

## Episode 1.03 Year of Hell

Her whole body trembled, her hands clutched desperately to the poor stressed armrests. With a determined gaze straight ahead of her, she snarled the infamous words, "time's up!"

There was an almighty explosion.

### Day One

The impact threw everyone from their seats or feet. The little baby carrier fell on its side as it hit the ground.

Everyone on the ground felt the floor trembling. Chakotay chose to ignore it for now as the screams from his newborn daughter needed his attention first. While he tried to pull himself back up, it felt like something was pushing him back down. Not letting that stop him, he dragged himself across the floor as fast as he could. The rest of the Bridge were having similar difficulties. Crewmembers tried to return to their stations, using them as a means to push themselves up.

"Report!" Kathryn tried to yell out, but her hair was being pulled into her face.

The trembling grew, they could all hear it now.

Jessie managed to get only half way up by holding on to the seat, which had rolled on impact and fell into something. Then she noticed she wasn't alone. The unknown crewmember who manned opps lay against the wall next to the opps station, the chair had crashed straight into him.

Chakotay tried to comfort his screaming daughter against his chest, gently rubbing her back. None of that was working.

"Oh god," Jessie mumbled when she spotted the chair had not only crashed into the crewmember. It had pinned him to the wall, crushing a few ribs. He was breathing still, but each breath was painful. Every one sounded like a gasp. Realising that the impact had brought her to opps, she tried to see what happened.

Tom meanwhile crawled from his chair to his station. No matter what he pressed it wouldn't respond. "We're not moving, at least not on our accord anyway."

"Oh god," Jessie repeated herself, her face was a deadly white.

"What?" Kathryn asked, her own face finally free of hair.

"I don't know how but that hit has caused an overload, it's already in progress," Jessie stuttered. "The entire deck's going to blow."

"Overload?" Chakotay muttered, he tried to at least sit up. "Where?"

Kathryn already tapped her commbadge, "Bridge to all hands..."

"Deck Thirteen," Jessie answered simultaneously, her whole body was shaking.

Before Kathryn could finish her warning, everyone were violently thrown to the ground. What started as low rumbling had turned into vicious tremors. Consoles sparked uncontrollably, lights were giving up.

Suddenly it all stopped. Just when everyone thought it was over, all of the lights and consoles gave up completely.

No one could see a thing.

B'Elanna was the first to find an emergency torch, the first thing she pointed it at was the warp core. The second was a groan from nearby. "Craig?" She quickly followed the light to where he was lying, and knelt down beside him.

"Are you all right?" She saw a slight nod before turning the direction of the torch elsewhere. More were turned on from other crewmembers. "Where's that Borg?" Everyone's lights flickered around randomly. "Nobody saw her leave? Good."

"Harry," Craig mumbled, getting her attention back on him.

"What, what about Harry?" B'Elanna stuttered.

Her torch landed on him as he tried to sit up, his spare arm pointed to his right. B'Elanna rushed to his side, tripping over immediately. He sighed and pointed again at where she tripped.

"Oh, sorry Harry," B'Elanna mumbled sheepishly. She shone the tricorder down at her feet, all she could see was a large lump in front of them. Her torch pointed at the Jeffries tube door, then she swung back around. "Everyone get the power back on. If you have to, reroute from non essential systems. Craig?" Another groan. "Phaser?"

"I'm okay," Craig muttered as he pulled himself to his feet. B'Elanna felt around the wall until she found a panel. Quickly she opened it and picked up the manual override for the door. She pressed it into the door and began to pull the door open, Craig rushed forward to help her but she had already opened it mostly on her own.

Once they were inside B'Elanna shone the tricorder around the Jeffries tube, eventually she spotted a figure lying on the floor. Carefully she approached for a better look. Mechanical implants, barely wearing clothes, B'Elanna knew who it was. "Why is she unconscious?" she asked.

Craig meanwhile looked around, using only the tiny lights on the phaser in his hands and the edges of the torch B'Elanna used. Something odd caught his eye. "Over here." B'Elanna looked up, following his voice. She shone the torch in the direction he was looking, her eyes widened.

The wall appeared to shimmer in the light, it looked fluidic. She turned to Craig, hoping that it was just her eyes badly adjusting to the darkness, but the look on his face dismissed that thought quickly.

"What could have done this?" she asked.

"Kes?"

Tuvok lifted his body up from the floor, stabling himself with his hands and knees. He could just make out a dark figure lying in front of him through the orange haze. His body tried to breathe in, all that did was scratch at his throat, forcing him to cough the poisoned air back out. It was quicker to crawl so he did so to get to the figure's side.

"Kes?"

He got no response again.

Tuvok's head swung side to side. He looked for the stars on the other side of the window, once he got that he looked to his other side. All that faced him there was complete darkness. Wasting no further time he lifted the figure up whilst standing up, then rushed into the black.

The doors were only half open. The man figured he could just squeeze through it if he went through it sideways. However he couldn't really do that for his teammate lying on the turbolift floor. The best he could do was try to pry the doors further apart. He was about to do just that when he heard a groan. The Security officer swung around to face his team mate, using his hand phaser as a small torch.

The other man sat up and rested his back against the wall, groaning at every move he made. His hand checked the injuries to his face. "Wha... what happened?"

"I dunno, it happened so fast," the man said. He walked over to try and help him up. His own head was still spinning but he didn't want to spend another second in a turbolift during a blackout.

The second man barely noticed his teammate lifting him to his feet, he was already dizzy and the lack of light wasn't helping. Unknowingly he was guided sideways through the turbolift doors. Once he was through he leaned back against the wall to stabilise himself. The first man climbed out next.

"You okay, buddy?" he asked.

The second man nodded. "Yeah, I'll live."

"Good, we need to get off this deck."

His companion looked around for anything, his eyes fell on the tiny bit of light emanating from the man's torch. It shakily pointed down a corridor. They both decided to follow it.

The further the two men went, the hazier the light got. Both men felt a little cloud of smoke hit their faces, they tried not to breathe it in. They knew they'd have to turn back. The second man was about to but the first held his arm out to stop him.

"We can't, we'll end up back in the turbolift," he said.

He didn't believe him, "what? I don't remember being in one."

"I know, but we were."

"We were talking to that idiot from Team One, we were on Deck Thirteen duty," the second man stated the obvious.

The first man groaned, he only nodded. His eyes went straight ahead. With the light he could still see to the corner, the haziness was light and the smoke was barely tickling his throat. "The smoke doesn't seem that bad, we should keep going."

They continued forward, and sure enough the haziness died down. They both could see no signs of a fire, it actually was starting to get darker the further they went.

Metal creaked in the distance, startling them. They both stopped, desperately looking around for the source of it. Apart from the corridor being black they could see nothing wrong. The man with the torch stepped forward to continue walking. Something fell, the crash echoed down the corridor.

"What was..." the first man stuttered.

The second man heard it. A harsh crackling sound, it came from in front of them. He shushed his companion. "Fire."

"Where, it's so dark, surely we'd see it," the other man argued. When he stopped talking he heard it too. The two men slowly made their way forward, keeping a close eye at the furthest range of the torch's light ahead of them. By this time they had reached the corner.

The further they went the louder the crackling got, yet they could still see nothing but empty corridors. They each thought it was their imagination when the corridor continued to get darker. The second man moved his hand onto the edge of the torch to make sure it wasn't that running out of power. He seemed to slip on something, he quickly stumbled back.

The first man looked at him with wide eyes, but he didn't notice. He forced his partner's torch to point towards the ground. The light barely penetrated the darkness, it was like staring into nothing. The thought unnerved the first man.

"Huh, I thought," the second man stammered.

"What?"

Another crash, only louder, startled them again. It was a lot closer than the last one. The first man swore it came from below him.

"I knew it, slide your foot forward, carefully," the second man said.

He did so. For a second there was nothing wrong, a few more inches and he felt his foot wobble. It dipped, he pulled it back as quick as he could. His whole body trembled.

"Jesus, there's a hole here!" he stuttered. The two men stared down, trying to follow the light as far as it could go. It wasn't far, but they now knew that was the furthest thing from the truth.

### **Engineering:**

Torch lights flew around frantically as the entire staff rushed around.

Harry held his sore head as he approached B'Elanna, lying head to chest inside a computer station.

"She couldn't have done this," he said. All he got was an angry scoff, muffled by the computer. "B'Elanna, she's not Borg anymore. Besides that wall..."

"8472 must have done more damage than we detected. Once we get the power back..." B'Elanna said.

Harry frowned, "8472? But we repaired the damage."

Craig looked over from his spot nearby, he stood guard of the unconscious Seven of Nine. He shrugged, so did Harry.

B'Elanna groaned, "you missed it." Harry cringed at a little crunch inside the computer she was at. "That should do it."

A couple of crewmembers rushed over. "Lieutenant, we've got it."

B'Elanna pulled herself out of the computer. The woman waited until she was sitting up before explaining. "The Borg weapons. The 8472 weapon must have hit the torpedo launcher just as we fired. If we reroute we'll get the power back online."

B'Elanna nodded, "do it." She climbed to her feet, and then quickly followed the two back to where they came from.

Harry sighed, "I'm so sick of getting knocked out, I missed everything."

"At least you didn't nearly get eaten alive by these things," Craig commented.

The two men coughed as the smoke grew more intense.

"It's definitely coming from the hole," the first man wheezed.

His partner agreed, he nodded. "Lets get..."

Red lights flickered back to life around them. Both men sighed in relief to the hum of the ship powering back up. The regular lights soon followed, allowing them to see the smoke hovering around them. That wasn't what they focused on, both their eyes widened at the sight of it. Within inches of their feet was a black abyss. The floor they were standing on was cracked, they quickly stepped backwards away from it.

"What happened?"

A hand flew over the edge of the floor, grabbing it tightly with four fingers. The two men jumped a mile at the sight of it and the loud bang it made. It forced the cracks already there to spread closer to them.

They fought the instinct to back away, instead they rushed forward. The floor creaked in protest. Just as they were about to grab the hand, it seemed to slip back, their hearts skipped a beat in that mere second, but the hand slid back up so its full palm was covering the floor.

"Hurry!" the second man stuttered. The two men got as close as they could to the edge, both of them knelt down to reach the owner of the hand. Only then they noticed they had a much bigger problem on their hands. It didn't deter them though. The first man looked at his companion, he nodded. They both grabbed the arm and began to pull as hard as they could.

The floor groaned, pieces of it began to break off. They tried to ignore it. "I got him!" man one yelled. He leaned over the edge and continued to pull.

"Oh crap, oh crap," man two stuttered as he started to slide further down the hole.

"Forget me, just get him!" the *hand* yelled.

Man one's eyes widened further, he looked towards his sliding partner and followed his arm. He debated it for a very long second, and then quickly grasped the same spot. Even though the hand was still there, the two men dragged a third man from the hole and onto safer ground.

Man one quickly checked the third one, "Fred? Damn." The man's nose was covered in dried blood, what was left of it anyway, it seemed like it been snapped to one side. It wasn't the worst of his injuries though, patches of burns all over his arm made man one's own crawl.

"Come on Jack!" man two snapped at him to get his attention. He had rushed to the hole to grab the arm all over again. He was surprised to see more than the one hand hanging over the edge, another had joined it along with a head and shoulders. He went to pull them up anyway, this time grabbing under his arms. They made it just in time to hear the floor creaking loudly. "A bit more," man two stuttered. The pair clambered away from the cracks.

Man one, Jack, looked across. His eyes were still wide, but he imagined they went wider when he realised who else they had rescued from the hole. "You're... you're that Team One guy who..." Realisation suddenly washed over him, "oh!"

"What?" man two stuttered. He looked over to the man he helped out of the hole on his own. He realised Jack was right. "You were with us. What happened?"

James shook his head, which stung a little with the burns on his face. "Deck Thirteen exploded."

"What?" man two couldn't believe it. He looked around, "isn't this?"

"No, twelve," James replied. He noticed Jack staring at him. "What?"

Jack looked over at the other man they rescued from the hole, then back at him. "You... did you know that would happen?" He pointed towards the hole for emphasis.

"I knew something would," James sighed. Both of the men stared at him, neither of them knew what to think. "I'm sorry but you wouldn't listen to me, I..." He looked across at the other man they rescued from the hole, the guilt evident on his face. "I didn't get him out in time, so it doesn't matter."

Man two edged as close as he could to the hole so he could take a peep down. Even with the lights on still all he could see was black smoke rising from it. Jack continued staring towards James, he was about to speak again when he noticed he had more burns than just on his face. He glanced back at the third guy, mainly focusing on the burns he had as well.

"Yeah," James looked down at the floor. "I tried but..."

Jack turned his head back. "Nah, you're okay. Maybe next time don't smack us with our own rifles, hmm?"

James frowned and his eyes drifted to the right. "Sure, the rifles. I promise." He looked up towards the lights, "wait, power's back?"

"Yup, thankfully," the second man answered.

James shook his head, "I dunno, we should get to a higher deck, just in case."

"Why?" Jack thought out loud. He laughed nervously, "you're right, we already need medical attention." He turned back to the third teammate and rushed over to his side. James and the other Security officer approached as well.

"Hey, how did we get in the turbolift? It's been bugging me," he asked him. James didn't answer, he leaned forward to help Jack pull the other man up. "Maybe we should avoid them this time."

"You're carrying Fred up the ladders then," Jack teased him.

### **The Bridge:**

Kathryn paced back and forth, her shoulders were tense and the screams from her baby weren't helping either. Chakotay tried his best to comfort her. A couple of the back station crewmembers carried the injured Opps officer into the turbolift.

"Damage?" Kathryn said. She looked towards Opps, arming a scowl. "And don't say there's some here and over there."

Jessie matched her scowl with her own. "Deck Fifteen took heavy damage. Our broken warp core's still broken. We have no shields, phaser arrays are fried. The only way we'll be able to fire a torpedo is if somebody went in there and pushed it out." Kathryn sighed angrily, she rolled her eyes and began pacing again. "The biggie is Deck Thirteen. There was a Security team in there when it blew, but there's no lifesigns there now. Good news is Janeway's bitchy mode still works."

Chakotay winced as he shut his eyes. "Don't make it worse."

Kathryn growled at the both of them. "When you say it blew, what damage did it do? I did ask for a damage report after all."

"My bad, I thought you'd want to know about the people we lost, not your precious..." Jessie grumbled. Chakotay cleared his throat loudly to stop her. She sighed to calm herself down, clearly not being affected by the deadly stare Kathryn was giving her. "Lets just say we have no Deck Thirteen. We have a hole full of fires, the fire suppressant system is sorting it out now."

"I hope you didn't kill the people who survived the blast with those fire suppressing forcefields," Kathryn hissed.

Chakotay groaned. "Why do I bother?"

Jessie stared at the Captain blankly. "There were no lifesigns in the spots where the fires are, I already..." She glanced down at the station, "we still have a full crew compliment. Those guys on Thirteen must have evacuated."

"So, no fatalities?" Chakotay sighed in relief. "At last some good news."

"Yes fantastic, we're a sitting duck in the middle of Borg space," Kathryn muttered. She tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Engineering..."

### **Engineering:**

B'Elanna ducked as the ceiling above her sparked violently. The console she was heading for exploded before she got there, she rushed back towards the parallel station by the warp core. It wasn't the only one, panels and other work stations were sparking furiously. Several Engineering staff were trying to extinguish a fire starting at one of the wall stations.

Harry rushed over to her side, he quickly tapped his commbadge. "Kim here, Captain. We don't understand how, but the overload that engulfed Deck Thirteen has spread. We're trying to stop it." The station behind him threw sparks at them, they ducked again.

B'Elanna growled, she slammed her hand on the station she was at. "Damn it! If we don't shut down again, we'll never get control."

*"Shut down? You mean the power. We can't do that in the middle of Borg Space, we're..." Kathryn's voice snapped.*

"If we don't there will be nothing for the Borg to assimilate," B'Elanna grumbled. The warp core hummed as it reactivated itself. No matter what they were doing, everyone looked across at it with their eyes getting wider. "Oh, now you come on."

Harry quickly looked at another station in the area they were in, that wasn't a blackened mess yet. "The power is increasing. We've got no more than sixty seconds."

"The power going off must have been the ship trying to stop this," Craig stuttered. He winced at B'Elanna's resulting glare. "I'll stick to Security stuff." She nodded with a killer look in her eyes.

"We have no choice, Captain. The overload has spread to the core!" she yelled.

They could just make out the sigh on the other side of the comm, over the sound of the warp core powering up. *"Very well. Shut down the power," Kathryn's voice commanded.*

"Once that's done, we'll have to figure out a way to prevent the spread," Harry said.

B'Elanna shook her head, she quickly entered the commands she wanted. The warp core was the first to change, the light in it began to dim and the humming sound faded away. The rest of the lights flickered out one by one. All that was left once again was the torches and the fires.

Harry sighed, "it's going to be a long day."

### **Day Three**

Most of the senior staff gathered around the poorly lit Conference table, each fearing for their lives as a furious looking Kathryn was already sitting there. Even in the dark they could see her steely death glare.

"I'll make this very clear. Anybody who has bad news can just get out now," Kathryn hissed.

Chakotay looked on with worry growing on his face. "Kathryn, it's only been two days..." He swore he saw her eyes literally light up as they looked his way. He swallowed a lump in his throat. "Since the repairs started, I didn't mean the C word."

"My team is in the process of severing all the links to Deck Thirteen, it shouldn't take more than another two days," B'Elanna quickly reported.

"I thought the overload spread to Engineering," Tom said.

B'Elanna stared down at her table, "it had, but that was only because we were still connected to the damaged sections of thirteen."

"That doesn't make any sense," Kathryn hissed. "What did I say?"

"That doesn't make any sense," Jessie answered. Kathryn growled at her.

"I didn't realise that you had a sex change, James," Chakotay said to her.

Jessie narrowed her eyes in his direction but unlike Kathryn, he couldn't tell because of the darkness. Tom meanwhile tried to laugh silently, taking full advantage of it.

"Um, think of it as a broken replicator that's overloading, catching fire. Power is still feeding into it. The computer has fail safes and usually the simplest, quickest thing to do is to cut off the power to it," Harry explained. Something hard hit his head, he flew off his chair. Nobody really saw it, they just heard him grunt and the resulting bang as he hit the floor.

"I was a science officer, don't insult my intelligence you little squirt!" Kathryn snarled.

"I don't think that was the part she was complaining about, Harry," B'Elanna said, turning to him. That was when she noticed he was no longer sitting next to her. "Oh. Um, we still don't have all the answers. Just in case we've severed the damaged systems in Engineering as well. We won't know if we're right until we reactivate the power."

"Maybe you should just power up the important things," Kathryn said.

"Yeah like the replicator in your office and your coffee machine," Jessie muttered.

"Seriously, I can no longer tell you two apart," Chakotay commented while face palming. "How much time did you spend with James during your sick leave?"

Jessie was about to answer but was distracted by Tom clicking his tongue twice. "It's none of your business but..." Tom did it again. Everyone heard another couple of bangs as well as Tom joined Harry on the floor. "But... very little. He was working nights the whole time."

"Great, so you thought that we were in dire need of a smart ass to annoy me?" Kathryn hissed. "I already have Parasite, and James is back on day shift. Speaking of him, where is he?"

"Have you forgotten about our Borg drone already?" Chakotay asked.

Kathryn groaned, "yes I had!" She slammed her hands down on the desk, startling everyone, including Tuvok. "Okay so two more days of this. Anymore to report?"

"I would but you said no more bad news," Kes said quietly.

"Great, all of our meetings should be like this. Get out," Kathryn said. Nobody dared to move. "I didn't just mean her, I mean everyone."

"Kathryn, our babysitter will need to be relieved very soon, and trust me, you don't want his replacement," Chakotay said.

**Meanwhile:**

"Aaaw who's a little cutie pu-tu-teey. You are, yes you are!" Neelix cooed towards the baby carrier. He seemed to be oblivious to the screams emanating from it.

Craig stood nearby, looking very uncomfortable. "Uh, maybe you can go to my shift instead of me, since you have nothing to do during the power cut."

Neelix glanced up, his face had lit up. "Me, Security? Hmm." He went into a daze thinking about it. Craig quickly snatched the baby away while he was doing that, and ran for the nearest open door.

**Conference Room:**

Tuvok shuddered quite violently. "Something horrible has happened."

Kathryn sighed. "Fine, but I'm only doing it instead of you cos she obviously likes me better." She stomped off through the already open door, muttering under her breath.

"Shocking," Jessie commented.

Chakotay tried not to smirk. "Okay, maybe we can have the bad news now. Kes?"

"Not news, information," Kes said quietly. "I believe I am responsible for what happened here." Everyone stared at her with a shocked expression on their faces.

"Wait a minute. Species 8472 attacked us, they did some heavy damage to our weapon systems as we were firing. How could you possibly be responsible for that?" Chakotay tried to reassure her.

Kes glanced over to Tuvok, "Seven of Nine was trying to contact the Borg. I tried to stop her."

*Tuvok couldn't believe what he was seeing. The candle they were using for the meditation was shimmering. Its entire structure was like liquid being sloshed around in a container. Eventually it settled back to normal.*

*"The Borg," Kes said, her gaze seemed out of the room. "She's trying to contact her people." Her body swung around in his direction.*

*Tuvok slapped his commbadge, at the same time the Red Alert klaxon sounded and the red lights began flashing.*

*"Wait! I think I can stop her," Kes calmly said.*

*Her demeanor was calm, Tuvok could only watch and wait. The floor at their feet trembled, then the ship jerked to one side, throwing them both onto the floor. The candle fell as well, setting the carpet ablaze.*

*Kes gasped as she felt her power coursing through her, she saw it.*

*Seven of Nine lay on the ground as the walls around her fluttered in the non-existent breeze. Kes tried to stop it from spreading further, her energy drained. She could only watch as it neared an open panel.*

The whole room was in an awkward silence. Even Tom was keeping his mouth shut, though that probably was because he had been knocked onto the floor earlier.

B'Elanna decided it would be her that would break the silence. "The overload started on Deck Thirteen, you couldn't..."

Kes shook her head, "no. I altered the structure of that entire room. You said the overloads spread to Engineering, what if they didn't? What if they only reacted with Thirteen from the systems I affected."

"Kes, the overload started on Thirteen. I'm sure of it," Jessie said.

Kes sighed, "I'm not. I caused it, or I aggravated it. That much I'm certain of. I wanted to stop it and I only made things worse."

"The overloads began after you were unconscious," Tuvok pointed out. "I do not believe you are correct."

"It doesn't matter. Our priority now is to stay in one piece until the power is back online. We can worry about other details later," Chakotay said. He looked around the room. "Without the Doctor we can't have people getting sick, does anyone else here know how to cook?" Tom raised his hand as he sat back in his seat, his other hand cradled the bump on his head. "We're doomed."

"It's not finding a cook that's the problem, it's getting rid of Neelix. Surely there's something we can distract him with," Jessie said.

Tuvok shuddered again, "there it is again."

## **Day Four**

Kathryn stared ahead of her without blinking. After a few minutes she narrowed her eyes instead.

Seven of Nine finally blinked, and then looked to the Security team in the room. James just shrugged. "You won't get used to it," he said. The other members of his team shook their heads.

"I'm waiting," Kathryn said coldly.

Seven of Nine turned her attention back to her. "Explain."

Kathryn's eyebrows both twitched, one hand went to her hip. At the same time the rest of James' team stepped backwards, whimpering slightly.

"Why did you betray us? Good god," Kathryn groaned.

"You were not deceived, Captain Janeway. I intended to help you," Seven of Nine responded.

Kathryn scoffed, "really? Remind me never to give you a job on this ship."

"I only took advantage of an opportunity to contact the collective," Seven of Nine said.

"Oh is that all? You're free to go!" Kathryn snapped.

"I do not believe you're sincere," Seven of Nine said.

"Christ, you and him will get along swimmingly," Kathryn muttered, gesturing her head James' way. He rolled his eyes.

"You will not assimilate this drone. Your attempts are fut..." Seven of Nine said. Kathryn shushed her to shut her up, but she continued. "Ill." Kathryn trembled with rage. "Nor are your attempts to change how we speak."

"And we're back to we," Kathryn groaned. "If you were really *they*, you'd say futile like the rest of the bloody collective does." She breathed in and out to try to calm herself down. "Look I'm not as excited to have you on my ship anymore than you are, but you're going to die without further treatments. I don't see the problem myself. Why am I here again?" She glanced at the team for an answer.

"Um, Borg crewmember equals advantage?" Thompson stuttered.

Kathryn growled as she glared at him. "Get the hell out of my sight." Thompson was already gone before she even said *get*.

"You are no different than the Borg. You imprison us in the name of humanity, you..." Seven of Nine growled.

"Blah blah, I imprisoned you because you would have gotten us killed. You still could," Kathryn interrupted. She grinned, "oh, that's why I'm here. Did you get a message to the Borg?"

"No," Seven of Nine coldly responded. "But you would not believe us anyway."

"True. But it took me four bloody hours to get here and I need the bathroom, which is another two hours away I think. I wasn't going to leave until I got an answer and I'm not in a good mood," Kathryn rambled.

"Nah, that's too easy," James said to himself. The remaining team looked at him with wide eyes.

Kathryn's growl echoed around the room, it unnerved the two Security officers. "Kes is on her way here to see if any implants are risking your health, she'll try to remove them with what tools she has if there are. Until power's back that's all that we can do. Hopefully those giant bazongas of yours will go as well."

"We will resist," Seven of Nine hissed.

"Fine, resist," Kathryn shrugged her shoulders. She gestured her head in the Security team's direction, "it'll give them something to do." She turned to walk towards the nearby door.

Craig and Foster meanwhile stared at each other with wide eyes, they then directed the same look to James, expecting the same. He only shrugged. "Does anything faze you?" Craig stuttered.

"Nothing really tops Janeway so..." James answered.

"Ahem," Kathryn fake coughed from the exit. The team looked over to see her standing in between the doors, eyeing up the few dents in it. She looked across at them, smiling for once. "How sweet." With that she walked out of sight.

"Um, how are we supposed to stop her if she resists?" Foster stuttered.

Craig shrugged, he looked down at his phaser rifle. "My plan is to throw this at her and run. If you can think of something better, be my guest."

"Or you could try firing it, I know it's crazy but it might work better," James said not sincerely.

Craig glanced back at Foster, "is he always..."

"Yes," he whispered back.

James rolled his eyes, he noticed Seven of Nine staring their way while he was doing it. He turned his head to one side to get a better look.

"What if she adapted to it, we'd be dead or Borg and she'd be out of here," Craig argued.

Foster didn't look so sure, "not after one shot, surely. Besides she's lost a lot of the junk, maybe she won't adapt at all."

Craig glanced back towards James, noticing him looking towards Seven of Nine. He did so too. The blank stare she was sending their way gave him the chills. "If she wanted to escape, why hasn't she?"

"You prefer that she'd get it over with instead of making you nervous?" Foster tried to snigger, but he was still too worried.

"It just feels like she's waiting for something, a weakness or something. I'd prefer it if the power was back on. I miss forcefields," Craig replied.

"I miss replicators," Foster commented, pulling a disgusted face. "I was so hungry I tried Neelix's gazpacho soup." Craig shrivelled his nose up and tried to repress a gag. "I know but those rations make me ill."

"You are not like them," Seven of Nine said.

James sighed and shook his head, he took a few steps forward towards her. "We're individuals, we're different. You should try it."

"We did not mean that," Seven of Nine said. "You took us from the Borg."

"You were trying to get us assimilated. It's not as nice as you thought, was it?" James said.

Seven of Nine's only eye narrowed slightly. "Return us and we will spare your vessel."

James tried not to smirk but not well enough. "In case you haven't noticed, Voyager's not going anywhere or doing anything for that matter. Neither are you."

"You will be added to our own," Seven of Nine threatened.

"Go ahead, try," James said. Meanwhile Craig and Foster shook their heads with wide eyes, mouthing *no*.

Seven of Nine armed her own death glare, the team wondered if she had copied it from Kathryn as it made them extremely nervous. "The Borg will come for you, your efforts here are worthless."

"Giving up on saying futile, are we?" James commented. He shook his head. "The Borg won't come for us. Look at us; the ship's a wreck, it's outdated compared to other Starfleet ships you assimilated, our crew obviously have too many nutjobs to make it worthwhile, and their ex drone is just a whiny coward who can't function without them."

James or Seven of Nine didn't notice Foster and Craig quickly back out of the doors and hide behind them. "We can guard outside," Foster said.

"Sure," Craig nodded.

Seven of Nine didn't say anything, she turned away from him and started pacing back and forth. Her fists clenched tightly.

"Neelix, I swear to all the gods that if you don't stop doing that, I'll rip your whiskers off!"

Neelix quickly stopped leaning on the console behind the command seats, and straightened back up. "Rude."

Chakotay returned his attention to his daughter who had settled right down now that Neelix had moved. She quickly dozed off in his arms.

"Did you ever figure out how she well, you know, appeared?" Tom asked.

Chakotay's head flew up. He hadn't noticed Tom approach him, he was so close he was almost sitting on his lap. He even had the nerve to be leaning over to get a better look.

"Normally I'd say the obvious, but Janeway's not exactly someone you'd..." Tom said, slowly realising that Chakotay had spotted him. He smiled nervously and backed away, still hunched over.

"Kiara's a miracle, that's all I can say," Chakotay grumbled at him.

Tom straightened up as well, smirking away. "Ah, Janeway did a Seska. I wouldn't want people knowing that happened again either."

Neelix's face softened, "aaaw what a lovely name. Where did you get the idea for it?"

"Maybe it's a sort of coffee brand or type," Tom mused.

Neelix shook his head, "don't be silly, it's obviously a tribe name."

"How would you know?" Tom scoffed.

Chakotay rolled his eyes as the argument made his daughter stir, she began to whimper.

"Well it sounds like a Chakotay type name," Neelix countered.

"It sounds like a juice actually," Tom said.

"Why would they name her after a juice?" Neelix argued.

The baby began to cry, stopping them both in the middle of their argument. They noticed the look on Chakotay's face and thought it was the best time to crawl through a few Jeffries tubes. He sighed in relief once they both disappeared down the hatch.

Seven of Nine's chest heaved each time she breathed in and out deeply, her eyes flashed with rage. Fists would clench and unclench with each breath. She paced until she could take it no more. With a growl deep in her throat, she launched herself towards what was in her way. With a desperate scream she attacked.

Kes was exhausted. She had climbed down so many ladders and crawled through one too many tubes. All that was left was a short walk down a corridor. She expected to see people standing outside her destination, but she saw no one. She picked up her pace even though her feet were complaining to reach the open doors to the Cargo Bay. Once Kes arrived she realised what had happened.

Craig was the first to notice her. He gave her a worried glance. Kes slowly made her way inside, glancing briefly at Foster who stood nervously by the door, aiming his phaser rifle. She kept a close eye on the direction he was pointing as she made her way over to Craig.

"She flipped out," Craig mumbled, shaking his head.

Kes only nodded, she knelt down beside him. Craig did the opposite so he could do the same as Foster.

"That's putting it mildly," James commented. His hand went up to his head, Kes quickly pushed it aside. The medical kit she had brought opened up on its own, the regenerator flew into her hand. The Security team had all seen her do something like this before, but they were still surprised to see it. She brought the device to the deep scratch on James' cheek and activated it.

"How did you stop her?" Kes asked, glancing briefly behind her. She was surprised that the ex-drone was still conscious and still in the Cargo Bay. Seven of Nine even appeared calm, she felt no anger from her. She figured it would be a lot harder for the boys to know this as she stood with her back to them.

Craig glanced towards Foster, he shrugged. "We're not entirely sure. We heard her screaming, we charged in..." He turned back to look at Kes, "well one of us did."

"Good of you to admit it, Craig," Foster said. Craig scoffed and shook his head.

Kes finished her treatment. She turned on her heel while still kneeling to look at the drone.

"It probably didn't help when the genius here started pissing her off," Craig sighed.

Foster's eyes widened again. "Dude, there can be worse things than ex Borg drones flipping out." Craig passed him a confused face. Foster was relieved when he saw James only smirking at their comments.

"I was just trying to help," he said. The pair stared at him bewilderedly. James pointed towards the ex-drone, "it did, didn't it?"

Kes heard the drone whisper, "one." She turned her head back to James with a frown on her face.

"You know I'm no good at tact," he said with a small smile.

Kes smiled back, she pulled herself up onto her feet. "No."

"One. I am one," Seven of Nine said through her tears. "I cannot function alone. I..." Kes sensed her pain even without the words. Harsh as it sounded, it was progress.

## **Day Five**

B'Elanna had double checked everything, it had cost another few hours but after the last time she had to be sure. She looked towards Harry as he went to man one of the Engineering stations. He nodded, she did the same.

"All right everyone, it's time."

Lights flickered to life, each one lighting up a piece of the silver hull. It only took a few seconds for the saucer to be visible once again, the bottom half of the ship remained lost in the darkness.

"Status?" Kathryn ordered.

*"We've got a few more overloads, we're isolating them from the power grid," B'Elanna's voice responded.*

Some of the bridge crew winced at the sound of another console sparking out of control. Tom pushing his chair backwards made them realise it wasn't coming from Engineering. The viewscreen powered down as it spat sparks in his direction.

"B'Elanna, we're getting one here!" he warned.

*"Confirmed. Overloads on Deck Five to One," Harry's voice stuttered.*

"Damn it," Kathryn hissed while she covered her face.

Chakotay tapped his commbadge, "Bridge to Sickbay, get the Doctor on his mobile emitter. We may have to power down again."

*"Acknowledged," Kes' voice said.*

Tom quickly got out of his chair and rushed over to the command centre. Seconds later the screen started to crack under the strain.

Kathryn's head shot up as she heard the ceiling above her groan. Her hand grabbed Chakotay's arm and pulled him over to her side of the Bridge. He looked just in time for sparks to start flying from above. "I'll check Kiara," he said before rushing for the Ready Room.

The ceiling continued to groan, cracks began to form. "B'Elanna if you cannot isolate it, we'll have to..."

*"Standby, we've almost got it!" B'Elanna's voice screamed.*

Everyone's heads turned towards the centre of the bridge as the groans intensified, followed by a loud bang. The cracks got longer and deeper, the bulkhead couldn't hang on any longer. The huge piece of metal slammed down to the ground in front of Opps. Even though she had a console between her and it, Jessie backed away as far as she could.

"B'Elanna!" Kathryn snapped.

### **Engineering:**

"That's it, it's just a minor system. Shutting it down," B'Elanna said as her fingers flew across her station. "Viewscreen, primary lights..." she mumbled as she worked. "There."

Harry glanced over with a look of horror on his face, he gestured for someone to cut off the comm signal. B'Elanna did so. "I've had to shut off the replicator systems, once one was infected that was it."

"Great, Janeway will have our heads," B'Elanna groaned. She reactivated the comm. "Captain, everything that's infected have been shut down. Everything else is stable."

*"What do we have left?" Kathryn asked the question they dreaded.*

B'Elanna looked around at the still darkened Engineering. She sighed before answering. "We've got emergency lighting. I'd recommend keeping that on all decks, just in case. We can use the independent power systems to keep everything running while we do repairs on the damaged systems. I think shields and propulsion are our top priority."

*"So lights and stations, is that what your answer is?" Kathryn's voice asked.*

B'Elanna winced, she noticed that through her avoidy answer. "No, we still have a few systems operational, obviously like communications. Sickbay for example should be fine, but I recommend keeping the Doc on his emitter until we fix this cos we still don't know why the overloads spread."

*"Very well, keep me informed. Bridge out," Kathryn's voice said.*

B'Elanna sighed in relief when the comm made the cut off noise. "Okay, listen up everyone. Obviously the top priorities are to fix the major systems as soon as possible, but we need to find out what caused this in the first place. I need one team to help me investigate this, while the rest of you need to continue repairs. Any volunteers?" Only Harry raised his hand, everyone else looked at the closest person with concern and for some, exhaustion. "All right, that's fine, the more on the repairs the better. Split into shifts and take a long break, okay. We'll get started afterwards." Her staff nodded, they were all relieved at that.

Harry walked over to her, he did look as tired as everyone else but he had his usual eager expression on his face. "Perhaps we should start at the source."

B'Elanna nodded, "Deck Thirteen."

"Nah, Species 8472's attack must have been the trigger for whatever happened on Thirteen, but..." Harry said.

"Their weapon hit Deck Fifteen, lets go," B'Elanna agreed.

## Day Eight

The Doctor beamed at his latest achievement. It was his finest work and he was so sure that even in a cranky mood, the Captain would be able to see that. He waited for the incoming compliments.

"What is this?" Kathryn asked.

She was obviously so taken back by his genius she was lost for words, the pride on his face grew. The Doctor continued to wait for her to collect her thoughts.

"Do you honestly expect me to accept this?" Kathryn snapped at him.

The Doctor almost grinned, she was getting modest. Here comes the compliments.

"Where's her bloody clothes!?" Kathryn hissed at him.

His proud smile continued for a few seconds until he realised that what she said, couldn't be taken another way. He turned to look towards the Captain at his side, it was plain to see that she wasn't going to compliment him anytime soon. His mobile emitter melted away from the intensity of her gaze. "Captain?"

Kathryn didn't move her stare away from him, she pointed in front of her.

"Oh," the Doctor wasn't sure how she was getting confused or angry for that matter. "You mean the Borg implants? I've removed about 80% of them, there would have been more if I had more power..." Kathryn's stare managed to get worse, he didn't know how that was possible. "She's stable, the remaining bio-implants are no threat to her."

Kathryn slowly turned her head back to in front of her. The woman standing in front of her gazed at her through steely blue eyes, but all Kathryn could see was the tight, grey outfit that covered her from neck to toe. It didn't leave much to the imagination, and it didn't help that four inch heels were apart of the suit.

"Why is she naked and in heels, you sick fu..." Kathryn grumbled.

The Doctor's eyes widened, he quickly butt in, "Fashion, of course, is hardly my forte. Nevertheless..."

"You don't say! At least give her a dress or just a tracksuit. What's the matter with you?" Kathryn demanded.

The Doctor glanced at the woman, then back at Kathryn. He obviously wasn't seeing what she was seeing. "She's wearing a bodysuit. I've managed to balance functionality and aesthetics in a pleasing enough manner, don't you think?"

"It is acceptable," Seven of Nine added on.

Kathryn scoffed, luckily because of Seven of Nine's huge heels she didn't spit in her face when she did so. It just sprayed across her huge chest. "It was you who got Kes that stupid velvet catsuit, wasn't it?"

The Doctor shook his head. "I never said catsuit and of course not. I wouldn't give a woman a catsuit to wear, it's degrading."

Kathryn's eyes widened, her eyes were as dangerous as the scowl on her face. The Doctor shuffled backwards out of harm's way. "Jesus Christ, don't you think it was bad enough when she was walking around in tight leather?"

"Um, I've also stimulated your hair follicles," the Doctor said in Seven of Nine's direction.

"You stimulated her what!?" Kathryn's voice boomed.

The Doctor tried to ignore her. "I figured that only I really suit the bald look, don't you agree?" He sighed as the joke obviously went over Seven of Nine's head and bounced off Kathryn's angry aura. "You'll need to continue using a Borg alcove to regenerate and intake energy, at least until you're able to sleep and eat like everyone else. I don't know what we'll do when we have another power cut though."

"Understood," Seven of Nine nodded.

"Where did you even get that thing? The replicators are off," Kathryn muttered whilst staring at Seven of Nine.

"Captain I've finished my report," the Doctor stuttered.

Kathryn huffed, "about damn time, yeesh!" She turned around and stomped off.

"You'll get used to her," the Doctor lied. Seven raised her mechanical eyebrow in response.

"B'Elanna and Harry have returned from Deck Twelve to report on the damage there," Chakotay was in the middle of saying. "From her tone I don't think we're any closer to figuring out what happened."

"You believe Kes' theory has some merit?" Tuvok stated.

This stopped Chakotay in his tracks, Tuvok stopped as well and walked over to stand in front of him. "No, I thought you could rebut it."

"I could not find any damage or evidence of any kind on the sections Kes claimed she affected, Commander," Tuvok said.

Chakotay sighed a little in relief, "so she didn't cause this."

"My results are inconclusive at best," Tuvok said.

Chakotay shook his head, "we know that it happened at the same time, but that's it. It's probably a coincidence."

"There is more however," Tuvok added on. Chakotay sighed, he should have seen that one coming. "Seven of Nine was accessing systems in the same junction, and there was an incident on Deck Thirteen before the blast."

"What kind of incident?" Kathryn questioned, her eyes warned him not to answer.

Chakotay's shoulders tensed up, he turned slightly to one side so he could only see the station. While he entered in the commands he thought he heard a sipping sound. His head shook it off. "Okay, here." They both looked to the large schematic of Voyager. His finger pointed towards the lower part of the ship, near the front landing strut. "Point of impact was here, right?" His finger slid along the belly of the ship towards the centre, and then edged up slightly. "Opps detected an energy surge here."

"That better not be Deck Thirteen," Kathryn muttered. Chakotay swore he heard another sip.

"It is," Chakotay reluctantly said. "The only problem is the sensors are off-line at the moment, we got this from opps' memory. So we have no idea when exactly it occurred. All we do know is it happened right before the explosion."

"That's very close to the intermix chamber," Kathryn mused. Her voice sounded a lot calmer despite what she said.

"And it's the deck above the antimatter storage, which is here," Chakotay said, only moving his finger down a tad. "If this was the real source of the explosion, we wouldn't be talking about it now."

"Hmm." Another sip. Chakotay decided to turn to face her just to see the next one happening. Kathryn's eyes were a lot softer, that was the first thing he noticed. The second was the cup in her hands. "What?" She looked down at her cup, "relax, it's just crummy decaf."

"How did you heat it up?" he dared to ask.

Kathryn's eyes shifted to one side and then back again. "The filter machine, I just put water in it. I put the decaf in the cup and sat it underneath... I don't need to explain anything to you!"

"Uh huh, if that were true, you would have used the real thing," Chakotay said. He moved a little closer to sniff the air, he frowned. "That is decaf."

"I told you," Kathryn smiled smugly. "Replicators are down, our daughter needs to be fed. I can't have the real thing while I do that. You warned me about that months ago. I'm not stupid."

"All right, fine. Maybe the decaf is acting as a placebo, I'm sorry," Chakotay said, but he wasn't too sure about it.

"Good, now get on with the report," Kathryn said before sipping her fake coffee.

"I'm afraid that's it. It wasn't the source of the explosion, but we can't rule it out as being apart of it. All we do know is look..." Chakotay said, pointing his finger back to where it was before. "It was here, directly below Engineering."

Kathryn nodded, "where everything else happened. Good work." She finished her cup, but she still tried to take a sip from it. After double checking it she pouted, and placed it to one side. "Arrange a meeting tomorrow at 1700, I think it's time we..." They both heard a smash come from her Ready Room, Kathryn's eyes widened. "Ohno."

Before Chakotay could ask she was gone in a puff of smoke. Reluctantly he followed, shaking his head. Screams greeted him at the door. He shook his head and walked straight back out.

"Commander?" Tuvok got his attention. He glanced over to where the Jeffries tube hatch was, he just spotted the Vulcan climb out of it. "Seven of Nine has requested to help with the repairs."

"Great. You're the chief of Security, I'll leave it up to you whether you want guards to be around her at all times," Chakotay sighed.

"The Captain doesn't think it is necessary. However she did say she should avoid the Jeffries tube hatches, or her melons will get stuck." Chakotay and a few others on the bridge started smirking. "I told her that if she has found any food supplies, she would share them with the crew and she wouldn't carry them with her in the Jeffries tubes. She can be so illogical at times."

"Don't worry about it, nobody likes melons that large. Well maybe Tom does," Chakotay sniggered.

Tom looked up from his station and turned his head to look behind him. "Tom does what?"

"Maybe Tom would want to babysit my daughter as he can't exactly fly, or do anything useful to help out either," Chakotay said.

Tom swiveled his chair around, a grin spread across his face. "Commander, I'm honoured and insulted at the same time." He shrugged, "I don't care, I'll take what I can get."

"Good, she's asleep in the Ready Room," Chakotay smiled.

Tom didn't say anything else, he got straight up and rushed towards the Ready Room. As soon as the doors opened his face turned extremely white.

Kathryn's head shot up, her mouth was covered in a brown sludge, so was her right hand which was by her lips. The same brown stuff was all over the carpet, but mixed in with broken glass. Sitting nearby was bits of black plastic as well, with light smoke drifting from it. A cable running from the laptop on the desk was plugged into it, but that part of it appeared to be melted.

"Don't look at me! Get out!" Kathryn screeched as her left hand flew up to cover her face. Tom quickly did as he was told but not fast enough. Her right hand swung in his direction, the slop in its palm flew at him. The door didn't close quickly enough and it splat across the back of his head.

Chakotay tried not to laugh as Tom's face was priceless, his bottom lip trembled like he was going to cry. "Oh yeah, I knew I was forgetting something."

"I... I didn't do anything! God you're a jerk," Tom grumbled. His hand went up to wipe the sludge from his head. He stupidly brought it to his face to smell it, he shuddered as the odour flew up his nose and down into his throat. "Oh god, this is Neelix's. Why would she brew it?"

"Desperate times," Chakotay sighed. He burst into giggles again. "Kiara's in the Conference." Tom stared at him with eyes narrowed. "I'm serious this time."

## Day Twelve

The Voyager schematic on the back console now had several parts of it highlighted in various colours. B'Elanna was busy pointing towards Deck Two, while everyone else in the senior staff had huddled around her so they could see it.

"Thank... *unfortunately* the stoves and other kitchen equipment will have to remain off-line," she was saying. Neelix tried to blink away a few tears, everyone else of course were thankful to get some good news. "The rest of the deck is fine." Her finger pointed at several decks underneath, "a few of the crew quarters are infected here, here and here. I'd recommend against using the affected quarters, until repairs can be made. Those people will probably have to share quarters with volunteers for the time being."

Chakotay pointed his own finger in the general direction of the lower half of the ship. "I see that most of the red's are localised here. Maybe we should focus on the major issues first."

"I'm almost there anyway," B'Elanna almost growled. She shook her head and returned to the schematics. "Deck Six, the only overload here was Stellar Cartography. I've had to shut it all down. Is that red enough for you, Commander?" Her finger rested on one of the few red patches on the saucer.

"Stellar Cartography sounds orange at best," Craig dared to say, he regretted it immediately. B'Elanna's growls were getting louder.

"Um without that and navigation control being a bit wonky, we'll have a hell of a time getting through the rest of Borg space," Tom butted in. "Once we get the engines back anyway."

Harry smiled that eager smile, everyone who saw it groaned to themselves. "Perhaps our new crewmember can help."

"The Borg?" B'Elanna spat. "Why would she help us?"

"She already is. I've assigned her to a repair team detail on Deck Twelve," Chakotay sighed. B'Elanna stared at him with wide eyes and her jaw dropped. He quickly pointed at the red parts of the schematic again, "relax, what can she do with no power?"

"What do you suggest, Ensign?" Tuvok tried to get everyone back on track.

"Well she'd know more about the Delta Quadrant than anyone else on this ship," Harry replied. Neelix huffed and folded his arms. "If anyone knows the safest route out of Borg Space, it's her."

"We don't have anywhere to chart a path though, or a way to use it," Tom pointed out.

Harry sighed but he didn't let his smile escape. "That's the point. Stellar Cartography is great when you're in an area of space you already have charted. Here it wasn't much use. I suggest that if we need to repair the whole lab, we might as well start from scratch."

Chakotay shrugged, "fine, go ask her." Harry's smile was defeated, he turned sickly pale. "What's wrong?"

"Me, er... the last time we met, she cracked my skull," Harry stuttered.

Tom tried not to smirk as he turned to his best friend. "That just means she's already fitting into Voyager, what's the problem?"

"She didn't hit you," Harry muttered back.

"It's your idea, your project. Who better to ask her?" Chakotay didn't try, a smirk filled his face.

"Great, er yes sir," Harry mumbled.

B'Elanna shook her head, it was obvious she was a lot less happy about it than even Harry was. She turned back to the schematic. "Engineering's mostly shut down as the overload seemed to spread there first." She turned her head to give Chakotay a little stare as her finger moved to the red area of the ship, then looked back at it. "The entire red patch here is now off limits, only to repair personnel. There's a chance that even the life support systems could overload."

"So the entirety of Decks Thirteen to Fifteen have no power at all?" Tom questioned bewilderedly

"That's not it," B'Elanna said. Her finger went to the dark red in the middle of it all. "Thirteen is considered Hazard Level Twelve. No one is allowed there until the Captain gives us the all clear."

"Like it wasn't already," Jessie commented from behind everyone. A few people looked back at her as she wasn't there before.

"You're a little late," Chakotay said.

Jessie shrugged, "do you have any idea how long it takes to crawl from Engineering to here?"

"Where's James?" Chakotay asked.

Jessie groaned and rolled her eyes. "He's not attached to my hip you know. How would I know?" Tom sniggered quietly but not enough, Jessie narrowed her eyes at him.

"Ookay, we need to have a chat about your recent attitude, Jessie. It's not like you can use the same excuse as last year," Chakotay grumbled.

"I don't really have much else to report anyway, other than an estimated time," B'Elanna quickly cut in.

"This should be good," Tom smirked.

B'Elanna managed one herself, "if we include Deck Thirteen's complete refit, eighteen months. That's if we don't have anymore problems with it."

Chakotay covered his face with both hands. As he moved them back down to where they were, he had to ask, "and without?"

"Three months, but that's before Harry's Stellar Cartography refit idea," B'Elanna replied. "It may be shorter if we can get the right systems back online, but it still could be longer if they overload again. It's really hard to tell."

"Well, might as well make some bets on it," Tom said, ending with a grin. Chakotay nudged him in the arm with his elbow, his hand flew up to comfort it. "Ow, really?"

"Replicators are down, we're living on rations and whatever crap Neelix and Kes have grown in the Cargo Bay before the Borg assimilated the crops. The last thing we want is people betting their lack of food away," Chakotay explained in a harsh tone.

"Nah nah, winners can't collect until replicators are back," Tom said. Everyone, including Tuvok, groaned loudly. "Come on, after all that's happened we could all do with something to lighten the mood."

"By betting on when we'll get food back?" Harry muttered.

Tom shrugged, "well if you want, but I didn't say that exactly."

Kes raised her hand slightly. "Um, what was that about me growing *crap*?"

"Sorry, I'm only saying that because it's mainly Neelix who brings back every seed he can find on every planet," Chakotay softly said. "You do great with what you've got. Dunno what we'd do without you."

"Starve, obviously," Jessie answered.

Chakotay just nodded, mostly everybody did. The corner of Kes' lips curved a little, "all right. I moved the Hydroponics to Cargo Bay One, so we should get some fresh vegetables again as soon as we can get the light fixtures working again."

"Don't worry, I've got people on that. Next to the warp core and shields, it's top priority," B'Elanna said. "I didn't at first as the last thing I wanted to do was encourage Neelix to cook, but then Harry noticed the damage to the Mess Hall."

Harry nodded, meanwhile Neelix was in tears again thinking about his beloved kitchen. "Hopefully he can't screw up salads and sandwiches."

"Hey, surely you've noticed that I'm right here," Neelix huffed.

Chakotay ignored him, "sandwiches? Where do you get the bread from exactly?"

"Oh," Harry's smile faded again. "just salads then."

Tom leaned in closer to Chakotay to whisper in his ear, "it's okay, I've already chucked the leola root away."

"Where?" Chakotay whispered back.

Tom smiled proudly, "where else? Where only fools dare to go."

### **Meanwhile:**

Seven of Nine raised her regular eyebrow as she stared towards the hole in the floor. A forcefield had covered the whole thing, as well as blocked any entry to the large cracks in the floor. The deck below

was completely black. She turned her head to look behind her at the rest of her team, one of them was keeping a nervous eye on her while the others worked.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Somebody is on that deck," Seven of Nine replied.

The man looked towards the hole, he shook his head. "No, no one should be. The life support is off and it's a mess down there, trust me."

"That appears to be incorrect as I saw someone," Seven of Nine said.

The man again looked, but all he could see was black. He frowned at the ex drone suspiciously. "I doubt that, even space would be brighter than that."

"You're wrong," Seven of Nine stated.

"I'm not. No one is allowed there and it hasn't been creepy in months," the man said.

"Creepy?" Seven of Nine was confused.

The man shook his head, "long story. Can we please get back to work?"

"As you wish," Seven of Nine sighed. She returned to repairing the smaller cracks in the floor.

### **The Bridge:**

Chakotay groaned, "if we end up with mutant leola root monsters, I'm sending you down as fodder."

Tom's smile faded, "but... Deck Thirteen doesn't mutate things."

"Anyway that's all for now," B'Elanna butted in. "Lets hope the Borg don't like to waste their time on assimilating damaged ships."

Tuvok nodded, "indeed, but there's a possibility of a Species 8472 attack as well."

"That was probably a lone revenge attack," Chakotay said. "I'll give the damage report to the Captain, when she's done with trying to grow her own coffee plants with old crumbs of granules and a phaser light source." Everyone but obviously Tuvok tried not to laugh at the image. "For now it's important we keep calm and have some hope. We'll get through this."

### **Day Fifteen**

Her whole body trembled, her hands clutched desperately to the poor stressed armrests. With a determined gaze straight ahead of her, she snarled the infamous words, "time's up!"

Everyone quickly ducked for cover from the incoming explosion, but they couldn't hide. Anybody close by would be exposed to the lethal fires, and the tremors would effect the entire ship within minutes.

"Too bad," were the words no one wanted to hear. A pile of broken plastic and glass were dumped at the Captain's feet. "I can't fix it, you need a new one."

Kathryn growled and her eyes narrowed. B'Elanna bravely stood her ground.

"You're an ace Engineer, and you can't put together a simple coffee filter?" Tom tried to help, immediately regretting it. Both women scowled in his direction. "I'll be on Deck Twelve, that's a good two hours away." He scampered off.

"I could, but the jug is in tiny pieces. Any coffee brewed into it would just leak even if I did put it back together," B'Elanna explained. She decided to leave before she was attacked.

"Hmph, bloody useless. Can't even fix a defibrillator, how can she fix a bloody starship," Kathryn grumbled.

Chakotay tried his best not to laugh in fear of his life. "Percolator, Kathryn. Defibrillator is something we'll need to use on you if you don't calm down."

Kathryn's eyes widened, "do you have one?" She grabbed his shoulders and shook him violently. "Why did you hide it from me? Give it, give it, give it!"

"Captain..." Tuvok spoke up to stop her. The crewmembers nearby shushed him.

"Please don't, it's the only entertainment we have," one pleaded with him. He raised both of his eyebrows in response. Harry overheard and shrugged.

"The man's right, there's not much else to do around here," he said.

"Weren't you supposed to be rebuilding the Stellar Cartography lab?" Tuvok questioned. He walked around the group who probably wished they had popcorn, and approached him.

Harry grinned, "actually that's Astrometrix Lab. The X I thought sounded cool." Tuvok stared at him, he thought his face couldn't get anymore blank than it usually is, but he was wrong. "Or Astrometrics, it sounds mostly the same anyway. Whatever floats your boa... but anyway, I was but Seven of Nine said she had something else to do."

"What?" Tuvok asked.

"I wouldn't worry about that, she's not that Borg drone anymore. She's actually kind of sweet and chatty," Harry said.

Kathryn pushed Chakotay to one side, she groaned in disgust. "Oh god, Harry's crushing on the blonde bimbo with the Barbie boobs. What a shock!" Harry pouted like a child. Chakotay meanwhile fell onto the floor as the five minutes of shaking made him extremely dizzy.

"She is," Harry whimpered. "She has a sense of humour as well, you should give her a chance. You just think because she looks the way she does, that she's just some bimbo, but she's..."

"I'm going to need more than cold bloody decaf for this crap," Kathryn grumbled as she marched to her Ready Room.

The unknown crewmembers moaned in disappointment, they got back to doing mostly nothing.

She climbed down the shaft as far as she was allowed to. The forcefield touching her heel was the hint that she was there. The door to the next deck was burnt beyond recognition, and all that normal people could see was a black hole to nothing. Seven of Nine however could see a lot more than that through her mechanical eye. The fire damage through the shaft was extensive, even if she could get through the forcefield there, there was no ladder left to climb down.

She had tried every possible way she could think of. The simplest one seemed to be the one she tried earlier. The force field was the only physical barrier there. Only a few people had clearance to remove it and she found it unlikely that any of them would sneak around like this. Seven of Nine knew she wasn't wrong, somebody was on that deck, but she didn't understand why. She decided to climb back up to the next deck.

Footsteps echoing in the distance caught her attention. It was coming from an adjoining shaft. Sure enough the footsteps were replaced with consistent taps and light scrapes against metal.

Seven of Nine hurried up the ladder to another level, she kept watch on the hatch below her. The sounds were close when they stopped. Her Human eye couldn't see anything but a shadow moving below her, her mechanical one recognised a little more than that. The shadow disappeared down the ladder until even she couldn't see anything anymore.

### **The Mess Hall:**

"I'll raise you the Purple Tomato Salad with extra old cheese," Tom smiled deviously.

Harry winced, he glanced at his cards and down at the ones he could see of Tom's. Two of the cards were hearts, but number wise they were so far apart. A six of Clubs sat in the middle in more ways than one. He decided to look at Tom's face. "You obviously don't have a flush, you wouldn't be gloating with a two pair." He made one last look at his cards before deciding, "I'm in. You can have the club sandwich without the bread, starring the blue lettuce."

"Oh that's risky my good man," Tom teased.

Harry's eyes narrowed, a smirk formed on his face. "And the only looks like pepperoni on left over crackers from two weeks ago."

Tom's poker face almost slipped away, he remembered that pepperoni too well. He quickly covered it with a toothy grin. "A bit bold for a poker newbie, aren't we?"

"That can only mean one thing," Harry teased right back.

Tom clicked his tongue, "you've got a lot to learn. Next bet?"

Jessie was too busy squinting at her cards to hear him. Tom looked to the final player he knew was the easiest prey. "Two please," Neelix asked in a chirpy voice.

"Dealer gives two," Tom narrated as he granted the request. Neelix gave himself away by groaning in disappointment. "Jess?"

Jessie glanced around at everyone's cards and then back at her own. She growled and dumped them on the table. "This game sucks. What's the point, it's all luck and you can't see all the cards."

Tom peered over to see what she had, he debated whether to tell her she had a full house or not. The look on her face decided it for him. "I'm so in. Potato and the green stuff that wasn't lettuce salad."

"My last leola root and chilli pie," Neelix chimed in, trying badly to appear happy. Every few seconds he'd look down and shake his head at them. The other two players cringed at the thought of getting that pie, now they were more determined than ever.

"Fruit salad with a pickle lying in the middle of it," Harry challenged them.

Tom gasped, "you wouldn't!" Harry only smiled at him. "Oh you've got to be bluffing with that one. I'll raise you old packet of crisps that were left open."

Harry shook his head, "you're on the dregs Tom. Ration *cake*."

Tom shuddered violently. "Just call it before I have to offer sick in my next game." Jessie pulled a disgusted face at him.

Harry looked to Neelix, he was busy turning a card in his hand upside down for some reason. "You with me or against me, Neelix?"

"What? Oh, does this look like a good hand?" Neelix asked Jessie. He leaned in too close for her tastes, she shoved him back to his spot. "I am. Leola and herbal protein shake." The group all exclaimed in disgust, Harry looked like he was about to be sick.

Tom whimpered as he placed all of his cards upright onto the table. Harry laughed as he only had a measly pair originally hidden in his hands. He put his own two pairs down.

"Is that all? Damn, I'm the rookie. Knew I should have got more cards," Tom grumbled.

Neelix rotated his whole hand upside down this time. He shrugged, "how's these?" He put his cards down. Everyone's eyes widened in horror. All of his cards were diamonds.

"Damn it Jessie, you had a full house," Harry complained as he pointed at the cards she abandoned.

Tom shook his head and mouthed so many warnings but it was too late. Jessie just scowled at the other man though. "I may be a newbie but I'm sure that his were better."

"It's still better than trying to bluff with a pair," Harry said.

Tom huffed, "that was harsh." He glanced in Neelix's direction, "looks like you win."

"Oooh, does that mean I get all of that lovely food? It seems to be a bit harsh considering the state the ship is in," Neelix questioned.

Tom sighed, "no, the losers share all of it out."

Jessie's eyes widened more than usual, "what? Even if you fold? If I knew that I wouldn't have took part."

Neelix looked confused. "So the winner gets nothing?"

"Exactly, that's the point. Who'd want it?" Harry asked just as he realised who he was saying it to. He inhaled through his teeth and shifted his eyes nervously. "We're just joking of course. Winner takes all." He hinted at the other two, "right!?" They both nodded quickly.

"Well if you insist, but I think cos we all had fun, I should share my winnings with you," Neelix grinned. The group were only happy for half of his sentence, it was obvious which half it was.

## **Day Sixteen**

"Oh my god! *Futill, antee*. Do you even know how to say I?" Kathryn snapped. "Don't get me started again on the whole *dadda* instead of *dayta* thing."

Seven of Nine stared blankly at the deranged Captain, unsure of what to say back to her.

"Of course, you're a Borg imbecile. Note I said imbecile, not *imbecill*. You say rubbish like we are and we are not amused. You don't know what I even means, funny that considering the source," Kathryn rambled.

"Kathryn, a lot of us, including me are allowed to speak English a little differently. It's called a dialect," Chakotay quietly said.

"Abandon ship," Tom whispered to Harry. He couldn't even nod, he seemed frozen in fear.

"No, it's called stupidity. Do you know why we put E's on the end of those words. They're not silent E's, they're not a second L pretending to be E, like Chakotay here pretends to have a brain. No, they're to stop us sounding like blonde Barbie idiots!"

"I was under the impression that the Captain had already made her sub unit," Seven of Nine said to the others.

"Huh?" Tom muttered.

"Jesus Christ, you're not listening to a word I say. English, speak it," Kathryn snapped.

Chakotay sighed in relief as she didn't understand what the drone had meant. "Our replicators are down."

"I do not understand," Seven of Nine said.

Kathryn groaned, "shocker." She slapped Chakotay across the back of the head. "Have you forgotten our little lesson about respect already?"

"No," he shuddered. "We're all a little on edge with what happened. The replicators being down, doesn't help."

"I see," Seven of Nine said.

"Unfortunately, so can I," Kathryn muttered. Luckily for everyone on the Bridge, a loud cry from the Ready Room caught her attention. It also scrubbed the crabby attitude off of her in an instant. "Oh, duty calls," she smiled before running off.

"I do not understand her," Seven of Nine commented.

Tom sighed in relief. "Nobody really does. Just remember, coffee and baby less Janeway is a devil spawn, or devil herself. With either or both of those things, well..."

Chakotay rolled his eyes, "Tom enough!"

"It's the truth," Tom complained. He turned to his best friend looking for some back up. Harry still appeared to be frozen on the spot. "Of course it helps if you don't provoke her. That was something you told me not to do, wasn't it?" He poked Harry to get him to snap out of it, nothing happened.

"You're right. It's just we don't need her making our new crewmember prefer the Borg. The last thing we need is them paying us a visit," Chakotay said.

"True. Well at least now it'll be different. The baby cries and we get some respite," Tom said.

Kathryn marched out of her Ready Room, carrying her baby with her. Most of the Bridge crew cringed as their presence brought along a horrible smell. "You're on crap duty." In a flash she dumped her into Chakotay's arms.

"Um..." Chakotay was speechless. Most of the Bridge crew just looked amused.

"Shoo, you stink," Kathryn grumbled as she dropped into her seat.

"Right, maybe we can call it diaper duty from now on?" Chakotay mumbled.

Kathryn turned around slowly, her death glare rising a level higher than usual. Chakotay quickly ran to the Ready Room. A large piece of debris followed him, but luckily smashed against the door. "It's nappies, not diapers!"

Tom looked at a still frozen Harry. "I thought she was American, weird huh?" He turned back, immediately regretting it. Kathryn was now standing right next to him, glaring into his eyes. He barely suppressed a squeal.

Tuvok's eyebrows now hovered above his head. "What were you saying about the accident?"

Seven of Nine glanced towards him, grateful for the interruption. "While I was on Deck Twelve I noticed some suspicious activity. I decided to investigate."

"Without telling anyone or being ordered to?" Tuvok said.

"I am not used to asking for permission. During treatment the Doctor encouraged me to use my initiative, and not wait for a voice to tell me," Seven of Nine explained. She raised her eyebrow as she noticed Kathryn doing the same thing to her that she did to Tom. "I searched for any entry points to Deck Thirteen, there were none, not without clearance. That was when my suspicions were confirmed."

"Snore!" Kathryn groaned. "Did the Doctor also tell you to drag things out as well?"

Tuvok was more interested in the details anyway, he ignored the Captain and nodded at Seven of Nine to continue. "A member of the crew did try to enter Deck Thirteen, the need for clearance did not stop them. If it were not for the damage, they would have gone further."

"Hang on, life support is off there," Harry butted in.

"That is not the biggest concern as the crewmember would not have reached that point. Only a few people on board this ship have clearance to remove Hazard Level Twelve forcefields," Tuvok pointed out. Everyone wanted to look towards the culprit, but they knew it was risky. They didn't need to though, they could feel the room drop about two degrees.

"Oh I see, trying to get rid of me again, are we?" Kathryn hissed.

"Again? No, it was not you," Seven of Nine said.

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "thanks for telling me that. I would never have figured that brain buster out!"

"The Captain is the only one with clearance," Tuvok dared to say. He knew he'd regret it in a few seconds, so he quickly continued. "But security clearance can be tampered with if someone knows what they are doing."

Kathryn swung her head towards Seven of Nine, she didn't even blink. "If it were me, I would not have reported it."

"Who'd want to go Deck Thirteen anyway?" Harry asked.

### **Sickbay:**

His teammates tried not to smirk at him but the sorry for himself look on his face wasn't helping. Craig's bottom lip stubbornly stuck out, his eyes were watering as well. The Doctor was too busy multitasking with humming a tune and treating him to notice any of these things.

"His singing isn't that bad," Thompson teased.

Craig pretended not to know what he was talking about, he even tried to laugh. The sudden movement reminded his arm that it hurt which forced him back to feeling sorry for himself.

The Doctor finished what he was doing to his patient's knee in time to scowl at Thompson. "Mind telling me how this happened?" he asked in Craig's direction.

"Security ace here forgot that the turbolifts were off-line," Thompson sniggered.

"Oh, then why did the doors open for him?" the Doctor was surprised. Craig's head seemed to retreat into his shoulders, his face burned.

"Who said that they did?" Foster said with a shrug.

The Doctor started to smirk too. "Did you walk sideways into it, Mr Anderson?" He started to hover a regenerator around Craig's sore arm.

"Sure, forget the most important part of the story," he mumbled huffily. "Thompson stole something of mine and I turned to get it back."

"And bang! I didn't forget," Thompson laughed. He nudged Foster in the arm with his elbow, "saved the best till last." Foster stopped smirking and sighed in deeply. He bit his tongue for the moment.

"Oh I see, this is a rite of passage," the Doctor chuckled. The whole team stared with a blank stare, bringing his laughter to an awkward halt. "When Mr Taylor joined your team, you also gave him a hard time."

It was Craig's time to laugh a little, "oh right, so I'm not the first you bullied into Sickbay?"

"You are, unless we count himself," Foster snickered.

Thompson didn't look amused. "I'm no bully. I just like to have a laugh on duty. Is it a crime?"

"Obviously James thought so," Foster tried to stop laughing.

"Oh come on, if anyone's the bully on the team, it's that guy," Thompson argued. He tossed a PADD into Craig's lap, it only bounced and fell to the floor. "Yeesh, I only wanted to look."

"Yeah just in time for the corner," Craig said. The Doctor nodded at him when he finished his treatment. "He's been okay with me so far. Maybe you're just a prick."

Foster nodded furiously until Thompson glared at him, he looked away so he could smirk instead.

"Speaking of which, isn't he a member of your team again?" the Doctor asked. He turned to his medical tray. "I'll be seeing you again soon, I imagine," he commented as he walked off to his office.

"Right, just proving my point," Thompson commented. He knelt down to pick up the PADD before Craig could. He tried to snatch it back but Thompson decided to have a read of it instead. Foster rolled his eyes and walked away towards the exit. Craig tried to grab it off him again, but he'd keep moving it while still reading it. "What does OOML stand for?"

The door opened just as Foster got there, James rushed in. Both of them stopped to avoid collision. "Sorry, got held up. Tuvok wants us to..." he said, trailing off when he spotted Thompson and Craig. He turned to Foster. "Why are you guys in Sickbay?"

"Same old, Thompson's a five year old," Foster muttered his response.

"Right. Somebody has been trying to get onto Deck Thirteen, so we need to go nowish," James said.

Foster nodded, "good luck." He nervously looked away as James' eyebrow raised. "Oh you said we... I meant good luck breaking those two up."

Thompson laughed as he read the PADD he held up slightly above his head. "God what a loser, but I suppose if I looked like you..." Craig tried again, but he moved again. "I'd resort to desperate measures too." That comment stung the younger man a little, his head retreated back into shoulders as he gave up and backed away.

"Ho boy, this is gold!" Thompson cackled just as the PADD disappeared from his hand. He couldn't believe it, he hadn't seen a hand coming. Before he could think anymore about it, the PADD swung into the side of his face.

Craig's eyes widened as the joker stumbled sideways onto the floor. James shook his head as he handed the PADD back towards Craig. "I'd password it, or better yet program it to shock idiots."

"Yeah... thanks," Craig stuttered, he took his PADD back gratefully.

"It's okay. We should go before our Thirteen would be intruder tries again," James said, passing a brief scowl in Thompson's direction. Craig glanced down and smirked as the tiny smack he'd seen had brought him to tears. Foster did as well as the other two headed for the exit, he quickly followed them.

The Doctor sighed. "Something's never change."

Craig and Foster both had the same idea. The next deck was a great place to stop and recover from their hike across to the other side of the ship. Craig reached it first, he couldn't get away from the ladder fast enough. Foster smiled, he was very relieved he wasn't the only one. He did the exact same thing.

"Guys, wait up guys!" Thompson's voice managed to echo down a few decks above them.

As Foster sat down, Craig smirked at him. "Should we leave as soon as he gets here?"

"I was planning to," Foster smirked back.

"I tell ya, the ship never seemed that big until now," Craig sighed. His whole body ached in agreement. Foster only nodded.

They both jumped as a head popped up from the ladder and looked at them. "A little warning would be nice."

Foster's hand went to his chest, "I could say the same."

James looked up, he could see and hear Thompson huffing and puffing a few decks above them. "There's only one more deck you know."

"You go ahead, we'll watch your back," Foster sighed.

Craig looked a little guilty as James was about to do just that. "Wait, what if the intruder's not a member of the crew? It could be Borg. We have no sensors to tell us they're out there, and I haven't looked out a window in a while."

James climbed up only one step. "I doubt it. Don't worry about it, I'll check it out and come back for you." He disappeared down again.

"Cool cool," Foster breathed a sigh of relief. Craig stared at him in disbelief.

"We're letting him go alone?" he stuttered.

Foster shook his head. "He's letting himself. If he needs help, he'll holler."

"Jesus Christ, I need to do more exercise," they heard Thompson groan above them.

"I dunno, it doesn't seem right," Craig said. He made up his mind pretty fast. Foster watched him climb back onto the ladder again.

"Great, now I have to wait for Thompson," Foster groaned once he was out of sight.

Craig looked around as he climbed down to the next level, he slowed to a stop. "James?"

"Down here!" he heard from below.

"I thought it was one more deck, not two," Craig muttered to himself. He continued on his descent, keeping a close eye on his route. The tubes they were inside were getting darker as he went further down, it was a little difficult to see where to step off. As if he read his mind, James pointed a torch towards to the floor nearby. Only a few more steps and he was there.

"Careful, you don't want to slip down there," James said once he got off the ladder. The torch was directed to the ladder again and then down to where it was damaged. Craig dared to take a peep, he shuddered at the thought. There was no climbing down and definitely no getting back up if he slipped.

"So this is where the reported intruder was?" Craig said nervously. He kept his attention straight ahead just to keep his mind off the hole nearby. "It's taken us so long, how are we going to find out anything?"

James didn't answer, he just pointed the torch in front of his feet. Craig glanced down. The light reflected off a third person lying on the ground, at least he thought it did. What he saw reminded him more of looking at his reflection in a flowing river. All he could make out was the person's long, light coloured hair and that he'd seen something like this quite recently as well. He looked up towards James, the concern on his face matched his.

Kes watched the tricorder as it scanned her. The Doctor did so with a very concerned look on his face, his forehead had been taken over by worry lines. James, Craig and the rest of the team were nearby. All but James were having a sneaky sit down or lean on whatever they could.

The doors opened for both Kathryn and Tuvok, they headed straight for Kes and the Doctor.

"Report," Kathryn demanded.

"We reached the area Seven of Nine said she saw somebody attempt to get into Deck Thirteen," James explained. "We found Kes instead."

"Yeah but that's not all. She was shimmering," Craig added on.

Kathryn's eyebrow began to twitch. James spotted her and rolled his own eyes. "She looked like a reflection in a pond. It was like she was fading away."

"Damn, I thought that," Craig muttered to himself.

They both had Tuvok's full attention, he even looked a little worried. "Kes, were you experimenting with your new abilities?"

Kes glanced down at the floor, closing her eyes. The Doctor sighed angrily. "Please, my patient has been through a traumatic event and then lugged up seven decks by a Security team."

"We need to find out what happened before she continues *fading away* into a *shimmering* pond," Kathryn muttered in a sarcastic tone. James passed her a brief dirty look, she ignored it.

"We also did a good job getting her here, there was no lugging," Thompson butted in.

"You were still climbing down, you got in the way," James pointed out. Craig nodded in agreement.

"Well maybe somebody shouldn't have smacked me in the face, again!" Thompson snapped.

Kathryn literally shook with rage, but unfortunately nobody saw it in time. "I'll do more than smack you in the face you little ponce!" Thompson whimpered, he quickly rushed to the office to hide. "And you, one more sarcastic comment and dirty look..." James shook his head and walked straight outside. She growled at his empty spot.

"Please don't be hard on them. I shouldn't have been there, and they did a good job getting me here," Kes tried to calm the situation. She turned to Tuvok. "Weeks ago I had a vision of Voyager being damaged, possibly destroyed. I..." she cringed and closed her eyes again. "I was so busy being selfish that I caused what I wanted to stop. I just wanted to fix it."

"There is no proof that you did this, Kes," Tuvok said.

"If you hadn't have stopped Seven, we probably would have been assimilated by the Borg by now," Craig spoke up.

Kathryn raised her hand as if it was to tell him to shut up. "Wait a minute, back up here. You told me that she could alter anything on a molecular level, is that the new ability you were talking about?"

"You are correct," Tuvok replied.

"So, you think this is what happened to her?" Kathryn questioned.

The Doctor sighed. "Once she was brought back here her body was obviously back to normal. I have no way of investigating this phenomenon unless it happens again, here."

"We didn't dare touch her, now I'm glad we didn't," Craig winced.

"Okay fine. How would this new ability help then?" Kathryn asked.

Kes shook her head, "I may not have been the main reason for the disaster, but I'm certain I was one of the catalysts. The aliens hit the ship on Fifteen, I alter the hull on Eleven, Thirteen is the one that explodes. I wanted to see why. I tried to use my powers to get to Thirteen without going through the forcefield and..."

"We already know how it happened, an energy surge," Kathryn replied.

Kes looked a little frustrated, which was a rare sight for everyone there. She shook her head again. "You don't realise what that means, do you? How could you all forget?" She tried to calm herself down with deep breaths. "This has happened on that deck before."

"Of course we remember that," Kathryn said.

"If you did, you'd know that it's a huge concern. It nearly destroyed us, twice," Kes explained.

"Kes, we remember that. What makes you think we haven't?" Tuvok questioned.

"Because we're not worried about it. We've investigated it, it's not the same as the last two. It's also not there anymore," Kathryn replied. She felt calm for the moment, so she placed a comforting hand on Kes' shoulder. "It is likely the cause of it all, so a lot of people are working on it now. You shouldn't have been there. There's nothing even left of the deck."

"Also you'd need an environmental suit to look around," the Doctor added on. "You've had a difficult few weeks Kes, these new abilities are a lot to take in. It's obviously taking its toll. I suggest rest."

"I'm not tired," Kes tried to get out of it. The Doctor shook his head. "We're still in danger, I feel it. The answer is on that deck."

"We're all on the same page, don't worry. The Doctor is right, rest. If we find anything out, you'll be the first to know," Kathryn smiled.

Kes tried to smile back, "thank you, Captain."

Kathryn nodded, she turned around to walk back out. Her smile was already gone and her eyes were stone cold. She marched straight outside to look for something, she found it immediately. "You, word now."

James stopped leaning against the wall to turn and face her. "Finally. Are you going to tell me what your problem is, instead of picking on every little thing I do?"

Even the surrounding walls trembled in her presence. "For one thing, you're back to being that cheeky little punk you were when you first joined Voyager. Remember him, the one who deleted coffee from the replicator. Oh and speaking of picking on every little thing! That's a bit rich isn't it?"

"What are you talking about? I've always, to quote you, been a smart ass. I get sometimes getting mad at it, but even when I'm not doing anything, you're ripping me a new one," James snapped.

Kathryn tried not to laugh. "Oh, did I hurt your feelings?" James shook his head and kept his mouth shut for once. "My problem is you recently turned over a new leaf. But now you're back to being..."

"A punk? Seriously, who uses that word?" James commented. Kathryn growled quietly. "And that, stop it, you're not a dog. Though I'm probably wrong there."

"You've gone back to that annoying, hothead twenty one year old who did nothing but pick fights. Whatever happened between you and Jessie is none of my business, but don't take it out on everyone else and start acting your age again. All right!" Kathryn snapped back.

James stared at her blankly, slowly shaking his head. "Nothing happened between me and Jess, don't bring her into it."

"Oh please!" Kathryn scoffed. "I'm not daft. She's acting just as badly as you, any idiot would notice the pattern here. Sort it out and maybe I'll stop picking on you." She turned to walk down the corridor.

"Right, cos I'm the one losing my rag all the time over the littlest thing. Sort yourself out before judging others, okay," James said.

Kathryn tried not to growl again. She decided not to prove his point in anyway and continue walking. Her fists did clench though, she quickly undid it until she was out of his sight.

Each wall was ripped apart. All that was left of the corridors were the explosion's trail, gouged into the ground as it had travelled through the whole deck. Debris lay everywhere, left to rot in the atmosphere-less environment. The darkness was overpowering.

Nestled in the centre of the deck was a deeper gouge. The two walls that used to surround it only existed now as powdered debris lying to one side. If it wasn't dark and people were allowed there, they would have seen a tiny speck of black appear in the air over that spot. A tiny drop of black liquid slipped from the speck, congealing in the hole below.

## **Day Twenty Five**

*First Officer's Log Stardate 51196.9: Repairs to the ship are still progressing slowly. The overloads continue to plague the ship's systems, slowing the repairs further. So far though there has been no encounters with the Borg, and Deck Thirteen remains docile for the time being.*

*"Chakotay, she's crying but there's nothing wrong with her! Get your tubby ass in here now or you'll be the one crying!" Kathryn's voice screeched. She was somehow drowned out by baby cries.*

*Tensions are still fray but that's no surprise. The replicators are still out of action, and everyone's been living off salads and rations. Don't ask where water is coming from, it's best not to ask these kind of questions.*

*"Oh for... she's spit up on me. Stop screaming! Stop it! I miss coffee too, it's not my fault," Kathryn's voice cried as well.*

*Um, end log.*

Chakotay pulled himself away from his chair to go and rescue his daughter. In the Ready Room he found only Kathryn in tears and his daughter lying in her arms gurgling happily.

"Should I take her?" he asked softly. He headed over to her without hearing her answer.

Kathryn was about to reply when the comm beeped. *"Torres to Captain Janeway. I think you should see this."*

Chakotay and Kathryn looked at each other with the same worried look. That couldn't mean anything good.

### **Engineering:**

It took them a few tiring hours to get there, but Kathryn and Chakotay rushed through the doors anyway. They headed straight for B'Elanna, she stood at the warp core, working on the control panel there.

"What's the news?" Chakotay dared to ask.

B'Elanna sighed, she didn't turn around to greet them. Instead she nodded at Harry at the station nearby and turned back to face the core. The good old whirring sound it made when powering up raised both Kathryn and Chakotay's spirits. They had forgotten B'Elanna's surly attitude when they arrived. The sound seemed to stall, so did the visual side of it. It still seemed to be powering on, but slowly.

"No overloads but what..." Chakotay said.

B'Elanna nodded. "I have no idea. The antimatter is reacting, the core is stable, it's just doing it slowly. I have no idea yet what it'll do when its online."

"It's a start," Chakotay tried to reassure her. The look on her face made him think that it was way too late for that.

"We're not done," Harry chimed in. "It's minor but it's too similar to ignore." He keyed in a few commands on the station in front of him, Kathryn meanwhile approached to see what he was doing.

"What time did we call you here?" B'Elanna asked.

Kathryn looked up at her, her fury slowly returning. Chakotay quickly tried to calm the situation before it started boiling, "we did have to drop Kiara off to our babysitter, we still got here as fast..."

"I'm not picking, I just want to know," B'Elanna said.

Chakotay frowned, he glanced down at Kathryn who had gone back to watching what Harry was doing. "0900, why?"

B'Elanna cringed, it wasn't what she wanted to hear. "I called you at 0950. We logged it, just in case."

"Right now here in Engineering it's 1246," Harry said. Both Kathryn and Chakotay frowned, that didn't seem right to them. "Here's the time on the Bridge." He pressed one more key. Kathryn shook her head as she read it. 1147.

"Has the main computer been affected by the overloads, explosion, anything?" Kathryn asked.

"No, there's no problem," B'Elanna replied.

"Any theories?" Chakotay said with a little hope. When no one answered him that faded away.

Kathryn sighed. "When will sensors be online?"

"We haven't been making them a priority as we're still struggling with the engines," Harry replied.

B'Elanna walked over to stand with them both. "I can get started on the external ones now, it'll probably take a few days."

"Good. There's a chance that we've drifted into something that's effecting a few systems. That's probably all it is," Kathryn said. She turned to leave as quickly as she entered. "Keep me informed."

## **Day Twenty Seven**

Kathryn stared at the viewscreen, hoping to find anything that would explain the problems.

*"There's nothing there, just pieces of our own ship," B'Elanna's voice quickly said.*

*Harry's voice sounded a little chirpy despite the news, "the time difference isn't as large anymore, probably around an hour and ten..." His voice cut out for a second, "minutes."*

Chakotay climbed out his seat to stand beside her, he placed a hand on her shoulder. "Kathryn, maybe it's time you go home, rest. You've been up for three straight days." Kathryn turned her head around slowly, her eyes drilled holes into him. He didn't back down though. "Perhaps the night shift Engineers can work on the internal sensors in the mean time."

*"You're thinking Thirteen, right?" B'Elanna asked. "Probably right, check it out."*

Chakotay frowned, her voice sounded a little higher than normal and she was missing words out. "B'Elanna, has the computer problem spread to the comm?"

*"No, why do ask?" she asked. The comm switched itself off with a distorted beep.*

"That'll probably take another few days, Kathryn," Chakotay said.

Kathryn shook her head, "I'll rest easy when I know what's causing this." Chakotay sighed. It was one disaster after another, he worried that the next one would keep her up as well. At least she was too tired to lash out at everyone.

## **Deck Six:**

Despite the lack of success in Engineering, Harry had a big smile on his face as he walked down the corridor. The only thing that had kept him sane the last month was the upgrade project for Stellar Cartography, which he had dubbed Astrometrics. It wasn't just the project he was looking forward to, he was looking forward to his time with Voyager's ex Borg drone.

As soon as he entered Astrometrics his smile disappeared and his heart sank. She wasn't there. He tried to reassure himself that the clock issues on board may have interfered as she wasn't the type to be late.

He decided to get on with the new computer interface they had installed in the centre of the room.

He must have been there a good half an hour before he realised that. His hand instinctively went for his commbadge. It hardly beeped back at him, leaving him frowning.

## **Meanwhile:**

The hole to Deck Thirteen in the middle of Twelve's floor had finally been repaired. The team assigned to it on and off were busy clearing up whilst chatting with each other.

Seven of Nine stood with her teammates, but she wasn't interested in joining in with them. She had her eye elsewhere. She was waiting for something.

A tiny bang in the distance got her attention. She turned her head to see if the others heard it. They didn't seem to. It was the right moment to leave the group and follow the noise.

Around the corner she saw the door to the turbolift shaft. It had been forced open weeks ago so she could see straight inside the turbolift stuck there.

It didn't take long for her to get there. Whatever made the noise was long gone. She looked inside the turbolift to get a good look, but she didn't have to look for long. Something heavy had smashed a large hole in the floor. She looked up to see if anything from the roof did it, it appeared intact.

Seven of Nine calculated that the hole was big enough for somebody to fit through. It was close enough to the emergency ladder in the shaft. The turbolift had sat there for a month, it was clearly not in danger of falling or it would have already. There was only one way to find out if it was what she was looking for. She activated the torch strapped to her wrist and knelt down.

She didn't have to climb down far. Her target stood out a mile. The door leading to a corridor had been ripped apart, the walls surrounding where the door would have been was severely charred.

Arming her arm with the torch attached directly ahead of her, she climbed through the gap. The forcefield that was supposed to be sealing off the deck didn't exist, her only issues were avoiding getting her heel caught on debris as she stood up.

Slowly and carefully Seven of Nine made her way down the debris filled corridor, shining the torch around to assess the damage. The only way to distinguish the corridors from the rooms was by the amount of debris piled up, more of it meant a wall had collapsed.

While she walked she took a tricorder out of a pocket attached to the outside of her suit. The display reading lifesigns read two, this was the evidence she was looking for. Still she pushed on further. She still had questions and that lifesign had the answer, her gut told her. She hadn't used it before but she was told to trust it.

Halfway down the corridor something clattered in the distance again. She figured she was getting close, so her arm lowered to point the torch to the floor. Whatever or whoever was here, she didn't want them seeing her before she saw them.

It was getting harder to tell if she was heading straight into further corridor or the rubble of a room. The debris was a little more spread out. She decided to follow the remains of a wall on her right around a possible corner. That was when she registered something strange in her mechanical eye.

Nothing.

Everything around her looked like something, but this just appeared to be a tiny hole floating in the air. It made no sense to her. Then she realised her torch didn't reflect off it or through it either, it was like it didn't exist.

The light increased for a second, then she heard very light footsteps through the rubble. She swung around to find a familiar face right in front of her.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing," she didn't answer.

### **Engineering:**

B'Elanna kept a close eye on the warp core as its dull colours slowly moved around the see through casing. It may have been her wishful thoughts but she swore it started to speed up, only slightly. She hurried to a close by station.

"Damn," she muttered. Her instruments were telling her it was running normally, which is what it had been saying for days. She was about to walk away when she noticed something had changed. "Time 1602, Bridge time 1559. Well at least something is fixing itself."

### **The Ready Room:**

Kathryn never understood why it existed, it didn't work, yet she still drank it. It was the closest thing she had to the real thing. It was insulting and she felt like a traitor for doing it, but it was better than just water. It was cold as well, that was the worst part of it all.

Half way down there was a knock on her door. She was grateful for that.

"Yes?"

Seven of Nine entered, Kathryn grimaced a little. She still hadn't gotten used to that silver thing she wore. It was all she wore as well.

"Seven? After you've finished here, talk to somebody like Jessie and get some more clothes. You're probably a bit ripe after a month," she grumbled.

Seven of Nine raised an eyebrow, she decided to comment on the easiest part. "Seven?"

"Well no one calls me Kathryn Janeway constantly, do they?" Kathryn shrugged. "What is it?"

"I have some... disturbing news about Deck Thirteen, Captain," Seven replied.

That was something she didn't want to hear, "has Kes tried to break in again?"

"No." Seven of Nine started to explain.

Kathryn's face stiffened, her eyes could even freeze the drone standing in front of her. Everything the drone was saying was turning into a blur as fury washed over her. She raised her hand to stop her, "hold on." She pressed her commbadge.

Jessie climbed into the Bridge, panting heavily. Chakotay looked over, concern grew on his face. "Jessie, what..."

"B'Elanna sent me as the comm's a bit hit and missy, it works and then it doesn't..." Jessie explained.

"Ok I get it, what's wrong?" Chakotay quickly butted in.

"I don't think we're out of the woods. You need to see this, now," Jessie replied. Chakotay nodded, he headed for the jeffries hatch. Jessie didn't follow, she was struggling to get her breath back.

"Relax, I'll tell B'Elanna you're helping me with something else here," he said. Jessie nodded gratefully.

"Excuse me," she heard Chakotay's voice say. Moments later James climbed out of the same hatch.

"Oh hey," Jessie said with a smile. She still struggled to get her breath back though.

James looked worried, he quickly walked up to her. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, just broke the record for fastest Deck 11 to 1 climbing," she replied.

"Really? What's happening?" James asked.

Jessie shook her head, she was about to answer when Kathryn's voice rang out over his commbadge. *"Sometime today would be nice, Ensign."*

James shook his head and rolled his eyes. "Whatever's happening, it'll happen soon right?" Jessie nodded. "Time to visit the witch, hmm."

She noticed a lot of worry in his eyes despite his comments. He gave her a half smile to reassure her and headed for the Ready Room. Jessie watched him until he disappeared inside.

"Have a seat," Kathryn icily said.

James' head turned to the left, Seven of Nine stood nearby, staring intently at him. "I'd rather not."

"I'm not asking," Kathryn dangerously said.

James stubbornly stood there for a minute or so, the stares she was giving him finally made him give in. He sat down uncomfortably.

"You know what this is about," Kathryn said. "Perhaps we can skip the denials and lies and get an explanation."

James looked at Seven again, and back to Kathryn. "The Doctor's a perv?"

Kathryn definitely wasn't amused. Her stare managed to get even more intense. "Of course, but that's not what I asked. What were you doing on Deck Thirteen, Mr Taylor?"

It wasn't the staring that made him wince, it was being referred to by his second name. "Kes warned me about the explosion in her vision. I went to get the people there out..."

"No!" Kathryn sharply snapped. "Not last month. I meant today."

James looked confused, he glanced towards Seven who's stare had not changed since he had come in. He turned back to Kathryn. "What are you talking about?"

"Denial and lies is it? So I assume Seven just imagined you there," Kathryn said.

James' eyes widened a little, "wait, you'd believe her over me? She tried to get us assimilated a month ago."

"Yes," Kathryn harshly replied. That stung him quite a lot. "I'm waiting for an explanation."

"So am I," James muttered. He looked back at Seven, "why are you doing this?"

"For all I knew you were responsible for the explosion. I had to report it," Seven answered.

James shot out of his seat. "I told you, I went there to get that team out." His desperate, angry eyes looked back towards Kathryn. "I'd never do anything like that, you know that."

"Normally I'd agree, but for weeks you've been secretly going down there. You've jeopardised the lives of this crew by activating life support, removing the forcefield on Thirteen. Your behaviour lately is not what I expect from you either, as we've previously discussed," Kathryn said.

"No, no, that was not out of character for me. You're blowing this way out of proportion," James argued.

Kathryn climbed out of her own seat, her eyes were on fire. "So you admit it?"

"Not to that, I just meant your comments on how I was acting," James replied, shaking his head. "I've done some stupid stuff over the years, but I'd never put this ship in danger, ever."

"Then cut the lies and heartbreak rubbish and explain yourself!" Kathryn snapped.

"I dunno what to say. I wasn't there," James said.

Kathryn sighed, she looked very disappointed. She looked at Seven and gave her a nod. The ex drone walked out of the Ready Room.

"She's lying," James said.

"Stop," Kathryn butted in. "You're a terrible liar. Her tricorder readings place you there, and she hasn't just found you out today. Somebody has been on the deck for weeks, not every day but more than enough to flag up. You know more about this than you're letting on, that much is certain."

James continued to shake his head. "I was responsible for her being disconnected, under your orders sure, but she won't see it that way. She's setting me up."

"Do Borg even do that?" Kathryn didn't buy it.

"It was the first thing she did once 8472 were gone," James replied. He covered his face with his right hand. "Why won't you believe me?"

"I've already explained that," Kathryn shrugged. "If you're doing this to help the ship, why not just say it? Lying and denying it isn't helping you."

"I wasn't there," James said quietly.

Kathryn glanced down at the desk, sighing deeply. She looked back up. "Then I have no choice." Her hand went to her commbadge. "Janeway to Tuvok." Nothing. She tried again with an annoyed sigh. The chirp finally sounded, "he's not co-operating."

The other door that's rarely used opened. Tuvok stepped inside with a few Security officers behind him. James looked at them and back at Kathryn with a sense of betrayal on his face, he shook his head before walking over to them. They all disappeared through the door.

Kathryn squeezed her eyes shut and inhaled through her nose, she shook her head as well. The anger was gone, just disappointment remained.

*"Captain Janeway to the Bridge, please," Harry's voice chimed in.* The ship trembled, giving away what he wanted.

"Great," Kathryn sighed as she climbed up to her feet.

As soon as she entered the bridge, the ship trembled again more violently, it almost knocked her off her feet. The jolt sprung the Red Alert klaxon into action, but it was garbled. The red lights flickered on and off more frequently.

"What now?"

"Every station on the bridge began acting strangely, and then..." Harry started to explain. He ducked down underneath ops as a part of it exploded. "That."

"More overloads?" Kathryn couldn't believe it.

"How long did it take me to get here?" Jessie quietly said to herself. Kathryn gave her a *what* look. "B'Elanna warned that this wouldn't be an issue until..." The ship shook again but this time it didn't stop.

*"Torres to Bridge!" B'Elanna's voice yelled over the comm.* Small explosions were heard behind her. *"Finally, I've got through, has Jessie reported in yet?"*

"Yeah, I was just telling them," Jessie replied.

"Telling me what!?" Kathryn snapped. "What's going on now?"

*"I have no explanation Captain. Most of the systems on board are running at 110% and they're still rising! I believe it may be the reason why the computers in Engineering were showing a later time," B'Elanna loudly explained over the noise.*

Kathryn steadied herself by grabbing the railings. "What about the core, that didn't..."

*"The core is the only thing not affected, in fact it is still trying to power itself on. It doesn't making any sense," B'Elanna answered. Another loud explosion cut the commlink off.*

"B'Elanna? Damn," Kathryn muttered.

Every single console that was on began sparking uncontrollably, everyone manning them backed away as quickly as they could. There was nowhere to hide as even the lights started to do the same. The ship itself was shaking more violently than before, everyone were struggling to keep their balance.

"We need to shut down again, Harry!?" Kathryn yelled.

Harry tried to return to his station but it wasn't having any of it, the back station spat sparks at him before shutting down completely. Jessie meanwhile tried to get to her Engineering station, dodging everything it threw at her. Eventually she resorted to crawling there on her hands and knees, Harry looked at her and thought he could get away with doing the same. Both of them carefully reached up to still working parts of their stations.

*"Sickbay to Bridge, we're getting power overloads on every biobed and every comp..."*

"Join the club, Doctor!" Kathryn snarled.

*"I realise that but..." the Doctor stammered.*

Jessie lifted her head a little so she could see some of the station. "Captain, it's serious, Deck Thirteen serious."

"Doctor, evacuate Sickbay now!" Kathryn ordered.

*"Acknowledged," the Doctor stuttered. The comm cut off.*

"Captain I can't shut us down," Harry stuttered. His eyes widened, he quickly leapt out of the opps area right before it blew itself to pieces. Him and the crewmembers nearby were slammed into the ground.

Kathryn looked back, she rushed to the barrier around the command chairs to check on them. "Jessie, you have an Engineering station..." She ran around to tend to them.

"I know, I know..." Jessie stuttered after ducking another barrage of sparks. The only part of her station still functioning was flashing and every time she pressed something she could feel the heat building up.

#### **Deck Five:**

The Doctor hurried his several patients down the corridor, towards the Jeffries tube. Other crewmembers were running as well, ducking wall panel explosions.

*"Warning, Deck Five structural failure in two minutes,"* the computer's garbled voice did nothing to help the panic.

"Hurry, please," the Doctor stuttered. Two crewmembers ran around the corner and passed him. He waited a little longer for anyone else, once he was certain there were no more he followed the others to the tube. In the distance he could hear a roar approaching. He didn't waste anymore time, the door separating the corridor and the Jeffries tube was slammed shut.

#### **The Bridge:**

Kathryn helped another crewmember up to his feet, Harry attempted to help her but his ankle screamed at him to stop. Once the crewman was up, he stumbled to the floor, grimacing in agony. Kathryn went to aid him again, her eyes fell on his leg. Blood had stained through the lower half of his trouser leg, she was about to help with that when she heard a terrifying sound. Her daughter's terrified screams.

"I'm okay," Harry said through gritted teeth.

Kathryn looked to the crewmembers already gathering around to help Harry, knowing he wasn't alone she got up to run for the Ready Room.

"That's it, I think I've got it!" Jessie yelled with a smile on her face. She pressed one last control. The console didn't seem to like it at all, fire erupted from it, striking her right in the arm she was using. The force of it slammed her to the floor. Kathryn's head swung side to side, torn between finishing off what Jessie started and her helpless daughter crying all alone in the Ready Room.

Fate made the choice for her. The computers and lights began to switch off one by one. For some systems it was not soon enough. Fires had begun and were spreading fast, support beams from the ceiling were falling away. Once the lights had all gone out, the only sound to be heard was the crackling of the fires.

Chakotay had no idea how far he had come, without any kind of light he was climbing blind and he didn't know which deck he was on when everything went to hell. On every deck he'd force open a door, slower each time as his energy drained, to see anything familiar. Each deck looked alike and not in the way he was used to. Scattered debris lay everywhere from what he could see, small fires were burning in localised spots, lighting up the darkness of each corridor.

With a heavy heart he'd continue climbing down, adding one to his count. He figured the next deck would be where he should stop.

His strength was almost gone when he pried open that last door. He hoped it would lead to his destination and that would be it. Once it was open enough for him to see inside, he wished he hadn't bothered.

If it were not for the fires dotted around, he wouldn't have known he was in Engineering. Even then the whole place had been ripped apart, there wasn't much to distinguish it from any other room. One particular fire reflected light from the warp core, which he was glad to see for the first time, was offline. It also appeared undamaged from whatever happened here.

Chakotay desperately looked around for any signs of life. The whole room was deathly silent and he feared it was a futile effort. He tried nonetheless. Every body he came across wouldn't move or respond to his voice, his hopes died with every pulse he failed to find.

It was only a tiny groan, but in the silence it was deafening. Chakotay quickly tried to find the owner of it.

Through the haziness he finally found some movement. Two figures, one was helping the other one up. He rushed forward to help as well. The groan he had heard though continued from another direction. As the two figures slowly approached him, he continued his search for it.

"Chakotay?" B'Elanna's voice coughed from the direction of the figures.

He was relieved to hear her voice, but he couldn't help but think about the members of his crew who didn't make it. He finally found where the groan was coming from, a young woman lying on the floor with burns on her face. "It's okay, I'll get you out of here." Chakotay knelt down to help her up.

All that he could hear were the screams of a baby. Tuvok tried to lift himself up but something was holding him down. Whatever it was, was heavy. His hands tried to push it away but nothing happened. He could hear groans from his team-mate lying beside him. His head tried to turn to the other side. His neck made a loud crack noise in protest, if he were not Vulcan the resulting pain would have made him scream.

Another groan pierced the blackness, Tuvok now knew that at least one of his team survived, but he wasn't sure about the other.

"Lieutenant?" he tried to speak, his voice was hoarse.

The groans from beside him stopped. "Sir," the same voice struggled to answer.

"Can you move?" Tuvok asked him.

The Lieutenant tried to sit up, but the same weight was pushing him down. "No sir."

"Ensign Shaw?" Tuvok croaked. Another groan was muffled, but he took it as a confirmation anyway. "Taylor..."

"I dunno sir," the Lieutenant groaned. The pain was starting to seep through his chest, his eyes felt a lot heavier than they did before. Tuvok tried again to move, but to no avail. Whatever was holding him down was too heavy, even for him.

The three of them heard metal clattering and scraping, but the noise wasn't enough to keep them alert. A loud bang saw to that though. A lot more metal clattered to the ground immediately afterwards, the baby's cries got louder like she was in the room with them.

"What... what's happening?" the Ensign barely mumbled.

"Hold on," they heard James' voice say. Then they heard rushed footsteps going away from them.

"Taylor, now's not that time to esc..." Tuvok said, trailing off as he fought unconsciousness.

They all heard a loud sigh, the baby's cries seem to settle down. The footsteps grew closer again, metal crunched close by.

The Ensign felt the world starting to fade away, when the weight crushing down on her seemed to disappear. She did her best to fight her closing eyes. Another loud bang helped her out.

"Say something, where are you?" James' voice called them.

"We're both here," Tuvok tried to call back, his throat throbbled in protest. He tried again to move, his hands pushed against the metal holding him down. As he did, it moved upwards with little effort. Another loud bang told him it was out of the way. Both him and the Lieutenant slowly tried to sit up, now only the pain was holding them back.

"Can anyone stand?" James asked. He tried to look around but the darkness was still obscuring his view of everyone. He knelt down nearby where Tuvok lay. He answered by reaching out to grab a hold of his arm. James stood back up slowly, bringing Tuvok with him. "I hope we're not going to the Brig still?" he tried to joke.

Tuvok knew not to take him seriously, "not just yet. The Captain's child?"

"Not a scratch on her that I could see, she's obviously just scared," James replied after a glance behind him.

"Good. We should get medical attention for Shaw and Reynolds," Tuvok said. He attempted to walk forward on his own but his left knee gave way for a second. James grabbed his arm to stop him from falling.

"And you," James commented.

"I need to return to the Bridge to assess the situation," Tuvok said as he limped forward. "Make sure they are stable and then join me. There could be more casualties." He held onto the door frame as he passed through it. The Ready Room was dimly lit up by a small emergency light. Tuvok saw the

Captain's daughter fidgeting inside her carrier on top of the sofa, he decided to take James' word and leave her be. His target was the door to the Bridge.

James meanwhile knelt back down again, he could just make out the Lieutenant resting his back against the wall. The man shook his head, "I'm fine, check Alissa." James looked around to see if he could find the Ensign again. Her painful breathing drew his attention.

Tuvok stumbled across the Ready Room. The only way he could open the door was with the manual overrides, but they would be by the Captain's desk. With his knee throbbing it was a longer journey than he realised. Once he reached the desk, he had to lean on it to get his bearings back.

Something behind him screeched, he slowly turned around to see what it was. James got in his way as he approached him. "Not very logical for the second in command to be hobbling around, is it? That's what lackeys are for."

Tuvok looked over his shoulder towards the door. It was now open, his eyebrow raised in response. "Ensign, the door."

James looked around behind him, he turned back with a frown on his face. "Yeah, and?"

Tuvok shook his head, he began his long limp towards the door. James lightly shook his head, he took a few steps forward to walk alongside him. Tuvok found his left arm lifted up over James' shoulder and his pace quickened.

The state of the Bridge shocked them both, Tuvok was experienced in keeping it contained and to himself. Crewmembers lay unconscious, possibly dead near the back of the Bridge. Harry was one of them, lying upright against the back of the Captain's chair. Tuvok noticed Kathryn lying face down on the floor right in front of them, he pulled himself away from James to kneel down next to her. His hand reached for her neck.

"She's alive," he said. His head looked back up to assess the damage.

The fires had thankfully died down, what was left was smouldering the Engineering station. Tuvok continued to scan the room but James kept his attention on the fire. His eyes widened in horror as they spotted a familiar figure lying close to the fire. He didn't waste anymore time, he ran over to her and knelt down.

"Jess?" James gently lifted her up from the floor and rested her head and shoulders in his arm. Only then he realised her right arm was horribly burnt. His spare hand went to check if she still had a pulse, he sighed in relief as she did.

Kathryn began to stir, groaning into the floor. Tuvok briefly glanced back at her. "Captain?" He just got another groan.

"We badly need the Doc," James said without looking away from Jessie.

Tuvok nodded. "Indeed. We may need more than that though."

### **Deck Eleven:**

Chakotay and B'Elanna helped a young woman out of Engineering. They gently sat her down next to a few others who were injured too.

"What do you mean, they were running too fast?" Chakotay was asking.

B'Elanna sighed as she straightened back up. "Remember the time error we had in Engineering. Well imagine that but in more important systems."

"And they overloaded," Chakotay understood, at least he thought he did. "Is that why it happened the first time?"

"No. I don't know," B'Elanna shook her head angrily. "None of this makes sense. When I sent Jessie to tell the Bridge, the power being fed had only risen by .01%. It spiked to 10% in a few minutes. The warp core on the other hand."

"Calm down, we'll figure this out," Chakotay softly said.

B'Elanna scoffed, she looked around at what remained of her Engineering staff. All four of them. "By that time most of us will be dead. We're lucky the power shorted itself out and the core wasn't doing it as well."

Chakotay frowned in confusion. "I wonder why. It was slower as I recall. Why would it behave differently to everything else?"

"Probably because it's anti-matter, not matter. I don't know," B'Elanna sighed. The whole situation had completely drained her. "Even just one system wouldn't speed itself up to oblivion on its own, everything doing it is ridiculous. 8472's attack couldn't have done this, Kes' telepathic powers couldn't, not even Deck Thirteen's anomaly habit."

A thought occurred to Chakotay, he felt his cheeks tingle as the blood drained from them. "Anomaly."

"I didn't mean it was an actual anomaly, Chakotay. I just meant..." B'Elanna muttered while covering her face. She then had a thought of her own about the same word. Her hand moved away again, she stared at Chakotay. He only nodded.

## **Day Twenty Eight**

"Like I tried to tell you, I wasn't there," James groaned angrily. His attention went back to Jessie lying on a table, now bed. Kes tried to block out the conversation so she could concentrate on treating her arm.

"Aaargh!" Kathryn yelled in frustration. She paced back and forth in front of him. "Now's not the time for this!"

"Kathryn," Chakotay whispered to her calmly.

Kathryn shook her head, the fire in her eyes were directed towards him. He felt his innards melting. "No, no! People are dead and all he cares about is covering his own ass."

"I don't care about getting into trouble with you, so why would I lie?" James snapped at her.

"I don't know, you tell me!" Kathryn screamed at him. The Doctor glanced over from the other side of the Mess Hall, he shook his head in anger and tried to get back to treating his own patients. "Look at what happened to Jessie. She risked her life to save this ship and for all we know you're the cause of this. I thought she was all you cared about."

"Don't," James growled. "If I knew what was happening, the last thing I would do is keep it to myself."

Chakotay shook his head, "we want to believe that, but you were on that deck and you told nobody about it."

"I wasn't!" James complained. "I'd prove it if I could."

"Is there an anomaly on that deck?" Chakotay asked like he had never said anything. James stared at him in disbelief, he turned his head away.

"Seven of Nine described a strange black *dot*, for want of a better word, there when she caught you," Kathryn said. James' head turned back, he was torn between confusion and worry. "Did that slip your mind?"

"A black dot?" he said once he went with confusion.

"If you don't know about that, then why were you there?" Kathryn asked.

James' eyes widened as they rolled, he sighed and returned his attention back to Jessie. "I don't know why I bother."

Kes looked on in concern, she wanted to help but wasn't sure how.

"I knew there would be an accident, I went there to evacuate the deck," James said quietly. "I thought I saw an anomaly but it was just for a moment. I thought I imagined it, as the next thing I remember we were surrounded by carnage. There was nothing like that there then. As that team will tell you, I escaped it with the last evacuee. I never went back until the rest of team one and I found Kes. I haven't been back since." His eyes kept a close watch on Jessie's face as she remained unaware of what was happening. "I swear."

Kathryn sighed. The lack of sleep and coffee was enough to rattle her, but everything else added on to that was making it difficult not to smash nearby furniture. "So who did Seven see there? Nobody else could have done it. You're the best hacker we have. Besides you, only I could have lowered that forcefield."

"If I knew I'd have bloody told you, wouldn't I?" James grumbled. "Believe me, after the last time I never wanted to see anything like this again."

"Perhaps we should ask his Security team, as well as Jessie when she wakes up. They'd have noticed if he sneaked off at anytime," Chakotay reasoned.

"Fine. Until then, you're not to be alone. Do you understand?" Kathryn snapped.

"Perfectly," James groaned.

Kathryn walked off first with Chakotay close behind. "What do you think?" she asked.

"I believe him. He has no reason to go down there and hide it either," Chakotay replied.

Kathryn nodded, "I do too." Chakotay was surprised at that answer, everything pointed otherwise. "I still think he knows more than he lets on. At least now we have more information."

"We're still a long way from an answer. Was there an anomaly or not?" Chakotay said.

"I'm leaning more towards yes, but not one we've encountered before," Kathryn replied. "We need to start repairs all over again from scratch. This time our priorities, apart from replicators anyway, are to repair that deck. I want it taken apart bit by bit until it gives us an answer. I feel like we're wasting our time trying to repair anything else until we do."

Chakotay agreed, he nodded. "The ship's going to take longer than the estimated three months this time."

"Exactly, we can't afford to waste it if Thirteen's just going to hissy fit again. We've already been in Borg Space one month too long," Kathryn said, ending with a sigh. "It's odd that they haven't come for us yet, we're an easy target."

"If you were the collective, would you assimilate a cursed ship?" Chakotay smirked. Kathryn scowled at him, he recognised that look in her eyes. He was going to pay for that joke when he was alone with her.

*"Vessel identified: USS Voyager, Federation starship. Intrepid class, registry 74656. Location spatial grid 1991. Cube 1898, intercept."*

One Borg cube changed its heading and shot off into warp.

## Day Forty Seven

B'Elanna and a few crewmembers climbed down the Jeffries tube ladder, she reached the next level first. She didn't wait, she went straight for the opening where a door used to be.

The crewmembers followed her into a heavily damaged corridor, already habited with some repair personnel. Portable lights were dotted every metre or so down the corridor so they could see what they were doing. Most of them were trying to rebuild the walls.

"This one's going to take more than a few weeks," she explained. "The explosion ripped through the power conduits like a fire going down a fuse. I've got a team already rewiring a whole new system, what I need you to do before they finish though is..."

The team passed by Seven and Harry as they worked on rebuilding a wall panel. Right now though it was a lying on the floor, the wall was still just rubble.

"I've never seen this deck so busy," Harry said with a smile. Seven seemed to ignore him as she continued to work. "Even before this the deck would be..."

"Creepy, I have been told already," Seven butted in.

Harry didn't find this rude at all, he grinned at her. "Our only theory was that when the ship was split into two, it was actually split into three. The third one was more than just a duplicate though." Seven finally turned her head to stare at him quizzically. "Think of it as an opening to another dimension. Just my theory anyway."

"The previous anomalies would absorb power from the ship, damaging it in return while it grew," Seven said. "What does a third or second Voyager have to do with that?"

Harry pulled a confused look, "you know what, I don't remember. We just assumed somebody was doing it to us on purpose."

"What about now?" Seven asked, turning her head back to their work.

"Maybe. We make progress and the ship overloads," Harry shrugged. "Does the Borg know anything that could give us a hint to this?"

"No," Seven answered plainly. Harry seemed a little disappointed with that non answer. "If this vessel does have a gateway to another dimension, they would want to assimilate it though."

Harry's face drained a lot, he cleared his throat and continued his work. "Maybe we should keep it to ourselves then, hmm?" Seven nodded. Harry smiled at that, he saw it as a sign that she didn't want to go back to her previous life.

At the back of the Bridge, Chakotay was busy explaining something to Tom, James and a craggy looking Kathryn. He gestured his hand every now and then to the cracked schematic of Voyager on the back station. "If we suffer a major hull breach, the rest of the ship shouldn't feel a thing."

"I think it is genius," Tom beamed.

"I think Chakotay doesn't swing that way," James commented. Tom threw him a glare.

Kathryn yawned into her hand, "let me guess. You thought of it, but couldn't explain it so he did it."

Chakotay shrugged, "firstly, yeah Tom's explanation would have had you reaching for a phaser."

"Too late," Kathryn muttered.

"Secondly, even if I did, no way," Chakotay said in James and then Tom's direction.

"Hey, twice," Tom complained.

"It isn't a bad idea really. It makes me wonder where you even got it from," Chakotay said.

"I was inspired by the ancient steam ship, the Titanic, I can't take all the credit," Tom said, smiling proudly.

James opened his mouth to speak but stalled when Kathryn tackled the helmsman to the ground. He and Chakotay watched as she beat him silly.

"You dumb shi..." she threw another punch. Chakotay winced while James just smirked. "Don't you think we're in enough trouble? I should wring your scrawny neck!"

"Captain please..." Tom squeaked, holding his hands up to defend himself. "I made a few..."

She hit him in the chest, making him wheeze. "A few what? Holes? Or did you melt down the escape pods to make this brilliant new hull design of yours!" A slap to the head stopped him from replying. "Oh I know, when we're up and running again let's turn off the sensors and fly the ship in the dark shall we? Make it a bit more authentic!"

"I made improvements," Tom stuttered. She pinched his nose tightly. "Ow, Captain I didn't!" he squealed in a nasally voice.

"You're supposed to be a twentieth century and ocean fanatic, an expert in both. Explain to me how the only twentieth century ship you could think of was the most famous!" Kathryn snapped at him. Her slaps and punches just kept coming. "Oh yeah, what was it famous for? Let me think!"

"To be fair, we wouldn't sink," Tom stupidly said.

Kathryn's face managed to get even redder, which the other boys didn't think was possible. "Oh, so that's ok then! I know, let's put that new hull in your quarters to test it out. Then we could beam some ice outside, send you home, and see if you still think *oh we won't sink* then, prick!"

"Before we change the name of the ship, maybe I should point out that this did look like it would work before Tom said anything," Chakotay said as he stared at the back station. Kathryn threw him a killer glance so fast she probably got whiplash.

"Did you think that after seeing the Titanic's plans, they said *that'll totally sink*, then sent it out on a cruise?" James commented.

Tom sat up a little as Kathryn had eased off a little. "Well it was a British ship." James gave him a little kick in the leg.

*"Doctor to Paris. Report to the Mess Hall at once."*

"How did he know?" Tom stuttered. Kathryn stared daggers at him as he crawled into the safety of the Jeffries tube hatch.

## **Day Forty Eight**

Jessie picked up the last clean cardigan she had left by the collar. She flung it up slightly to get it to land on her left shoulder, it was easy to slide the arm into the sleeve. Her right arm was another matter.

She stared at the sling supporting it. It still stung so much she had to repress shouting or screaming. Kes had treated the skin damage but the nerves were shot. Jessie was angry that she could barely feel it enough to move it, but it would still hurt like hell anyway.

Her right shoulder lowered to try and coax the cardigan to sit there, but it would just fall straight off and hang there from her left shoulder. She sighed. Sometimes it would take her one try. The other times she'd try a few times and James would help her, no matter how much she protested.

As if on cue there was a knock on her half open door. "I'm decent," Jessie said with a shake of her head.

James popped his head through the opening. He was about to speak when he noticed her struggling with the cardigan. He turned to the side to squeeze through the door.

"It's okay, I got it," she quickly said to stop him. To prove it she tried again, but that didn't work any better than it did before, it even started to slide off her left arm. She groaned in frustration. "Ugh, this shouldn't be hard."

"I know. It's not permanent, so can't I help in the meantime?" James said, showing her a small innocent smile. She laughed a little at it, shaking her head.

"You don't know that. By the time Sickbay's fixed it'll probably be too late."

"Aren't you the one always telling me to stop being so pessimistic?" James' smile grew a little. He pulled the cardigan gently onto her right shoulder, covering her sling arm with it.

Jessie sighed and nodded. "Yeah usually."

James walked around to stand in front of her. "I know you weren't eager to have me around so much."

Jessie shook her head. She butted in, "it's not that. I mean I'm not bothered about that. I just don't like having other people do things, simple things, for me."

"It's not like I help you get fully dressed," James said. Jessie's eyes narrowed, probably a good thing as they looked deadly. He broke into a laugh, "I'm sorry. I get it, I just wanted you to stop feeling so down."

Jessie's eyes returned to normal, she resorted to faking a scowl at him. "I wouldn't pick you anyway, even if you do live here."

"Ouch, I guess I deserved that," James said, only half serious. He broke into a smirk, she couldn't help but smile in response. It didn't last long, his smirk turned into a fully serious face. "I know all this crap between us is my fault, so..."

"Don't, we're fine," Jessie kept her smile. "I do appreciate you helping me out. I don't think it's the not being able to put a cardy on that's getting to me anyway."

James looked around the room. Hers was a lot neater than any of the other rooms he'd seen, but there was still debris from the overloaded computers and lights lying in the corners. Everything was still broken as well. "Yeah, I know what you mean."

"Well that too," Jessie shrugged. James looked back at her with a frown. "Five or whatever weeks is a long time to go without a bath, let me tell you," she whispered with a disgusted look on her face. "I'm so gross."

"Really, I didn't notice," James said.

Jessie smirked. "Careful," she continued to whisper. "Somebody else would think you were flirting with a comment like that." She headed for the door while maintaining eye contact with him.

Once she had gone through the door he sighed like he had been holding his breath for a while. "I'll remember that," he said to himself.

### **Deck Thirteen:**

Harry pointed his tricorder down the corridor. Seven stood beside him, staring straight ahead.

"Are you sure this is where you saw the black dot?" Harry asked her.

Seven walked forward, looking around to familiarise herself with the specific corridor. "I'm certain."

"There was no power, no light. The whole place was rubble," Harry said as he put away his tricorder into his belt.

"I am certain," Seven repeated herself with a little anger in her voice. Harry was surprised at this. "Perhaps it was destroyed when the ship overloaded the second time."

"Hmm, maybe," Harry wasn't so sure. "Why don't we have another look around? This deck's had people all over it and they haven't seen it, but if it was *nothing* like you said, they wouldn't."

Seven nodded in agreement. "What would somebody like Ensign Taylor benefit from sneaking down here?"

Harry's eyes widened, "wow, that question came in at warp speed. You're really sure it was him?" Seven stared at him blankly. "He wouldn't. That's why it's a little difficult to believe, as is everything that's happened."

"Curious," Seven said with her eyebrow raised.

"What?" Harry questioned.

Seven shook her head. "It's not important right now. We should look around as you said."

Harry nodded with a smile on his face.

### **Day Sixty Five**

*Captain's Log Stardate... god only knows by now. It's been months since Species 8472 attacked us, causing overloads all around the ship. As we've narrowed the problem down to Deck Thirteen, most of the crew have been working around the clock to restore it. I hope that we'll find out the cause if we do. So far even the strange things that Seven reported haven't been seen for a while. B'Elanna has...*

*"Captain, why are you explaining a decision we made a month ago?" Tuvok's voice asked.*

*It's not my fault this episode hasn't had a log since Day twenty five. Sheesh!*

*"Also Captain, it's stardate 51268.4," Tuvok's voice said.*

*In other news Commander Tuvok is overdue his foot up his ass appointment, so I'll be attending to that when I'm done here. As I was saying; the repairs are going slowly but well, so I'm expecting another disaster any minute now.*

"Foot up his ass?" Tuvok questioned. A tiny giggle distracted him for the moment. He caught Kathryn narrowing her eyes, even he knew to back away slowly. Chakotay passed him just as he left the Ready Room, he entered after him.

"Kathryn, happy birthday," he said with a broad smile.

"Happy what?" Kathryn huffed. Her eyes drifted upwards as she tried to figure a few things out. "51268 is... how do we work these sodding stardates out again? Why don't we just use normal dates?"

"Um, okay," Chakotay didn't know what to say. He approached the desk, passing a wave and smile towards his baby daughter. She smiled and tried to wave back. "I've got you a present. Don't worry, I replicated it months ago."

"Is it a reset button? We seemed to lose that years ago," Kathryn sighed.

Chakotay couldn't help but smirk. "No but this may be useful too, especially when you don't even know what date it is."

He brought out an old fashioned silver pocket watch from his pocket. He handed it to Kathryn, she didn't look impressed. "It's a replica of a the chronometer worn by..." Kathryn handed it to Kiara, who promptly chucked it back at her dad, giggling madly. "Um ouch, in more ways than one."

"I would have kept it if it didn't come with a Chakotay Tale of the Month," Kathryn muttered.

That hurt his feelings, he winced. "If I handed you a pocket watch without the story, you would have wondered why I picked it."

Kathryn groaned. "Harry and Seven still haven't found that apparent anomaly she saw. I'm starting to feel like we're chasing ghosts."

Chakotay smiled, he silently accepted that as an apology. He knelt down to pick the watch up. It went onto the desk this time, far enough away so his daughter wouldn't grab it.

"Who has time for sentimentality anymore? Every day is a reminder of the hell we're in. How do I help my crew through this when I can't even pick myself up?" Kathryn asked.

Chakotay sighed, he wished he had an answer for her.

The Mess Hall had returned to its old job of serving meals and providing a brief respite for the weary crew. There were not that many people there at the moment, one of them was Seven reluctantly drinking a white drink. Neelix and Kes were preparing yet another salad for lunch.

"Have you practiced any of your new abilities?" Neelix cheerfully asked. Kes shook her head timidly. "You shouldn't let what happened put you off. I don't believe you did anything wrong."

"I can be more useful helping the Doctor and you," Kes said.

"You shouldn't give up. You always wanted to become more than you were, that's why you left Ocampa," Neelix tried to encourage her. "You've come so far, I hope you don't give up."

"My abilities would only damage the ship. There is no helpful and safe use for it," Kes said sadly.

"You won't know until you try," Neelix smiled.

Kes finally looked up into his eyes, she smiled gratefully.

James and Jessie walked in through the nearby door, chatting amongst themselves. With her good arm she attached herself to his right one, pulling him closer. He tried to fight the blush building in his cheeks, it worked but Jessie already noticed it. She laughed as she pulled her arm back away only to use it to playfully slap one of them. His right hand reached down to clutch hers.

Kes glanced over, catching the whole thing. Her smile widened. Things were starting to pick up, she thought. She turned back to Neelix to continue preparing the salad.

Harry waltzed in with a nervous look on his face. He looked around until he spotted Seven. His nervousness grew as he approached her table. Meanwhile Tom tip toed into the room, once he was in he made a dash for the galley to take the only free seat. He turned his head to look over his shoulder.

"Ensign Kim?" she greeted him.

"Um hi Seven. What's a girl like you doing in a place like this?" Harry stammered.

Tom meanwhile nodded in approval, "good good, go in strong." Neelix and Kes stared at him in bemusement.

"I was in need of a nutritional supplement, this is where the crew eat," Seven answered. "Though I resent the implication that an ex Borg shouldn't be here."

Harry's blood escaped his face, it seemed to run away from him completely. "No, no, that's not what I meant. It's a compliment."

"I do not understand," Seven said.

Harry quickly tugged at his collar as it felt like it was sticking to him. "Was your mother a thief?"

"No, she was a scientist," Seven replied.

Harry pretended she didn't say anything, he continued. "She must have been, cos she stole the stars to make your eyes." He glanced behind him briefly at Tom who put his thumbs up at him.

Seven looked very puzzled at this point. "That would be astronomically impossible."

"Strike two," Tom winced. Kes shook her head while Neelix chuckled quietly.

"They should rearrange the alphabet, cos U and I should be together," Harry stammered.

"The alphabet is irrelevant, it has no logical use. I see no need to change it either," Seven said, she was starting to feel uncomfortable.

"Do you practice medicine on the side, cos I'm running a fever," Harry improvised.

"No, you should see the Doctor. It appears to be affecting your speech patterns as well," Seven answered.

"Ooph, he's not getting any anytime soon," Tom commented.

"Any?" Kes was confused.

"That's a nice outfit, it would look better on my bedroom floor," Harry continued.

Seven looked around for some help. "I don't think it would fit you, Ensign." She climbed to her feet, "excuse me." Harry repressed a whimper as she walked away.

"Ouch!" Tom commented once she was gone. Harry looked at him with a lost expression on his face. "That was classic."

Harry wasn't sure what he meant by that. "I guess she takes things literally. If she was another girl she would have been all over me."

He heard laughter coming from a nearby table, he looked over to see both James and Jessie were the culprits.

"Thanks, we needed a good laugh," James commented once they both stopped. "Maybe next time write her a love poem, comparing her chest to mountains." Jessie unfortunately was taking a drink, she nearly spat it out.

Tom nodded seriously, "good idea. Women love compliments!"

Harry's face was stone cold, he turned his head towards his so called friend. "You can't be serious."

"Oh, too far?" Tom snickered. Harry only nodded, most likely while plotting Tom's murder later.

### **Day Ninety Three**

The turbolift doors opened, allowing B'Elanna, Chakotay and Kathryn to step out of the turbolift. Chakotay glanced back at it after he left it. "I've missed that."

"We all have," B'Elanna smiled. She lead them down the corridor which looked almost new in places. There were still holes dotted around the walls as crewmembers worked on fitting computer panels in those spots.

"Impressive," Kathryn said.

"We're still weeks away from it being finished. We still haven't found any problems," B'Elanna reported. They passed the last hole before the corner, which no one was working on. A panel had been left discarded in front of it on the floor.

"So nothing creepy or anomaly like," Chakotay stated.

They turned the corner, just missing a black drop of liquid drip out from the hole and onto the glass panel. Everyone in that part of the corridor were too busy working to see it.

"No. We've been extra cautious with every repair we've done, but it's just like repairing a normal deck," B'Elanna replied.

"Do you recommend assigning more teams to other parts of the ship?" Kathryn questioned. There was hope in her voice.

"Maybe one or two. Once we're closer to the finish line, I'd feel better," B'Elanna replied.

Two drops fell this time. Nobody was around to see them either.

"Good. It'll be nice to get back to normal," Kathryn said, quickly touching the wall beside her. Chakotay passed her a little smirk. "Touch *wood*."

"I thought you were scientist through and through," he teased.

Kathryn passed him a fake scowl, "you're lucky we have replicators back."

"Yes, you were very sensitive without your first twenty cups in the morning," Chakotay laughed. He returned his attention back to B'Elanna, "do I dare ask for an estimate?"

"If we keep the full team on Thirteen, three weeks for that. Then it'll probably be another few months before the rest of the ship looks even half as good as this," B'Elanna replied.

"Good keep at it, hopefully everything will remain uneventful," Kathryn said. Chakotay tapped the wall, smirking at her.

### **Day One Hundred and Thirty Seven**

A child's giggles echoed down the cleaner corridor. A man's voice called after her.

On her hands and knees, a now four month old Kiara was crawling as fast as her hands could take her.

"Oh god, Janeway will kill me," the man's voice stuttered. He eventually appeared around the corner, spotting her immediately. "Oh thank god," Craig sighed in relief.

He ran to catch up to her and stop in her path. Undeterred she just crawled around his feet.

"No, no, no, no," he squeaked. He quickly knelt down to scoop her up. The mischievous girl laughed in his nervous face. "How did you get the turbolift to work, hmm?" A big smile appeared on her face, he half expected it to overlap her eyes. "All right, between us."

*"Janeway to Anderson."*

Craig jumped a mile, luckily he kept a tight grip on the little girl in his arms. She laughed again. He quickly tapped his commbadge, "yes Cap..." Kiara copied off him, cutting him off. "Crap, don't do that please." He did it again, but so did she.

*"Janeway to Anderson, don't cut me off again, you hear?"*

Craig quickly tapped his commbadge, "I didn't, it..." Kiara cut him off again, laughing cutely. "That'd be cute if you weren't doing that to your mum." Her head cocked to the left side and she squeaked. When he thought she couldn't get any cuter she blinked so many times and smiled. "Oh dear."

Craig was forced to put her back on the floor, of course she took off again. "No!" he screamed.

Using the Conference Room wall panel, B'Elanna brought up a picture of Voyager's interior. She pointed towards several points. "These will take another two months. The damage was severe."

"How's Sickbay doing?" Kathryn asked.

"Another month I'm afraid," B'Elanna replied with a frown. "We'll have to start from scratch, and then there's the Doc's emitters. They'll need rebuilding."

"If his mobile emitter is working we can afford to skip that for the time being," Chakotay suggested.

Kathryn nodded, "agreed." She swiveled her chair back around to face the rest of the staff. "How are we doing offensively, or defensively?"

"Shields are at minimal power, Captain. We only have ten percent," Tuvok replied. "Offensively we'll need a lot more power to get the phasers to a minimum level."

"It's a start," Kathryn seemed happy enough with that. She turned back to B'Elanna. "External sensors?"

"We worked on the internal ones first, just in case Thirteen had a hidden surprise for us when we finished," B'Elanna replied.

Harry quickly chimed in, "I can get those operational, short range only, in a day. I got started a few months ago when I had a break from Astrometrics."

Tom sniggered, it caught in his throat. Everyone looked at him. "You mean when you struck out with Seven."

Seven raised her eyebrow, "Mr Kim didn't strike me."

"You don't say," James commented. Tom couldn't contain it this time, his snigger turned into a full blown laugh. He wasn't the only one.

Harry pouted and folded his arms. "Sure, will you all laugh at me when the external sensors detect any trouble before it's outside our windows?"

B'Elanna sat down in her chair, smiling as she recovered from her laugh. "Probably."

"Good thing I'm not petty," Harry muttered.

"Right. If that's all..." Kathryn cleared her throat, fighting the smirk tugging at her lips. "Dismissed."

### **Day One Hundred and Forty Two**

In his long purple robe, Tuvok knelt down in front of his meditation table. He wasn't alone. A very nervous Kes knelt opposite him.

"You seem concerned, distracted?" he stated.

Kes nodded. "That last time we did this..."

"The ship was attacked. I do not see the significance," Tuvok said. "What you did to the structure of the wall didn't effect the overall outcome. Shall we begin?"

Kes breathed in deeply, she hoped it would settle her nerves. She eventually nodded.

### **The Bridge:**

The new Opps beeped constantly at its user. Harry turned to that part of the station. Kathryn looked over in the meantime. Harry's face was now very pale.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Er... short range sensors are picking up a cube. It's heading right for us, warp nine," Harry replied.

"Great," Kathryn sighed as she abandoned her coffee on the floor beside her. She climbed out of her seat. "Red alert, battle stations."

"Red alert isn't fixed yet," Jessie pointed out.

Kathryn groaned, covering her face with her right hand. Chakotay looked over sympathetically. "Shield status?" he asked.

James was covering for Tuvok at Tactical, he quickly checked. "Fifteen percent."

"Time to intercept?" Kathryn directed towards Harry. She pulled a confused face as he kept switching between his back station and front one. "What?"

"It should be here, now," he replied. "I don't understand."

"Is it still at warp nine?" Kathryn asked.

Harry nodded, then shook his head. "If they were they'd be on top of us, but it says right here."

"Maybe you screwed up the sensor repairs," Jessie remarked.

"I didn't," Harry said.

"Ignore the warp nine reading, what's the intercept time?" Chakotay questioned.

Harry sighed, "I'm not sure, I'm working it out. It says warp nine but the cube hasn't moved. It's sitting still."

Kathryn sighed, "cancel battle stations."

Jessie looked around as nobody moved. "What's the difference?"

"On the bridge, there isn't any," Chakotay replied. Kathryn sat down, picking her coffee up on the way. Jessie gestured her head that way, Chakotay shook his own. "Harry..."

"I know, I'll get right on it," Harry said, looking ashamed of himself. He quickly exited the Bridge. Another crewmember took his place.

"Perhaps we should focus on repairing the warp core now, just in case they do come for us," Chakotay suggested.

Kathryn nodded in agreement. She sipped at her coffee.

Kes shook her head, "I can't do this. I don't want to hurt anyone."

"Kes, without practice your new abilities could manifest on their own. Once you are disciplined you will be able to use them without harming anyone," Tuvok tried to reason with her.

Kes knew he was right but she couldn't settle her nerves. The feeling in her gut told her it would be disastrous.

## **Day One Hundred and Sixty Two**

The Doctor beamed proudly as he finished his treatment. "How does that feel?"

Jessie wasn't sure. The pain was intense sometimes but it was the only time she felt like she still had her arm. Her arm just lay there lazily across her lap, it looked sorry for itself. She looked to James at her side. "I still can't move it."

He looked worried, his head turned to the Doctor. "It still needs time and lots of physical therapy. Your arm hasn't been active in months, even with my wonderful medical expertise it wouldn't suddenly work again."

"I see," Jessie seemed a little disappointed. Her left arm reached for the sling by her side. James' hand reached out to take her hand before she picked it up, she looked to him with her eyes quizzing him.

"Can she start the therapy now? It shouldn't hurt right?" he asked the Doctor.

"I don't see why not," he replied.

"Yeah why go now and miss some recovery time? Unless you like having me around all the time, overprotecting you, helping you put jackets on and carrying your food," James said, directing a sneaky smile her way. She matched it with a pretend glare.

"Like you'd stop overprotecting me," she said.

James shrugged, "that's true."

Jessie glanced over at the Doctor, he was busy smirking at the pair. "He even carries a glass of water around for me, like I'm some invalid." She turned her head back towards James. "Don't get me started on the clothes."

"Ok I put the wrong pair of jeans with the wrong top out for her one morning. I never heard the end of it," James tried not to laugh.

"They didn't match, and you didn't have to get them for me," Jessie argued. She looked at the Doctor, "see what I mean?"

"Ohno, don't get me involved in a couple's spat. I'll just prepare your therapy," the Doctor hurried away.

"We're not..." Jessie tried to say but he already was in his office.

"He's just teasing," James smirked. "You should know what that sounds like."

"Yeah, I know a lot of jerks," Jessie commented, not seriously. Her fake glare was back, he did one back to her making them both laugh.

### **Engineering:**

"How's it going?"

He was getting sick of hearing it, but he wouldn't dare say that out loud. Harry gave the poor console a slap as he groaned in frustration. "There's nothing wrong with the external systems. I've gone through it dozens of times. I don't get it. It still says there's a..."

"Harry, let it go," B'Elanna butted in. "You've been at this for weeks. It wouldn't be the first time Voyager's done something it shouldn't."

Harry didn't listen to a word she said. He just buried himself underneath the station. B'Elanna turned back to the warp core, sighing in sympathy. She'd be doing the same thing in his place, who was she to argue? She also had her own mystery to solve.

Seven walked over to her from another station. "Lieutenant, perhaps I should take a look at the EPS manifold."

"No," B'Elanna shook her head. "I already did, twice." She stared at the warp core, glaring at it like it was taunting her. Its colour was still dim, the coolant inside seemed to be just sitting there, unresponsive. "It's online, every console backs it up. The anti-matter won't react, every time I try the computer says the start up procedure is done and it just sits there."

Seven turned her head, watching the core intently. "Perhaps in your eyes it just *sits there*. That is clearly not the case."

B'Elanna's grip on the railings tightened, she bit her lip for a few seconds but she had to say something to the drone. "What the hell does that mean?"

"It's an understandable mistake. My ocular implants can see things other Human eyes cannot," Seven answered. "The core is functioning, but not at the speed in which it is supposed to."

B'Elanna decided to let her off, this time. "Like it did when we had the inconsistent clocks around the ship, it's working but slowly." She stared more intently at the core but her eyes couldn't see any signs of life. "A lot slower."

The silence was more than just awkward to him, it was painful. Neelix kept looking up to check on her, each time Kes' face would manage to get even sadder. He had to say something. "You never told me what happened in Engineering. What's frightening you so much?"

His sudden questions took Kes by surprise. She looked at him with dismay on her features. "What?"

"You're the kindest, gentlest person I know, but you're convinced you were the cause of the terrible accident months ago. I want to understand," Neelix explained himself.

The pair were sitting in the empty Mess Hall, relaxing after another busy lunch hour. Kes hadn't expected an intervention. She didn't know whether to scold him or thank him. Her head was racing through the many thoughts she had trapped in there. He had helped her before, maybe he could again.

"With my new abilities I can alter the structure of any object. I did this to the engineering junction where Seven was, to stop her. The aliens shot us at the same time. I lost my control."

Neelix managed to smile grimly. "Did you do that to Thirteen?"

"No, that's not the point," Kes answered.

"I think it is. As far as I understand it the hit collided somewhere else, disrupting an already fragile deck. None of this had anything to do with Engineering," Neelix said. "What happened was bad timing, a coincidence."

"Perhaps, but you can't know that for certain. My power could easily have made things worse," Kes said.

Neelix disagreed. His head shook, "I know you well enough to be certain. You're powerful but you're also kind. You wouldn't hurt this ship."

"I only have to look at an object, gaze at it and I can see what it's made of, its foundation. I can control it. It's dangerous," Kes argued.

"I... I'm not sure I understand," Neelix stammered.

"I do. That's what is so terrifying. If I could show you without hurting anyone..." Kes sighed. Neelix placed a hand over hers, giving her an encouraging smile.

Tom chose that moment to walk in, his eyes widened. "Yikes, another sappy scene." He quickly walked back out.

"You can do anything you set your mind to. You've proven that over and over again," Neelix said.

Kes tried to force a smile but it was too difficult. "I wish I was as confident as you."

"You are. If it wasn't for you those men on Deck Thirteen would have died in the original blast. We'd also have the Borg paying us a visit while we were at our weakest. We'd be lost without you," Neelix smiled. "I would be."

"Even though I was cruel to you?" Kes whispered.

"I was only holding you back. I know that now," Neelix said.

"If this is about that Borg Cube not flying at warp nine, can it wait until after my afternoon coffee?" Kathryn scowled.

Harry eyed the four empty cups sitting on her desk, then the Captain herself. B'Elanna cleared her throat to tell him to not go there.

"Sort of," he replied.

### **The Bridge:**

"What the hell are you talking about? I'm not interested in seeing you peel that catsuit off, I'm not even interested in seeing you wear it," Chakotay snapped, clearly flustered. He shook his head with his eyes wide. "Are you sure it wasn't Harry?"

"I am certain," Seven replied.

"Oh, just like you were certain I was gallivanting around Deck Thirteen," James commented from Tactical. Tuvok, who was also there, tried to pretend he wasn't listening to this but his eyebrow shot up.

"Sounds like someone needs to go back to the Doc to get her MOT done," Tom sniggered. Nobody laughed, or probably got it. "You know, a service." Silence only followed. "You guys suck," he grunted.

The opps station beeped twice. Jessie, now sling-less, glanced at it. "Sensors are back online. I assume Harry fixed it."

"No, he claimed the sensors were never broken," Seven replied.

"He must have reactivated them before coming here," Chakotay said with a shrug.

Jessie's cheeks were a little pale as she read what the station was feeding her. "I really hope it's still broken." Everyone looked her way, each with their own curious expression. "I'll put it on screen."

The doors to the Ready Room opened as the viewscreen was activated. It was tiny but everyone could make it out anyway, the shape of the object was cubed.

Tensions on the bridge rose to critical levels when they saw what it was showing. Kathryn rushed back onto the bridge seconds later, with B'Elanna and Harry behind her. Harry was about to go to his station when he saw the viewscreen in the corner of his eye, he stopped in front of the rear stations.

"The sensors are back on, I see," Kathryn muttered. Harry nodded grimly.

"It's definitely not moving," Chakotay said before swallowing a lump in his throat.

Jessie nervously bit her lip as she looked back down at her station. "According to the sensors it is."

"Warp nine?" Kathryn knew the answer.

"Uh huh," Jessie nodded.

"How can the sensors get it so wrong?" Chakotay questioned.

"They're not, it is at warp nine," B'Elanna replied. Everyone who wasn't in the Ready Room, except Seven, turned their heads towards her. "It's us that's wrong."

"What?" Chakotay stuttered.

Kathryn breathed in deeply through her nose to calm her nerves. "That Borg cube has been intercepting us for months, in their perspective... probably only a few hours."

Most of the bridge crew's jaws dropped.

"Figuring out the distance between where it was when we detected it, and where it is now, we estimate it'll get here in thirty three days, and five hours," B'Elanna explained.

"It'll probably take them another month or two to fire weapons," Harry commented as he returned to opps.

Chakotay shook his head, "I've heard some ridiculous things over the years, but this takes the cake. How do you know it's not just a broken ship after a fight with 8472?"

"For one the cube is definitely generating a warp field," Harry replied.

"The core," B'Elanna added on. "Remember? It was running slowly around the time that we had the problems with the clock. It's the only source of anti-matter on the ship, it was also the only system that didn't overload the second time. It isn't affected like we are."

"It's still a bit of a leap," Chakotay said.

Jessie shrugged as she moved away from Opps. "If it's true we have plenty of time to prepare."

Kathryn turned around to share a look with everyone on the bridge, a small smile formed. "She's right. We need to decide though whether we're flying or fighting. We don't have time to get this ship ready for both."

"If our core is running slower than us I'd say fight," James suggested.

Tuvok glanced his way, "even if we disable that cube, we'll still be in this situation."

Kathryn nodded, "what do you suggest?"

"Clearly the overloads were caused by the phenomenon causing the temporal distortion. We need to find it and eliminate it," Tuvok replied.

"Preferably after the Borg ship is gone, right?" Tom said.

Chakotay looked worried as Kathryn's smile grew, he knew that smile that meant trouble. "Not necessarily."

"I never said my answer, can I still vote for flight?" Harry asked with a whimper. A lot of the bridge crew nodded, obviously hoping for the same thing.

## **Day Two Hundred and Two**

The red alert lights and klaxon were back up and running, everyone on the Bridge wished it wasn't.

"The cube is hailing," Harry reported.

Kathryn rolled her eyes and slapped her arm rest as hard as she could, "god damn it!" Chakotay looked over from his seat with a bemused expression. She climbed out of her own and headed for the Ready Room. "I'll see you in another week, cancel red alert." She disappeared through the doors, muttering obscenities.

Tom span his chair around 180 degrees. "Anyone wanna play charades?" Everyone's expressions gave him his answer, he turned straight back around.

### **Day Two Hundred and Eight**

"Come on, come on, come on!" Kathryn screamed at the viewscreen, which she was within an inch of.

"I knew we should have gone with the beam over Janeway plan," Jessie commented.

Almost everyone tried not to laugh. Tuvok raised his eyebrow, "she would no longer have the protection of the temporal anomaly."

"Yeah, that's the flaw in her plan!" Chakotay groaned into his hand.

Tom span his chair around again, "just the girls. Strip poker?" He smirked in Jessie's direction, "Jess?"

### **Day Two Hundred and Twelve**

Tom marched out of the turbolift with an angry look on his face, he directed an angry finger towards Jessie. "That was not cool!" James shrugged, clearly disagreeing. Jessie only smiled maliciously.

"It was quiet," Chakotay sighed in disappointment.

"God, how long does it take for a collective to make up its mind?" Kathryn complained. "They're just a bunch of dumb bitches aren't they?"

"Dum bishes!" Kiara squeaked. Chakotay cringed, a lot. Kathryn however was over the moon with this. She rushed over to where her daughter was sitting on the floor.

"That's my girl! Now say coffee," she giggled. The pair disappeared into the Ready Room.

The turbolift doors opened, Craig ran out of them with a panicked look on his face. "Has anyone seen Ki... itty?" he trailed off when he saw Chakotay. He broke into nervous laughter.

"Relax, she's with her mum," Chakotay groaned.

"Oh, thank god. I thought the worst had happened," Craig sighed in relief.

Opps beeped, waking up Harry from a standing nap. He quickly shook it off, "Commander, they're activating the tractor beam."

"Damn, I was about to suggest Twister," Tom complained.

Chakotay tapped his commbadge, "Chakotay to Janeway, it's time."

James winced a little, "they've only just done it, are you sure about that?"

Chakotay's eyes widened in horror. He didn't dare look towards the Ready Room, he didn't have to, he could feel a pair of eyes piercing his soul.

"Dum bish," Kiara squeaked.

Kathryn nodded, patting her daughter's head. "That's daddy." They both went back into the Ready Room.

"Oh, if we've still got time, I'll get a twister mat," Tom grinned.

"James, can you put him into a longer coma this time?" Chakotay groaned.

Tom looked confused, "huh James, I thought it was Je... eek!" He ran back for the turbolift. Almost everyone were in stitches, especially as James had barely moved an inch from his spot when he ran.

## **Day Two Hundred and Fifteen**

"Any minute now," Harry reported.

Chakotay sighed in relief. "Our minute or theirs cos this shift's nearly over."

"Ours," Harry replied.

"Damn," Chakotay groaned.

"Damn? We've been waiting for this for nearly two months," Kathryn hissed. She watched the viewscreen intently. The Borg Cube's green tractor beam was almost on them, not that anybody could see it moving.

"How about..." Tom started to suggest. Kathryn's growls and everyone's *no's* startled him into silence.

B'Elanna smirked, she kept switching her attention between the viewscreen and the Engineering station. Her fingers were still, hovering ready over specific controls.

"Prepare the pulse, Lieutenant," Kathryn ordered.

"That's what I was going to suggest," Tom muttered. "No one listens to me."

Harry's eyes flickered up for a second, "ten seconds. I think."

B'Elanna nodded, "we're ready here."

Harry wiped the sweat from his forehead, "five, four, three, two..."

"Time's up!" Kathryn snarled. The ship trembled as the tractor beam finally connected. B'Elanna pressed her fingers down.

"Kathryn, you've already used that one," Chakotay warned.

Kathryn looked disappointed, "oh I did? Okay, let me think." It came to her. "Time to take out the garbage!"

"That doesn't even make sense," Tom commented.

"It's working, the pulse is overloading their emitters," B'Elanna reported. The ship's vibrations got more intense, anyone watching the viewscreen saw the surface of cube cracking up. Explosions erupted from the cracks.

Harry nodded, "the cube's systems are overloading."

"Oh I got a better one," Kathryn smiled just as the ship jolted viciously. Everyone standing were tossed to the floor. Kathryn clutched her arm rests and prepared for her big close up. "There's coffee in that... no wait, that's not..." The viewscreen was overwhelmed by a huge fireball emanating from the cube.

The fires from the cube ripped the huge vessel apart, the resulting explosion smashed into the tiny ship in its tractor beam.

Seconds later all that was left was tiny specks of debris. In Voyager's place all that remained was a tiny black spot, only illuminated by the green mist the Borg Cube left behind. It didn't take long for it to shrink into nothing.

## Day Sixteen

"Oh my god! *Futill, antee*. Do you even know how to say I?" Kathryn snapped. "Don't get me started again on the whole *dadda* instead of *dayta* thing."

Seven of Nine stared blankly at the deranged Captain, unsure of what to say back to her.

"Of course, you're a Borg imbecile. Note I said imbecile, not *imbecill*. You say rubbish like we are and we are not amused. You don't know what I even means, funny that considering the source," Kathryn rambled.

"Kathryn, a lot of us, including me are allowed to speak English a little differently. It's called a dialect," Chakotay quietly said.

"Abandon ship," Tom whispered to Harry.

Kes woke up in the dark. It was a struggle to sit up, her head span as a throbbing pain coursed through it. Through the pain she managed to see a tiny light by her feet. Her hand reached for it, accidentally knocking the source of it into her eyes. When she finally got a good grip of it she pointed it all around her to find out where she was.

It didn't take her long to recognise it. It was one of the Jeffries tube hatches, but not just any old one. The damaged ladder beside her told her it was the one before Deck Thirteen.

"The damage was fixed. How..." she mumbled. The last time she was in this spot she lost control of her abilities again, she thought. "That was months ago. How?"

Kes decided to get out of there before she was discovered again, and figure it out later. She grabbed the ladder and began to make the long journey up to a safer deck.

As she wandered down a corridor she was starting to feel like the last few months were only a dream. Some of them were fine, just without power, but others sported broken wall panels. Crew passed by her, armed with flashlights.

Sickbay was in sight, she picked up the pace to reach it. Just as she did footsteps approached her from another direction.

"Kes, hey. Are you all right?" James asked.

Kes stopped. She tried to force a smile on her face before turning around to face him. "Fine considering what happened. What about you, what have you been up to?"

"Oh," James looked a little worried. "Seven thinks she saw somebody try to break into Deck Thirteen."

"You're a long way away from there," Kes said.

James smirked and nodded. "Tuvok wants me to take the team, apparently I don't go alone."

"Reasonable," Kes shrugged. "So erm, I've lost track. How long has it been since that deck was destroyed?"

"I dunno, about two weeks," James replied. He noticed her shoulders tense up and her eyes glaze over. "Are you sure you're fine?"

Kes nodded, "sure. Everything's fine."

James wasn't convinced but he knew he had to hurry. "I'll catch you later, we'll talk then. Okay? I just have to..."

"I know," Kes sighed. James reluctantly hurried into Sickbay, glancing back at her before the doors shut behind him. "It will be fine," she said. She knew what she had to do now.

### **The Ready Room:**

"I'm not sure I understand." That was an understatement, to Kathryn this was out of nowhere.

Kes glanced down at her hands, she squeezed them both tightly. "I've thought about this a lot over the last few... since this started. The power I described is only the beginning. I held it back, fearing I would be risking this crew. I can't keep doing that. This is who I am."

"So what if you make a wall wavy now and then, it's hardly our biggest problem right now," Kathryn said angrily.

"I think someday it will be. I care for this crew too much to risk their lives. I have to leave Voyager before I do that," Kes explained softly.

Kathryn shook her head, Kes was certain she saw a few tears in her eyes. "Go where exactly?"

"I don't know yet," Kes answered honestly. "I'm changing, evolving into something... bigger, and I've tried to hold it back for the sake of everyone. It's not just because I think I won't always have control of it, it's for me as well. This is why I left the underground and Ocampa. I believed my people had the potential to be more than they are. I have a chance to explore that."

"Can I talk you out of it?" Kathryn almost whispered. "You can still do that here."

"I can't. I've seen... I know that it will hurt the ones I care about. I must do this alone," Kes answered. "I don't want you to think I'm ungrateful, up and leaving at a time like this."

"Of course I do, you're a rotten little pixie," Kathryn grumbled, but her heart wasn't in it. Kes tried her best not to laugh. "If you ever change your mind, you're always welcome. This is your home."

"Thank you, Captain," Kes smiled, tears started to fall onto her cheeks. "I have something I want to give you, all of you."

"All of us? Then it isn't coffee," Kathryn tried not to sound disappointed.

Kes chuckled, shaking her head. "No, it's better."

A white flash penetrated the darkness, Voyager flew out of it, gradually coming to a halt after it faded away.

"Holy..." Tom stuttered.

Chakotay's eyes were wider than they'd ever been. "What was that?"

"I don't believe it," Harry gasped. "We're nine thousand five hundred light years from where we just were."

*"Engineering to Bridge. The warp core has gone back offline, I don't know what got into it."*

"Incredible. We no longer have to worry about the Borg," Chakotay couldn't help but grin.

Kathryn smiled, "thank you for the gift, Kes. Good luck."

"I dunno, she could have left the warp core on," a random crewmember muttered to his friend. He trembled at the sound of Kathryn's dangerous growl.

Chakotay sighed, "great, now she'll be crabby again for another few months."

The crewmember screamed as he ran for his life, well walked, he only had to jump onto the ladder in the Jeffries tube.

"Hmm Harry, ever feel like you missed out on something huge?" Tom asked.

Harry nodded, "every damn episode."

**THE END**