said.

The two men quickly left the Conference Room via the furthest away door.

### **Meanwhile:**

Rhyian sat in the Jeffries tube, working on a large padd. James sat nearby looking totally uninterested and bored, while sharpening a few daggers.

"We should then converge from the back. You fire the rifle as a distraction and..." Rhyian muttered. He looked toward James, "are you listening?"

"Barely," he muttered in response.

"But this is important," Rhyian moaned.

James groaned, "I know."

"We need a battle strategy if this is going to work," Rhyian said.

"No we don't," James said. "At least not that exact anyway."

"Don't you care..." Rhyian mumbled.

James finished sharpening one of the knives, then casually threw it toward him. It plunged into the wall right beside him.

"What are you doing?"

James shrugged his shoulders, "it seems sharp enough to me, don't you think?"

"You're crazy, did someone give you a concussion," Rhyian stuttered.

"I don't need a literal blow by blow plan, I don't fight that way," James said.

"So you just charge in?" Rhyian said.

"Well it's better than having an exact plan that leaves no margin for error," James muttered. "Imagine if something didn't go exactly as planned, you'd be screwed."

"But we need something," Rhyian said.

"Don't worry, that's why I listened a little," James said.

"Good," Rhyian said. "Do we both agree on distraction idea two going first, I move in to work, then you arrive to fight plan?"

"Sounds good, now we..." James said, glancing at Rhyian. He was still working on that padd of his. "Ok I'll just wait till you're done then."

"The no thorough plan thing works for you, it won't for me," he said.

"I told you, that's a really bad idea. What would you do if it didn't go exactly to plan, panic?" James sighed.

Rhyian dropped the padd and stared directly at him. "I'm not like you. I'm not exactly brave, and I don't live in a safe environment. Yes I would panic if I didn't have a proper plan, I feel safer with it."

"When have I gave you the impression that I was brave? Right now I'm not in a safe place either," James said.

"You're a Slayer right, so... this should be relatively easy for you," Rhyian muttered.

"I think the last two weeks is proof of how wrong you are, for god's sake you've seen the state I'm in," James said as he swapped daggers.

"You're born for this sort of thing though. I wasn't obviously or I'd have demon strength like the others," Rhyian muttered.

"I'm not a machine you know," James mumbled.

"What could you possibly be scared of?" Rhyian raised an eyebrow.

"Oh I don't know, this whole plan messing up. I'm scared that I'll die before we succeed, and my crew'll die because of it. Heck I'm trying to avoid thinking that there's a chance I'll never get back there," James replied. "I could give you a list of stuff that's not related to this, if you want."

Rhyian stared with disbelief in his eyes, "I don't understand. If I was like you I'd find it hard to be scared of much."

"I didn't expect you to understand. Being like this just gives you more things to be scared of or worried about," James mumbled.

The pair sat in silence for a while. James changed the last dagger to a sword half way through it.

Rhyian was the one who broke the silence, "tell me about her."

"Who?" James muttered.

"That girl of yours. She must be something if you're like this," Rhyian replied.

James looked up with a frown on his face, "like what?"



"The usual Slayer attitudes are 'charging in, do what they can, no care for themselves, dying is apart of the job'..." Rhyian replied. "No personal lives or else they'd risk losing it."

"Um I kinda got the first two covered anyway," James said.

"No I mean they don't usually care if they could die, even more so in a mission like this one," Rhyian said.

"Ok, and you've narrowed the reason for this down to Jessie," James said. Rhyian watched him uneasily. "Good call, what do you want to know?"

Rhyian relaxed a little, smirking slightly. "It's gotta be a first for the history books. Besides I was taught that Slayers were unfeeling robots, obviously I knew better than that but it's still interesting."

James sighed while placing the sword down beside him. "I hate to repeat myself, but what do you want to know?"

"Anything you don't mind sharing," Rhyian replied.

"All right um... she's fun, spirited, fiesty..." James said. He smiled to himself, "she will always say what's on her mind. She's eccentric, in a good way. There's no-one else like her, there should be."

"She does sound interesting," Rhyian said. "You must miss her loads."

"Stating the obvious," James said.

"What does she look like?" Rhyian asked.

"All you need to know is that she's gorgeous, what does it matter anyway?" James replied.

"True," Rhyian sighed. "We should prepare."

"Yeah, we need a way to hide the weapons," James said.

"I got an idea about that, not original though," Rhyian said.

### **Deck Eight:**

Tom and Harry climbed out of the Jeffries tube, both holding tricorders. "Anything?" Tom questioned as he scanned toward the end of the corridor.

Harry's tricorder responded as he slowly turned on the spot. "It's nearby."

"Harry," Tom said in a warning tone. Harry continued turning until he faced the same direction as him, just in time to see Jessie disappear around the corner. "She's not following the source of the alien's signature."

Both tricorders started beeping madly, then they heard what sounded like an animal with small claws crawl around above them. Tom pointed his tricorder above his head but the noise started to fade away. "That was it."

"We should go after it," Harry said.

"What about Jessie?" Tom questioned. Both tricorders stopped beeping. "Damn, we lost the signal."

"Ok that decided it," Harry muttered in response. He and Tom rushed after Jessie.

Moments later Danny crawled out of the same Jeffries tube exit, she looked around confused... "god damn it, I hate these things. Computer... where am I?"

The computer responded, "Deck Twelve."

"Crap!" Danny groaned, climbing back in.

The computer laughed quietly to itself, "heh humans are such suckers."

### **The Ready Room:**

Kathryn sat back down behind her desk reading one of the two padds in her hands. She brought the computer closer to her while keeping her eye on the padd. The door chimed. "Come in!"

Chakotay meekly stepped in, but stayed at the doorway. "Captain, I've just been talking to B'Elanna."

"Good for you," Kathryn muttered.

"She told me you have a theory," Chakotay said.

"A theory that's not going to help us stop these intruders on its own," Kathryn said. "Did Chaplan return the tricorder?"

"Yes," Chakotay sighed.

Kathryn looked up at him impatiently, "well?"

"The ghost didn't appear on the scans, but nearby there was the same energy readings Tom and Harry are investigating," Chakotay replied.

"So nothing new then," Kathryn groaned. "Have there been any incidents where crewmembers saw ghosts, but weren't injured?"

"There's a couple, but those incidents affect other people who get injured instead. For example Faye's was her ghost but injured other people. The strangest one was a repair crewmember on Deck Eight reporting a Cardassian with a weapon, nothing happened to him," Chakotay replied.

"That's the report I'm reading now. It's exactly like mine, his decision didn't seem to save him, it was because there was no disaster he could have been tricked into," Kathryn said.

"It's just a recent one, we should still be on our toes," Chakotay commented.

In: "Paris to Chakotay."

Chakotay tapped his commbadge, "Chakotay here. Give me some good news."

### **Deck Eight:**

"I'll give you some news," Tom said as he and Harry stood at the broken turbolift. "Jessie has been affected, we saw her wandering the deck while chasing one of the intruders."

In: "Did you see anything with her?"

"No, she just turned the corner when we saw her," Harry replied.

"I don't know how she did it but she left the deck, the turbolift's are still offline and the Jeffries entrance she was heading towards has been blocked by debris from the fire," Tom said.

### **The Ready Room:**

"Could she have transported out?" Chakotay questioned.

"B'Elanna told me you need a command override to use any turbolift or the transporter," Kathryn muttered. "How the hell did she know how the override, it's not like she has connections anymore."

Chakotay and Kathryn both turned a little pale as they looked at each other. "Of course, her ghost is James," Chakotay said.

Kathryn growled as she jumped to her feet, "that's the second time they have used his form to trick someone, it stops here." She marched toward the door.

"But Captain," Chakotay said. Kathryn stopped next to him. "These ghosts can take dead people's form, they even have access to some memories... this proves that these aliens can use James to manipulate any crewmember into doing what they want with his hacking skills."

"Now it's even more personal," Kathryn growled, she pushed him out of the way of the door and stormed out.

"It is?" Chakotay muttered. "Tom, have you heard everything?"

### **Deck Eight:**

Tom and Harry were now running towards the Jeffries Tube door they entered the deck through. "Yes sir," Tom replied.

In: "Forget Jessie, you have to continue the search."

Tom and Harry stopped in their tracks, both with shocked expressions on their faces. "But sir?" Tom said.

In: "You heard me. These things can easily hack into ship systems..."

"Probably with Jessie herself, Chakotay," Tom said.

"I doubt it. Jessie's an easy target for these things, they can probably lure her into any disaster..." Harry said.

Tom sighed, "I always said her and James were puppy dogs to each other, if one jumped off a cliff the other would follow."

In: "Exactly. I'm sending a Security team after her, Chakotay out."

Tom and Harry sighed, glancing at each other.

### **Meanwhile:**

Jessie stood on one side of a turbolift, looking for once a bit lost for words and unsure what to think. James stood on the other side.

"You do trust me don't you?" he was saying. Jessie didn't respond, she just stared at him. "It's for the best, for all of us."

"Computer halt," Jessie ordered. For once the computer responded and the turbolift stopped normally. "It'll kill me, it's not like you to..."

"No it won't, not really. Don't you want us to be together?" James said.

"Of course I do," Jessie mumbled.

"I can't stay here long, I don't want this to be the last time I see you," James said. He looked around him as he started to fade away. "Trust me Jess, please."

Jessie reached her hand out to touch him but he disappeared completely. The turbolift doors opened, a Security team pointing phasers were on the other side.

"Crewman, step out of there," one ordered.

Jessie didn't respond, she just stared at where James once stood. The team carefully moved toward her, and lead her out of the turbolift.

### **Deck Thirteen:**

Kathryn stood in the middle of the large room where the portal was, staring deeply into it.

"What is it?" she sighed.

In: "Security to Janeway and Chakotay. We've found Crewman Rex, she's fine."

"Was anyone else affected?" Kathryn questioned

In: "Not that we know of yet ma'am, she looks a bit shaken up that's all."

Kathryn sighed, "fine. Janeway out."

The portal grew to be five metres wide, the ship shook a little.

"That's it," Kathryn said. Backing away she clicked her fingers, "that's what, but why? Why are you here?" She then turned to run back to the turbolift.

### **Deck Five, nearby Sickbay:**

Several crewmembers stopped walking and looked above them. The sound of a creature crawling from above stopped just above Sickbay's first entrance. Tom and Harry arrived on the scene, this time Tom had a phaser in hand while Harry still had a tricorder.

"It's up there," Harry said.

"Where exactly?" Tom asked, raising his voice.

"It's in the ceiling, I don't know," Harry muttered.

Tom groaned, he aimed the phaser above Sickbay's door. It opened, three people stepped out all wearing Cadet uniforms. They stared directly at Tom, this froze him on the spot.

"Oh crap, my turn... what do I do?" he stuttered.

Harry stood by his side, "shoot quick."

"Tom how could you do that to us," one cadet said.

Another one shook his head disgust, "and he's doing it all again."

"What, I'm not doing anything. Stop it," Tom stuttered.

Harry quickly grabbed a hold of the phaser in his hands, the tricorder stopped beeping and the cadets faded away. "Damn it, so close."

"Sorry Harry," Tom muttered.

"Don't be, we should have expected it would defend itself this way," Harry said, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Come on." He continued down the corridor, Tom followed.

### **The Mess Hall:**

The hall was filled with repair teams surrounding the kitchen. A large part of the ceiling had fallen down and covered half of it. Kathryn and B'Elanna were standing nearby it talking to Tuvok.

"Crewmembers reported seeing Neelix talking to another Talaxian," he was saying. "Then the ceiling collapsed."

"How is he?" B'Elanna questioned.

"He's recovering in Sickbay," Tuvok replied.

"Please tell me somebody is getting somewhere with this investigation," Kathryn grumbled.

B'Elanna sighed, "all we've got is that disasters have more chance of happening on the higher decks."

"I thought that too. The good one appeared on Deck Thirteen," Kathryn said. "I think it's here to keep the others from causing more trouble than they are already, and to help us. It posed as somebody to give me the push I needed to leave the Ready Room, and lead me there to show me something."

"The anomaly, like I said..." B'Elanna said.

"I don't think it was that, not completely. I'm sure it was trying to give us a solution for the anomaly," Kathryn said.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "Captain, that's just mere speculation. There is no proof."

"Maybe not but we're running out of time, and we haven't got any proof to help us solve either problems. All we have is our instinct, and mine is telling me that the answer is on Deck Thirteen itself," Kathryn said.

"It's probably telling us to send another crewmember into it," B'Elanna muttered.

"Mister Richards told me that Taylor thought he had reason to believe only he could close it," Tuvok said. "There is no scientific explanation for that, however a lot about Taylor can't be explained."

"How long until the anomaly breaches the hull?" Kathryn questioned.

"I'd say about three hours," B'Elanna replied. "Captain there won't be much left of Deck Thirteen left to examine. When the anomaly was closed the last time there was barely a few metres left of corridor left."

"I'm going down there. If I can't figure it out, I'll do what he did," Kathryn said, she headed toward the nearest door. Tuvok and B'Elanna quickly followed her.

"Captain, you can't," B'Elanna said.

"I agree Captain. There is no guarantee that your plunge would even stop it. It's against all regulations for the Captain to do such a thing," Tuvok said.

Kathryn turned around to face them, "I don't remember reading a rule that says 'do not jump into an anomaly that will kill you to save the ship'. My crew is in danger, it's my duty to help them."

"Well there should be," B'Elanna said.

"Does anybody have a better idea, huh?" Kathryn questioned.

"I believe we should continue the hunt for these creatures, they may know a solution. Also we should delay the anomaly but reducing power on less essential decks," Tuvok replied.

"We've already done so, the aliens tried to keep several crewmembers on decks where we cut life support. We can't risk doing that again," B'Elanna said.

Kathryn groaned, "how dumb are some people on this ship? Fine you continue your little hunt, cut power again to Deck Thirteen and below. Shut down the warp core if you have to, we need the time." She marched out muttering to herself, "I still say the answer is on that deck."

"I'll return to Engineering," B'Elanna sighed, she followed Kathryn.

### **The Alternate Deck Thirteen:**

Rhyian had changed to a sneaky camouflage style outfit, while James had acquired a tall jacket to go over what he was wearing earlier. He looked around a corner, not far was the portal and a large group of demons. He moved back around. "It's time for the distraction."

Rhyian sighed, "good luck."

"You too," James said, raising a phaser rifle. He walked away leaving Rhyian on his own.

Sythian arrived on the scene to stand in between his minions. "Keep an eye out you useless little trolls. No doubt the Slayer will try to close it again."

"What about Rhyian?" one demon questioned.

"Kill him, if he's still alive he must have betrayed us," Sythian snarled.

All of the demons heard something small dropped down amongst them. "What was..." one said, then he noticed a small spherical item lying next to his foot. With a slight nudge using his foot it exploded, throwing a lot of demons whole or otherwise clear away.

While the living ones were all distracted Rhyian ran in and started working at a station. He cowered slightly so no-one could see him.

Sythian glanced around, "enough! Stay on your guard! It came from above!" He pointed toward a huge hole in the ceiling where you could see a Jeffries tube and of course the next deck. A group of demons ran toward it.

"Some stay, span out, keep..." Somebody grabbed him from behind, he turned around and ducked slightly but he still got a hard punch in his face. Only when he fell backwards to the ground he knew what happened.

James stood in front of him, pointing a large crossbow like weapon directly at his face. Instead of an arrow, it was loaded with a jagged knife.

"I hope you have a first officer," he smirked slightly, then he pressed the trigger to fire it.

Demons gathered around him as he pulled a sword from inside the jacket. The group attacked, he fought back with the sword and using the bow like it was a bat.

### **The Bridge:**

Everyone heard a thud come from the Conference Room. The door opened to a peeved looking Chakotay. "Stupid door," he grumbled. The door closed again just as he tried to step out.

"Sir, I think I found something," Claire said from the helm. Tuvok made his way over to her. "A cloaking field, it jumps around a lot."

The door opened again, Chakotay tried again but it closed before he got out. Craig at Tactical heard him ranting to himself. "It really should hurry up and kill us."

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "jumps?"

"Yeah at first I thought the ship was just messing with me but..." Claire stopped speaking when she looked straight ahead of her. A middle aged, medium built man stood in front of the viewscreen, leering at her like she was just a piece of meat. "It's not real," she muttered to herself, but her arms began shaking out of her control.

The man moved closer. Tuvok pulled out a phaser, pointing it at him. "Continue the report, he's just trying to stop you."

"Yes sir... It appears that the ship is in the pla..." The man placed his hand on the helm.

"You're looking good Clara," he sneered, moving his hand closer to hers. She jumped to her feet and stumbled backwards. Tuvok attempted to fire but it went straight through the man, and hit the viewscreen.

"I'm sorry," Claire stuttered.

Craig quickly left the helm to go to her and Tuvok's sides. He hesitated before replacing her at the helm. "Sir the cloaking field she found is a decoy. They appear to be moving, but they're not. There's multiple at..."

Claire butted in a warning tone of voice, "Craig."

The man was in the middle of morphing into a young slim woman. "Craig," she softly said.

Craig refused to look up from his station, "you'll have to do better than that. There's multiple at different frequencies to look like they're moving, or to make us think it was a problem with the sensors."

"I'm sorry son," the woman said.

Tuvok walked forward to pull Craig away from the helm. He worked at it himself, "confirmed, a ship bearing 43..." The console began losing power in different spots, only for a couple of seconds each. "The helm's overloading." Everyone nearby quickly backed away.

"You really shouldn't do that," the woman said. Moments later the helm exploded. "I don't like to break the rules."

"Who are you?" Tuvok asked. Claire moved to stand behind him, and took out a tricorder. "Are you causing the anomaly?"

"It's amazing how little you know," the woman smiled, shaking her head. "No of course not."

"Why are you here then?" Tuvok questioned.

"Why do you think? You're parasites, you are not worthy of them," the woman replied. She looked around Tuvok, "you can scan all you want Clara. There's nothing you can do without your pet Slayer anyway."

"You're demons?" Tuvok said.

"Pet Slayer? What the..." Craig muttered in confusion.

"Don't you worry about it sweetheart," the woman softly said.

"Stop it, stop looking like my mother," Craig muttered angrily.

The woman laughed, "oh the boy has a backbone after all. So long." She faded away into nothing.

"The energy reading's left the bridge," Claire said.

"Lewis, take Tactical and arm weapons on the co-ordinates 4561.32," Tuvok ordered.

"That's not what you were saying earlier," Craig said as he and Claire headed for the Opps and Tactical stations. Chakotay finally managed to escape the Conference Room.

"Indeed. They know that we know their current position so they'll move to a certain area to avoid their decoys. It's a logical place to move," Tuvok said.

"What's going on?" Chakotay asked.

"We've found the alien ship," Craig replied.

"Fire phasers," Chakotay ordered. Tuvok walked over to join Claire at Tactical. "Attack pattern Delta Four."

Claire keyed in the command, "firing."

"Commander an energy spike," Craig muttered. "A ship's decloaking three kilometres off our port bow."

"Good, keep firing until they're disabled," Chakotay commanded.

"Done," Claire said with a frown. She looked up, "they were no match for us."

"I may have the reason why. There is no signs of a signal coming from the ship. The ship cannot be the source of what is happening here," Tuvok said.

"Damn, that was why it was easy... they don't care that much," Chakotay grumbled. "Tuvok send an awayteam."

"Transporters are offline," Tuvok said.

"God fine, keep an eye on the ship, just in case," Chakotay muttered.

#### **Meanwhile:**

Jessie and Danny sat in Jessie's quarters, she had buried her head in her hands, elbows resting on her legs.

"How could somebody be so sick to do some stuff like this?" Danny grumbled. "Jess, what did you think when you saw him?"

Jessie moved her arms to place her hands against her cheeks. "I don't know, I was happy to see him... but confused."

"Surely you knew that he couldn't have been real?" Danny muttered. "Sorry, I don't mean to be harsh."

"It's ok, I'm a little better," Jessie mumbled.

Danny put an arm around her, "as long as you need me, I'll be here ok. Just tell me if you ever need anything."

"Thanks but there's nothing you can do," Jessie said.

"Is there anything I can get you before I go to the bathroom?" Danny asked. Jessie shook her head. Danny got up and headed for the bathroom.

Jessie sighed, climbed to her feet and walked straight out through the main door.

#### **Alternate Deck Thirteen:**

The fight had been moved away from the rift, into what was left of the corridor. More demons arrived through the turbolift. A couple of them ganged up on James, they all grabbed a hold and pushed him through the weak wall.

"That was easy," one commented.

Another looked through the hole and saw James just lying there. "It's ok."



The demons started to go back. One fidgeted slightly, he picked off a device that was on his arm. "What's thi..." The device then exploded, like a flash fire it covered the entire corridor killing all the demons in it.

James stepped out of the hole when the fire and smoke cleared, seemingly not affected by being thrown through the wall. He smiled to himself, "I can't believe they fell for that." He walked down through the charred corridor, and back into the rift's source room.

"Did you get them all?" Rhyian asked.

"And more actually," James replied. "How's it going?"

"I'm ready, you can go through on the next growth," Rhyian replied.

"Stay hidden, just in case," James said. "We don't know if they have any more coming."

Rhyian widened his eyes, "somebody's already here."

James turned back around. Paryain strode in to stand in front of the rift, smiling broadly. "Good job. I don't know how you managed to kill all of my guards, and my little science nerds but you did." Rhyian tried to lower himself. "I wouldn't hide Rhyian, you're already a traitor, don't be a coward too."

"It has a name?" James said, looking back at Rhyian, then at Paryain again. "You can have it back when I'm finished here."

Paryain laughed, "you're not good at lying are you. Don't dishonour him by covering for his actions. He may be a coward but he's not one for doing something somebody orders him to, whether his life's at stake or not."

"I dunno, that sounds brave to me. Unlike all the demons who had to wait until I was tied up and beaten to dare go near me," James muttered.

Paryain narrowed his eyes, "you're not going through the rift this time. I'll personally see that your very beautiful little girlfriend gets any message you want to give her, plus a little preview of the tortures she'll get in several hours." He only laughed at the look on James' face. "Oh I hope future Slayers get lucky like you, that look on your face will stay with me."

"So this torture, are you giving me the same preview?" James said.

"I'm guessing our fight is just going to be insults and jibes thrown back and forth," Paryain said.

"Well you insisted on it," James muttered. "Do you plan on just standing there and boring me for a few hours?"

"No," Paryain replied. He took out a rifle from behind his back, then pointed it at Rhyian's station. "Ok little leech, what would happen if I fired this at the station? I bet you didn't expect the fail safe on it."

"What do you mean?" James questioned.

"Oh... your backup plan was probably to destroy our invention to collapse the rift and stopping a new one. Sorry, Carden predicted that... the rift will do it's job no matter what you do to it," Paryain said. "Personally I don't think it has a use anymore, you and it have something in common."

"Shoot it if you want Paryain, if James goes in or not, whether you're lying about the fail safe or not, you're doing us a favour," Rhyian said.

"Ooh, he talks... Rhyian finally grew a backbone," Paryain teased.

James mockingly yawned into his hand while he moved over to block Paryain's line of fire.

"Am I boring you, maybe I should make things more exciting for you," Paryain muttered. He pressed a button on the rifle to power it up.

### **Engineering:**

In: "B'Elanna, we've uncovered the ship belonging to the intruders."

B'Elanna stepped off the small lift, and made her way toward the warp core. "You called me for a reason Commander? We've got enough problems of our own at the moment."

In: "I think everyone's problems are linked so don't give me that. We need transporters online so we can send an awayteam, or the very least attempt to transport these intruders to their own ship."

"I don't recommend it," B'Elanna said. "We did a test earlier just in case, and we lost the signal. While we're in this situation I don't recommend any of the ship's systems we can do without."

In: "B'Elanna this may be our only way to stop them."

"Ok but we're still going to die in less than three hours," B'Elanna muttered. "My whole team's working on trying to stop this anomaly."

In: "Any progress?"

"Do I sound like we have?" B'Elanna muttered angrily. She walked over to a Crewman, "Torres out. Crewman how's the..." She turned to look at her, B'Elanna widened her eyes and backed away. The Crewman had a female Klingon face and was staring at her with a look of annoyance on her face. "Ok where's Leanne?"

The woman didn't answer her, she just continued to stare at her.

B'Elanna looked around her, a few of her staff had gathered around. "No don't... this might be a trap. Get back to work." Her staff did as she said. "All right, what the hell do you want from us?" she snarled at the Klingon.

"All I ever wanted from you was to respect your own culture," the woman replied.

"No... you're not my mother. Tell me what you really want," B'Elanna said. The ship shook, at the same time an Engineering alarm went off. "Report?" B'Elanna ran over to a crewmember standing by the core.

"This can't be..." she stuttered, looking back at the Chief Engineer. "We're looking at a core breach Lieutenant."

"Damn it," B'Elanna growled. She swung herself under the console into the core area, she knelt down and ripped a panel off. "Give me a hand." Several of her staff gathered around to help.

### **Bridge:**

In: "We're looking at a core breach in five minutes, one of the bio neural gel packs has been affected by the anomaly. If we don't stop this anomaly..."

"Understood B'Elanna," Chakotay said. He glanced back at Tuvok, "are the escape pods still here?" He nodded. "Chakotay to all hands, abandon ship. Repeat, abandon ship."

"Commander," Craig said from opps. "Somebody's restored life support to Deck Thirteen, a turbolift is on the move."

"Who is it?" Chakotay questioned.

Craig frowned at the station as he worked at it, "a Crewman Rex sir."

Chakotay groaned, "damn it Jessie..." He tapped his commbadge, "Security to Deck Thirteen."

"Captain Janeway is in another turbolift, heading there," Craig said.

**Meanwhile, Alternate Deck Thirteen:**

"Don't block it, we need you alive to close the rift. It doesn't matter if he's telling the truth or not, we're going to destroy it anyway," Rhyian stuttered.

Paryain laughed, "it's funny that you need to tell him that."

He moved the rifle to the side quickly and fired at the station. A shield blocked it. Paryain's face tightened as Rhyian smirked at him. James lunged forward to kick the rifle from his hands, the two then began exchanging and dodging blows.

The station beeped at Rhyian, "James!"

Paryain and James stopped just as the rift expanded, James had a hand around Paryain's neck, while he was just about to punch him. "You're not going to ruin this for us, not again!" he snarled. His punch continued, but James blocked it in time. Using all the strength he had he pushed Paryain away from him, and kicked him hard enough to make him stumble backward into the rift. He screamed as he was vaporised.

"Are you ready?" James asked as he walked back over to Rhyian.

"As I'll ever be," he replied.

"They know you've betrayed them, if they catch you...." James said.

Rhyian smiled, "they can't do anything to me. I'm the only smart one left, they need me."

"You helped me though, it doesn't feel right to just leave without..." James said.

"Yeah you're forgetting though that I was helping myself as well. Thanks for your concern but even if I was put to death, I'd be happy that it was something worthwhile," Rhyian said. "Now go, say hi to Jessie for me."

"Ok then, good luck," James sighed.

"You too," Rhyian said with a nod.

James turned back to face the rift, he walked towards it.

**A minute or so earlier:**

Kathryn stood in a turbolift that was on the move. It stopped, she stepped out of it. She saw the edges of the anomaly coming from the hole in the wall from the last time the anomaly forced its way through. "I'm here... what is it you want to show me?"

In the next room Jessie stood pretty close to the anomaly, staring at it with intent. It fluctuated slightly as she closed her eyes and walked slowly towards it.

Kathryn then walked through the doors, "no... Jessie!" The anomaly fluctuated again, a bright light engulfed the room. Kathryn covered her eyes, "oh god no, you didn't..." The light died down so she uncovered her eyes. The anomaly had disappeared, Jessie lay on the ground nearby where she stood before. Next to her lay somebody else.

Jessie groaned, opening her eyes. She looked straight at where the anomaly was, "oh no..."

She heard a groan come from beside her, her eyes widened in shock and partial disbelief. Kathryn had done the same thing, and rushed over to her. The body lying beside her lifted his head up, and looked around at his surroundings. "Jess," he managed to say.

Kathryn quickly helped Jessie to her feet, and pulled her away. She tried to get away from her, but couldn't. Kathryn now had a very angry look on her face. "You're doing this to her again? How could you lure a grieving girl to a dangerous anomaly, when I find out who and where you are I'm..."

James stumbled to his feet, looking more than just confused. "Ok... how much coffee did you drink today?"

"No don't do that... you're not him!" Kathryn snapped.

Jessie looked at her briefly then back at James, "why, what are you doing?"

"Don't listen to this ghost ok Jessie, it's already tried to kill you once," Kathryn grumbled.

James stared blankly at the pair, he stepped closer but that only made Kathryn go backwards. "Look I'm not a ghost, but I get why you think that. The rift was a passage way to ano..."

"What a nerve, come on," Kathryn muttered. She tried to pull Jessie out of the room, but this time she managed to get out of her grip. "Don't, you never know what'll happen."

Jessie ignored her and closed the gap between her and James. "Is it really you?"

"Yeah, what's left of me anyway," James replied. "What do you mean by try to kill you, who did?"

"You did, that's who," Kathryn said.

"No I tried to do the opposite," James muttered. Jessie reached out to touch his arm.

"He's corporal..." she muttered, looking back at Kathryn. "The one I saw before wasn't."

James looked confused again, "huh?" The next thing he knew both women were tightly hugging him. "Ok.... need, to breathe."

"I don't understand this," Kathryn said, she loosened her grip slightly so she could look at his face. "Oh who cares how and why, we're glad you're alive."

In: "Chakotay to Janeway. What happened?"

Kathryn moved away to tap her commbadge, "the anomaly was closed, I'll get the explanation later. Continue the hunt for those intruders of ours."

In: "All right. Just so you know, the warp core breach has been prevented in time."

"Good, let's get out of here," Kathryn said. She turned to leave but noticed the other two weren't following her. She turned around on her heel, "ahem!"

James looked at her, Jessie still was hugging him, totally oblivious to everything else. "Jess, at the very least can you walk backwards?"

Kathryn sighed, "never mind, in your own time." She walked out of the room.

"I don't understand, I thought the anomaly was lethal," Jessie mumbled.

"It is for everyone, but me. It's just me that can go through it," James said, looking uncomfortable. "What's going on here anyway?" He looked at her suspiciously, "no, what are you doing here?"

"I'm not sure," Jessie quietly replied. "You were here, before.... but then you weren't. You told me to come here, so here I am." She smiled for the first time in weeks, "and so are you."

"Here I am," James sighed. "What was Janeway talking about?"

"I don't know, I don't care either. All I do care about is that your plan worked," Jessie replied.

"I never told you to come here," James said.

Jessie pulled a confused face, "but you did. I saw you, you wanted me to go where you were, or something."

"You mean through the rift?" James questioned bewilderedly "I'd never tell you to do something like that."

"I know, the entire experience was a tad weird. I don't understand what's going on here," Jessie muttered.

#### **Meanwhile:**

"Do you think they're still here?" Tom questioned.

Harry glanced at him briefly as they walked down a corridor. "Maybe, they'll probably have less to do though."

Tom smiled a little, "I have an idea."

"Glad to hear it, I'll try anything at this point," Harry said.

#### **The Bridge:**

Kathryn stepped out of the turbolift, "report."

Chakotay turned around to look in her direction, "Tuvok placed a tractor beam on the alien ship, they're not going anywhere."

"Good, have we found our intruders yet?" Kathryn questioned.

"Not yet," Chakotay replied. "Deck Eight's been sealed off for now, only to non repair personnel."

"Captain. I've detected the energy readings on Decks Six and Seven, same sections," Tuvok said.

"Can you get a transporter lock on them yet?" Kathryn questioned.

"The transporters don't recognise the readings as an object that can be transported. I will continue to work on it," Tuvok responded.

Kathryn sighed as she walked closer to Chakotay. "You won't believe what just happened on Deck Thirteen."

"I really believe that," he said. "What happened?"

"He returned, at first I thought it was another trick but unlike the other ghosts he was corporal," Kathryn quietly replied.

"Who?" Chakotay whispered. Kathryn looked directly into his eyes with her eyebrows raised. "That's not possible."

"Don't you think I know that, but it happened," Kathryn said.

"So again he closed the rift, I can see this becoming quickly tedious," Chakotay muttered.

#### **Deck Seven:**

The turbolift doors opened, James and Jessie stepped through them. "This doesn't look like Deck Eight, were the turbolifts affected by the rift?"

"Yes, I don't know why," Jessie mumbled.

James groaned as he turned back to face the turbolift, he began to work on the panel beside it. "It took us to the nearest deck, it must be sealed off."

"There was a fire there, but the damage was already being repaired when I left," Jessie said. "One member of the Marquis ran into our quarters, escaping a Cardassian."

James glanced back briefly at her, "what, a Cardassian?"

"What? Oh sorry, I was just muttering to myself, a habit I can break now that you're back," Jessie replied.

"Hmm, Janeway and you hinted that I was here before, even though I wasn't... and a Cardassian," James muttered. "Something about tricking, luring."

Jessie shrugged her shoulders, "you know just as much as I do now. I've been in my, our room most of the two weeks so I don't know what's happening."

James turned away from the panel, "Deck Eight's sealed off. Sickbay could be a better place to go anyway." They both heard the turbolift moving away from the deck.

Jessie nodded her head, "yeah, I don't even know why we were heading to our quarters anyway. How many times were you punched, and by who?"

"I lost count, you're not supposed to count at all but..." James said.

Jessie failed to look amused, "Sickbay for you, Mister. Why do I get the feeling there's more wounds that are not on your face, and where did you get that coat?"

James looked down at himself, then back at her. "I found it on a dead demon."

"What?" Jessie muttered, raising an eyebrow.

"Just kidding," James smirked at her. Jessie groaned, shaking her head as she started to walk down the corridor. James shook his head like he didn't mean what he said, and followed her. "The other Voyager was kinda like an opposite one, instead of us there was demons living on it."

"So let me guess, you had to hide away for a while until you could get through the rift again. Of course the demons knew that, so a fight happened," Jessie said.

"More or less, there was a fight when I first got there," James replied. "They weren't happy that I closed their rift."

Jessie frowned, "why would demons want to destroy us that way? Surely there's easier ways."

"I'll explain later," James said.

They turned a corner, she almost walked into a middle aged male crewmember. "Excuse me," he said, eyeing Jessie. "Are you Jessica Rex?"

"Um yes I am, it's Jessie actually," Jessie replied in a suspicious worried tone of voice.

James caught up and stayed by her side, looking a bit suspicious himself.

"This may sound a bit farfetched to you but I must say it. I'm your father," the man said.

Jessie stared with wide eyes, "what?"

"I'm so glad I'm not on duty, I don't have to hold you back," James quietly said to her.

"How, what... why," Jessie muttered.

"I heard you were on the Maquis ship, so I requested to join Voyager," the man said. "Well here I am."

"If you are her dad, what took you so long to find her?" James asked.

The man looked at him with a raised eyebrow, "mind your own business."

"Um he has every right to be in my business," Jessie said. "Why the hell would you look for me if you abandoned me before I was born?"

"Abandoned you?" the man said. "I didn't even know you existed when your mother left me. She and I had just recently met on good terms since the split, and she told me. The rest is history."

"How can I believe you?" Jessie questioned.

The man smiled, "doesn't any of me seem familiar to you? If that's not enough, I'd be glad to do a DNA test. I'd love to know a few things about you first."

James half rolled his eyes, "why can't you wait until after the test?"

"Just who is this rude young man?" the man asked, getting a little annoyed.

"He's a... uh friend," Jessie replied awkwardly. "He asked a good question."

"Don't tell me you're seeing him," the man said, looking at James in distaste.

"You got the wrong idea," Jessie muttered.

The man moved his distasted look to her, "don't try to fool me. You look pregnant and there's an irritating man your age at your side, trying to protect you from me."

Jessie gasped and looked at James, "do I look fat, oh god..."

"No, no you don't. You're skinny and tiny remember," James muttered.

"I'm not tiny," Jessie pouted.

"In a good way," James quietly said to her.

The man scoffed, "maybe my expectations were too high, but... ugh god."

"What?" Jessie said.

"You're pregnant at twenty two, with a 'friend' in any case. You appear to be vain and whiny, and the 'friend' must have been somebody you discovered on the street back at Earth," the man said.

"I'm not whiny," Jessie mumbled.

James gently took a hold of her arm to lead her away, "we should leave him to it." She nodded in silent agreement, they backtracked to where they were earlier.

"I've never been more disappointed in my life. Even your mother wouldn't stoop so low," the man said, watching them walk away with interest.

James looked up, frowning slightly. "What the..." Jessie looked at him, trying her best not to look upset. "The lure."

"What?" she said.

He quickly pushed her forward as the ceiling started to collapse. A thin and long, sharp edged beam fell, plunging itself into his left arm. It went straight through, and hit the ground, pulling him to the ground too. Jessie quickly got her bearings back, and turned back to him.

"What the hell just happened?" she asked. Her eyes then focused on the man who claimed to be her father, he chuckled to himself.

"It never gets old," he said, fading out.

Jessie knelt down beside James, now looking very annoyed. "Oh my god, don't move... are you ok?"

"Yeah, I can barely feel the arm now so it doesn't hurt," James replied, still cringing slightly. He grabbed the beam with his right hand, Jessie quickly put one hand on it.

"Don't... if you pull that out you could bleed to death. You know we're both weak to too much blood," she said.

A few crewmembers turned the corner, one was Harry, they rushed over to them. "What the hell, James?" Harry stuttered.

"Yeah, he's back. Now can some of you block the bleeding when he pulls this thing out?" Jessie questioned.

"Uh... what if he's one of the ghosts?" Harry replied.

"He's not," Jessie said, she looked down at her hand that was on James' right hand.

"Oh... ok," Harry stuttered. He and another crewmember knelt down, with their hands awaiting for the wound to be exposed. James pulled the beam out of his arm, Harry and the unknown crewmember quickly used their hands to cover the wound. Jessie took off her jacket, she wrapped it around his arm tightly.

James stood up, the other three soon did the same. "How did you know?" Jessie asked. "And why didn't you get out the way too?"

"It was just a hunch, plus I heard something just above us," James replied. He looked up again where the ceiling had collapsed, "excuse me." He picked up the beam with his left hand, then jumped up to look up through the hole, holding on just with his right. Harry stood at Jessie's side.

"What's he doing?" he asked.

"I don't know," Jessie replied.

James dropped back down, everyone quickly backed away. The beam he was holding had a small, scrawny little demon through the end of it. It was still alive though, and kept trying to slash at anyone nearby.

"Oh... well that's one down," Harry muttered.

In: "Paris to Kim... ahem."

Harry nodded, "do you want to help with another one?" He headed down the corridor holding a tricorder in his hands.

James smiled as he watched the demon squirm, then looked at the other side of the beam. "Sure why not."



**Meanwhile:**

Tom stood around in a dead end, outside a door. Standing in front of him was Admiral Paris, obviously lecturing him.

"Uh huh... what would you want me to do instead?" Tom muttered. "You know I was thinking of becoming a ballet dancer."

"What? Why the hell would you demean yourself like that!" Paris snapped.

"Oh no, I was just kidding, if we were still in the Alpha Quadrant I would have joined the Romulans," Tom said.

Paris raised an eyebrow, "I see what you're doing here... You're trying to stall me."

"Stall you for what, dad?" Tom questioned nervously.

**Meanwhile again, inside a Jeffries tube:**

James and Harry sat just around a corner, James peeped his head around it. Not far away was another of the demons standing around, talking to itself.

"I find it hard to believe you wanted to be a ballet dancer, so you think I'd believe this Romulan crap," it said.

James turned to look at Harry with a raised eyebrow. Harry smirked at him, "I told Tom to keep it busy as long as possible, we have to move fast." He handed him a phaser.

"You're trying to trick me, it's not going to work," the demon hissed.

James aimed the phaser at it, it turned just in time to get hit by the beam. It disintegrated. "Oops, wrong setting."

Harry frowned, "uh, no it wasn't... damn that must have been one of the affected phasers."

"Who cares, it's a demon not an alien," James muttered. "Is there anymore?"

"We only thought there was two, I'm not sure," Harry replied.

"Wait, the rift is closed... what caused the ceiling to collapse? And what was Tom being lured to or distracted for?" James questioned.

Harry frowned, "that is strange, I'm not sure of that either."

**The Bridge:**

Kathryn paced back and forth, with her hands held behind her back. A figure started fading in, in front of the viewscreen.

"Captain," Chakotay said to get her attention.

Kathryn stopped to look, everyone else stopped what they were doing and watched as well. A man in his twenties appeared, Kathryn's face turned a little pale as a result.

"Justin?"

"Oh my god, where!?" an unknown crewmember panicked.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "Captain, we should still be careful despite the rift's closure."

Kathryn raised a hand in the air, she stepped closer to the man. "I know. Are you here as Justin or yourself?"

"Forgive me Kathryn, our normal look usually alarms. I appear like this so I do not do that," Justin replied.

"You're the one that lured me to Deck Thirteen as James, aren't you?" Kathryn questioned.

"What do you want?" Chakotay asked.

"What I want is no longer an issue. I am sorry for what my former colleagues were doing to you, if you release my ship from the tractor beam I will leave and never bother you again," Justin said.

"You can't be serious," Chakotay said.

"Release the tractor beam," Kathryn ordered.

Tuvok didn't do as she said right away, "Captain?"

"I believe him. You took me to Thirteen to inform me about him, didn't you?" Kathryn said.

Justin nodded, "I only wish I was able to police the two trouble makers better than I did."

"Well, where are they?" Chakotay asked.

"Dead... they were renegades, they believed demons were meant to kill mortals and that was all. It's not our kinds way," Justin replied. "Thank you for your crew's help."

"Your kind, you mean demons or your kind of demon?" Chakotay said.

"Tuvok, release the tractor," Kathryn said. "Though I do have one question myself. Why didn't you just give me the message, instead of luring me posing as someone else?"

"I couldn't risk the renegades overhearing, they didn't know I was here," Justin said.

Tuvok worked at his station, "tractor beam has been released Captain."

Justin bowed his head before fading away again.

Kathryn sighed, "I want a full damage and casualty report send to me in an hour." She headed into her Ready Room.

"Yes ma'am," Chakotay said.

### **Deck Eight:**

The door to James and Jessie's quarters opened, James walked through into the living room, then straight for the bedroom. He slowly and carefully pulled the jacket off of him, cringing everytime the material rubbed against the deep cuts, burns and of course the bandage that covered his earlier injury.

Not long later he emerged from the bedroom, then headed towards the bathroom holding clean clothes on his better arm. After placing them in the corner of the floor, he carefully lifted the top he had on upwards. There on his back, chest, stomach and neck were more cuts, bruises and a few phaser wounds. He tossed aside the piece of clothing, and looked down at himself then into the mirror. He could barely recognise himself with the swollen black eye, and bruises across his face.

"Computer," James said. The computer responded by beeping. "Never mind." He turned on the tap that was still attached to the shower system he made. Reluctantly he stepped into the shower area. The room was quickly steaming up from the heat of the water. James even more reluctantly moved into the water's path, cringing at the pain he had to endure throughout his whole body.

After just a minute of the hot shower, he couldn't take it anymore and yelled out while punching his right hand through the wall. He continued to punch it until he heard somebody's voice say something like, "what the hell was that noise?"

James sighed a little as his senses got used to the hot water, and the pain died down. He stepped out of the shower area, then turned to look towards the hole in the wall. His eyes quickly turned back to the mirror, he stared for minutes at the stranger looking back at him.

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