

B4FV Episode 3.18

End of the Day

Sickbay:

A few crewmembers sat on their own biobeds while the Doctor and Kes were busy treating their mild injuries. Tom strolled in looking a little pleased with himself. "Did anyone call for a miracle worker?"

Kes glanced upwards, looking slightly annoyed. "The gunmen I ordered should follow any minute now."

"Mr Paris, just help us treat any patients that come in," the Doctor sighed in annoyance.

"Aye aye Doc," Tom muttered, saluting the Doctor mockingly. The crewmember he walked over to glanced at him with worry.

"The Doctor sighed, "is what I heard true Mr Paris?"

"Depends, what is it?" Tom replied.

"About Taylor's return," the Doctor said.

The young helmsman's face lit up at the prospect of somebody wanting to hear rumours from him. "So I've heard but I say it's too weird to not be true, Voyager lives on weird. That's why we were saved, if it wasn't him what did it?"

Kes rolled her eyes, shaking her head. "It's true." The two men glanced toward her, anxiously waiting for her to go on. "He didn't die the first time, I don't know how that happened though."

"I see, whatever will be next?" the medical hologram sighed.

The Ready Room:

"It's unacceptable Chakotay," Kathryn grumbled with pouting lips, and blushing cheeks. "It's disgusting, it's inhumane."

Chakotay sighed, now fearing for his life. "It's also not top priority."

Kathryn exploded with rage, "not a priority! If this isn't, what the hell is!?"

Chakotay cowered, "um repairs to the bio neural gel packs, the hull, damaged Engineering systems, arrangements for dead crewmembers' memorial services which we delayed from the last time."

"How the hell can I do a stupid memorial service without coffee? Explain your way out of that one tattoo boy!" Kathryn snapped.

"Um I could do it instead," Chakotay mumbled.

"No, at the rate you're going you're going to be needing a memorial service as well," Kathryn said.

"Kathryn, the crew and ship are more important. I'm sorry but the replicators will have to wait," Chakotay said. He rushed out of the room leaving Kathryn to fume on her own.

She looked toward the replicator which appeared to have a bouquet of tropical flowers growing out of it. "I know that, my stress level needs lowering."

Meanwhile in James' Quarters:

The main door chimed to an empty living area. James stepped out of the bathroom, all of his injuries were still present but his clothes, skin and hair were clean. He answered the door to an unknown crewmember.

"Oh Steve, sorry about the wall."

The crewmember looked worried, "never mind sorry. What on earth happened?" His face quickly filled with fear instead, "wait, didn't you die?"

"It was an accident, I just..." James mumbled, trying to avoid the last question. "I'll get someone to fix it." One step backward allowed the door to close in the crewman's face.

James turned back to pick a jacket off the back of a chair. He carefully and slowly put it on, wincing as the sleeves rubbed across all the deep cuts and burns. Jessie walked through the doors just after he was finished.

"Are you feeling better?" she asked.

"Yep, I just need to get..." James replied, pointing briefly at his facial wounds. "These treated."

"That's a good idea. I'll come with you," Jessie said, about to take a hold of his arm. He moved away last minute without realising her movements.

In: "Janeway to Rex."

Jessie groaned before tapping her commbadge, "yeah?"

In: "Jessie I need to discuss your duty shifts. I assume you'll be going back to duty soon."

"Yeah I'll be right there," Jessie sighed, tapping her commbadge again. "So you will be definitely going to Sickbay?"

"Why wouldn't I go, don't worry about me," James said with a reassuring smile and nod.

Jessie moved to stand closely in front of him. "I can't help that, I don't know what happened in those two weeks. You just seem really sore and limpy."

"Jess really I'm better than fine. One brief Sickbay visit and all is good with me," James said. "I'm more worried about you. I hope you understand why I did it and..."

"I do, but it was..." Jessie uncomfortably said, raising her shoulders slightly. She took a hold of both of his hands, "I'm really glad you're alive, I'm ok now too." Her eyes narrowed, one eyebrow raised, "this way I can punish you for putting me through the worst two weeks of my life."

"Ok that's fair I guess. If there's anything I can do, just name it," James said, fearing the worst was going to happen.

"For now, just a kiss," Jessie smiled, lowering one of her shoulders and tilting her head toward the raised one.

"Right now? I'm not exactly a pretty picture, though that's never stopped us before," James mumbled.

"I don't care what you look like. I just got that, only you think you're not good looking," Jessie muttered. "I'd only not want you to if you had sore lips or something, then it would hurt." James lowered his head to give her a kiss on the lips. She smiled after it. "We'd better be going, I'll think of a punishment later." He kept a hold of one of her hands as they walked towards the door.

The Bridge:

Tom and Harry stepped out of the turbolifts half way through a conversation. They continued it as they made their way to Harry's station. Tom glanced toward his own where two repair personnel were working.

"You're kidding," he whispered before looking back at Harry. He replaced Craig when they reached opps, he didn't move away too far.

"What's going on?" Craig asked.

"Oh nothing, you don't know him," Harry replied.

Tom shook his head, clicking his tongue. "Harry Harry, that's just rude." He rested his folded arms on the station, turning his head to look at the young Lieutenant. "Some guy right jumped into the rift to close it the first time, but this time he came back through it to close it once again."

"Wouldn't that kill him the first time?" Craig questioned with a raised eyebrow, looking suspicious. "You really need to think of some realistic rumours."

"It's true," Harry whispered. "Everyone who knew him, heck even a lot who don't know that he did it. But I saw him, heck even touched him so he wasn't a trick."

"Touched him?" Craig smirked. "I didn't know you were..."

Tom interrupted him by laughing loudly. Harry tilted his head to the side, giving Tom and then Craig his 'I'm not amused look'. "He got injured ok, a few of us helped out."

"Ok ok. I did hear about somebody sacrificing himself, I wasn't sure it was true though," Craig said. "Who was it?"

"Now Craig, you know better than that," Tom scolded.

Craig pulled a face, "huh?"

Harry worked at his station as it began beeping at him. "Captain, we're receiving a distress call."

"That's funny. I thought that because no-one responded to ours that there was no other ships around," Kathryn muttered in a huffy tone.

Chakotay glanced over at her from his chair, "Captain we tried, the outward communications were being scrambled."

"Fine, open a channel," Kathryn ordered.

The viewscreen activated, however it was very distorted. Everyone could only see an imprint of somebody. He began to speak, but that was distorted as well.

"I am Jash Fahel of the Finians. We request some assistance."

Kathryn climbed to her feet to address the man on the screen. "Captain Janeway, Starship Voyager. I think the distress call was pretty clear about what you want."

"I apologise for that Captain. We do not like to ask for favours from other people. We are on a journey to peace negotiations with our homeworld neighbours, the Sykians. However we were attacked, our engines are going to take too long to be repaired, I'm afraid we won't make it to our negotiations on time," Jash said.

Kathryn glanced back at Harry. "Their ship's hull is too unstable, our faulty tractor beam will only cause more problems."

"Faulty tractor beam, why wasn't I informed of that?" Kathryn hissed at Chakotay.

He stared bewilderedly at her, "I tried but all you cared about was the broken replicator."

"Mr Fahel, may I ask for the co-ordinates for your peace conference?" Kathryn said. "Maybe we can get you there on time."

Chakotay frowned, "uh, what?"

"That's an intriguing offer Captain, we only expected a hand with the repairs at the most," Jash said, his voice filled with surprise.

"I'm afraid our own Engineers and repair personnel are busy with repairs of our own," Kathryn said.

"I'll transmit the co-ordinates to you. It may be too out of your way I'm afraid, but we appreciate the offer," Jash said.

Harry looked up from his station, "it's on the way Captain, we should be there in forty six hours if we go at minimal warp."

"Minimal?" Kathryn questioned.

Chakotay groaned, "again, you ignored me, broken replicator."

Kathryn shook her head while making a mental note to give her first officer a punch in the cheek. "Does that work for you, Mr Fahel?"

"That is excellent Captain, thank you," Jash replied. "I'd only need three to be transported, is that acceptable?"

"Yes of course, Tuvok meet our guests in the transporter room," Kathryn commanded.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow like he disapproved, "aye Captain." He left Claire to man his station on her own and stepped into the turbolift.

"What? This isn't in your face interference, what's everyone's problem?" Kathryn asked when the viewscreen went off.

"We're taking these people to their conference," Chakotay muttered. "We don't know that for sure."

"True, but it's better than helping them repair their ship. Like you said they could have been heading to their next target, but with just the three of them on our ship. No harm, no foul," Kathryn said. "If they were lying no doubt they would have insisted on us helping their ship."

"Hmm, if you say so," Chakotay sighed.

The Transporter Room:

Tuvok stood in front of the transport station, he hadn't noticed that Damien was manning it with an annoyed scowl on his face.

"I said energise," Tuvok ordered.

"Not until somebody requests a transfer for me," Damien grumbled.

Tuvok raised an eyebrow as he turned to the side. "Are you supposed to be working here?"

"Hell no, this job is just too demeaning for a great man like me," Damien huffed.

"If you insist. Energise," Tuvok repeated himself.

"You're on my list too, Toothprick," Damien grumbled. He keyed in the commands without even looking, rolling his eyes.

Three figures dematerialised on the pad, the two men were grey skinned while the woman was a very light blue. All three were dressed formally with hoods over their heads, the leader lowered his. "I am Jash Fahel. These are my ambassadors Halei and Yal Sutcha."

"Lieutenant Commander Tuvok," Tuvok nodded his head.

"Oh god, it's the Finians," Damien groaned. Tuvok turned to look at him with disapproval, then looked back at the guests. They stared at Damien with alarm.

"Why is Damien on your ship?" Jash asked.

"He is a human like most of the crew, and we have limited prisoner resources," Tuvok replied.

"So you say, this is more like a prison," Damien muttered.

"I request that this abomination be at least two decks away from us at all times," Jash said.

The woman spoke up, "he has insulted our people on many occasions, and tried to sell us these viruses that he posed as music files."

Damien sniggered, "they weren't viruses, the people singing were though."

"You are dismissed, if you break their request you will be back in the brig," Tuvok ordered. Damien pulled a face as he left.

"Commander, the Sykians will also be on course. They're at risk of attack as well, we believe the people who did it are our other neighbours. They'll try anything to stop the negotiations," Jash said.

"I'll inform the Captain," Tuvok said. He gestured his arm toward the door, "please, I'll escort you to quarters."

Deck Five:

James headed toward the doors to Sickbay, he stepped in but stayed at the doorway. There were more crewmembers inside than earlier, before anyone noticed him he picked up a regenerator from the medical tray and turned to leave. The Doctor noticed him just before he left.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn carried a tray holding several pieces of her broken cups to the coffee table. Jessie sat in the chair opposite her desk, resting her arm on her stomach.

"I hope you're ready to return tomorrow," Kathryn said while heading back to her desk.

Jessie crinkled her nose and smiled awkwardly, "kind of."

"Kind of?" Kathryn repeated as she sat down.

"I was hoping to find a job somewhere else. You know one that I'm actually good at," Jessie said. "I hate the job I have."

"It's not that simple," Kathryn sighed.

"I know that. I'm not saying I am too good for the job and deserve better, I just think there's a job more suited for me," Jessie said.

Kathryn sat back in her chair, cradling a new cup of coffee in her hands. "For example?"

"Um, I was hoping you'd have some suggestions," Jessie smiled nervously.

"We have a problem then," Kathryn sighed. "If you don't know what your own talents are, how should I know?"

"It's hard to figure out which ones would apply to Voyager when I've been stuck at that station the whole time," Jessie responded.

"There's only one way to find out. Work trials," Kathryn smiled.

Later that night

The Mess Hall:

A small party was in full swing. Like you'd expect a couple of people were drunk or trying to be. There was a snack table that everyone was avoiding. Neelix kept walking around with trays to offer his concoctions to.

Kathryn stormed in with her hands on her hips already in place. Everyone froze on the spot. "What is going on?"

"Uh," a nervous crewmember said. She pointed at a banner above the window saying 'we survived yet again'.

"Oh did I miss the 'someone sneezed party'?" Kathryn mockingly asked. She sniffed the air, "coffee. There's coffee at a party I wasn't invited to! Someone's getting demoted for this."

The poor nervous ensign backed away slightly. Kathryn marched toward another girl holding a coffee nearby, snatched it out of her hands and ran out of the other door. The girl looked around with a confused look on her face, it all had happened so fast to her.

Kathryn waited at the turbolift door happily sipping on her coffee. The door opened for James and Jessie, they hesitated before stepping out to join Kathryn.

"Do you have any idea why I'm the only one who wasn't told about that damn party?" Kathryn demanded.

James and Jessie looked at each other briefly. "What party?" Jessie replied.

"Oh some 'we are alive' party, well at least I'm not the only one," Kathryn said.

"The party probably started with two hyper crewmembers with a drink or two. Most parties here are just made up on the spot," James said.

"I dunno, they bothered to make a banner for this one," Kathryn sighed.

"A banner? How lame," Jessie commented.

"Excuse me," Kathryn mumbled, sipping at her coffee again. She walked around them and stepped into the turbolift.

"Wanna go?" Jessie asked.

"Yeah sure, I could do with some free food," James replied. They continued onward down the corridor.

"I take it you didn't get paid for the two weeks," Jessie said.

"Well they thought I was dead, come to think of it I should ask about that as I wasn't," James said. Jessie shook her head.

Meanwhile at the party, Neelix was attempting to pass around a tray of sausage rolls. One group thought they looked safe, so they tried one. All of them cringed when they put it in their mouths. Neelix beamed at them, totally oblivious to their expressions.

"Well, what do you think of my leola root flavoured quorn rolls?" he asked. The group answered by quickly vacating the room, with hands across their mouths.

James and Jessie walked in, a few people froze as they spotted them. Everyone else turned to look at what they were looking at, they did the same.

"Oh god," Jessie muttered, quickly looking down at herself and checking her hair. "Is there something on me?"

"I'm guessing it's not you," James said.

"Thank god," Jessie sighed. Then she pulled a face and looked at him, "I didn't mean..."

"What do we do, run or stay?" one crewmember asked her friend. He shook his head, shaking a little.

"You know what, I'll just go," James uncomfortably muttered.

"Yeah you do that ghosty," another crewmember said. The rest of his group pulled a face at him.

James turned away and quickly left. The entire room seemed to calm down, all except Jessie of course.

"You do realise that Neelix made the drinks," she said before storming back out.

Everyone froze on the spot again, staring blankly at their drinks. Neelix looked confused.

"How did she know that?" he stuttered. Everyone quickly put their drinks down.

The following day:

Danny stood in a doorway, resting her back on the frame. "Come on, why won't you tell me?"

Jessie walked up to her looking a bit rushed off her feet, and casually dressed. "Cos there's nothing to tell."

"Where's James?" Danny asked, standing on her tip toes to look over Jessie's head.

"He's already gone. He had to go and prepare for a meeting with Janeway. He's probably in his office right now trying to think of a way to make the report longer than a few sentences," Jessie replied. She then left the room, Danny followed her toward the turbolift.

"Um Jess, aren't you forgetting something?" she asked, eyeing her up and down.

"No, I dunno, am I?" Jessie replied.

"You're technically going to numerous job interviews and you're dressed like you're having a night in reading," Danny smirked.

"No I'm not," Jessie muttered.

"Explain the baggy-ish pants, snug top and long cardy then," Danny said.

"Pants always seem baggy on me, what are you talking about?" Jessie muttered. "I still look better than most schmucks around here. Anyway what's wrong with the cardy, James got me it?"

"Well I was hoping you'd be shocked that I dissed it, throw it away and when your back's turned, I steal it," Danny said.

"Ugh typical," Jessie grunted. The pair stepped into the turbolift.

"Ok so what jobs are you trying?" Danny asked.

"Probably everything, anything. Today I've just got one, tomorrow it's er, something else, two things depending on one of them. I still have to turn up for normal work though," Jessie replied. "Deck Six."

"Deck One," Danny ordered.

"I'm not looking forward to the morgue tomorrow, after orientation I'm off elsewhere unless someone else drops dead," Jessie muttered.

"Why's that, they should have two bodies already?" Danny questioned, smirking slightly. "I don't see you lasting five seconds in the morgue though, one small bit of blood and you're down."

"I know but these work trials include everything, except what I'm doing now," Jessie replied.

The doors opened on Deck Seven, another crewmember stepped in. "Deck Three."

"Why do you even need a new job?" Danny asked.

"Why do you need to alternate yours to helm and other little jobs? Those stations drive you crazy," Jessie sighed in response. "I feel pretty damn useless there, I want to do something I'm good at for once. Too bad I don't know what that is." The door opened again.

"Too bad we don't need a fashion consultant," Danny laughed. "Good luck in the morgue Jess."

"You know that's not my first stop," Jessie said as she stepped out of the lift, then began walking down the corridor.

"What is it?" Danny yelled after her. Jessie waved her right hand before turned the corner. The door closed. "Damn."

Jessie looked at her watch and picked up speed while scanning each door she passed. "Crap, late late. Where is it?" She stopped in the middle of the corridor. "Computer where is the new psychiatry training office, thingy?"

"Please re-specify," the computer responded.

Jessie groaned, she walked to a wall panel and messed around with it. "Of course, near Sickbay. Now..."

Two women passed by her and walked into the nearby turbolift. Jessie quickly jogged toward it. "Hang on, hold the door!" One of the girls shrugged, the other one laughed as the door closed just before Jessie got there.

"Ugh fine. I didn't want to choke on the tacky perfume stink anyway!" she snapped at the door. "God I hope those bitches heard that," she huffed, turning on her heel and made her way back the way she came. The nearby Jeffries tube caught her eye, "meh it's just one deck."

The Bridge:

"Commander, we're receiving another distress call," Harry said. "An adrift ship about fifty minutes away, just a little bit out of the way of our current course."

"Why doesn't anybody ever respond to ours?" Danny muttered from the helm.

Chakotay sighed, "on screen." The screen changed to show a rough looking light blue skinned male alien, with the usual mayhem going on behind him. "I'm Commander Chakotay of the Starship Voyager."

"Shal Malek of the Sykians," the man muttered. "Pardon our call for help Commander, we don't usually do this unless it's absolutely necessary."

"That's interesting, we were on our way to your peace conference. The Finians' were attacked, we had to bring them aboard to get to negotiations on time," Chakotay said.

The man hesitated slightly, "under the circumstances we'll have to adapt. Our engines are badly damaged, it'll take too long for my crew to fix them and we have a deadline to keep. Of course the Finians' will have told you the same thing."

"Prepare to transport everyone you need to go to the negotiations, it'll take us less than an hour to reach you," Chakotay said.

"Thank you Commander. We are in your debt," Malek bowed his head. The screen switched off.

"Danny, adjust course to rendezvous with them," Chakotay commanded.

"Aye sir," Danny said.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn stood at the replicator while James was kneeling down by the desk. He straightened up holding broken pieces of a cup in his hands. Kathryn walked over to her desk with a full coffee cup in her hands.

"Don't worry this is just a check in appointment, you know like you returned from an away mission," Kathryn said while sitting down.

"Mmm hmm," James mumbled, attempting to put the two pieces together.

"I've scanned your report, it's very interesting," Kathryn said. "I have some questions though, one is what are you doing?"

"Care for a..." James read from one of the pieces. "Hands off bitch. Nice." He finally looked up at her, "what?"

Kathryn smiled, she walked over to stand in front of him holding out her hand. "I can't believe I missed some pieces."

"The message doesn't make sense, and they don't fit together," James said, handing the two pieces to her.

"I'm afraid I broke more than one. The first one was 'care for a punch, no, then get lost'," Kathryn said.

"Huh, is that one in the replicator?" James questioned.

Kathryn smile grew a little wider as she moved back to her desk, she leaned against it. "Now can I ask a few questions about your report?"

"I guess so," James replied.

"You were there for the same amount of time you were gone here, obviously that Voyager shares the same time frame as us," Kathryn said. "Your report though only mentions what happened during the rift, can you tell me what happened before then?"

James glanced away uncomfortably. "It's not important."

"I think it is," Kathryn said.

"Nothing did. I only heard about the anomaly when it was created. After that you know the rest," James said.

"Fair enough," Kathryn sighed. "A few crewmembers told me that you had a few injuries visible, but the Doctor or Kes didn't treat you. The Doctor saw you leave but that's it, some injuries were facial but they're gone now."

"It was busy, I wasn't hurt that badly. I treated the worst of it," James mumbled. "The regenerator ran out of power," he said quietly.

"What was the last part?" Kathryn asked. He didn't answer. "James the injuries, how did you get them?"

"It's in the report. I had two fights, you can barely call the first one that though," James muttered.

"All right then. Are you fit to return to duty?" Kathryn asked.

"Isn't that a question for the Doc?" James replied.

"I meant in a mental capacity," Kathryn said.

"I'd rather get back to what this ship calls normality, so yeah," James replied.

"Great just in time. We're about to rendezvous with another ship on their way to a peace conference. Both sides transport ships were damaged so we're giving them a lift, but we need to keep them separated," Kathryn said.

"That's going to be an interesting peace conference," James commented.

"Yeah that's none of our business though," Kathryn said. "Supposedly one of their aggressive neighbours attacked them both to prevent the talks. We've already picked up the first guests, Tuvok is watching them."

"You want me to keep an eye on the other guys?" James questioned. "What are they like? Aggressive, annoying?"

"They're distant cousins of the Finians so I'd imagine they'd be just as proud yet peaceful as them," Kathryn replied. "Or they could be the 'evil twin' of the two races, either way I'd avoid..."

"What, being myself?" James said.

Kathryn smirked at him, "I have faith in you, I'm sure you can handle it."

James looked at her suspiciously, "how much coffee have you had?"

"I've done this to give you a different kind of challenge, you can back down at any time," Kathryn replied. "If that is all, dismissed."

"Um when will these guys be coming?" James asked.

"We can discuss this at the meeting. Relax, you've got time to get back into the routine," Kathryn replied.

"Ok fine," James mumbled. He turned to leave. Kathryn kept her smile on her face until he left, then she turned it upside down.

Meanwhile:

Jessie climbed up to the next deck via the ladder, then spent a minute trying to figure out which door to go through. "Damn why didn't I take note of the door I came through to begin with." Her face frowned as the sound of a baby crying echoed down the tubes.

She opened the door on her right, and crawled into it. Halfway down it Jessie stopped, cringing in pain as she placed a hand on her pregnancy bump. She kept her hand there as she continued down the tube.

The end door refused to open for her. After some fiddling it opened. Not far from her sat a young girl cradling a baby wrapped in a jacket. Next to her were a few rations, a sleeping bag, and a second baby lying in a blanket on top of the sleeping bag.

"Um, hi," Jessie nervously said. The girl stared at her looking just as nervous. "It's ok, um what are you doing here?"

The girl shuddered slightly, "please, please don't tell anyone I'm here."

Jessie moved to sit down opposite her. "What are you hiding from?"

"I don't, you wouldn't understand," the girl mumbled. She eyed the hand Jessie still had across her belly.

"Do you want me to leave you alone or..." she asked.

"No, it would be nice to talk to another mother," the girl replied.

Jessie widened her eyes, "mother, I'm not, no I'm not."

"Ok so you do understand," the girl softly said. "I'd recognise that denial anywhere."

"Uh, looks like we're both keeping secrets," Jessie muttered.

"Please stay," the girl said. "I'm Chrissy."

"Jessie. I'm late for something but I can reschedule," Jessie said. She tapped her commbadge. "Rex to Reynolds. I'm sorry but I'm going to be a little later than I thought."

In: "Is there a problem?"

"Uh, I'll explain later, it's related I promise," Jessie replied.

In: "Very well, just stop by when you're finished."

The Conference Room:

B'Elanna and Harry stood by the wall panel giving everyone present a report. Most of the senior staff occupied the table, facing them.

"Repairs will take a while ma'am, I estimate two days," Harry said.

B'Elanna nodded her head, "the damage remaining are non essential systems, with the exception of the warp core. It's still useable but I'd avoid it until repairs are complete unless it is necessary."

"Good. Casualty report," Kathryn sighed, folding her arms on the table.

"Two dead, twelve injured," Tuvok responded.

Chakotay covered his face with one hand, "James we need to know, will this happen again or will your trips be a regular thing?" He moved his hand away when he didn't get a response, everyone looked toward James who appeared to be in a daze. "James!" Chakotay snapped to get his attention.

"What?" was his only response.

"Will this happen again?" Chakotay impatiently repeated himself.

To a few people's surprise James didn't look annoyed at his impatience, "the machine that created them was destroyed, the creator was killed during the fight."

"What about your demon friends. Do you think they're a threat still?" Chakotay asked.

James glanced at Kathryn briefly. "They want to be in our reality, and they're willing to kill us to do that. They're crippled though, their leader's dead, as are a lot of their best guys. Plus their only brains remaining is the one who helped me, he fears that if they succeed his usefulness will come to an end and he'll be killed."

Chakotay raised an eyebrow, "am I not allowed to ask you questions?"

"It's not that," James said with a blank stare. "I've already told her this stuff at our meeting."

"It's the Starfleet way to repeat yourself unfortunately. Your two week vacation may of helped you forget that," Chakotay sighed.

"Hmm yeah, vacation," James muttered. "Lots of demons, Voyager on a really bad day, and the only one activity to pass the time; wondering when the demons will discover you."

"Sounds like paradise for you," Tom commented with a smirk.

James moved his blank stare toward him, "sorry I didn't get any pictures, the demons kept stealing my camera."

"It was just a joke," Tom shook his head. "Lighten up."

"Maybe you should if you took what I said seriously," James said, rolling his eyes.

"I'm just saying that you must have had a blast fighting with them all the time, or whenever you wanted. You couldn't have been doing it for two weeks constantly, so it must have been like..." Tom said. He cleared his throat and tried badly to copy James' accent and even his voice, "oh it's Tuesday morning, time for the morning jog and a punch there, a kick there. Then back to my hiding place for a game of cards."

B'Elanna looked at him in disgust. "I don't know which I'm more annoyed by, that phony voice and accent or the whole routine you made up."

"Well he must have done something like that," Tom said.

"That's not the point of the meeting, is it?" Chakotay groaned.

"Is there ever a point?" Kes sighed.

"Well it was about the rift and the damage it's done, possible reoccurrences." B'Elanna said. "We still don't know enough about it to..."

Harry's face lit up. "From what I heard from James' report and what we found out, I came up with this." He keyed in commands on the panel. A picture of Voyager appeared on the screen, constantly rotating from above view to port view. One more command changed it to port view. The ship split into two for a second, then merged back into one. "Look familiar?"

Chakotay frowned while resting his chin on his left fist. "Deadlock. Two Voyagers operating in the same place, more or less, with only the antimatter unduplicated."

"I'm thinking that when this happened, a third less prominent Voyager appeared without its crew and lured the demons to it. This one probably got infected by the proton bursts as well, but with only the demons aboard they probably didn't even care enough to do much about it," Harry said.

"It wasn't at the same time as that. It happened before, there's interference on their Deck Thirteen and that's where they insisted on making the rift each time," James said.

"So you're suggesting that this phasing is what's made Deck Thirteen so mysterious?" Kathryn questioned.

"Nice choice of words," Tom commented.

"No I'm not, it could be yeah but the point is something else phased us at an earlier time," James replied.

Chakotay frowned, "the Deck Thirteen issue could have been duplicated on their ship for all we know. This isn't proof that their ship appeared before the other Voyager, it only would be if that was the reason why we had the issue."

James rested his right elbow on the desk, and his chin into that hand. "I suppose so." Kathryn looked at him briefly with concern.

"If they ever figure out how to merge this ship we'll have an army of demons on our hands," Ian said looking nervous.

"Just under three hundred," James quietly added on.

"Can they do it though?" Kathryn asked him.

He looked at her and shook his head lightly. "They won't, it'll kill them. That's why they tried to kill us. They can't affect us in other ways either, temporal problems like those loops."

"What about the ones that paid you and the Captain a visit?" Harry asked.

James uncomfortably looked around the table as everyone had their eyes fixed on him. "I don't know, they were visible that time. Maybe."

"There probably was a temporal problem that we weren't aware of when they visited. With all the chaos going on at the time, we can't be sure," Chakotay said.

"Perhaps we could merge both ships into one again. If doing so will destroy them," Tuvok said.

"I don't think so. Unlike the other Voyager, we can't detect this one. We'd have to know where exactly they are before doing so," Harry butted in.

Kathryn sighed, "all we can do is keep an eye on our neighbours for now. We have another matter to discuss."

"Captain if I may?" Tuvok said. "I suggest increasing Security members on duty. I do believe they will attempt another attack."

"It could be anytime though, we don't have enough Security crewmembers to do double shifts or something like this constantly," James said. "Most of what we have wouldn't be able to handle a demon, even with a phaser."

"Wow, somebody's giving himself an ego boost while putting us mere mortals down," Tom said, raising both eyebrows.

For the first time in the meeting James managed to look a little annoyed. "For your information I had trouble with these guys, why do you think I avoided fighting them until I had to at the end?"

Kathryn groaned in annoyance, "Tuvok that's a good idea, do it. We haven't got much of a choice if they do make it aboard. Now we should move on to the other matter."

"As some of you know we made contact with two different alien ships, both of which are on their way to peace negotiations. They were both attacked by their neighbours, and were left with damaged engines," Chakotay said.

"We are transporting a group from each ship to the neutral planet they've chosen," Kathryn sighed.

B'Elanna pouted her lips, "Captain, I said the warp engines should only be used for..."

"I know, but if we stay at low warp we'll still get there on time. These two races have been blood enemies for centuries, they're distant cousins so to speak. Anyway they've finally decided to stop the fighting and negotiate. It's a worthy cause," Kathryn said.

"It's not going to be easy, the Finians and Sykians don't like to be in the same room as each other. We need to keep them apart until they're at the negotiation tables," Chakotay said.

"Won't they have to be in the same room together eventually?" Tom muttered.

"I spoke to Malek about it, he says it's the custom of the Finians," Chakotay replied. "They'll consider it an insult if a Sykian goes near them before then."

"Now I'd rather not share what's recently happened aboard ship with either species. Both are very proud, and the slightest thing could insult, annoy or if we're lucky appease them. I don't think a few collapsed ceilings, demon ghosts and mysterious rifts will appease them," Kathryn said. "Am I understood?" Almost everybody nodded at her.

"So in other words they're the Delta Quadrant version of Klingons, Bajorans or Romulans?" Tom commented, smirking to himself. No-one laughed with him as nobody got that his comment was said like a joke.

Kathryn groaned, "dismissed."

The Transporter Room:

Kathryn and James walked through the door and stood in front of the station.

"Energise," Kathryn ordered.

A group of five dematerialised on the pad.

"Captain Janeway of the Starship Voyager," Kathryn said.

"I am Ambassador Shal Malek, these are a few of my senior officers," Malek said.

Kathryn glanced at James, gesturing her hand toward him. "This is Ensign Taylor, he will look after you during the duration of your stay."

One of the aliens scowled, "him?" Malek laughed slightly. "A child? Captain you insult us."

James narrowed his eyes while Kathryn looked at him with a look telling him to keep his cool. "I assure you, he's not a child. He's perfectly capable."

"Ensign is a child rank," the alien muttered. The others laughed with him.

"There's a good reason for it," Kathryn said. "Now if you'll excuse me." She turned to leave, James put an arm out to stop her. "It's ok, you'll be able to handle them."

"There's no way I can hold back with these guys," James muttered. "They're acting like Klingons do around me."

"If that's the case just be yourself," Kathryn smiled.

"What, that's the last thing we should do," James said.

"Captain Janeway, we demand a stronger escort," another alien said. "It's a bit insulting that you think that this boy's enough to watch five of us."

"Hmm I think you're right, if they are like Klingons they'd appreciate your rough side," Kathryn whispered. She turned to the aliens. "You will not get a stronger escort, you have him already. Trust me you won't be disappointed." She stepped out.

"If you're quite finished insulting me, I'll show you to the quarters you all have to share," James muttered.

The aliens stepped down from the pad. Three of them gathered around him. "Your species must be weak if you are the strongest candidate."

Malek raised his hand, "enough. We should be taken to our quarters before it's his supper time."

"If you insist on continuing with this bull I'll take you to the airlock instead of quarters," James grumbled.

Malek belly laughed, "he's quirky, I'll give the boy that. Tell me, what is that good reason for you being an ensign?"

"You usually have to do as your told and stuff to get promoted, or wait until the Captain's had enough coffee," James replied. "Don't call me boy anymore, I really hate that."

"Then what can I call you? Young man, guy, child, ensign?" Malek questioned.

James shook his head while rolling his eyes, "this way, now." He stepped out. The aliens followed.

"You didn't answer my question," Malek said.

"Either Taylor, James or ensign," James muttered.

"I'm not familiar with the second one," another alien said.

"That's cos it's my first name, jeez," James groaned.

"I hope you have the heart of strength to back up your words, and earned the name you use," the first alien who spoke said.

James glanced at him in confusion as he walked by his side, "humans don't earn their names."

"Do you mock us?" the alien snarled.

"No but I notice that you're allowed to insult me, and I get accused of it like I'm not allowed to. It doesn't seem very honourable to me," James said.

Malek laughed again, he walked along his other side patting him on the shoulder. "I'm beginning to like you boy, excuse me, James Taylor. Which name do humans use between honourable men, first or last?"

"If you mean so called 'tough guys', then second," James replied.

The first unnamed alien scoffed, charging forward to stand in front of him. "He is not an honourable man, yet he questions mine."

Tuvok stepped out of the turbolift nearby. "Is there a problem Ensign?" He nodded at the aliens, he and James stood further away so they couldn't hear them.

"Just a few. The Captain must have been on something when she decided to assign me to these people," James replied.

"Yes I was the one who suggested you. They believe in honour and appreciate honesty, they're also an aggressive race," Tuvok said.

"Just like the Klingons then," James muttered. "You do realise they're all going to be in Sickbay if they don't stop annoying me."

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "from what I heard from the Finians, they'd respect you for it. I don't suggest starting a fight with them, but as you're the human representative I believe that your usual behaviour will appease them, and earn the respect for the crew." He continued down the corridor.

James sighed as he returned to the aliens. "Did you need some help from a superior, boy?" the mouthy first nameless alien sneered.

"Shanak. What have I told you about other races, you have to respect their ways too," Malek said in a warning tone.

"I do, I just think it's an insult to be given this puny child as an escort and guard," the alien muttered.

"Will you shut up before I lose my temper completely, you don't want that to happen," James muttered.

Shanak stepped closer, growling like an animal. "You're telling me to shut up, how dare you insult me."

"This should be interesting," Malek laughed.

"You continuously insult me for no good reason other than to impress the uh..." James said, glancing at the other aliens. "The men it appears. I think I have a right to defend myself a little."

Another alien smirked at Shanak, "I didn't know you felt that way about us."

Shanak growled, "I know what you're doing. You can't get in our favour by emulating me."

James rolled his eyes and groaned. He then pushed Shanak into the wall. He literally went through it, leaving a gaping hole. "Is he always such an ass or was that just for me?"

Malek laughed with the rest of the aliens. "I like you. Boys, get Shanak and follow." He and James continued down the corridor, while the rest attempted to pull Shanak through the wall. "He's always like that yes. Now here's my own question. Do all humans possess great strength, because that was impressive."

"No, I'm different," James replied.

The aliens stood a dazed Shanak up, and guided him down the corridor.

"So Taylor, you're here to look after us, does that mean stop us from getting into trouble?" Malek asked.

"It's procedure on Voyager," James said. They all stopped as they reached the turbolift. "Deck Four."

"So, have the Finians complained about our presence here or do they not know yet?" Malek questioned.

"Supposedly they've been told, no problems so far," James replied.

Meanwhile:

Damien stood just around a corner, his eyes shifting around like he suspected the walls or the door nearby were against him. Suddenly the old man, Tim appeared behind him.

"You know we used to call that shuckling in my day," he droned on.

Damien violently shuddered. "Are those anti wrinkle creams and tablets getting to your head?"

"Oh I stopped taking those," Tim replied. "It's best to let nature take it's course, like the good old days. There's too many medical..."

Damien tried to ignore his lecture, but all that did was make another screw in his head fall out of place. Eventually he turned around, his face red with rage. "Shut the hell up, no I'd rather you dropped dead and never came back! Don't you know who I am, I'm Damien!"

The female Finian turned the corner and stood behind him. She stared looking amused. "Yes we all know that."

Damien jumped out of his skin and turned to face her. "Don't do... oh it's you. Why did you want to meet with me? I already have an annoying stalker."

"Who were you yelling at?" Halei asked.

"Who do you think?" Damien groaned, gesturing his hand behind him. Little did he know that Tim had disappeared again.

Halei moved to the side a little to look over his shoulder. "Oh, I didn't notice little Jhian, don't know how you can though."

"What?" Damien pulled a disgusted face, he looked behind him. "Why does that b***ard keep disappearing, he makes me look crazy!"

"You don't need a hand there," Halei said.

Damien swung back around to stare angrily at her. "Hey, you're just as crazy with your little Jhian. Now what the hell did you call me here for? I really doubt you want more mp3s."

Halei smiled deviously as she eyed him up and down. "You could be useful. We'll spare you if you do as we say."

"Ah you Finians aren't as goody two shoes as I thought, nice trick you're playing," Damien smiled just as deviously. However it didn't last long, "but I don't do what anyone says."

"What about a Commander Tuvok? You did as he said," Halei said.

"I'm only doing this until I get away from this dump. Do you really think I'd go on their side, these people have been a thorn in my head for years," Damien said.

"What did they do to you?" Halei smiled.

"Look just take my advice. You can't be a villain around here, you just lose all the time. It's like we're in a TV show or something," Damien said. He then pulled a face, "oh wait." He grinned menacingly, "hmm maybe I can change that, or something."

Halei pulled a confused face, "how exactly?"

"Never you mind. This is how it's going to work. I won't tell the crew what you've been saying, and you do as I say," Damien sneered, folding his arms.

"Why would they believe you?" Halei asked, imitating him by folding her arms the same way.

Damien just stared, still sneering at her but obviously trying to think of a response. Halei just laughed at him.

"No wonder you lose, you're just a wannabe. You have no idea what it's like to be really evil."

Damien narrowed his eyes, "oh yeah? If you're evil then you'll know what my plan is now."

"Uh, stop Voyager being apart of a show?" Halei muttered.

Damien again just stared in the same way as he did before, then he snapped and stamped his foot on the ground. "God damn it woman. I mean uh, it's much more complicated than that. You'll never understand."

"You don't know how to do that. Trust me, you won't need to after tomorrow afternoon," Halei said. "Without your co-operation, you will fall like them." She turned to walk away.

"If I'm so un-evil, why do you even want to reason with me?" Damien smugly asked.

"We don't want to reason with you," Halei laughed, she turned back around. "We want to enslave you."

"Sorry, I don't work for anyone but for myself. For I am Damien, I am better than humans, I am what they can only hope to become. I am the ultimate Pok..." Damien rambled on in a fake dramatic tone of voice.

"What the hell are you talking about? Were you going to say Pokémon?" Halei muttered, interrupting him.

Damien groaned, "you didn't let me finish, I spent ages on that speech. It's something I'm trying, but I still don't know what to replace Pokémon with. Maybe I should think of an alias name, then I can use it."

Halei rolled her eyes, "all right you totally lost it. All right Pikachu, it's up to you. You'll either die a quick death, die a slow one, or live to do whatever you please. There's more to this universe than just, well this universe."

"Pikachu's not ultimate, it's just drugged up," Damien muttered. "You think I'm the crazy one, there's only one universe."

"You know better than that, why do you think we chose you. You've come from other universes. It's time to stop playing around like a complete dork with your insane celebrities, and really dumb speeches. We can help you be a legend, do you really want to turn that down just for a matter of badly placed pride?" Halei said.

Damien responded with another devious smile, "all right. Tell me what you want, and I'll think about it."

The Security Office:

"I already have teams two and four on rotating shifts for the Finians. I recommend five and three for the Sykians," Tuvok said.

"They've already been assigned," James said. He put his feet up on the desk, holding a padd in his hand.

"I was informed that you pushed one of the Sykian officers through a wall," Tuvok said.

"Yeah that was fun," James smiled.

"Indeed," Tuvok said.

"This seems like a waste of time to me. These aliens don't seem like the type to get along with anyone," James muttered, while placing the computer on his lap. "Surely we should be more worried about demon attacks, and repairs."

"Ensign I've already discussed this with the Captain," Tuvok said.

"Fine, I was just saying," James groaned, rolling his eyes.

Jessie appeared at the doorway looking a little anxious. Tuvok looked at her briefly. "We will reach the planet in less than two days. Keep me informed of anything." He passed Jessie on the way out. "Crewman," nodding at her.

Once he left James climbed out of the chair and headed over to Jessie. She smiled, closing the gap between them. James wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer to him. He gave her a kiss on her forehead.

"I missed you."

"Bad day?" she questioned, stroking his left arm.

He tried not to cringe as her fingers went across a deep cut. "Just a tad."

"Tell me about it," Jessie sighed.

"Never mind me, how did your interview go?" James questioned. They separated slightly as they made their way over to sit on the sofa.

"I missed it, that's why I'm here," Jessie replied.

"Please tell me you're checking out Security and would like office work," James smiled.

Jessie smiled back, and snuggled into his shoulder. "I'm interested but I doubt Janeway would let me."

"Are you still going to try for the counselling trial?" James questioned.

"Yeah, I'll go after this," Jessie replied. "There's something I need to talk to you about."

"I'm listening," James said.

"I hope you don't mind, it's a Security matter," Jessie said. James shook his head. "I found one of your missing people."

"Really? Wow, you may as well have my job then," James said with a smirk. "Who?"

"Christine Rannak," Jessie replied. "She's uh, a victim of an abusive boyfriend. She's lived in the Jeffries tube for months now, hiding from him. She's usually changing where, but now she's stuck in one place."

James frowned, he placed one arm around her shoulders. "Abusive boyfriend, who?"

"She never said," Jessie replied. She laughed slightly, "she still loves the guy."

"That's usually the case," James said. "But I don't understand why she's stuck. Ran out of hiding places?"

Jessie sighed, resting her hand across her belly. "She was pregnant."

"Huh really," James muttered. "Was? In a good or bad way?"

"Good, it's twins actually," Jessie said. "Boy and a girl."

"Well if we can find the creep and sort this out, then our child will have some other children to play with besides Naomi and possible Janeway's kid," James said.

Jessie smirked at him, "ours can play with hers if he/she doesn't inherit coffee obsession."

"Ok, so what else can you tell me?" James asked.

"She's on Deck Five, I can show you. I must warn you though, she's like I was around guys. She really doesn't trust them," Jessie replied.

James pulled a face, fidgeting slightly. "That's going to be a problem if you're going to show me to her."

"I don't trust anyone else with her," Jessie said.

"So how do you plan on convincing her to come with me?" James questioned.

"I'll be there too, she already knows you're coming," Jessie replied.

James moved his arm and stood up. He stopped at the desk, then worked at the computer. "First we should see if there's any quarters that can be hers, ones that can be sealed off. I'll assign female only teams to guard around the clock."

Jessie also stood up, with a smile on her face. "I knew I could count on you."

"Jess that's the easy part," James said. "We need to get her out of there, then we need to either convince her to tell us who this guy is or find him from what we have."

"James, I didn't just choose you cos of, you know, us. I also knew you'd be able to do this," Jessie said.

"Thanks for the confidence, but that means I can't let you down," James mumbled. "There's quarters on Deck Eight, so let's go get your new friend."

Jessie nodded, "ok give me a sec." James walked back over to her, he held out his hand. "I'm ok, really." She sighed and took a hold of his hand, he stepped closer to lift her to her feet. "Another four months to go my ass, as soon as it's safe for him he's out."

James raised an eyebrow, "him? You found out when I was away?"

"No," Jessie replied, pouting her bottom lip. "I just have a feeling, mummy knows best."

"All right, mummy's wrong, I say it's a girl," James said. He headed out, Jessie followed pretending to scowl at him.

"No you want it to be, I feel that it's a boy, so there," she muttered.

The couple walked toward the nearest turbolift. "I don't know how," James sighed.

"I told you, it's a feeling," Jessie smiled sweetly. Once in the turbolift she said, "Deck Five. I've had the baby inside me for five months, you would have a feeling too."

"Yeah just a feeling," James mumbled, pouting his own lips.

"Aaaw don't worry. If our first isn't a girl, then give me a year or so and we can try for a daughter," Jessie cheekily said, winking at him. "We can keep trying until we get a girl."

"Yeah, I bet after four, five boys you'll be taking that back," James said. The doors opened, they stepped back out. He tapped his commbadge, "Taylor to Chaster."

In: "Yes?"

"I need you and your team to meet me on Deck Five," James said.

In: "Fine. Where do you want Leva and I to meet you?"

James glanced at Jessie. "It was near Sickbay."

"Meet us just outside there," James said.

In: "Right, Chaster out."

"She sounds nice," Jessie muttered. "How come I haven't freaked you out yet?"

"Because you haven't done anything to freak me out," James replied.

"What about the suggestion I made about us keep making babies until we get a girl?" Jessie said.

"I'm not freaking cos I have a feeling you won't need to do what you said," James said, smirking to himself. He went ahead by a metre. Jessie fake scowled again.

"No you just want it."

"Hey I can say the same thing," James said.

"All right. In four months I'll be able to say 'ha ha ha'," Jessie said. "After 'ow, oh god, ow' and 'stop looking there you perv'."

James smirked as he stopped to allow her to catch up, then placed an arm around her. "I hope our baby has your sense of humour."

"You think I'm joking?" Jessie questioned, smirking too.

They rendezvoused with two female Security crewmembers. "Ok Jess, lead the way."

Jessie walked up to a Jeffries tube hatch, then looked at James expectantly. He turned to the other women. "Stay here, we'll bring her to you." They nodded.

James opened the hatch, Jessie climbed inside first then he followed her.

They didn't have to crawl far to reach Chrissy. Her face turned pale and tightened as she laid eyes on James.

"It's ok, this is the man I told you about," Jessie said, moving over to sit near her. James stayed in the tube itself. "We have safe quarters you can stay in until we can figure this out." She looked back at James.

"I'm sorry but to keep you safe I need to know who this guy is," he said.

Chrissy shuddered while looking toward Jessie.

"That's ok, I have asked a couple of female crewmembers to keep watch of the quarters. The area around it should be clear of other people. I can call Kes if you want your babies' health checked."

"I don't understand why I have to move at all," Chrissy quietly said.

"Chrissy, it's going to be easier to take care of your children in quarters. You can't stay in here if he's looking for you. Security can protect you easier in quarters," Jessie said.

"Nobody else knows about this, you should be safe," James added on.

"He won't expect you to be hiding in quarters after all this time," Jessie said with a reassuring smile.

Chrissy closed her eyes for a moment, then looked back at Jessie. "All right."

"We'll use the Jeffries tubes to get as close as possible to where we're going, but it'll take longer. There's some repairs being done on Deck Seven, we have to avoid them," James said, tapping a commbadge. "Taylor to Chaster, meet us at the meeting place, be discreet, someone could easily follow."

In: "Aye sir."

"I don't know if I can, with my children," Chrissy said.

"Can't we transport her? She can't crawl around with at least one newborn baby in her arms, she only had them a day or so ago," Jessie mumbled.

"I don't want to risk any trace of our relocation, Jess," James sighed. He tapped his commbadge, "Taylor to Chaster. Can you send one member of your team into the tube, we need some help."

In: "Very well, standby."

"She can help Chrissy down to Deck Eight. I doubt she'd let me go near her," James quietly said.

"Who's going to carry the babies?" Jessie asked, glancing at Chrissy. "James'll have to help you down Deck Eight or carry one of your children."

Chrissy looked uncomfortable to say the least, she looked down at the tiny baby girl in her arms. "He's not touching my daughter, but I don't want him to influence my son."

Jessie tried not to look annoyed as James looked a little offended. "He wouldn't, he couldn't. The boy is only a day old, he wouldn't notice if he did."

"It's all right Jess," he said.

Jessie sighed to calm herself down. "James will have to help you down then. Who do you want me to carry?"

One of the Security members crawled toward them. Her face lit up as she saw Chrissy, hers did the same. "Chris, what are you doing here?"

"Leva, long story," she replied, glancing at Jessie. "Can you take my son?"

"Sure no problem," Jessie replied.

Leva looked around, not believing her own eyes. "When did, both of these babies are yours?"

"Leva sorry but we should be going, you go first. We need to bypass Deck Seven's repairs, so don't continue down the ladders when we get to Deck Six," James said. He moved away so Leva could get through to Chrissy, she handed the baby in her arms to her friend. Then Leva headed down the ladder, holding on with only one arm.

James went over to Chrissy as Jessie picked up the baby boy. Reacting on instinct Chrissy backed away a little as James approached her, he stopped briefly, raising his hands. She reluctantly moved closer to put an arm around him, he helped her to her feet.

"It's ok. Keep a tight hold, just in case." With one arm around her, he climbed down the ladder with her. Jessie soon followed them.

Deck Eight:

Leva looked cautiously around the corner, Chaster stood waiting nearby. "It's clear." James, Jessie and Chrissy turned the corner. Chrissy and Leva walked side by side, Chaster stayed ahead of them while keeping a look out. Jessie and James walked beside each other behind them all.

Jessie still had the boy in her arms. With her finger she tickled his cheek, he kept trying to grab it with his tiny hand. James kept glancing at them with a small smirk on his face.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd think he was your son not hers."

Jessie looked at him with a bemused expression. "I'm just practising ok."

"Uh huh, I've heard that one before," James said.

"He's cute ok, I can't help it. It's probably the pregnancy hormones," Jessie mumbled.

"Maybe, but you do look more like a mum doing that," James said. "I think it's a good look for you."

Jessie grinned at him briefly, "really? That's a relief."

The group stopped outside some quarters. "Chaster, Leva. Please stay outside," James ordered. The two Security girls nodded. "Is the other team in position nearby?"

"Two members are on guard around the corner," Chaster replied.

"Ok you'll be relieved at a later time by the girls from team seven and three," James said.

"Right, are we on the look out for anyone in particular?" Chaster questioned.

"We don't have any names yet, so no. If any guys try to get in other than me and Tuvok then you can do anything to stop them," James replied. He stepped inside the quarters first, Chrissy took her baby off Leva before following with Jessie.

"The Security teams outside your quarters will look after you. Don't worry, you shouldn't have to see me again."

"I need a place for the babies," Chrissy said.

"I'll handle that," James said, heading to the wall panel next to the replicator.

"I don't think that's big enough to replicate a cot," Jessie commented.

"Don't be so sure about that," James muttered.

Chrissy sat down on the sofa cuddling her baby girl while he worked on the panel. A large crib rematerialised nearby him.

"There, all you have to do is tap into the Cargo Bay replicator and transport to here," James said. Jessie smiled down at the little boy in her arms. She rocked him, tickling his stomach which made him smile. James moved over to her. "Hmm, should I be worried?"

"Yes actually. It's like she doesn't really care about this little guy," Jessie quietly replied, gesturing her head to Chrissy. She still had her full attention focused on her daughter. "I'm worried about him."

"I doubt she'd let us adopt him," James whispered.

"It's a shame, he's a cutie," Jessie cooed over the tiny baby.

"Uh huh, looks like I have competition," James smirked. He placed his hand near the baby, he reached out to tightly grab his thumb. James moved his hand gently so it was like they were shaking hand and thumb. "Ok mister, enough friendliness. I challenge you."

"Now James, you don't stand a chance you know," Jessie said with a giggle.

"We'll see," James said. He raised one of his fingers to wave near the boy's face, he instead tried and succeeded to grab that finger. "Damn you, you win that round but you're not getting her."

Jessie laughed, glancing at James then the baby. "What am I going to do with you two boys?" she smiled, gazing directly into James' eyes. After a few seconds she shook her head to snap out of it. "Chrissy, um where should I put your cute little son?"

"Anywhere, he'll be fine," Chrissy replied without even looking up.

Jessie's smile soon disappeared, she looked at James who looked a bit worried. "I see what you mean," he mumbled.

Jessie walked forward to carefully place the baby in the new crib, then placed her hands against both of his cheeks. "See you later handsome." She soon attached herself to James' arm. "Call me if you

want some company." She glanced up at him while leading him toward the door, "let's go just as handsome."

He responded by pulling a face, "I thought the hormones were directed toward the kid, not me."

"Well you haven't had any today," she smiled.

Meanwhile:

For once the Mess Hall was pretty quiet, only Neelix, Kes and an unnamed crewmember occupied it. Neelix was as usual trying to impress Kes or at least get her attention, she looked totally uninterested.

"I just feel like nothing changed when those demons died and the rift closed," Kes was saying with her back to the kitchen, and Neelix. He coughed to get her to notice him, he wobbled slightly like he was standing on one foot. The kitchen did block most of the view of him. "I think we're still in trouble. We shouldn't have invited those aliens aboard, they were better off being late for their conference."

"Sweeting, I understand really," Neelix wobbled. "But can you just look at me for a second?"

Kes pulled a face, "you never listened to me when I had these feelings. I'll look if you listen."

Neelix's face seemed a little pained, "um, I don't know how long I can hold it for sweeting. You have a feeling that we're still in danger, I get it."

"I don't know exactly what it is, I just know it's not over," Kes mumbled. She jumped as she heard pans and other kitchen stuff crash to the ground, and a loud thud. "What the?" mumbling to herself she turned around toward the kitchen, no sign of Neelix. Instead she peeped her head over the divider. "Oh Neelix, what were you doing?"

Neelix, who was buried in a lot of pans, looked at her innocently, she giggled at him. "I was uh, balancing a pile of pans on my head."

"Why, oh I hope they weren't hot and had stuff in them," Kes questioned, looking around for spilt food. "If they did, I'm impressed they haven't spilled."

"I dunno," Neelix shrugged. "I just wanted to make you laugh, you have been a little anxious all day."

Kes smiled as she walked around to kneel beside him. "That's so sweet Neelix, but you didn't have to go to extremes."

"It worked didn't it?" Neelix smiled.

The unnamed crewmember leaned on the divider to see what happened. "What happened here?"

"Oh nothing, don't worry about it Simpson," Neelix replied, blushing madly. Kes helped him get the pans off him so he could stand up.

The crewman grinned, shaking his head, "I told you, you can call me Jack. Do you need a hand?"

"No that's alright Jack," Neelix replied.

Kes' face turned pale as her whole body shuddered, goosebumps appeared on her arms. "Something." She turned to look at the Jack Simpson. His lighthearted grin had disappeared, and had been replaced with a cold, blank stare.

"Oh well, I'll see you later," he said. He turned to leave.

"What's the matter sweeting?" Neelix asked, placing a hand on her shoulder.

"I don't know," Kes stuttered.

A short while later:

Jessie stood around waiting in a small office. A human woman in her mid thirties sat at her desk reading a padd. "You have no qualifications that are related, or many at all for that matter," she sighed, looking up at her. "I know you're just here for the trials but this job would need something. I only got offered this because I took a year of Psychology, I didn't stick around long enough to pass it. Maybe you have something similar?"

"Well uh," Jessie muttered as she sat down. "I may only be twenty two but a lot has happened to me, so I probably would be able to help with a lot of people's problems."

"I see, well I'm interested to see how you do," Reynolds said. "This job is too high pressured for my previous volunteers, not many can handle it."

"There's no harm in trying," Jessie said with a shrug.

Reynolds smiled, "well you're temporarily hired. Your office is not far behind me."

Jessie grinned like she couldn't believe what she just heard. "Office? Are you kidding?"

"Nope," Reynolds turned her chair around eighty degrees, gesturing her head to the door in front of her. "It's small mind you."

"I wouldn't care if it only had room for a chair, I've never had an office before," Jessie said, sounding a little giddy. She climbed to her feet. "Is there something else I should know before checking it out?"

"Only advice. It's best to get them to talk as much as possible, it's best to listen not discuss too much. Also if someone gets a little violent, contact me and Security discreetly by pressing the panel on your side of the desk," Reynolds replied.

"No problem," Jessie said. She didn't waste anymore time in rushing to the door. Her office was only two metres by one and a half metre wide. The office itself was barren with only a desk and two chairs as decoration. She tapped her commbadge, "Rex to Taylor. Can you spare a few minutes?"

In: "Not for another half hour, is something wrong?"

Jessie grinned as she lowered herself into the chair behind the desk. "No, quite the opposite. Half an hour's good, it'll give me time to decorate." She swiveled the chair around a little, then decided to look through the drawers on the desk.

In: "Decorate? Why don't I like the sound of that?"

Jessie pouted her lips, she turned the computer on the desk on and fiddled with it for a few seconds. Another office appeared on the screen, all she could see though was an empty chair and a wall, then a shadow getting bigger. James appeared in view, and sat down in the chair. "I have an office too you know. Do you want me to book an appointment for you, half an hour?"

James smiled and shook his head, "as long as I don't have to hear 'how does that make you feel' then yeah. So how long do you have in the trial?"

"I don't know yet, I'll probably get one person to talk to and then I'll have to go to my next trial," Jessie replied. "I bet none of the others has an office though."

"You might not like the job though," James said.

"Yeah I know, but I like the idea of being nine months pregnant and hiding myself behind the desk the whole day," Jessie said with a shrug. "I think I may like the job, it's just a matter of me being good at it."

"Jess you've had to deal with my issues your whole life, you'll be more than great at this," James said.

Jessie folded her arms on the desk, rested her chin on the middle of them. "Uh huh, you do realise that when you compliment me like that I never know if you actually mean it, or not."

The door chimed just as James pulled a confused face on the screen. "I always mean it, what are you talking about? Some boyfriends might have to lie sometimes, but I don't."

Jessie grinned at him as she straightened back up, "for your sake that better be true. Now I have to go, someone's at the door." She looked toward the door after turning the computer back off, "come in."

Reynolds walked into the office, "how is it?"

"Let's just say I hope I'm good at this job," Jessie replied.

"I've got somebody for you, he was going to be mine but otherwise you would have been waiting until much later for someone to talk to," Reynolds said. "If you need any help just call me."

"Thanks," Jessie nodded her head.

Reynolds stepped back out, moments later Jack uneasily walked in. "Hi, uh I'm Crewman Simpson."

"Hey, I'm Jessie. It's ok you can sit down," Jessie said sounding a little nervous. "Ok now what's on your mind?"

Sickbay:

The Doctor hummed to himself while he worked on the hyposprays on the medical tray. The doors opened, Kes walked through them still looking a bit uneasy.

"Ah Kes, how are our youngest crewmembers?" he asked.

"They're in perfect health," she replied.

The Doctor turned to look at her with concern planted on his face. She stood by his side to place the tricorder she had down on the nearby station. "What's wrong?"

"I've been getting the strangest feeling all day," Kes replied. "You know like something's going to happen, I just dismissed it as nerves like everyone else. A few people are worried like me, so..."

"But it's more than that, isn't it?" the Doctor questioned.

Kes nodded her head, "yes. I was in the Mess Hall earlier, and Neelix was talking with a crewman Simpson."

"Ah yes, he's always with a smile on his face. He's always a delightful patient, we usually discuss music when he's here," the Doctor smiled.

"That's the thing. One second he was happy, amused. The next I felt like something, I can't describe it. It was like something cold replaced him," Kes said. "I looked at him, and it was like he was a different person."

"You don't think he's possessed, do you?" the Doctor asked.

"No I don't. If he was, I'd feel a presence in him other than his own. All I felt was him faintly, and nothing, just cold, no blackness," Kes stuttered. "I'm sorry, I don't know how to put it to words."

"Maybe we should ask him to come to Sickbay," the Doctor said.

"I don't think it's something you'll be able to detect with a tricorder Doctor," Kes said with a sigh. "I don't think any of this can be."

Later in the Ready Room:

"Good work with it James, how's the investigation going?" Kathryn questioned.

"Not good so far. Christine's friend in that team didn't even know she had a boyfriend. No-one's seen her with anyone either. Usually if there's a couple aboard the crew tend to spread rumours about them," James replied.

"Hmm tell me about it. You do have to remember though that crewmembers love to gossip about senior staff members. We have more chance of being gossiped about," Kathryn said.

"You'll have to remind me sometime why I'm a senior staff member," James commented. "Anyway Kes is going to examine her and the babies, we should find out then."

"Good, this sounds like a simple case after all," Kathryn frowned. "How unusual."

"Don't celebrate and say things like that until the guy's arrested," James said.

"I don't believe in jinxing. I believe in complicated mysteries, if it starts out simple it's going to be the biggest headache later," Kathryn sighed.

"That's why we should all be happy if they appear difficult and unusual at first glance," James muttered. "Oh, I've already edited transporter protocols. Until I've overwritten it, no one without a command clearance can transport randomly around the ship. The guy would be forced to get passed Security."

Kathryn groaned into her hand. "James you can't just do that, what about medical emergencies?"

"They can override those with the doc, Kes or your permission. Hopefully it won't be long anyway. I'm sorry but I figured that I was supposed to do anything to protect anyone under Security care," James said.

"It's against procedure, but it's a good idea," Kathryn smiled. "Contact me when you learn more."

"I think this should be done for any other incidents like this. I am..." James said, but the comm rudely interrupted him.

In: "Chaster to Taylor."

James tapped his commbadge, "yeah?"

In: "There's a problem. You should get here."

"On my way," James said, glancing toward Kathryn. "Here comes the complication."

"Keep me informed," she sighed.

"Let's hope it's not as bad as I think," James muttered as he left.

Deck Eight:

Two Security crewmembers stood outside Chrissy's quarters as James arrived on the scene. "Report."

"Chaster's inside, we're not sure what this about. We were just told to watch as she and Samson investigated inside," one replied.

James sighed, "all right, stay there then." He walked through the doors to find Leva with her back to him. "What's the problem?"

She turned around with her face wet with tears. "I'm sorry, I'll stop... I..."

"I'm not Tuvok or an uptight Starfleet guy, don't worry about it. Where's Chaster?" James uncomfortably asked. Leva beckoned her head towards the bathroom. "If you want you can swap places with one of the current guards."

"Thank you," Leva mumbled, she headed out. Moments later another girl walked into replace her.

"What's happening?" she asked.

"Let's find out," James replied. He walked into the bathroom. His face filled with horror at the sight before him.

Chaster and the morgue attendant, Matthews were lifting Chrissy's lifeless body out of a bathtub full of water.

"What, how did this happen?" James asked, trying to keep his voice from breaking.

The body was placed gently into the body bag lying on the ground. Matthews scanned her while Chaster stepped closer to James. "I don't know."

"That's not good enough damn it!" James snapped. He placed a hand across his face, "there's no way anyone could have gotten in here. Did you leave your post?"

"Absolutely not," Chaster muttered, looking very offended.

"Then how did you know anything happened at all?" James questioned.

"We got suspicious. There hadn't been any crying from the babies for a while," Chaster replied.

"Why would the babies not cry for a while?" James asked her like he didn't really want to know.

"I'm sorry," Chaster mumbled. "I found them lying..." She looked down toward the ground, James followed her glance. Lying next to Chrissy's body lay two small lumps under a blanket.

James shook his head, backing away slowly. "No no, this can't be happening."

Matthews sighed as he lifted the blanket a little. Underneath it lay the two babies, both were now lifeless. "I'm afraid so. They drowned."

Chaster glanced toward James who looked whiter than all the dead people in the room. "Are you all right?"

"No," he stuttered, backing completely out of the bathroom. Chaster walked after him, she looked around the main living area but couldn't see him anywhere.

"He just went out," the other Security girl said.

Chaster continued her walk to the main door. Leva stood against the wall, trying her best not to cry while the other Security girl tried to comfort her. James knelt nearby facing the wall. His head hung, one hand rested on the ground, the other across his face.

"Taylor?" Chaster said to get his attention.

He slowly stood back up with his left hand still covering his face. "Once the uh, bodies are taken out, you can resume normal duty."

"Who'll continue the investigation then?" Chaster asked.

James lowered his hand so he could stare blankly at her. "Continue? You've got nothing, don't you mean start it?"

"We didn't do anything wrong, there's no need for the attitude," Chaster muttered.

"I know that," James muttered. "I'll continue it, has Kes done her scans yet?"

"Yes she's in Sickbay," Chaster replied.

"Fine, catch the son of a bitch," James muttered to himself.

Matthews uneasily stepped out, "I've beamed them to the morgue."

"Good, I want to know what happened. Keep me informed if you find anything," James said. Matthews nodded his head uneasily and walked away. "What are you still doing here?" Chaster stared coldly at him as she began to walk away as well, the other girls soon followed.

The Security Office:

Kes uneasily and slowly walked through the doors, holding a padd in her hands. "I have the DNA results."

"Good," James muttered, holding his hand out.

"I want to know what you're going to do to him first," Kes said.

"I haven't decided yet," James replied.

Kes sighed, "I'll tell you who the father is if you promise to hear his side of the story, and not lose your temper with him."

"His side of the story? What good can come from his mouth?" James grumbled in disgust. "He's the main suspect for the death of his girlfriend and two babies. I can't promise not to lose my temper."

"Then I'll give the results to Tuvok," Kes said.

"Why didn't you go to him in the first place then if you didn't trust me," James muttered.

"Because I was hoping you'd have an open mind as you usually do," Kes replied. "Sorry." She stepped back out. James quickly got onto his feet.

"You can't be serious!" he snapped.

The Conference Room:

Kes and Tuvok were talking when James burst in, they looked toward him. "Kes, I didn't think you were serious about keeping the results from me."

"Why would I joke about it?" Kes asked, shrugging her shoulders.

"Ensign, you are not Chief of Security. This is a serious matter," Tuvok casually said.

"No but this is my case," James said, almost like a moan.

"I'm sorry James, but I think there's more to the case than everyone thinks. I wanted the guy to get his say without a beating or threats," Kes said.

"What do you mean by more to the case?" James frowned.

"It's a feeling, something more is going on. There's something else, if I said it you'd know who to look for," Kes mumbled.

"This sounds like a typical wife beater case, all you have is a feeling," Tuvok said.

"Kes is usually right with her feelings," James said. "I'll try to keep my cool, I promise you that." Kes sighed, unsure whether to believe him or not.

"If you wish to continue this case, Ensign, you can come with me to talk to the suspect," Tuvok said. He headed toward him so he could leave.

"Kes?" James said, looking at Kes with the harmless look he successfully uses on Jessie.

Kes nodded her head, "thanks for understanding, but don't make me regret it. I understand why you want to take this case, so you can go. It's ok." He turned to follow Tuvok out of the room, leaving Kes looking uneasy.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn stood by the window, watching the stars go by, holding a cup of coffee in her left hand. The door chimed. "Come in."

Chakotay stepped inside, he held his hands behind his back. "Captain, I have some bad news."

"As long as the next sentences you say don't have the words anomaly or rift in them, then go ahead," Kathryn said.

"Christine Rannak was found," Chakotay said.

Kathryn interrupted him, "I know, James informed me. How is this bad news?"

"It appears she's been murdered, as well as her two newborn babies," Chakotay muttered.

Kathryn swung around to stare directly at him, her cheeks flushing red. "What!?"

"All three were drowned in the bath in their quarters," Chakotay responded. "Chaster reported the whole thing to Tuvok, and he told me. Supposedly James was working secretly to protect the girl. Obviously you know that, but I don't understand why Tuvok and I won't told."

"The less males involved, the better," Kathryn said, finishing off her coffee. "She was being abused by her boyfriend and hid in the Jeffries Tube. We don't know who he is."

"No offense but you knew it couldn't have been me and Tuvok," Chakotay said, raising an eyebrow.

"You really don't understand, we were trying to protect this woman. The more people who knew, the more likely he would find out," Kathryn muttered. "How did he get passed Security?"

"We don't know yet. The guards never left their positions, nobody could have beamed in. The transporters aren't working as they should," Chakotay replied.

"I know, James did something," Kathryn said.

Chakotay groaned, rolling his eyes. "I'd wager in ten days that boy will be using command codes, and pretending he's in charge of everything. We already have him thinking he's the Chief of Security."

"I admit that's a problem," Kathryn said. "Tuvok's given him quite a bit of power, but no real boundaries, he doesn't know what he's not supposed to do."

"You'd think that reporting an incident like this to the Chief would be something he knew that he had to do," Chakotay said.

Kathryn shook her head, "what does it matter now? How the hell did this happen?"

"There's no sign that anybody got in those quarters. No surprise here but James has taken it upon himself to solve this," Chakotay replied.

"So, that is part of his job," Kathryn muttered.

"Maybe so but I can't be the only one who's noticed his behaviour since he returned," Chakotay said.

"You're not. I believe there's something he's not telling me about his trip to the other Voyager. He's distracted, avoidy and well, either trying too hard to be non irritable or he doesn't care enough to get irritated like he usually does," Kathryn said. "I think the last one seems like a blessing in disguise, but we can't ignore it."

"If we let him stay with this investigation he's just going to keep avoiding whatever happened. This must be an excellent distraction for him, but we all know that's not a good cure," Chakotay said.

Kathryn sighed, glancing down at her empty cup. "Make sure that Tuvok takes full control of the investigation. The Sykians might keep him occupied a little, but not too much. Otherwise there's nothing but his usual tasks to do."

Chakotay nodded in agreement, "I'll talk to them both."

"Also tell Tuvok I want to be notified the second he's solved the case," Kathryn ordered.

"Yes ma'am," Chakotay said, turning to leave.

Kathryn looked down at her cup again, she made her way over to the replicator and placed the empty cup in it. "Coffee, black." The metallic cup disappeared for a second, then reappeared with steaming hot black coffee in. She picked it back up, inhaling the smell she loved so much but it didn't ease her like it usually does.

The computer on her desk beeped at her, so she headed over to the desk. The text, "twenty four hours, till the end," scrolled across the screen.

"What the? Computer locate source of this message."

"Unable to comply, there is no message to locate," the computer responded.

Kathryn frowned, "the one on the screen, verify source."

"Please re-specify."

"God," Kathryn groaned in annoyance. "The message that was just sent to my computer, who is it by?"

"There has been no messages in the current inbox."

"What? It's right here," Kathryn said, rubbing her throbbing forehead. "Never mind, I'll do it myself."

Engineering:

Most of the staff were busy rushing around repairing the warp core and several stations. James and Tuvok came through the already open main doors, B'Elanna rushed to walk in front of them.

"Commander, after we drop off our guests we'll need to shut down the warp core. The damaged systems will need repairing, they'll last the trip but not any longer than that."

"I will inform the Captain," Tuvok said. "Where is Ensign Simpson?"

"He's on the upper level," B'Elanna replied. "Why?"

"It's a Security matter," Tuvok replied.

"Really? Was he a witness to something?" B'Elanna questioned, walking away from them.

"Interesting," Tuvok commented. He and James went to the lift.

On the upper level Jack was working on his own at the station opposite the core. He looked up as Tuvok and James headed over to him. Tuvok placed an arm out in front of James just in case, even though he knew that wouldn't stop him, only caution him.

"Commander Tuvok, what can I do for you?" Jack questioned, seeming like he was back to normal again.

"We're investigating. Do you know a crewmember called Christine Rannak?" Tuvok questioned.

"Yes, yes I do. She's a friend of mine since school actually," Jack replied. His face lit up more than usual, "have you found her?"

"Yes she was found, however..." Tuvok replied.

Jack quickly butted in, sounding ecstatic. "Oh thank god, it's been months and I was expecting the worse." He sighed in relief, but his relief didn't last long as he noticed the look that could kill on James' face. "What?"

"Did you ever hurt her?" he asked. Tuvok raised an eyebrow.

Jack stared at him with a shocked expression on his face. "What? I'd never hurt her. Has something happened?"

"Oh so that's how it's going to work is it?" James muttered. "Did you have a relationship with her?"

"Um, that's kind of personal," Jack replied, now worried that he wasn't going to be leaving the room in one piece.

"Did you know she was pregnant?" James asked.

Jack's eyes widened. Tuvok almost groaned, "Ensign, maybe you should leave the questioning to me."

"Pregnant?" Jack stuttered.

"Yes," Tuvok replied. "When was the last time you saw her?"

"Oh, I'm sorry sir, I'm not sure. You lose track of time when someone you care about is missing," Jack replied. He looked toward James, "pregnant? How is she, is she ok?"

"What happened the last time you saw her?" Tuvok questioned.

"Um, she and I had an argument. I remember thinking for about two days or so that she just left me, then I found out no one else had seen her since," Jack replied.

"Did you ever harm her?" Tuvok asked.

Jack looked at the two men in front of him looking horrified. "I can't believe this, ask anyone. I'm not a violent person, not even a little bit. What happened to her?"

James glanced toward Tuvok, "one of us should ask 'anyone'."

"I already thought of that. I'll do it, however you should remain calm until I return," Tuvok said, he headed back to the lift.

"I'm not usually an aggressive person but I demand to know what's going on," Jack grumbled.

"She was hiding away from you. Why would she if you weren't an aggressive person?" James questioned while folding his arms.

"I don't know," Jack replied. "Our argument was about some silly little thing, it couldn't have been that. Are you going to answer my question?"

James glanced down, then away awkwardly. "I'm sorry but, she's dead."

"No, she can't be," Jack stuttered, his eyes slowly filling with tears. He turned his back to him. "How?"

"That's what I'd like to find out," James replied.

"Was she still pregnant, is the baby ok?" Jack stuttered. James' silence made him burst out crying into his hands, he tried to hide it with one of them. At this point James was looking a bit uncomfortable, but he felt like he was talking to the wrong guy.

Tuvok reappeared, "Ensign, we are done here."

"Fine, I'll be with you in a minute," James said.

Tuvok stepped back onto the lift to take it down again.

"I'm really sorry. Chrissy told a friend of mine that you hurt her, so we assumed..." James said.

Jack tried to dry his eyes so he could turn back around. "I don't understand why she'd say that. Of course there's no proof for me, everyone's going to think it was me."

"I don't know why she would either, I don't know her well enough," James said.

"She said her last boyfriend was a jerk," Jack mumbled. He shook his head, "she was with him for two months, god I hated him. That's the only time in my life I ever felt aggressive and violent, when he was around. She would tell me everything that he did, when we heard Voyager was about to be launched we both requested to join to get away. We figured as he was just a civilian he wouldn't be able to follow."

"Did you ever see her get abused by him, or any injuries?" James questioned with a frown on his face.

"No, she would always get them treated to hide them from me. Eventually she confessed it all," Jack sniffed.

James looked away, deep in thought. He turned back to him, "excuse me. Sorry for, well everything." He walked toward the ladder on the other side. When he was gone, Jack fell to his knees.

The Morgue:

Matthews turned away from Chrissy's body lying on the slab. He pressed a button, it slowly moved into the storage in the wall. After typing on the padd in his hands, he moved into the tiny office he had, and placed it next to the computer.

"Computer transfer logs from the padd to the morgue database."

The computer responded with two beeps, "transfer complete."

Matthews tapped his commbadge, "Matthews to Taylor."

In: "What have you got?"

"It took me a while but I was able to verify Chrissy's cause of death, and who touched the children," Matthews replied. He sat down in his chair then turned the computer on. "There was no bruising or any other kind of wounds on her body. It's very unlikely she tried to fight back."

In: "Could she have been drugged, knocked unconscious?"

"No there was nothing abnormal in her blood, I can tell she wasn't unconscious when this happened. It appears to be suicide," Matthews muttered.

In: "I don't understand, how could she have intentionally held her head under the water long enough to do that. I thought that some kind of natural instinct would take over or something."

"That's all I have. If somebody did do this to her, she must have let him do it," Matthews said.

In: "Maybe the killer of the babies threatened he'd kill them if she didn't."

"No. Their times of death were earlier than hers," Matthews shook his head. "You're not going to like the next part."

In: "Try me."

"The babies bodies were mostly dry when we found them, there were splashes but that's it. The killer must have held them and you know, to kill them. Unfortunately for her that left us with clearer fingerprints, and DNA samples," Matthews said. "You saw the children, were they wearing the same thing when you saw them the first time?"

In: "Yeah, and the replicator hadn't been used to replicate copies."

"I thought as much. The only people to touch these babies were Christine Rannak, Leva Samson and Jessie Rex," Matthews said. "I do know that the last two were the ones who carried the children to their quarters, and that Leva was the one guarding the door with Chaster." He heard a sigh come from the other end of the commlink.

In: "There's no way somebody else could have done this?"

"The babies were wearing those clothes at time of death, nobody changed them to cover anything up like you said. Only those three girls could have done it," Matthews replied. "The boy died a minute before the girl did, I don't know if that helps."

In: "I don't know yet. Thanks for the help."

"I'm still waiting on one DNA scan, a strand of long wet hair that was on the little girl. It should be done in half an hour, the scanner's a little slow after the rift messed with it," Matthews said.

In: "I'll come by then. Taylor out."

Holodeck Two:

The doors opened for Chakotay and Tuvok. They entered what looked like a training hall, straight ahead of them a group of holo-demons were fighting against James. Most were already lying on the ground unconscious. James had a hold of a long, thin pole which he swung around to knock four of them to the ground. The two left charged for him, he defeated them just as easily.

The computer beeped, "end of level."

He groaned, "skip five more levels."

"Pause," Chakotay butted in.

James swung around to face them, dropping the pole to the ground like he was trying to hide it. "Sorry, I just thought I'd spend my dinner break in here, I must..."

"It's ok, your break's still on," Chakotay said.

James eyes shifted nervously, "then what are you guys doing here?"

"We are here to discuss the Rannak case," Chakotay replied. "I'm afraid Tuvok's going to take full control of it. We don't need this many cooks, do we?"

"What, why?" James questioned bewilderedly.

"You are obviously taking this too personally," Chakotay replied. "It's only natural to feel responsible, especially when there were babies involved."

"Especially when?" James muttered, glancing toward Chakotay with flashing eyes, then gestured his head to Tuvok.

"He knows about Jessie," Chakotay said. "Supposedly the Captain told him."

"The Commander and I believe that you got involved, without contacting me first when you should have done, only because of, paternal instincts," Tuvok said.

"I thought only the mothers get those during pregnancy time?" Chakotay whispered to him.

James tapped his foot impatiently, with his arms folded and half rolling his eyes. "I wasn't acting 'fatherly', I just have a soul."

"Charming," Chakotay commented.

"I never said that you didn't," James said. "Somebody needed help, actually three did, and well it was my job."

"James when the murder occurred, you took it too hard. We can tell by your actions," Chakotay said.

"Actions?" James raised an eyebrow. "I may have snapped at the team, but considering what had happened they should have expected it. For all I knew, they screwed up. As for the suspect, if I had taken it too hard then he wouldn't have had the chance to speak now would he?"

"All right, reactions," Chakotay said.

"You're just making excuses. You only want Tuvok in charge cos you think he's better than me," James muttered. He sighed and turned away, "you'd be right though."

Tuvok raised an eyebrow, "the reason is simple. You're too emotional over this."

"And you couldn't give a crap, I get it," James said.

"Besides after your 'trip' to your opposite Voyager, both the Captain and I think you should take it easy. You took on too much too fast," Chakotay said. "We've got a simple little mystery that'll probably only take you five minutes."

"But Matthews has already contacted me with the autopsy results. I'm going there after my break," James stuttered.

"I think this is more suited to your skills," Chakotay said. Tuvok stepped closer and handed James a padd, he looked at it.

"Twenty four hours?" he read. "Till the end."

"We need to know where it came from. The Captain received it at 1200 hours," Chakotay said.

"You're right, that'll only take five minutes," James said. "What do I do for the rest of the day, besides the usual? Surely I can help."

"The Sykians are still your responsibility. Perhaps you should check on them," Tuvok said.

"Or give them a tour of the ship?" Chakotay suggested.

James glared in his direction, "hell no, they're really annoying."

"Malek seemed, unannoying," Chakotay muttered.

"Then you give him a tour," James groaned. The two more senior officers stared at him intently. "I don't know why I even bother, you already made up your minds. Fine, but no tour." He headed toward the exit, "save program and end."

Tuvok followed him. "Ensign."

James groaned, then turned around. "What?"

"I need to know what you've learned so far," Tuvok said.

"What's the point? You can ask Matthews everything else you need to know," James said.

"I wish to hear it from you," Tuvok said.

"What, you don't like Matthews?" James said, raising an eyebrow. Tuvok did the same. "There was no sign of any struggle from her, she wasn't drugged either. It appears to be a suicide."

"And the infants?" Tuvok questioned.

"I don't think they committed suicide," James muttered.

Chakotay rolled his eyes as he walked forward to stand by Tuvok's side. "I think he asked who killed them?"

"I'm not sure how Matthews did it, but he was able to check who touched them. Leva held the girl, Jessie held the boy. Obviously Chrissy held them both," James replied.

"So either two scenarios occurred. Rannak tried to stop one of those girls from murdering her children," Tuvok said. James cleared his throat, and passed him a cold look. "Miss Rex has to be considered a suspect."

"Yeah like a pregnant girl like Jessie would just randomly kill someone else's babies. What on earth's the motive, she was really attached to the son," James muttered.

"Whoever did it succeeded, and in grief Rannak killed herself. In scenario two she did it herself," Tuvok said.

"Again, why the hell would she do that?" James questioned.

"James your break's nearly over, you should get started on that," Chakotay snapped.

James turned to look at him, he rolled his eyes, shook his head then marched out of the holodeck.

"He does have a point," Chakotay uneasily said. "There have been cases of depression, where a new mother has abandoned her children, sometimes worse."

"It's possible," Tuvok said. "First I must speak to Miss Rex and Leva Samson."

"Samson and Chaster were both guarding Rannak's quarters, maybe you should talk to Chaster as well," Chakotay said.

"Yes, that would seem logical," Tuvok almost sighed in annoyance. He walked through the holodeck doors, Chakotay followed him.

The Conference Room:

Chaster sat down in one of the chairs, Tuvok watched her intently. "I don't understand, Commander. I gave you my full report."

"Did Miss Samson leave her post at any time?" he asked her.

"No, and I didn't either," Chaster replied.

"Did either of you go inside?" Tuvok asked.

Chaster sighed, "sir with all due respect, I answered these questions when I gave you my report."

"Did you know Miss Rannak?" Tuvok questioned.

Chaster shook her head, "no. Leva knew her, they've been friends since the Marquis joined us."

"Did they have any arguments that you know about?" Tuvok asked.

"Why don't you ask her," Chaster muttered.

"I have already. I'm asking you as well," Tuvok said.

"No, she was just concerned about her when she was missing," Chaster replied. "These two were close friends sir."

"Did you know about Rannak and Simpson's friendship?" Tuvok asked.

"Well yeah, and before you ask they all got on ok," Chaster replied. Tuvok raised his eyebrow.

Later in the day

The Bridge:

Everyone were in their usual places when James stepped out of the turbolift nearby opps. He headed over to the centre of the bridge.

"Well?" Kathryn questioned.

"I've tried all conventional and unconventional methods of tracking the sender, nothing. It's like the message never existed," James replied.

Kathryn sighed into her hand, "that can't be possible. It's just not good enough James."

Jessie glanced over with a concerned look on her face. James, for probably the twentieth time that day looked uncomfortable.

"There's something else I can try. I'll be going in a minute or so..." he said. Kathryn looked up at him expectantly. "I have to do something first." He walked over to Jessie.

"Is she giving you a hard time?" she asked quietly.

"Nah, I need the push. Um can we talk in private?" James questioned.

"Sure," Jessie replied. They headed across the bridge, and into the Conference Room.

Kathryn sighed before glancing at Chakotay, who was smirking at her. "What?"

"You're keeping him on his toes aren't you?"

"I'm not, just..." Kathryn muttered.

"I like the way you kept him away from the murder/suicide mystery," Chakotay said. "You're just trying to keep him occupied elsewhere."

"There's nothing wrong with that," Kathryn said.

"No but you'll have to trust him with an actual mystery, not this twenty four hour message you gave him," Chakotay smiled.

Kathryn sighed uncomfortably. "I didn't make it up. If I did he would have known that five seconds after looking at it."

"You mean, someone did send that threat?" Chakotay asked.

"It was delivered to me at noon exactly like I told you. I didn't want to give him another mystery like this but I assumed it would be easy for him," Kathryn replied. "He'll get it."

"No doubt," Chakotay sighed.

"He'll have it sorted long before the deadline, and he or she will be caught. Nothing to worry about," Kathryn said. "We should have a meeting when Tuvok reports in at 1830."

"I'll make the arrangements," Chakotay said while lifting himself off the chair.

Meanwhile in the Conference Room:

Jessie sat in the chair Kathryn would usually sit in, watching James as he sat on the edge of the table, deep in thought.

"Um, you wanted to talk about something?" she butted in.

"Huh?" James mumbled, "oh." He shook his head to snap out of it, then looked toward her while leaning into his hand on the table. "I've got some bad news Jess, I didn't want to be the one to upset you but it's got to be better than finding out from Tuvok who wants to question you."

"I suppose so," Jessie frowned. "What's wrong, what did I do wrong this time?"

"You didn't do anything wrong," James mumbled. "Um it's about Chrissy."

Jessie's face turned a little paler, "oh god, what did that boyfriend of hers do to her?"

"The boyfriend's soft as muck Jess, everyone we talked to tells us the same thing. He wouldn't harm a fly, and well he loved her," James replied.

"Oh, then she lied to me or he's putting on one hell of an act," Jessie muttered.

"He told me that her last boyfriend was a bully, so she said anyway," James said.

"So what are you saying? She likes to accuse guys of hurting her?" Jessie said, smirking slightly.

James sighed while looking down at the table. "I don't know for sure."

"I don't understand what Tuvok could upset me with during questioning. Was she attacked or something?" Jessie asked.

James cleared his throat before looking back up at her. "She's dead Jess." She stared at him blankly like she didn't believe him. "It looks like she killed herself."

"Oh my god," she stuttered. "How?"

"Um, drowned in the bath," James replied.

"Accident, it could have been an accident," Jessie stuttered.

"I doubt it, the only way that could have happened is if she hit her head. She had no injuries," James mumbled awkwardly.

Jessie stared with wide eyes, her face was now paler than his usually is. "But why would she do that? She had new babies, and..."

"I think that's why Jess," James said.

"I don't understand," Jessie muttered.

James closed his eyes, glancing away. "They're um, god this is hard."

"Noo no," Jessie stuttered as she scrambled to her feet. "You've got to be kidding. No, you're not sick enough to make those jokes, somebody else is messing with you."

"Jessie, it's not a joke. I saw them," James said.

"So what I'm thinking, I was right?" Jessie muttered with disgust in her voice. "No, I don't want to be right this time. Please tell me those babies are ok."

James stood back up. "I can't."

Jessie pouted her bottom lip, her eyes shed a few tears before she turned her back to him. "God I'm so stupid. Why couldn't I just left things well enough alone?"

"What are you talking about Jess, you didn't do anything?" James asked as he stepped closer to her.

"Bulls***," she snapped, turning back around. "If it wasn't for me, they'd all be alive still. It's my fault."

"If it weren't for you we wouldn't have known about them," James said.

"They would still be alive though," Jessie angrily muttered.

"You don't know that. Only three people touched those babies, you were one of them. Leva and Chrissy were the others. Chrissy seemed out of it, scared, depressed and unsure of herself. I think she was just one of those scared young mothers that snap, just for a minute," James said.

"What? Are you saying that it's possible that cos I'm a young mum I might just bash my baby's head against a wall, shake him a lot, suffocate him or drop him on the floor?" Jessie stuttered. "No, she couldn't have done it."

"I don't think it'll happen to you," James said. "I'm just saying that's what probably happened. Nobody got in there but us, we left, Chaster and Leva guarded and well they both have the same story."

"Yeah sure, they could be covering for one another," Jessie grumbled.

"Look Kes said she's been having strange feelings all day that suggests that the case might not be what it seems," James said.

"So what, we all know who's fault it is," Jessie said.

"I don't believe that. If Chrissy snapped and killed her babies, or something else made her do it, then it would have happened in the Jeffries Tube," James said, closing the gap between them. "You didn't do anything wrong."

"Then why do I feel like it is?" Jessie asked quietly.

"Cos it's easier to blame ourselves than Chrissy, it's the worst thing a parent can do. We don't want to think of her like that," James mumbled. He put his arm around her, and gently wiped some of the tears from her cheek with his thumb. "You're not the only one blaming yourself."

"I think I have more reason to than you. I told you about her, and asked for your help," she said, then rested her chin on his shoulder and held onto him tightly. "I'm so selfish. All I can think of is that our child won't have as many other kids to play with than I thought."

"That's not selfish, you're not thinking about yourself," James said.

"No but it's still inappropriate," Jessie muttered.

Deck Five:

Jessie walked through the door to the new Counselling office.

"Ah Jessie, Simpson's back. He's in your office," Reynolds said without looking up at her. "He must have thought you were good enough to come back to."

"Uh... sure I..." Jessie stuttered.

Reynolds looked up, "I can seem him if you want, you look a little pale. Are you all right?"

"I'm ok. I'm just a little shaken, there's been a murder," Jessie quietly replied.

"Oh, friend of yours?" Reynolds questioned.

"Could have been," Jessie muttered. "I'm ok really." She headed toward her office.

Reynolds turned her chair around to follow her direction. "You're doing a great job so far," she said with a reassuring smile.

Jessie turned around to look at her, "thanks." She took one step backwards into her office. The door closed after her. When she turned around her eyes widened, and mouth dropped open in shock. "Oh my god, Lieutenant!"

Reynolds rushed into the office, she did the same as Jessie then ran to the side of Jack. He lay in front of the desk in a pool of his own blood, with cuts on both of his wrists.

Jessie stumbled backward toward the door, instead she backed into the wall as dizziness began to take over. She closed her eyes to block out her view instead.

Reynolds tapped her commbadge, "Sickbay, medical emergency."

Sickbay:

The Doctor and Kes finished working on Jack's body on the solo biobed. He walked over to Jessie and Reynolds who were waiting behind the station.

"He has a rare blood type. The replicators are still having malfunctions, we can't risk it replicating the wrong type. We can keep him stable until a donor is found," the Doctor said.

"Did someone do this to him?" Jessie asked.

"Injuries like this usually mean suicide, however we don't know for sure," the Doctor said. "I'll do the usual tests to determine that."

Kes walked over to the group. "Even with a donor he could die, he was there for a while."

"Then he must have done it as soon as he entered the office," Reynolds said. Everyone looked at her. "He was alone about ten minutes."

"There's only two matches in the crew manifest for his blood type. Christine Rannak, and you Jess," Kes said.

"Huh, I didn't know I had rare blood," Jessie mumbled. "I hate for this to sound selfish but if something happens to him, and the replicators break again. I'm screwed." Kes stepped forward, flashing her eyes like she was hinting to something. Jessie caught on. "I can't do it, this isn't part of my job."

"This isn't a job matter Jessie, it's a humanitarian mission," the Doctor said in disbelief. "You said it yourself, if he dies too you won't have a donor yourself."

"You know how squeamish I am with blood, I dunno," Jessie stuttered, glancing briefly at Kes for help.

The biobed alarms went off, the Doctor and Kes rushed over to Jack's side. Jessie followed half way.

"We're losing him again," the Doctor said.

"Ok ok, I'll do it," Jessie said.

Kes glanced at her briefly, shaking her head.

"We don't have the time," the Doctor muttered. He groaned angrily when Jack's heart monitor made the continuous tone, "damn it."

"Is that it?" Jessie muttered.

Kes sighed, "I'm afraid so."

Almost an hour later

The Conference Room:

The entire senior staff sat around the table, some were in their usual places. Tuvok was the only one on his feet, he stood by the window.

"If that is all," Kathryn said.

Kes sat forward to lean on the table, "actually Captain, there is something I'd like to add."

"All right," Kathryn said.

"I don't think any of today's deaths are as straight forward as suicide," Kes said.

"Since when was suicide straight forward?" Tom asked.

Kes ignored him, "something else is going on. I felt something from Jack earlier in the Mess Hall. It was like for about a minute that he was pushed aside, and replaced with something. Whatever it was, it wasn't soulful."

"Possession?" Chakotay questioned.

"No, I would have sensed a different presence in his place. It wasn't like that, also when it happened he was acting differently," Kes replied. "I have asked a few of his friends, they say he keeps going into these moods where he's cold and quiet. He's been like that for weeks now, these moods didn't happen often either."

"If it's been weeks then that might explain why Chrissy hid from him," Jessie said.

"She would have been seven or eight months pregnant at the time, surely he would have noticed that fact," Harry muttered. "You said he didn't know about it."

"Perhaps he was lying," Tuvok said.

"Why would he lie about that?" Tom asked.

"If you were to give this something a name, Kes, what would it be?" Kathryn questioned.

"Evil, demonic. I'm not sure," Kes replied.

Chakotay sat up straight, he looked in James' direction. "If it's demons, you should be able to sense something. Have you?" He groaned into his hand as he noticed James not paying attention, and in a daze again. "Somebody get a phaser or something to hit him over the head with, this is getting ridiculous."

"Shush angry warrior, keep your cool," Kathryn muttered.

Jessie rolled her eyes while looking toward Chakotay, she shook James' arm to get his attention. "James meeting."

He looked at her, "oh sorry."

"Have you been able to sense anything demonic or not? I'm not sure if Slayers do that," Chakotay muttered.

"Kinda, I'm not sure," James replied.

"Can you get sure?" Tom nervously asked.

"I dunno, I shared a ship with three hundred of them. I may be sensing demons or it could be just after effects," James replied.

"Doctor I want you to do a thorough examination of Simpson and Rannak, I need to know what happened," Kathryn ordered.

The Doctor nodded, "aye Captain."

"James, I expect you've found the sender of that file by now," Kathryn said.

"Uh no, I'm still trying though," James replied.

Tom leaned in closer to Harry to whisper to him, "somebody's slipping."

"Let me know when you do. Dismissed," Kathryn ordered.

Everyone but James got up to leave, Jessie noticed him still sitting so she walked back to her chair. "Penny for your thoughts."

"Tom's right, I must be slipping. I can't even solve this stupid message mystery," he muttered.

"You're not, it's just taking longer than you thought to get back into the routine," Jessie said. "Of course all of this isn't helping."

"Maybe," James sighed.

Jessie sat back in the chair she was in before. "Do you want me to kick a few butts? I think a few people are being a bit impatient with you."

James smiled a little, "that's ok, it's usually me that's being irritable. I still am, but not as much."

"After the day I've had I'd kick nearly anyone's ass just to get it out of my system," Jessie said.

"I have a program you can use," James suggested.

Jessie smiled back at him, "you have several."

"I like this one better," James said.

Tuvok re-entered the room, "Miss Rex. I need to speak to you."

"Oh god," Jessie groaned, pulling a face. "It'll probably be him."

"Probably," James said.

Jessie stood back up. "Ok I'm coming."

"No, it should be here. Mr Taylor," Tuvok said.

"Fine, but if you have any problems you'll be wishing you hadn't told me to leave," James muttered as he climbed to his feet.

"You're on my side anyway," Jessie whispered to him. James nodded, he then headed for the nearest door.

Meanwhile:

In the small, cramped Deck Fifteen three figures stood in a dimly lit work room. One was holding something in his hands in front of his face.

"Wow it's beautiful. If I stare deeply into it I can see my salvation, my future, all the evil things I'm going to accomplish. I just cannot wait," the man rambled on, almost drooling.

Another male voice groaned, then whispered to the third figure. "He does realise I haven't given him the device yet, right?"

"Computer increase the lights by ten percent," a female voice ordered. The lights increased, the figures turned out to be Damien, Halei and one of the unnamed Sykians. Damien was the one with something in his hands.

"Ah you and me against the universe, they don't stand a chance," Damien sneered at the item in his hand.

Halei groaned, "how much longer do we have to listen to you talking to that yogurt pot?"

Damien turned around, glaring at the two aliens. He was holding one of those Muller Dessert themed yogurts, still unopened. "Don't you have any respect? You are both too simple minded to understand."

"Yes, unlike you we have a mind," the Sykian said. "Can we really trust this weirdo?"

"That's still in debate," Halei muttered.

"Now now, no debating without me," Damien said with a mouthful of yogurt. "I help you with your little quest, and you give me the device."

Sykian pulled out a futuristic looking device that fit in the palm of his hand. "This is it. It will get you to where you want to go, then you're on your own."

"I still say your plans clash with ours as we will succeed," Halei said.

Damien snorted with laughter, "yeah you wish. This crew may be a group of crazy freaks but they can get out of almost anything. Unlike you, I know where to hit them. With this, I'll accomplish what you could only dream of."

"This crew is only in our way, we're not obsessed with them like you," the Sykian said.

"Yes but we both want the same thing in the end," Damien said. "Now give it here."

The Sykian moved his arm behind his back. "You haven't given us the information we need."

"I will, I want the device first," Damien said.

"We're on a deadline you know. Your plans can wait," Halei said. "What do you have to lose?"

"Fine. I'm not someone you would like to screw over, remember that," Damien muttered. He turned to face a computer, he began working on it.

The following morning:

Kes walked a lot quicker down the corridor to catch up with James, he was working on a padd while walking.

"How's it going?"

"I wish people would stop asking," he muttered.

Kes frowned, "sorry."

James closed his eyes, "I'm sorry Kes, I didn't mean to snap at you." He reopened them just before they got to the doors to the Mess Hall. "It's not going well. At least the message exists to the computer now, that's not going to help us in four and a bit hours, is it?"

The doors opened for them. James ducked down, taking Kes with him as a chair went flying over their heads. It crashed into the wall next to them. When they straightened they both looked around with bewildered looks on their faces. The entire Mess Hall was a war zone, every crewmember but Neelix were fist fighting or throwing chairs and tables at each other.

"How did you know?" Kes stuttered.

James replied just by shrugging his shoulders. Neelix rushed over to them. "Sweeting I saw that, are you all right?"

"Fine Neelix, what's going on?" Kes replied.

"I don't know. Everything was calm and peaceful one minute, then out of nowhere people started jumping on each other and throwing furniture," Neelix replied.

"It had to happen when I was dropping by, didn't it," James muttered. He handed Kes the padd, then pulled out his phaser. He pressed one button on it, then aimed to fire it at the ceiling. Everyone stopped to stare at him. "Ok that's enough of that, or I'll be trying out the widespread function."

A few of the crewmembers headed for their nearest exit, all glaring in his direction.

"Can you ask them to clean everything up?" Neelix whispered.

James glanced at him with a raised eyebrow, "just offer to give them your quorn sausage rolls."

"Oh bribery," Neelix's face lit up. "Everyone, if you clean up I'll make some more of my sausage rolls." Everyone quickly headed for the doors, looking panicky.

"No, you're supposed to say 'clean up or I will make you eat them'," James smirked. Kes did the same.

"I don't understand, I thought everyone liked them," Neelix stuttered.

Chakotay stepped through the nearby door, he wasn't sure whether to look amused or shocked at the mess of the room. "Ok don't tell me I missed it all."

"Yeah unfortunately," James said, he turned to go to the replicator.

Chakotay walked up to Neelix and Kes. "You could hear the fighting on the bridge, what started it and who?"

"Everybody was fighting, it all happened at once so it's hard to tell who or what started it," Neelix replied.

Kes sighed, "the first people who left, I sensed the same thing in them."

"Great, what's going on here?" Chakotay muttered.

"I wish I could tell you Commander," Kes replied.

James walked over holding a chicken leg in his hand, he pretended to offer it to the three. "Cup of coffee?"

"Ugh B'Elanna said the replicators would be completely fixed by now," Chakotay groaned. "Can you get a list of all the crewmembers who were fighting, the computer should be able to tell you easily enough as it was everybody in the Mess Hall."

"Like I haven't got enough to do as it is," James muttered, he reluctantly took a bite out of the chicken leg. He pulled a face, "ookay, it tastes a bit like coffee after all."

"Don't tell me you still haven't figured the message out yet," Chakotay said.

"Ok," James said, he walked away.

Chakotay shuddered when he was out of sight. "Neelix can you do the list, and send it to me?"

"I'm not Security," Neelix replied.

"Ugh never mind," Chakotay groaned, he walked toward the door James just left through.

Meanwhile:

The turbolift doors opened. Jessie slowly stepped through them, looking like she was on her way to her execution. She stopped before she got to the door with the words 'morgue' written in small writing on. Instead she stood against the wall, and remained there for a while watching people go past her.

Later:

The Sykians hung around anxiously in the main area of their quarters. James and Chakotay stood by the door.

"You reported a problem?" Chakotay questioned.

"One of our men is missing," Malek replied.

"He didn't come home to bed by eleven then, how sad," James muttered. Chakotay attempted to hide a smirk with his large hand.

Shanak grunted, but this amused Malek. "I hope other members of your crew are like him."

"He left an hour ago, but he was only supposed to go for a half hour," Shanak said. "He's harmless though."

"He might appear harmless, they always do," James said.

"Hmm yes," Shanak said, eyeing him distastefully.

James raised an eyebrow, "we should look for him, just in case. We only have an hour left."

Chakotay took a hold of his arm to lead him closer to the door, this made him cringe and pull his arm away. "You haven't found the source yet?" he snapped quietly.

"No I haven't, and don't act like I didn't tell you," James quietly hissed back at him. "I've got a scan going on while we speak, if that doesn't find it then we'll have a problem."

Chakotay turned back to the Sykians, "you say this guy's harmless but you contacted us anyway."

"He's been acting differently," Shanak said.

Malek nodded, "his behaviour's been erratic, he'll be himself for a while then turn back to, something else. I reported this as I believe he may hurt someone."

"I still don't think he could," Shanak quietly said to him.

"If you were worried about him, why did you even let him leave?" James asked.

"I didn't, somebody else was in charge at the time," Malek said, glaring briefly at Shanak.

"If he does become a threat, I have a good mind to push you through another wall," James muttered. He turned to leave.

Chakotay sighed, "I'd appreciate it if you tell me more about his behaviour."

"He's usually very gobby and well, sociable. During his mood shifts he would stir up fights between the others, scowl. He wouldn't speak for an hour and that's not like him," Malek responded. "He's not a violent man, the most he could do is provoke people into fighting."

"Mood shifts?" Chakotay muttered.

James turned back around, the door remained opened for him. "do you have a small computer in this room?"

"No they don't, why?" Chakotay replied.

"Replicator?" James said.

Chakotay nodded, "but it's been disabled, they've been eating what Neelix makes."

"No wonder the guy was so irritable," James muttered. He walked over to the replicator, then started to work at it. "I knew it, someone's tampered with it."

"How? They'd need codes to get access to anything," Chakotay questioned.

"I don't know, have you seen anyone use this?" James asked, glancing back at the aliens.

"No, Jhian looked at it but that's it," Shanak replied. "That's who's missing."

"Let's see what he's been replicating," James said as he worked at the panel beside the replicator. His face turned a shade paler, "oh god."

Chakotay grew concerned, "what?"

Meanwhile:

The Sykian that was scheming with Damien and Halei crawled down a Jeffries Tube. He got to the end, opened the door and climbed out into the top level of Engineering, pulling a large bag out with him.

On the lower level all the Engineers were hard at work, unaware of what was going to happen next.

Jhian activated a tiny device attached to his right arm. The bag on the floor beside him had been opened already. A good old fashioned shot gun rested in his other arm, he moved it around as he prepared to aim down at the people below him, keeping himself hidden behind the station, from there he only had view of people who were at the back of Engineering, working near the core. Fortunately for the gunman, there were three targets already.

B'Elanna walked over to Ian's side as he worked at the station in front of the core. "Why are the replicators still broken? I know we've got a threat of instant death in an hour or so, but I'm more worried about what Neelix is doing for lunch."

Ian smirked at her, "some of the bio neural gel packs are still malfunctioning. If you replicate your lunch on the bridge, off Deck Eight and below you'll be fine."

"Can you personally see to it that the ones doing those repairs speed up," B'Elanna ordered.

"Yes ma'am," Ian said. He was about to walk away when the glass floor above those three crewmembers smashed, throwing glass everywhere. One of those crewmembers fell to the ground. The other two tried to get away while shielding themselves from the glass, but two more loud bangs ended their escape.

"What the hell," B'Elanna growled. "Everyone, evacuate Engineering!" Nobody argued with her, well except Ian when she stayed where she was. He pulled her away as the gunman started walking across what was left of the glass floor. A few gun shots hit the station they were at.

The Bridge:

Kathryn marched out of her Ready Room like she had been interrupted during her coffee break. "What now?"

"Commander Chakotay reported in saying that one of the Sykians has replicated a shotgun. Then we got reports of an attack in Engineering," Harry replied.

Tom turned his chair around with a worried expression on his face. "Captain, B'Elanna... can I?"

"No, you stay where you are. Get Security on it," Kathryn ordered. "Tom, you wouldn't happen to know how to protect yourself from a gun from the twentieth century."

"I do actually, don't get hit or bullet proof vest," Tom replied.

Meanwhile:

A couple of Security officers stepped out of the turbolift holding rifles, other non Security crewmembers ran in the opposite direction toward the turbolift. The only one who wasn't was Jessie, who was still standing nearby the morgue.

"What's going on?" she asked no one in particular.

The Security crewmembers didn't notice her as they had lots of crewmembers pushing passed them. They could all hear gunshots in the distance, people screaming.

"Oh crap," Jessie stuttered. She went to the turbolift, but like a couple of the escaping crewmembers she was forced to wait for the next one.

The Security people disappeared around the corner. All the others could do was listen to the phaser firing, gun shots and yelling. A few of the crewmembers were smart enough to run into the morgue to hide, other doors were too much of a risk to run toward.

The phaser firing stopped, everyone of course froze at that point. Jessie looked around for another exit, she then noticed a Jeffries Tube door, however it was half way down the corridor like the other more risky doors. She decided to take the chance and ran toward it.

Just then Jhian turned the corner aiming the gun, he went straight for Jessie. She opened the door in time, the bullet hit that instead. Without any hesitation she leapt inside the tube. The turbolift doors opened as well, but the gunmen had decided to start shooting at the people there. Only two out of six remaining got into it, the other four lay badly injured but not dead near the doors. The two in the lift were shot at, they hid at the side of the lift but one was hit in the leg in the attempt.

Jhian ran to get into the turbolift himself but he was way too late. His eyes focused on the Jeffries Tube door which slammed closed.

The Bridge:

"The attacks have moved to Deck Ten, the Security teams were not able to stop him," Tuvok said.

Kathryn slammed her hand against the railing, "one man, two teams. Impossible."

"Not really, we never got trained to duck," Tom said.

"Now's not the time Tom," Kathryn growled.

"I'm not kidding," Tom pouted.

Deck Nine:

Jessie climbed up the ladder toward Deck Eight as fast as she could manage. However something made her freeze just for a second, the sound of somebody crawling through a tube below her, dragging a heavy object with them.

"Damn it, damn it," she whispered to herself, while picking up speed up the ladder. At Deck Eight, she climbed into another tube and went up that instead, quickly she tapped her commbadge. "Rex to Security."

Jhian meanwhile got to the ladder, and climbed up it a lot faster than her.

Luckily for her the exit to a corridor was only a metre away. The door opened, she climbed out as quickly as possible. The door closed again quietly.

Jhian stopped at Deck Eight, sniffing the air. He followed Jessie's path down the tube.

In the corridor itself about three teams of Security were standing, waiting for him to emerge, all pointing rifles in the door's direction.

"Oh yeah, this is my time to shine," Sid laughed quietly.

Foster stood next to him, sweating like crazy. "I really hope not."

The door swung open, the teams began firing at Jhian. A yellow shield appeared around him as he climbed out of the tube, getting ready to fire the shotgun back.

"Damn it, retreat!" Thompson yelled. Everybody backed around two different junction corners as Jhian began firing at them.

"I have an idea," Foster said as he made sure Sid stayed with him around the corner. He whispered in his ear. "Well?"

"Anything for the team buddy," he grinned.

"Just don't die," Foster whispered. He gestured the other Security guys with him to fire at the guy again. Using that as a cover, Sid snuck toward the gunman, looking disappointed that he hadn't been spotted yet or probably cos he wasn't allowed to walk through the phaser fire.

Jhian didn't notice Sid until he was right beside him, he swung around to prepare to fire. Sid spotted the device on his arm, he went to pick it off without noticing that he had been discovered. He grinned as he was shot in the chest, he fell backwards to the ground.

"Oh wow."

Foster cringed, "crap, but at least we know what it is." He and the rest of the teams on his side retreated. The other side were getting shot at still, some of them got away but the rest weren't as lucky.

Foster's teams ran up to where Jessie and a few crewmembers waited anxiously. "There's a device on his arm that acts as a shield, it gives him about half a metre to breathe. Though Sid did get pretty close, closer than that and the shield didn't work then."

"It's only programmed to repel electrical discharges," Jessie muttered. "We just need to get close to him, and if Sid couldn't do that..."

"He may love pain but a bullet does the same to him as it does to us," Foster stuttered. "I don't know if it'll help but we should seal the deck off."

"Oh crap," one Security guy stuttered as Jhian turned the corner.

"Damn, never stop to talk," Foster stuttered. The teams split up, some went into nearby rooms, a few were lucky enough to jump into the turbolift. Jessie was one of them this time.

The turbolifts stopped only at Deck Nine, the occupants didn't know or care as long as it wasn't the one they were on before.

Jessie and two of the escapees headed down the corridor. A Jeffries Tube door burst open, scaring the three witless. A man climbed out of it, they all heard a loud bang. The man fell the rest of the way out with a gun shot wound in his back.

"Crap, we only went up or down one deck," another crewmember stuttered.

"Nine," Jessie stuttered. "Please be here, please be here." She muttered, she ran down the corridor. The other two followed her.

Jhian pushed the dead crewman out of the way as he climbed out. He dumped the shot gun, then pulled out a small gun from his belt. Again he sniffed the air, and followed Jessie.

The three crewmembers reached a dead end, Jessie lead them into the empty Security Office. "No. Computer locate James Taylor."

In: "James Taylor is on Deck Nine."

Jessie looked hopeful for a minute but then noticed his commbadge lying on the desk. "Aagh, why do that? We'd better hide."

Jhian burst in, aiming his smaller gun. He aimed directly at her, she dove out of the way but landed hard on the ground. Instead she resorted to dragging herself across the floor to use the desk as cover. Jhian fired again, hitting her in the leg. She cried out, but still pulled herself out of his view.

He shrugged his shoulders before turning around to fire at the other two. The first one pushed the sofa forward, and used that as a shield. The other ran to join her but was shot down before he could get there.

Jessie pulled herself under the desk, sitting up slightly so she could put a hand across the leg wound. She stayed perfectly still and quiet as Jhian's footsteps got louder and closer. The desk suddenly was thrown away from her, it went flying across the room then smashed into pieces against the wall.

Jhian smiled while he aimed at her again. She tried to get up but her wounded leg didn't make it easy for her. His smile faded as the door opened, he swung around to get a hard punch in the face. The gun fell out of his hands as he landed on the ground.

"James, thank god," Jessie muttered.

James, who stood nearby glanced at her briefly. He then grabbed the gun before Jhian got a chance to recover. He straightened up, aiming it at him. The last surviving crewmember peeped over the sofa to see what was happening.

Jhian moved onto his knees to get up only to find the gun he did have pointed at his forehead. He laughed as he looked at it's new owner. "Now James, you know better. I'm a mortal, you won't hurt me."

"Yeah, I only kill demons," James muttered, backing away slightly but still pointing the gun at him. Jhian sighed in relief, but it was short lived. "Today I'll make the exception," he fired at him anyway several times in the chest. The first one probably killed him, but he continued shooting anyway.

Jessie finally managed to stand up, she put a hand on his arm. "James stop it!"

After about ten shots he stopped, the anger on his face fizzled away immediately while being replaced with a guilty one. He looked at Jessie hoping to see that she wasn't mad at him.

"You could have knocked him unconscious," she stuttered.

James looked back down at the body, "I know." He phased out for a second, then lost his footing. Jessie took a hold of both his arms to steady him, of course he cringed but the pain did bring him back out of his phasing out.

"You didn't get treated did you?" Jessie demanded.

"No," he replied. "We should both go now." They and the other crewmember left the Security Office, she tapped her commbadge. "Sickbay, another to transport from the Security Office."

In: "Acknowledged."

The crewmember lying on the floor transported away.

Sickbay:

The entire room was packed with injured crewmembers. Kes, Tom and The Doctor were rushed off their feet trying to treat them. More walked in, Jessie and James followed them.

"We really don't have enough room," the Doctor grumbled. "Mr Paris, set up a triage facility in the Mess Hall, take the less serious injured ones with you."

"It's nice that you don't trust me with critically injured people," Tom muttered. He clapped his hands, "you heard the Doc."

Jessie glanced up at James, "you stay here, knowing you you're probably critical." She limped after the crewmembers who were leaving. Tom followed after everyone who was leaving had gone.

"Computer, what is the time?" James asked.

The computer responded, "1130 hours."

"Damn," he muttered as he left as well.

The Security Office:

After retrieving the computer from the remains of the desk, James put it on the sofa and activated it. He stared at the death threat while sitting next to the computer.

"Computer, re-analyze the message on the screen now. Did it come from a source outside Voyager?"

"Negative," the computer replied.

"Here we go again," James groaned, keying in something. "What about inside?"

"Unknown."

He frowned, "that's different, you said negative after the last scan. So you're saying it did come from the ship." He typed in another command, "can you narrow down any more source locations?"

"Negative."

"Damn," James groaned. He continued to stare at the screen to see if there was anything small that he missed. He moved closer as he spotted something amongst the recent scan results. A part of it said 'received time 12:01', just below that it said 'sent time approximately 11:46'. "That wasn't there before. Computer, what's the time?"

The computer responded with, "11:40."

James tried to tap his commbadge then he remembered that he left it on table earlier, instead he jumped to his feet and ran out of the office.

Meanwhile in Engineering:

The Engineering staff were back to work, most of which seemed a little shaken.

"Just get that warp core shield up, we only have fifteen minutes," B'Elanna ordered. Ian nodded at her, and turned back to the station he was at.

In: "Janeway to Engineering."

"Yes Captain, we're working on the shield. It should be operational in ten minutes," B'Elanna said.

In: "Good, I want other systems that could be used to destroy us protected."

"Well we would have had it done sooner if that crazed gunman hadn't have paid us a visit," B'Elanna grumbled. She looked around, "two of my people aren't back yet either."

In: "Do what you can. Let's hope the gunman was the attack and the message was to trick us into thinking it was happening at twelve."

"Amen to that," Ian commented.

The Bridge:

Kathryn stood over Danny's shoulder as she worked at the helm. Chakotay sat in his chair doing the usual. Tuvok and Harry were in their usual places.

"Captain, I'd work better if you didn't breathe coffee down my shoulder," Danny muttered.

Kathryn groaned as she straightened up. "I just want to keep an eye out for anything suspicious."

"Uh huh, it's nice to know that you trust your crew," Danny muttered.

The turbolift opened, a crewmember stepped out. While keeping an eye on the Captain he shifted over to join another guy at the back station. The two talked quietly between them.

"Fine. I trust you," Kathryn groaned as she walked away. She stood around the centre of the bridge, waiting impatiently. "I'll be in my Ready Room." She rushed into her Ready Room.

In: "Sickbay to Bridge."

Chakotay sighed, "bridge here."

Sickbay:

"I hope you've figured out the twenty four hour mystery as I've stabilised everyone," the Doctor said. Kes raised an eyebrow at him.

In: "Not yet Doctor, we've got just over fifteen minutes to go."

Kes shuddered slightly just as the doors opened, a crewmember limped in with a gunshot wound in the leg.

Meanwhile the turbolift down the corridor opened, James stepped off it. He rushed towards Engineering. Once inside he walked forward and looked around for anything else out of the ordinary besides the broken upper level.

The doors opened again behind him. He looked over his shoulder. One of the surviving victims of the shooting had walked in, he moved to the side wall stations and stayed at the one closer to the warp core. The uniform jacket he was wearing seemed a size or two bigger than it needed to be, and looked lumpy in places.

James moved backward, then went to stand next to Ian who he used partially as someone to hide behind. He looked at him oddly.

"This isn't the time to hang out you know," he commented.

"Shhh, just continue being tall and fat," James whispered.

Ian looked offended, "hey, it's not fat. I'm big boned."

"Yeah whatever," James muttered. "What's the time?"

"Eleven forty four, why?" Ian asked quietly.

James took out the gun from earlier from his jacket, "just stand in my way so that guy with the bulgy jacket doesn't see me and this. Walk with me as well, pretend to be working on a padd."

Ian looked over his own shoulder to watch the crewmember just stare at his console. He let the crewmember next to him take over with the shield, then moved backwards slightly so if that crewmember turned around he'd only see Ian.

A minute or so earlier:

Everyone on the bridge, but the two crewmembers at the back and Tuvok sat or stood anxiously waiting for something to happen, or not at all. One of the crewmembers slipped his hand under his uniform jacket.

At the exact same time in Sickbay, the crewmember who walked in and was talking to the Doctor did the same thing.

"Yes the Mess Hall, minor injuries only," he was saying. He then noticed his hand, "what are you doing?"

Meanwhile on Deck Two, Jessie limped out of the Mess Hall even though her wound had been healed. She muttered to herself as another girl followed her out a second later. "Next time I'll get Kes to treat me," she said, stopping to put a hand on where the wound was earlier.

The girl passed by her smirking, "tell me about it, my arm actually feels worse than it did before."

Then it happened.

The two girls slowly turned around, both frowning as they felt the ground shaking. They were blown from their feet as the doors, and part of the wall were blown apart by a small but powerful explosion.

On the bridge Harry's station beeped madly in several places, "Commander, there's been a..." Just then the back stations exploded, throwing most of those crewmembers flying into the air, and over the command chairs.

Harry and Tuvok both were pushed into the sides of their stations by the force of the explosions shockwave. Chakotay had been thrown to the floor.

Danny was forced to duck as one of the airborne crewmembers flew toward the viewscreen. It smashed as she made impact with it, she fell to the ground with glass covering her. Danny moved her chair in the way to avoid it, but got numerous cuts from it anyway.

In Sickbay the Doctor panicked, he tried to grab the crewmember to stop him. Kes tried to help some patients that were more able up to their feet. "Go, if you can get out the other way." A few of the injured helped each other get through the office to the other door.

The Doctor then was pushed clear away into Kes. As the crewmember put his hand into his jacket, the Doctor pushed Kes on the floor behind the station, then rushed to help his patients.

Another guy charged at the crewmember, they stumbled through the doors. As they closed the explosion blasted a small hole through the wall and doors. They were thrown clear into Sickbay along with pieces of debris from the wall. Everyone tried to duck out of their way.

Engineering:

As James began to go slowly toward the crewmember, Ian walked alongside him working on the padd. He raised the gun to aim at the suspicious character, then the ship rocked from the three explosions.

The man smirked before turning around quickly, his smirk soon faded when he saw James. He and Ian, like the rest of the Engineering staff had lost their footing when it happened. The man growled, "you." Then he lunged for James and technically Ian as well. James quickly kicked him away so he could repoint the gun, Ian meanwhile backed off slightly.

"Get everyone out," James quietly told him.

By this time everyone had stopped what they were doing to watch what was happening. B'Elanna marched in the centre, next to Ian when he backed further away. "What the hell is going on, James?"

"He was going to destroy us, I know it," James replied.

The man laughed a little, "how naive you are."

"Lieutenant!" one crewmember called over in panic. B'Elanna turned to her. "There's been three explosions onboard ship, all at the same time; 11:46 hours."

"Is that what you were going to do?" James asked.

The man just stared coldly at him, "you wouldn't be here if I was."

"Ian, what did I say!" James yelled back at Ian.

He cringed slightly, "oh yeah, everyone. Let's go!" He headed toward the door. Everyone but James, B'Elanna and the suspected bomber ran toward the main doors.

"Give me the bomb, now!" James yelled at the suspect.

"Uh no, why don't you just shoot me to get it," he sneered. "You can't risk it, you can't risk shooting me. So." He walked closer, "will you be sticking around long enough to see what is really going to happen?"

B'Elanna growled as she stepped closer to the two. "Why are you doing this, if that bomb is on you then what's the point?"

"I don't think that's a problem," the man replied. "Isn't that right James?"

"If you detonate the bomb near the warp core it'll kill us all," James muttered. B'Elanna then headed toward the door, she edged closer to the wall station.

"Hmm gee," the man said, with a fake concerned look on his face. "Never thought of that, not my problem though."

"You've got to be kidding," James groaned. "You used that rift to destroy us as you can't do it conventionally, this'll destroy you too."

"I hardly call this conventional. Though I am glad you've figured it out," the man said.

"Computer, eject the warp core, authorisation Torres Omega five nine three," B'Elanna whispered to the station she worked at. "Now."

The man swung himself around as the warp core disappeared out of sight, James took the opportunity to go forward to attack him. Despite just being a human his size, the bomber was strong enough to fight back. He pushed him away as B'Elanna rushed back over to help.

"No, you should get out of here," James said.

B'Elanna grunted, "I'm not a helpless little thing."

During this exchange the bomber placed his hand in the uniform jacket. "I didn't say you were, go," James said.

"You owe me one," B'Elanna muttered, she ran to the door. The bomber chose that time to lunge at James again. The pair fought for only a minute as James grabbed the guy by the throat. He chuckled, well at least tried to.

"Too late," he croaked.

James widened his eyes, he pushed the man away from him then turned to get away.

Outside Engineering, B'Elanna stood around impatiently. "I should have took care of it," she muttered. Then she heard the bomb go off, and felt the slight shockwave shake the ground. "See."

The doors opened crookedly, the Engineering side of them were black from the flash fire that came from the initial explosion. There were a few fires everywhere, stations were a charred mess, ones that were still online sent sparks flying every second or so. The entire area was filled with a black smoke.

B'Elanna carefully walked in with her hand across her mouth. Ian appeared behind her, they both looked around for any sign of life. B'Elanna then almost tripped over something on the floor. "Here." She knelt down.

Ian joined her, and knelt down. James lay on his side not far from the door, a lot of his skin looked badly burnt. He opened his eyes, coughed as he breathed in too much when he awoke. B'Elanna and Ian pulled him to his feet and lead him out of Engineering.

"Computer, initiate fire extinguishing systems in Engineering," B'Elanna ordered. The computer responded with the two beeps. She turned to James, "why didn't you warn us, you obviously knew when you got here."

"I didn't know for certain," James muttered, trying to clear his throat with a few coughs. "The last scan showed the real deadline, I came here as it was the best place to kill the entire crew."

Ian coughed a few times everytime he opened his mouth to speak. Eventually he got a word out, "if he was planning on bombing the core, why attack other areas of the ship."

"Back up maybe," James replied. "Where were the explosions?"

The crewmember who reported the explosions looked worried. "Bridge, Sickbay and the Mess Hall I think."

"We should..." Ian uncomfortably said. James interrupted him just by walking away.

"Just in case I should go to the bridge," B'Elanna muttered, she walked faster than usual to follow him.

Ian sighed, his eyes quickly widened then he ran after them. "Wait, I'm going too. Danny's on the bridge."

The Mess Hall:

Lots of injured crewmembers sat or lay on the left side of the room, if you look at it from the kitchen. Five of the demons from the alternate Voyager were spread around, two each were putting debris into piles in front of the only main door left, and the gaping hole on the right side of the room. The last one stood in the middle, pointing a rifle at the injured. A few Voyager crewmembers emerged from the kitchen.

"The back's sealed as well, no one can get in," one said.

"Well except for you know who," the lazy demon with the rifle muttered. Each of the pairs of demons finished their creations, and rejoined the others. "I can't believe how easy this was."

"How many more do you think is left?" one of the humans questioned.

One of the demons grabbed him by the throat, "one less when I tear off your head."

"It doesn't work like that," the human grunted after pushing his hand off.

Another of the demons walked towards the injured. He eyed Tom with interest as he attended to the burn victims. Then his eyes rested on Jessie, she lay on the ground unconscious with a large bruise on one of her arms.

"Leave her alone," Tom boldly snapped. "Don't you think you've done enough already."

The demon bared his teeth at him, hissing. He stood over Jessie, then crouched down to look directly at her face. She then chose that moment to wake up. "Eew," she screeched while throwing the demon a punch in the face. He then received her trademark kick in the groin. As he stayed perfectly still in obviously a lot of pain, Jessie pulled herself backwards. She cringed when she noticed her arm.

"Are you ok?" Tom asked, moving over to her. He hovered the regenerator over her arm.

"No, what on earth happened?" she replied.

"I don't know, something exploded. I don't know what," Tom replied. "When everyone came to, we found the demons guarding us."

"This is making less sense," Jessie said.

Two other demons dragged the one she kicked over to the others. One of them sniffed the air, he walked toward the group. "I smell the Slayer."

"You fool, he's not here," the lazy one snapped. The other two and one of the humans picked up rifles from the kitchen.

"Don't you?" the demon asked. "He must have been around one of these people." After sniffing the air around the injured, his eyes set on Jessie. "Her."

"What? I'm no Slayer. Whatever that is," she said.

"Yeah what is that? Is it some kind of food, as you were sniffing around," Tom said, laughing nervously. Jessie rolled her eyes.

"Are you sure it was a 'Slayer' you smelled, it was probably Neelix's quorn crap," another crewmember said.

"It's not crap," Neelix pouted.

Two demons joined the other one. "You're right. She's been around him."

"Oh a he, I probably walked by him," Jessie said.

"No, you stink of him," demon two hissed.

"Ooh I wonder why," Tom sniggered. Jessie gave him the elbow, he squeaked in response.

"It's her, what luck," demon one said. "What do we do?"

"Wait for him to come for her," the lazy demon, who now appeared to be the leader, replied smiling deviously. "But first, get her."

"Oh no no, no getting," Jessie muttered. The three demons marched forward to grab a hold of her and pull her up to her feet.

Meanwhile:

The Bridge was in the worst state out of all the attack areas. The fires had been put out but damage was everywhere. The back stations were charred, glass lay everywhere especially around the viewscreen which had been smashed to bits. The command chairs had been half uprooted at the back. The turbolift door near Tuvok kept opening and closing on it's own. Two crewmembers lay either dead or unconscious, one by the viewscreen and the other in the middle of the command centre.

Two more of the demons were guarding everyone, one in front of the Ready Room and the other paced to keep an eye on everyone. Everyone conscious had been forced to stand in the centre. Kathryn's voice yelled through her door.

"I swear to god when I get out of here I'm going to tear you apart! You don't just plant suicide bombers on my ship!"

Chakotay sighed as he looked around at his remaining people. He eyed Danny the longest who had a few nasty looking cuts on her face and arms. "Don't worry, we'll get out of this." He turned to look towards the pacing demon. "Hey, I want to talk about this."

The demon stopped, "there's nothing to talk about mortal."

"I think there is. From what we've heard you want to get into our reality, there has to be easier ways," Chakotay said.

"How could you understand what's happening here," the demon scoffed. "You just had that freak as a guide to our kind."

"The only freaks around here are you sons of bitches," Danny grumbled.

"Silence!" the demon hissed.

"What do you plan to do now? Whatever you planned, it didn't work did it?" Chakotay said.

"Can I kill their Captain yet?" the other demon moaned.

"No, we need her command codes," the first demon snapped.

"The message said we would all die at twelve, we're still here," Chakotay said.

"You thought it would be instant? Humans are so naive," the first demon laughed.

Chakotay smiled smugly, "something went wrong didn't it?" The first demon growled at him. "Tell me, how did you influence those two innocent men into becoming suicide bombers? They obviously weren't the only ones."

"You talk too much," the first demon said.

The second demon sighed in relief as Kathryn had stayed quiet for a while. "How do you plan on bringing more of our troops here?"

"How do I plan? I don't you moron," the first demon growled. "We must wait first, we won't succeed when the Slayer's still around."

Sickbay:

The Doctor moved toward Kes at the station, she leaned on it. "Is that what you sensed in Simpson and Rannak?"

Kes nodded, "I was wrong. Demons mustn't have souls, so what did I sense?"

"If they can do something like this then you're right," the Doctor muttered.

This time there was only one demon and a human around. The demon guarded the door and the human stood by the office, watching them intently. Kes looked toward the one by the office, "that one might give us information. Something is different about him."

"This is ridiculous," the Doctor groaned, he marched toward the demon by the door. "Why on earth would you target Sickbay? The people here were already wounded, and it serves no purpose whatsoever. What do you want from us?"

Kes used his outburst as a cover while she went over to the second guard. "Don't," he said, looking away.

"Why did you do this? You only appeared after the explosions," Kes asked quietly.

The human looked at her, "it was the only way."

"I don't understand, what was?" Kes questioned.

The human sighed, glancing toward the other demon who stood arguing with the Doctor. "I guess there's no harm now, it's done. We use the humans as conduits, then 'swap' places with them. It's not a swap really, we get their place and their bodies are destroyed."

"Why, there are more demons than people on board?" Kes questioned.

"It's a stupid idea," the human grumbled. He noticed the demon had stopped arguing, so he backed away to continue guarding.

Deck Two:

The turbolift doors opened, James stepped out leaving B'Elanna and Ian still inside. "Good luck," Ian said as the doors closed again.

James headed down the corridor towards the Mess Hall.

Not long later Kathryn passed through the same corridor, muttering angrily to herself. "I'll teach them to do this to my ship."

James reached the doors to the Mess Hall, but he could easily see the pile of debris on the other side.

Inside the demons who had a hold of Jessie kept teasing her, while blocking a certain area on them. The other demons and human bad guys looked bored to tears.

One demon poked his sharp claw into Jessie's side, she managed to grab him by the throat. "Do that again, and I'll snap it off and jam it into your throat."

"Oooh, she's really the freak's type, feisty," another demon who held her purred.

Almost everyone jumped when the pile of debris blocking the door started to wobble, allowing parts of it to fall to the ground. The leader pulled out a knife, then put it in front of Jessie's neck. "You're with me." He pulled her away from the others.

The rest of the pile fell to the ground, a few pieces were chucked to the side. James stepped over the remaining stuff in his way.

"Ah ah, that's far enough," the leader hissed.

"You'd better let her go," James muttered.

"Hmm, give me a reason to," the leader said.

Tom moved closer to Neelix to whisper to him, "I have a bad feeling about this."

"Easy, I'm going to kill you. Next question," James said.

"You can't do that while I'm holding your precious little girlfriend," the leader teased.

"What hey," Jessie grumbled.

"Yeah I knew it," Tom sniggered.

"You know better than that. If you hurt her you'll have a serious problem on your hands," James said.

The leader smirked at his minions, "what, you'll turn evil? Oh all these innocent people around, you don't want to risk doing that here."

"Let her go and I may take it easy on you," James muttered.

"I don't think you're in a position to make demands. I'll tell you what though, I'll let you decide," the leader said. "I'll let these lot go. Not her though, I'll slit her throat. Then deal with you myself. Or I'll let her live, but you've got to leave."

"Leave?" James questioned, raising an eyebrow.

"Leave the ship," the leader replied. His minions smiled or smirked. "If you come back, I'll kill her."

"She wouldn't be with you then, it wouldn't be so easy," James said.

"Hmm you're right," the leader said, clicking his spare finger. One of the humans walked over, he pulled out a hypospray.

"Oh crap, what's that? No no," Jessie stuttered as he pushed it into her neck. The leader kept the knife at her neck to stop her and James trying anything.

The human handed the leader a small device, which he put into his jacket while still keeping Jessie with him. "Now she's one of our bombers."

Tom and a few of the others widened their eyes, unsure who was going to end up killing them, the demons or James himself. He clenched his fists so tightly, they were turning whiter than a sheet.

"If you come back, and I'll know about it as this thing has a sensor, she goes boom," the leader laughed. "It won't be pretty, body parts flying, blood... eugh, not a nice way to go."

"I am so going to hurt you," James grumbled.

"Yeah yeah," the leader said. "Now when you leave, we'll seal the door again. We'll use these lot as conduits for our soldiers, any incompatible ones we'll just beat them till they are."

"I don't understand," Tom mumbled.

"Only the weak," another demon butted in.

The leader growled at him, "shut up!" He turned back to James. "Every single one of these people will die as I described. We can't pass through until the conduits are destroyed. Count 'em."

Another demon looked at the injured. "Ooh there must be something like thirty people here. I remember this one in maths, was it thirty over one or one over thirty? I can't remember."

"Not just thirty," the leader smirked. "Once they've allowed thirty of us through, we'll roam the ship. It wouldn't stop at one hundred and something, not when we have a ship that actually can contact other races. Which will it be Slayer? The people you care nothing about, or the girl you care so much about. Hmm toughy."

"We're doomed," Tom whispered, everyone nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile:

A demon snuck out of a turbolift, he spotted a few crewmembers so he began chasing them. As they were weaponless they ran for their lives. They turned the corner, he followed. Moments later he ran back around it, now he was fearing for his life.

Kathryn appeared around the corner holding a rifle. "Do you feel lucky, punk!" She fired the rifle at him, he vaporised. "Damn it, I should have picked a better line." She walked off looking for more targets while lowering the setting, just in case.

The Bridge:

"Look maybe we can discuss this," Chakotay said.

"Enough, you're driving me nuts," the first demon grumbled.

Danny giggled rudely, "ooh, Chakotay's driving you nuts is he?"

The first demon stamped his foot, "ugh, why does she keep speaking like that?"

"Never mind her. You won't be victorious if you just stand around, waiting," Chakotay said.

"Don't be stupid, I can already taste victory," the first demon said.

Danny laughed, "oh you're tasting already?"

The demon glared at her, he started to march over to her. Chakotay hit him across the back of the head with fallen debris. He took the rifle from him, and shot the other demon. He shot the one he hit, just in case.

"Now, Harry we need a status report," Chakotay said.

Harry smiled as he got to his feet, "yes sir." He headed back over to opps.

The Mess Hall:

"Have you decided yet?" the leader asked.

"If she dies, so do you," James replied.

The leader laughed, "am I worth her life though?"

"You didn't let me finish," James muttered. "That won't be enough for me in that state, I'll blame them and you know the rest."

"James don't," Jessie stuttered, struggling in the leader's grip.

"Let her go," James said.

"You choose the girl, classic," the leader laughed. He pushed Jessie away from him. "You've got five minutes, try anything and *everyone* dies."

James moved to guide Jessie out of the Mess Hall, she angrily pushed his hand away from her. As soon as they left the demons quickly resealed the doors.

"Now, let's see what we have here," the leader smirked. He handed the remote to one of the humans, "you keep an eye on her signal."

"I can't believe you did that," Jessie muttered as she and James walked down the corridor.

"And you claim to know me so well," he said. They stepped into a turbolift. "Shuttle Bay."

Jessie stared at him bewilderedly, "you can't be serious, we can't leave."

"We have to," James said.

"We don't know for certain that there was a bomb planted in me at all," Jessie said.

"There's no reason why they wouldn't," James said.

Jessie rolled her eyes, "this is ridiculous, it's not like you to give into demands."

"Of course it is. You had a knife to your throat, I didn't want to take the chance. You can't treat a cut to the throat, believe me I know," James mumbled.

Jessie fidgeted uncomfortably. "I don't like the idea of leaving. You never think about me in these decisions."

It was James' turn to stare bewilderedly. "I do nothing but think about you."

"Yeah safety wise, you never consider how I'd feel," Jessie snapped. "You decide that I'm better off without you, you kill yourself. There's a rift about to kill us, you jump into it. Now this."

"Jessie, I..." James mumbled.

Jessie folded her arms, "I don't want to live my life knowing that it cost those people theirs, and maybe the entire crew's. I don't want that on my conscience, you may think it's acceptable but I don't."

"Jessie, please trust me, I know what I'm doing," James said. "You said you trust me with anything, so just trust me now."

Jessie sighed, "I wish you wouldn't use that on me."

"You use the 'do it for me' thing on me, it's only fair," James said.

Meanwhile, Deck One:

Kathryn had met up with B'Elanna and Ian, all of them stood in the Ready Room with a rifle each. "Ok now I'll distract the guard by talking to him. You two fire at the door."

"What's the point of the distraction?" B'Elanna frowned.

"No point, I just want to annoy him," Kathryn replied.

The Bridge:

"Explosions occurred in Engineering, Mess Hall and Sickbay," Harry read from his station. Tuvok stood beside him.

"It appears that several members of our crew are on the demons side," Tuvok said.

"I wonder how we're going to get out of this one," Chakotay muttered.

Everyone heard a phaser blast, the Ready Room doors opened involuntarily. Kathryn, B'Elanna and Ian charged in. Five seconds later they blushed in embarrassment. "So this location's sorted then," Kathryn stuttered.

Danny ran over to hug Ian, "thank god you're ok."

"I was going to say the same thing," he sighed in relief. Everyone groaned as the pair began kissing like nobody was around.

"Where next then?" Kathryn asked.

"There's a lot more activity in the Mess Hall, something's going on," Harry replied.

"All right. I'm going, if anybody wants to come with me just follow," Kathryn said. She headed back to the Ready Room, Chakotay nodded at Tuvok as he followed her. B'Elanna did the same.

"Commander, a shuttle's left," Harry said.

Tuvok glanced at him with a raised eyebrow, "why wasn't it detected before?"

"I don't know. The sensors look like they were disrupted by fake telemetry," Harry replied. "It's Jessie and James, weird."

Danny and Ian pulled away from each other so they could look in their direction. "Maybe they're eloping," Danny commented. Everyone stared blankly at her. "What, she'd do anything to get out of wearing a wedding dress."

"Not getting married's a good start," Harry muttered. "I can't get a lock on them, he's hacking against me. They've jumped to warp." The station beeped, "there's a message, text only."

"Maybe they're the invites," Danny said, looking hopeful.

"It tells us not to follow them to bring them back," Harry frowned. "If we do, Jessie will die, odd."

"Die with embarrassment maybe, she's probably wearing the dress after all," Danny said.

"Ugh enough with the eloping theory," Harry groaned.

Tuvok raised both eyebrows, "indeed."

Meanwhile on the shuttle:

Jessie sat at the controls while James stood near the back, he fiddled with a phaser rifle.

"Do you ever get the feeling that Danny's making dirty or couple suggestive comments about you, when you're not even around?" Jessie asked.

James looked up to think about it, "no, she usually says it to my face."

"Hmm, I do and I have it now," Jessie sighed.

James walked back to the front of the shuttle, then sat back down. "I just want you to know I hate this plan."

"It's yours," Jessie reminded him.

"Exactly," James said.

"Which part do you not like the most?" Jessie asked.

"Normally I'd say you being at the helm, but if this messes up that bomb will go off," James replied.

"Comforting," Jessie muttered uneasily.

"It shouldn't though," James said, standing back up. "It's autopilot by the way."

Jessie's mouth dropped open in shock, "oh, you insist on me trusting you but you don't trust me."

"You've never flown before, ever," James mumbled. "If you flew today, it might get you killed."

"Yeah but at least I'd die with style," Jessie said.

James pulled a face, "having a bomb in you isn't stylish, it's quite the opposite."

"Fine. I just sit here, fine," Jessie pouted, folding her arms in a huff.

James leaned over to kiss her on the forehead, then straightened back up. "Ok then, set autopilot."

Jessie's face lit up, "oh, so I do get to do something." She keyed in a few commands. "Here we go."

Voyager, Sickbay:

The human by the office watched the demon as he began to pace slightly. He edged closer to him,

raising his rifle a little. Kes watched, unsure of what he was up to. Before the demon turned around again, the human swung the rifle across his head. This knocked him unconscious.

"Finally," he said. "We haven't got much time until he wakes up again."

Kes and the Doctor stepped a little closer. "What did..."

"I'm here to help you, so listen up. I know how they use your race as conduits, and how to force them out," the human said.

"Who are you?" Kes asked.

"My name's Rhyian, now can we?" the man nervously said.

Kes glanced up at the Doctor, then back at him. "You mean the Rhyian who helped James get back here?"

"I didn't do that much," Rhyian said. "Now, let's get to work. It'll have to be put through your environmental systems, luckily they'll be working overboard to be rid of the smoke and those areas will need it the most."

Meanwhile:

The Mess Hall was again a warzone. The more able hostages were staying in groups, and fighting back against the demons and conduit humans. Not one person noticed one of the piles of debris coming down again.

Tom meanwhile charged at one of the humans, knocking him to the ground unconscious. He jumped up looking dazed himself. "Ha, I'm good." The demon nearby knocked him to the ground by accident while struggling with three humans.

James walked in, not sure what exactly he was seeing. "Huh, this is good I suppose." He raised the rifle, aiming at the nearest demon. He vaporised.

The leader noticed him, he pulled the remote out. "You've just made a big mistake." He pressed the button.

James pointed the rifle at him next. "Boom," he mockingly said as he fired. The leader suffered the same fate as the other demon. One of the remaining conduit humans ran at him, yelling like a mad man. He threw that one across his shoulder when he got to him.

Tom jumped to his feet once the bad guys had either been killed or knocked out. "All right, who did that. I'll kick some butt."

"Good one," James said, fake laughing as he walked away. Everyone stared after him.

Later:

Captains Log Supplemental: The damage to Voyager has been extreme, I have been told it'll take seven and a half weeks to fully repair everything that was damaged. The worst thing about this was that, added to the casualties from the last two rifts I now have to do a memorial service for fifteen members of my crew, and two infants. Everyone's still a little shaken with the turn of events, and there's still a lot left unexplained.

The Conference Room:

Most of the entire senior staff sat at the tables, most of them talking at once. Kathryn poured herself a coffee, while rubbing her forehead.

Chakotay stood up, clapping his hands to get everyone's attention. "Everyone calm down. One at a time, please." Everyone calmed down. "We'll go around the table clockwise, I will start. I know the last few weeks have been strange and difficult, but we're alive..."

"Tell that to those fifteen crewmembers," B'Elanna muttered.

"We've crippled the demons, they shouldn't try anything again for a long time," Chakotay said. "We can't let them get to us like this. Now moving on, Captain?"

Kathryn looked at him with narrowed eyes, "I want to know how these people got explosives."

"A few replicators were hacked into, we didn't get an alert because there was a virus in the systems," Tuvok replied.

"It wouldn't surprise me if that warning message contained it," Harry added on.

Chakotay glanced at Tom next. "I say we pulled together as a team this time, that's the only good thing," he said.

"When did we do team work?" B'Elanna frowned.

"Us in the Mess Hall, we wouldn't have survived if we didn't do that," Tom replied.

"You wouldn't have had to if someone hadn't decided to save Jessie instead of you lot," Chakotay said, looking in James' direction. He was in a daze again, resting his chin in one hand. He still hadn't been treated yet either.

"He had a plan all along, he came back didn't he?" Jessie snapped.

"Oh don't give me that, he probably was forced to make one up later," Chakotay said.

"If the virus in the message, and the wrong time had been discovered sooner we might have been able to prevent some of this," the Doctor said.

Jessie rolled her eyes, "oh now it's your turn to jump on the bandwagon. There's no way this could have been prevented."

"What about Chrissy, surely somebody should have mentioned her as soon as she was found," Harry questioned.

"Oh Harry, you're digging yourself into a big pile of crap there," Danny muttered.

"I'm just saying," Harry muttered. Nearly everyone began speaking, or yelling at the same time. The only ones quiet were Kathryn, Tuvok and James.

After a few minutes of this, Kathryn stood up looking like she was going to kill somebody. "That's enough!" she screamed. Everyone stopped again. "When that girl was found in the Jeffries Tube, or when I discovered the message, nobody expected that events would turn out like they did. How could anyone? Everyone concerned did everything they could possibly do."

"What about James then?" Harry muttered. "Oh I'll choose an irritable little bitch over a group of thirty injured people."

"What did you call me!" Jessie snapped. "You would have done the same if it was someone you care about, except you wouldn't have returned so you better watch your mouth!"

"Maybe he should have checked to see if there was a possibility of this attack happening before waltzing back home," B'Elanna commented.

Kathryn shook her head, "somebody's going to get choked in a minute."

The overlapping yelling and loud talking started to build up again, a thud interrupted them. Everyone looked to find the source, which was James lying on the ground unconscious. Jessie rushed out of her chair to kneel by his side. The Doctor soon joined her holding a tricorder.

"He needs a lot of medical attention and I mean a lot," the Doctor said, managing to look shocked at the tricorder readings.

Kathryn shook her head in disgust, "everyone's dismissed." The others watched her march out of the Conference.

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