

Episode 2.04 Disconnected

Tom panicked and slapped the offending hand away from his precious Flyer controls. He knew he'd be made to regret it, it was worth it though.

Morgan glared into the back of his head. "Did you just...?"

"Yes, don't touch the helm," Tom said, "they're not for kids' hands."

"The controls are oversized and pointless like someone I know," Morgan grumbled as she walked back to the only empty station.

Tuvok sat parallel to her, carefully choosing his words to soothe the teen. "Miss Morgan." He still got a glare for it. "The Captain asked you to come to observe, so you learn awaymission protocols. If you wish to be contribute in future, you..."

"Yeah yeah," Morgan groaned and sat back in her seat. "I just thought we were supposed to help people in need."

Tuvok frowned, "there are no lifesigns left on the surface. We are too late to answer the distress call. There is no one to help."

"But," Morgan protested, "you dunno, sensors could be faulty. Shouldn't we check it out, just in case?"

"I'm detecting a vast amount of weapon signatures, desolate buildings. The surface has been obliterated from orbit," Tuvok said.

Tom whistled, "harsh."

Tuvok's eyebrow shot up, "yes. We will report back to Voyager. Until then..." His console interrupted him. "We are being hailed. Curious."

"Told you," Morgan smiled.

Tom swivelled his chair around to face her. "Ok, lesson number two; no one likes a smug told you so-er."

"No one likes a doesn't shut up-er either," Morgan said, armed with a scowl.

"I am unable to establish a two way communication. The interference in the atmosphere is interfering with the signal. I'll open it their way so we can hear it," Tuvok said as he worked.

"Hello?" a man's voice said barely over the crackling. "Is there someone up there? Please. Something horrible happened here. I can't find any other survivors."

Tuvok tapped on his station to close the comm. "The signal is coming from the city outskirts. We should be able to land a mile away."

Tom grinned broadly, "now's my time to shine."

"Can't we beam down?" Morgan asked, knocking Tom's pride down a touch.

"I would not recommend it. The same interference that's affecting our communications could cause problems with the transporters," Tuvok replied. "Besides, there are only three of us."

"You're the boss," Tom said giddily.

Tuvok lead the way with his tricorder through what used to be a road. Broken bricks, concrete, metals scattered everywhere. What Tom thought were small shuttlecrafts dotted around, he discovered were the aliens' version of cars. Many of which had been crushed by falling debris. What caught his eye were the five in a line, each one had hit the one in front with some speed. The first looked to have been crushed by a lamppost falling on top of it.

Dust hung in their air, choking the team, forcing them to cover their faces with the neck of their uniform or in Morgan's case her t-shirt.

"Tuvok," Tom said as he peered into one of the vehicles.

Tuvok walked over to join him. "Interesting. This mode of transportation looks to be from a pre-warp civilisation."

Morgan's foot caught on something, tripping her over. She looked back instinctively.

"No, that's not it. This," Tom replied, pointing at the cars that had crashed into it, then the crushed one in front of it, "happened quick. And yet, where are the bodies?"

Morgan's screaming got their attention quickly. They ran over to find her stumbling away from the spot she tripped over, trembling fiercely.

"What?" Tom stuttered.

Tuvok glanced in the direction she was staring. A body lying in amongst the rubble, heavily decomposed.

"Okay never mind," Tom said with a lump in his throat.

"Curious," Tuvok said. He walked over to it and crouched down.

Morgan's eyes flashed with rage, "curious? I just kicked a dead guy. It's gross, and ick."

"Woman," Tuvok corrected her as he scanned. "Mr Paris is correct. An attack of this scale and nature, there should be more remains than this."

"More?" Morgan said in a higher pitch. She made a little whimpering noise as she walked off, eyeing her feet carefully. "I don't want anymore."

"Maybe some were vaporised. This one might have already been dead, or escaped the initial blast only to die when the building collapsed," Tom suggested.

Tuvok nodded. "Perhaps."

The team heard footsteps approach and what sounded like a pebble bouncing onto lower ground. They looked around to see a figure approach them.

"You're getting close," a pale grey man said in a friendly voice. What they could see of him was covered in scars, but what brought them on edge was the very Borg like implants on his face and hands.

Morgan pulled a face as she hurried in front of Tuvok and Tom. Tuvok hinted for her to step aside by touching her shoulder. She didn't, but he walked around her anyway while grasping the phaser on his belt. "Are you the one who sent the distress call?"

"Yes," the man said, laughing nervously as he noticed the phaser. "I also tried to call your ship but I got no answer."

"We didn't detect your lifesigns. Any in fact. How...?" Tom wondered.

Morgan stepped forward with her shoulders tense. "Because he's dead, right?" Her two teammates stared at her, flummoxed.

"That's right," the man answered sadly. "My name is Nij. Two months ago our planet was attacked by a strange looking ship. Pyramid shaped. It fired indiscriminantly at every city, town, village. I remember seeing a bright light, then a sensation of flying. I couldn't move. When I awoke, there was more than one voice in my head. I wasn't me anymore."

"The Borg?" Tom stuttered.

"They called themselves the Tolg. They left no survivors, they took any body that was still in one piece," Nij said, grimacing. "I myself looted the city for other people like me who were dead or dying, recruiting for their sick army."

Tom tried not to gag but he did anyway. "Oh god. That is worse than the Borg."

"They usually don't leave such a mess behind, it limits their assimilation pool," Morgan said.

Tuvok glanced at her, "indeed. An orbital bombardment would be wasteful, not efficient if assimilation was their primary objective. Perhaps they had another agenda."

"Wait," Tom stammered and stepped forward cautiously. "If you're Tolg, how come you're still here?"

Nij sighed, his gaze drifted to the corpse Morgan found. "I think it would be best to show you. Follow me." He turned to go back the way he came.

The team followed carefully, keeping far back so they could keep an eye on him. It didn't take long for them to see how he managed to sneak up on them. Only a few yards away from where they met him was a small crater, shallow yet deep enough for them to walk down into and not be seen by anyone on the road.

Morgan hesitated near the top as she spotted figures lying at the bottom of it, some looked as bad as the body she tripped over. A couple seemed to be fresh, covered in torn and small sheets or what looked like paper.

"What is this?" Tuvok questioned halfway down. He stopped there with Tom waiting behind him.

"These were left behind," Nij answered sullenly, "like me." He knelt down beside the freshest of the bodies; a woman lying on her back with all but her head covered in a blanket.

Morgan took a few further steps down and to the right so she was beside Tuvok, but a step closer to Nij. She looked at the body he was beside, then across to the other fresh corpse nearby, noting the technology across his face and forearm. "She wasn't assimilated."

"No. I found her after they left," Nij replied. "Everyone else I have found were ex drones too though."

"So let me get this straight. The Tolg batter an entire planet so badly they have very little new recruits, and yet they still left them behind?" Tom questioned while frowning. "Is that what you're saying? It doesn't make sense."

"I don't know what it means. All of the people I ran into were turned into drones, disconnected, dumped aside and left to rot," Nij answered. "Without the Tolg's help, we're nothing more than reanimated corpses. The more recently assimilated died instantly, while ones like me, we endured. I believe I'm the last one, and I don't feel like I have long."

Tuvok thought about it carefully. "A full assault on a pre-warp civilisation. Perhaps they chose this planet by mistake, it had nothing of interest to them. In that case why assimilate only to discard the drones? There must be a reason for it. Is this usual behaviour for the Tolg?"

"No. Nothing about this is usual for the Tolg," Morgan replied.

"Hang on. You said these guys were like a myth, you'd never seen them until that one time. You don't know anything definite about them, other than they're like a zombie Borg who likes pyramids," Tom said.

Morgan glanced at him and lightly shrugged. "From what I heard they pretty much do what the Borg do. Their only differences haven't been witnessed, so everyone assumes it's them. That's why for a while we weren't sure they even existed."

"We should proceed with caution," Tuvok warned them both. "We'll take Mr Nij back to the Flyer and do a full scan. If he is indeed telling the truth about being disconnected from the Tolg, or the Borg, then we'll return to Voyager but keep him confined. Perhaps the Doctor might be able to help him."

"Tuvok," Tom said uneasily.

Nij smiled, "no, it's quite alright. I understand. I'd be cautious too, especially from what I've seen and learned of them."

"Very well," Tuvok nodded, "let's return. There is nothing more we can do here, after all. If it is truly pre-warp, there is also nothing we should do." He turned to go back up the crater.

Morgan pulled a face, "that's stupid. Wouldn't lesser advanced people need our help more?"

Tom smiled at her as he walked by her, following Tuvok. "I don't like it either, but them's the rules. We can only help Nij as he'll already know about aliens and spaceships thanks to the Tolg."

Morgan watched him walk off, still grimacing. Nij passed by her, then stopped. His hand gestured in front of him. She shook her head stubbornly. "Oh, of course. Apologies," he said and walked away.

She waited a bit before following him. A light gust of wind tried to push at her back. It felt warm and yet it left a cool feeling across her skin, giving her goosebumps and a shudder.

Voyager:

The Senior Staff gathered around the Conference Table, eager to secure the few seats. Annika huffed as the one she was aiming for was took by James, so she stepped back and scowled at his back instead.

"So, you made sure to keep scanning for any visitors, right Harry?" Kathryn questioned.

Harry nodded, "absolutely. There's been no transwarp activity, or any other vessels in the area for a long time. I've rigged Opps to inform me if that changes though."

"You think the Tolg are going to return for their drones?" Chakotay wondered, glancing at Kathryn.

She tensed, "in the olden days I'd say no, but with our luck they'll have forgotten a pen or something."

Chakotay quietly laughed at that, then turned to Tuvok. "Do we know anything new about our guest?"

"The Doctor examined him on our return. His story appears to be correct so far. Parts of his body show signs of decay over two months. The implants are artificially forcing his heart to beat, and keeping his brain active. However this technology is brand new to us, and it appears to be failing. We don't have the time to fully examine it before he perishes," Tuvok replied.

"If he's already dead, what can we do for him? It seems cruel to bring him here for nothing," Tom said.

The screen on the wall changed to show the Doctor sitting at his desk in Sickbay. "Don't write me off just yet, Mr Paris. The Tolg appear to use a nanovirus similar to the Borg's to kill the drone but it slows the decomposition process considerably. The implants maintain the organs it needs to keep the drone active. I believe it'd be possible to revive him, hopefully before the implants lose their functionality."

"Even after two months of slowed decay, that's still a long shot," Harry pointed out.

"Normally I'd agree if he were human, but this man has remarkable adaptability. I think with a few donations; blood and a few organs, I should be able to revitalise him," the Doctor said proudly, cueing a few eye rolls from the table.

Annika stepped forward, eyes brightening. "Perhaps I can be of assistance. There are still nanoprobes in my blood stream. You should be able to use that to assist the regeneration process."

The Doctor beamed in her direction, "I'm glad you said that, as I was about to ask but it felt rude to." A few more eye rolls and a groan from Kathryn. "I've made a list of what donations he'll require, including nanoprobes. I'm optimistic we should be able to help this man."

"What kind of organs are we talking about?" Craig asked.

The Doctor looked at him curiously. "Oh, are you volunteering?"

"Uh," Craig said hesitantly as most of the table eyed him, "depends what it is. That's why I asked."

"Well the most damage is to his lungs and kidneys. Right now he is breathing through an implant in his throat and jaw, quite uncomfortable. The kidneys are of no use to a dead Tolg, but he'll be needing one to live," the Doctor said. Craig looked wary and was about to object, but the Doctor brightly smiled again. "Oh don't worry, I've checked compatibility. Human donors only."

Craig smiled nervously. Some of the people watching him shook their heads, and or smirked as they had a good idea why he was. "What er, blood type is he? Maybe I can help there?" he asked.

"Craig, it isn't something that everyone must do. You can opt out if you don't want to," Chakotay said.

"I know," Craig quickly protested.

Tom snorted, getting everyone's attention. "Oh I see. He's trying to impress the ladies. If I were single, I'd be thinking the same thing."

"No," Craig groaned, "I'm not trying to impress ladies."

"Oh I'm sorry," Tom said sincerely, but then smirked, "lady then."

Morgan rolled her eyes, "yeah, that's a little sad Tom. I'd only be impressed if they were doing it because they wanted to help someone."

Tom laughed in Craig's direction, "oh too bad Craigy. Better luck next time."

"What?" Morgan looked confused. "Doing it to get a girlfriend is pretty creepy, isn't it?"

"I'm glad I'm not the only one thinking that," James commented. Morgan looked relieved and nodded.

"Oh," the Doctor said to something off screen, "we have a volunteer for the kidney. So that leaves a lung, and maybe a few nanoprobes."

Tom meanwhile pretended to think about it. Anyone who saw him do it knew he was overexaggerating. "Hmm, says a lot that the only one who agrees with you is the guy that likes to stab people in his free time for fun."

Morgan looked confused, then disgusted. "Why do I never understand what this prat is saying?"

Kathryn shook her head tiredly, "we all have that problem."

James though looked across the table at him almost as if he were bored. Tom was more amused by Annika nodding enthusiastically behind him.

"If you really believed that, you wouldn't say anything to me," James said.

Tom faked an offended gasp, "ho oh, is that a threat?"

James rolled his eyes and looked away. "No, but it's obvious that's what you're after. Which is... weird."

"Mr Stuart, enough of that," Tuvok warned.

Tom raised a quizzical eyebrow, "who?"

Jessie let out a tired groan as she leaned her chin against her hand. "Oh god, you don't listen to anyone but yourself, do you?"

"Nuh uh, if I did I wouldn't know that we have a killer at our table, in our senior staff. I can't be the only one that has a problem with that," Tom said sharply.

His remark silenced the room and left behind an awkward chill.

Kathryn cleared her throat, cutting into it. "Tom, what I have told you about bringing your rumour rubbish to my meetings? Don't or lose an ear."

"Rumour? Everyone knows, Harry told me," Tom said exasperated. Kathryn fixed her death glare on him but he was too upset at the rumour accusation for it to fully affect him. He still stammered, "what, even with that he can still do no wrong? Well I'm sorry but I'm not okay with it, I don't trust him. If anyone should be volunteering for lung surgery, it should be our criminals, not a poor kid who just wants a girlfriend."

Craig looked around sheepishly, taking care to avoid looking at Morgan. Thankfully she wasn't listening and was busy tapping on a PADD in front of her. "Hang on, I'm not..."

"You're right. Fine," James interrupted him.

Jessie turned her head towards him so fast it give her a brief twinge. She ignored it to scowl at him, "what do you mean, fine? Don't let him guilt trip you into doing something stupid."

"Wonderful," the Doctor grinned, "I'll see you in an hour Mr Tay... oh sorry Stuart. Annika please stop by at 2000 hours and we'll get started on the nanoprobes." Annika smiled and nodded. He disappeared from the screen afterwards.

Jessie's eyes were wide in shock and anger. "No, that's not what he meant. He was just agreeing with him to shut him up, right?"

James looked down at the table, then up at again, not daring to make eye contact with her. "No, I'll do it. If it helps."

"What?" Jessie stuttered.

Tom chuckled, "give it up Jess, he's probably pretending to be all mopey and stuff so you won't think he's doing it to impress you after that creepy Craig comment."

"Oh yeah, do I look impressed?" Jessie shouted at him while pointing at her face.

Kathryn growled impatiently, "oh for god's sake. I feel like I'm in a bloody kindergarten." She got up and walked out, mumbling about coffee.

"Uh, dismissed?" Chakotay said as soon as the door closed behind her.

Most of the room filed out. Jessie hinted at James to stop by grasping the hand he had leaning on the table. "Don't you dare. You don't need to prove anything."

"I'm not," James said.

"Then why?" Jessie asked shakily. "This isn't some routine blood transfusion. You're talking about giving some stranger, a guy who's been dead two months already, one of your lungs. It's not something you can hand over like that, it's going to effect your health. You're not exactly spending your days slouching around on a chair, doing nothing. You won't be able to do anything active until you get used to it..." Her face paled, "and what if your remaining one gets damaged. What then?"

James finally turned his head to look at her apologetically. "I'm sorry. I feel like I have to do this, it's..."

Realisation struck Jessie, it left her looking haunted. "No. Helping that man live won't undo the one you killed." James flinched, he turned away with a shaken expression. "It certainly won't help you feel better. I know you. You could save a hundred people but you'll still hate yourself for that one. And you know it, so why?"

James shook his head. "I don't care about that. He almost killed you and the baby."

"Yeah and still," Jessie said as she climbed out of her chair. "I still can't believe after all these years, you'd think I'd fall for that."

"What?" James said, glancing up at her.

Jessie sighed, smiling sadly. "You can fool everyone else, but I know who you are. Yet here I am, still trying to talk you out of it when I know it will never work."

"Jess, I'll be fine," James said.

"You better be," Jessie sighed before walking out as well.

Sickbay:

The Doctor fussed around his latest patient, with help from a blue shirt crewmember. A couple more stood nearby at the station looking over patient files.

Craig anxiously paced right next to the door, mumbling to himself. The door opened, which he didn't notice. James almost walked into him as he passed by. He jumped a mile and stood aside to let him in.

"Craig, what are you..." James started to ask.

Craig's face turned bright red. "I'm not doing this just to get Morgan to like me. That's not it. What are *you* doing here, trying to one up me?"

James struggled not to laugh. "That's not what I was going to ask, but thanks for that. I needed cheering up."

"Oh," Craig continued to blush. "I just wanted to help. I can't imagine being a walking corpse. I feel sorry for him."

"I dunno why you're so defensive if that's your reason. Tom's not worth getting worked up over. Relax, okay?" James said, shaking his head.

Craig nervously nodded and glanced over at the busy biobed. "Yeah, mine's not too bad. I wanted to help but I have to admit, I wouldn't be doing what you're doing." He glanced back at him, "what gives?"

The humour in James' face faded away. "To be honest, I don't know either."

One of the blue shirts walked over holding a hypospray. "Which one of you is here for the blood donation?"

Craig meekly raised his hand, then anxiously rolled his sleeve up. The crewmember smiled and stepped closer to press the hypo into that arm.

"Maybe you should take your own advice," he said once that was done.

James frowned, "what do you mean?"

"Tom's afraid, and you know he's not the only one," Craig replied, tensing his right shoulder. "You don't have to prove anything to them. I would've wanted to do the same thing."

James wasn't sure what to say to that, that was until Craig walked around him to leave. "Wait. What do you mean by that? Would've done the same thing."

Craig flinched and stopped at the door, opening it. "Morgan said that you and Jess..." James groaned a little impatiently, making Craig stutter and turn around. "No no, she didn't mean to. She said something similar like; *of course James killed the prick, who wouldn't want to defend their fam...* and then said she was famished as a cover. I asked, she tried, so it's not her fault. Blame me."

"Right," James sighed. "You know what I'm going to say, don't you?"

"Hey, who do you think I am?" Craig smiled. "Don't think this lung removal is going to get you out of dad duty, if that's your plan."

James chuckled, "yeah it's not."

"Your secret's safe with me," Craig said, once more turning to leave. He stalled again, "the baby part, not the suicide by organ donation."

"Why does everyone think I'm going to die?" James said, a touch impatiently.

"I dunno, personally I believe that jinxing works both ways," Craig sniggered. He walked out.

"Thanks. I think," James said hesitantly.

A few minutes of waiting around, the Doctor hurried over to him. "Ah there you are. If you're ready, can you lie down on the closest biobed?"

James nodded, "sure." He walked over to the biobed he was directed to. As he did he heard the door opening again. The assumption was that it was another blood donator so didn't bother looking to check.

"Let's do this thing," Tom's voice echoed around the room.

James groaned just as he sat down. "Oh, you're kidding me?"

The Doctor approached him first, pulling the medicine tray along with him. "There's a lot to do. I need all the help I can get."

Tom wandered over looking too chirpy for his own good, even when he was met with a cold stare from both James and the Doctor. "What? Smiles gentlemen, and James," he said with a flourished wink, "we're performing miracles, playing god here. What's not to like?"

James stared blankly at him long enough to unnerve the helmsman, he wavered and stepped back while looking away. Then James turned his attention to the Doctor. "He's not touching me. If you're going to involve him, I'm leaving."

Tom pouted slightly, "oh come on. What do you think I'm going to do while you're out? Draw a moustache on you, or give you a wedgie?"

The Doctor groaned, "perhaps if you didn't come in so, so eager, he wouldn't have objected..."

"No I would," James cut in.

"As much," the Doctor finished anyway. "I am the main physician, he'll merely be assisting me. You have no reason to worry."

"Yeah," Tom nodded, once again cheerfully. "I don't want to touch you anymore than you want me to."

The Doctor's brow was getting a little busy with frustrated lines. He sighed very impatiently. "Perhaps you could take Williams' place with our guest. Tell him to come over here and assist."

Tom's face and shoulders fell. "You guys have no sense of humour," he huffed and walked off to the main biobed.

"Please," the Doctor said, gesturing to the bed.

James took the hint and lay down. Another man walked over, a young man in his twenties with a friendly smile, black hair and stubble, tall with a hint of a gut. If he were shorter it'd be more noticeable.

"Ah Lee, this is James. He'll be giving us a lung for Mr Nij. Prep him will you, while I get my tools ready," the Doctor said.

"Oh we've met, it's been a few years huh?" the man said as the Doctor walked over to the tool tray. "You remember, the time travel incident."

James laughed awkwardly, "yeah, how could I forget?"

"So, you been keeping busy these three or so years? I've found a sweet little..." Lee said a little excitedly.

"Lee, that's not even close to what I meant by prep him," the Doctor groaned from afar, though he did look amused.

Lee smiled nervously and picked up a PADD sitting on the small panel at the side of the bed. "Fine less me, more you, I'll catch you up later." James looked the other way briefly while frowning. Lee missed it as he was engrossed in reading. "Okay, blood type's a match. You have a little Borg tick in your box, so I'm gonna have to have a wee look to see if we can use it." The overbed scanner turned on. "Do you have any allergies?"

"Only to awkward small talk when I'm about to be dissected," James replied.

"Oh you," Lee laughed a little too much. His face turned immediately straight as he peered at the scanner, but it wasn't because of that, the whole room heard his stomach gurgle for two whole minutes.

The Doctor shook his head from afar.

The Mess Hall:

Neelix hummed tunelessly while scooping some muddy slop from a wok into a bowl on the counter in front of him. The steam emanating looked almost yellow despite the contents being mostly pink.

A young woman in her twenties waited on the other side of the counter, looking like she was waiting to be executed.

"Oh, there's some extra dumplings in there. Lucky you," Neelix smiled.

The girl peered in, immediately spotted something furry floating to the top. Her stomach churned and she felt lightheaded. "Actually, I'm not that hungry," she mumbled quickly.

Neelix stared at her a little concerned. "You don't look well, my dear. Why don't you take this and fill your belly, it'll help."

"Nope," the girl tried to say but gagged. She ran off before the dumpling crawled out of the bowl.

Neelix looked confused in her direction, missing it plop onto the counter beside it. He spotted Craig walking through the doors, calling out to him he didn't hear the dumpling make a weak purring sound. "Ah, Mr Anderson. My favourite security..."

"Work in Engineering now," Craig quickly said as he dashed by to get to the replicator. Neelix pouted and resumed stirring the wok.

Morgan noticed him as well and eagerly waved at him. His face lit up when he eventually saw her, he then made his food order.

"Why did I do that?" Morgan said while grimacing.

The woman at her table bit her lip and tried not to laugh. Morgan narrowed her eyes in her direction but that only made it harder for her to hold it back, she burst into sniggers. "Oh god, you keep working on that death-glare, Janeway Junior."

The women who escaped from Neelix earlier wandered around the busy Mess Hall, holding a glass of water. Morgan's neighbour saw and shook her head. With a devilish glint in her eye she stood up and frantically waved, "Faye, yoo-hoo, over here!"

With a new red face, the girl hurried over to sit down. "Claire! Why did you do that? I already saw you."

"Oh don't let glarey here scare you off," the cheerful woman said. Morgan rolled her eyes and concentrated on her drink. "Don't tell me you're out of rations again. This isn't like you."

"I know. I think someone's stealing my rations," the girl, Faye said.

Claire groaned, "oh don't with that someone. We both know who'd steal your food."

Faye sighed, her attention drifted to the window and the planet. Claire pushed her bowl of chips forward to share. "This place, gives me the creeps."

"Yeah, a lot of people died. It should," Claire said. Faye continued staring, so Claire nudged the bowl into her hand so she'd get the hint. "You worry too much."

Morgan's back felt as if a cool breeze brushed against it, making her bolt upright. To ignore it, she tried to concentrate on the people she was sitting with, first at Claire, then Faye. In the barely a second she was turning her head towards Faye, someone stood in between them. She wanted to believe it was only Craig but the colour of the clothes and their shape was all wrong. Then she noticed she could still see behind them. One blink and they vanished.

"Yup, still creepy," Faye shuddered.

Morgan looked at her expectantly. Doing so she could see the planet in her peripheral. It felt to her like something there was watching her.

"Oh hey, we can't all fit on this one chair," a male voice said a little too loudly.

Faye jumped nearly off her seat, "oh god, Lee. Why?"

Claire sniggered and glanced up at the new arrival, then she noticed it was arrivals. One of the men standing there looked a little awkward. "Oh right, sorry Lee. First invited, first to sit." She gestured to Craig.

"That's okay, I er..." he hesitated.

Lee grinned at him, "don't worry about it man. I'll stand. I'm used to it."

"Aren't you supposed to be in surgery?" Claire asked.

"In between jobs. Lung out, waiting on the kidney girl," Lee said with a shrug. "So glad too, starving. Couldn't stop thinking about burgers."

Craig was about to take a bite out of his own burger, until an image of Lee with a burger in one hand and a bloody organ in the other popped into his head. He put it right back down on the plate.

"Oh you read my mind," Lee said, reaching over to grab it. Craig had little time to object before it was stuffed into the other man's mouth.

Morgan stared at him in disgust, "trust me, no one's going to want to do that." She got up to leave, brushing past Craig's chair. He watched after her with a confused frown on his face.

"*Sickbay to Williams,*" the Doctor's voice called.

Lee quickly chewed what was in his mouth before answering. "What's up?" he asked, still spraying crumbs everywhere. Craig had to back his chair up a bit to avoid getting covered.

"*Medical emergency. Hurry back.*"

Lee made a little whine. Still he hurried out carrying his plate.

"Mr Paris, the cortical stimulator, on my mark!" the Doctor bellowed while pointing at the station opposite the biobed.

Tom was already running over to man it. The Doctor meanwhile placed a little curved device on Nij's chest. A firm *now* told Tom to activate the stimulator. Apart from the chest forcefully rising, nothing happened.

Lee ran inside on the sixth attempt.

"I don't get it. He was compatible, how..." Tom stammered. The Doctor gestured for him to try a seventh time.

"What's happening?" Lee asked, carefully approaching.

The Doctor focused on him urgently. "Crewman, retrieve the Tolg breathing apparatus, it needs re-attaching. Until we can discover the problem, it'll have to do."

"Okay," Lee quietly mumbled to himself. He didn't have to go too far, only to another trolley sitting in between the in use biobeds. On it were the many little implants they had taken from Nij. He tried to remember which one it was, the stress wasn't helping.

"Hurry. The donated lung is failing," the Doctor said.

The other biobed started to bleep erratically when Lee was about to grab the right one. He hurried over to check on the patient there. His face paled. "Uh Doc."

"What?" the Doctor snapped from the other biobed.

"James's breathing has slowed, heart rate is increasing," Lee stuttered his answer.

Tom and the Doctor shared the same horrified expression. They dropped everything to run over to Lee's side.

"This doesn't make sense. He was fine before," Tom said.

The Doctor shook his head, "bring me the cortical stimulator. Quickly!"

Tom glanced helplessly at the other patient they had left. Lee ran over to him to grab the device from his chest. "Are we really... what about Nij?"

"I'm afraid a still living patient takes priority here, Ensign," the Doctor said as he gently placed what looked like a breathing mask over James' mouth and nose. Lee ran over with the device and handed it to him.

"Yeah, right. Sorry," Tom stuttered guiltily.

Lee walked over to the foot end of the biobed to use the console there, looking at the Doctor expectantly. He gave him a nod. "Clear!" Lee barked.

Tom meanwhile collected himself of his shock to pick up a tricorder and a regenerator, then hurry over to the opposite side to the Doctor. In between cortical stimulation, he attempted to scan.

"There's nothing. No damage. He shouldn't be dying," Tom said.

"Check for any nanoprobe activity. Anything, even slight," the Doctor said quickly, then nodded at Lee for another burst. Once that was done and with no effect he continued, "heck even check for blood type incapability."

"But wouldn't both problems only be on Nij's end?" Tom asked. The Doctor merely grunted as he signalled for another jolt. Tom did as he was told anyway. "Nanoprobe level count is low, primarily around the chest where the lung was removed."

"They're trying to heal the damage we've caused, but it's not enough. Another!" the Doctor shouted to Lee.

Lee was shaking by that point. He counted eight so far. "Doc, there's no response. His heart's stopped, breathing..."

"Is there still any brain activity?" the Doctor asked. Lee's hesitant stare gave him his answer, so he signalled another go. "Mr Paris, anything?"

Tom grimly shook his head. "Nada Doc. He should've been recovering. He was fine, healthy when we left him and I don't see any change now."

The Doctor sighed, frustrated and sullenly. "Make a note in the ship's log. Time of death 2103 hours."

He said it to Tom but he didn't even move. The Doctor glanced towards Lee to hint that he should do it instead, he nodded and walked away.

"Mr Paris?" the Doctor said with some empathy in his tone.

It took Tom a few minutes to respond. "I guilt him into it. I didn't think he'd do it, but still."

"It's not your fault," the Doctor said softly. He pat his shoulder in comfort as he returned to the previous patient, if only to hide his own guilty expression.

Despite telling Lee to do it, the Doctor found that he still had to write up the report and then later the death certificates. He struggled between being annoyed about it and obsessing over what went wrong, which he couldn't figure out. He missed somebody walk into his office.

"Hellooo?" Morgan called him impatiently.

The Doctor looked up in surprise, "yes?"

"I've er, I dunno how to describe it but ever since I returned from that planet, I've felt a bit weird," Morgan said.

"Weird?" the Doctor sighed, eyebrow raising.

Morgan frowned, a little put off with his lack of concern. "Yeah weird. I can't describe it. Like there's someone following me, watching me. I keep getting cold and stuff."

Finally the Doctor looked a little concerned. Still he remained in his seat. "I see. Is it possible that you're feeling that way because someone is watching you? It's perfectly normal to feel anxiety over that."

"What?" Morgan snapped, "no. Nobody's there. Can you scan me, it's probably some telepathic thingie."

The Doctor sighed as he climbed onto his feet. "For the last time, you don't need telepathy to know that your mother wanted a coffee. You are Human, it's not possible for you to possess that ability."

He got an annoyed exhale as a response, as well as the teen turning her back on him. He was relieved she seemed to be leaving but she stopped at the door. "Oh really. Then how come I can hear somebody when there's no one here?"

"It's your imagination. I only have deceased patients here, waiting for our coroner to collect them," the Doctor said with a lot of regret.

"Yeah right, that's definitely not it," Morgan said with a shudder. A grimace took over her face, "wait, dead? No way. He's definitely not, I can hear him." She ran out of the office but not out of Sickbay.

The Doctor gave chase. Once out of his office he spotted her standing near James' biobed. He understood and tried to sound sympathetic. "I'm sorry, but it's true. I haven't officially announced it yet..."

"Don't," Morgan scoffed and pointed at one of James' hands. The Doctor looked, he noticed the fingers twitching. A quick glance up and he also noticed the chest rising and lowering rhythmically. "See."

"What?" the Doctor stammered as he hurried over, "pass me the hypo tray."

Morgan shrugged, she picked up a tray from one of the trolleys to hand it over. The Doctor took a hypo and used it.

Moments later James' eyes started to open gradually, weakly. "Did it work?" he asked groggily.

The Doctor still couldn't believe it. He tried not to show it. "No, I'm afraid not. I'm looking into what happened."

"No you weren't," Morgan scoffed.

James tried to sit up. The Doctor quickly put a hand on his shoulder to push him back. All it did was stop him. "No, I need to run some scans. Many scans. Stay, please." He hurried away to gather more equipment. James looked in Morgan's direction, confused as he sat up.

"I dunno. He thought you were dead, so maybe you don't want to stick around. But if you were," Morgan said, then pulled a gritted teeth wince, "maybe you do."

"Dead?" James mumbled and looked down. Morgan assumed he didn't believe it.

The Doctor hurried back, sighed impatiently at his patient sitting up and gestured for him to lie down again. "You were. For ten minutes. I have no explanation as to why."

"Why he's not?" Morgan wondered.

"No, I'm more concerned with why he was. I have a cause of death theory for Nij, an underestimation of the role of the Tolg technology we removed," the Doctor started to mutter. Morgan looked bored and stopped listening. James went from dazed to confused as long as the Doctor rambled on, until he had to tune him out too. "Thus far, there's no way that any of those factors should've contributed to Mr Stuart's passing. It makes no sense."

"When can I get out of here?" James asked once he was sure he was finished talking.

The Doctor frowned as if he had insulted him. "When I tell you, you can. You've just come back from the dead, and you have only one lung now. Neither are something you walk off."

"Hmph, what a waste huh?" Morgan said and smiled in James' direction.

"Hardly," the Doctor gasped, clearly offended. "Giving an organ to a stranger, that's..."

"Done. Can we hurry this up?" James cut in, sounding more bored than annoyed.

The Doctor sighed overdramatically. "Very well." He started to scan with a tricorder, making hmm's all the while. "Oh, that reminds me. I thought I should warn you that while you were out before you died, Lee was talking about throwing a shower soon. He already has a buffet menu planned."

"Eew, that guy eats in the shower too?" Morgan grimaced.

James and the Doctor glanced at her briefly and back again. "Why would I care about that?" James asked.

The Doctor lowered the tricorder and once more hinted for him to lie down, with a judgmental look on his face. "Mr Williams assisted with Miss Torres and Rex's operation the other week." James' face turned a shade paler, which turned the Doctor's into a worried frown. "I assumed you knew already."

"If you thought that, why did you warn me?" James stuttered.

Morgan tried not to laugh. She walked off towards the door. The Doctor looked on helplessly. "Mr Williams is not discreet, at all. I've tried to tell him this is a delicate matter he should keep to himself, but he's excitable. I thought..."

James groaned and pulled himself off the biobed. The Doctor hurried around to stop him, mumbling no's over and over. Without his emitter on he couldn't follow him for long.

Lee shook his head side to side while happily singing along to his blaring music, occasionally stopping to munch on a slice of pizza. Because of the noise he didn't hear the door chime.

After a few attempts, the person at the door started to knock loudly. That got his attention. He turned the music down and got up to answer it. As soon as the door opened his face brightened up.

"Oh Jim, you're alive. That's wonderful," he grinned.

James tensed, "no, not Jim. Or Jimmy."

"Ok you'd be the first. Fair enough James," Lee cheerfully said, stepping to one side to let him in.

James stepped inside just enough for the door to shut. Lee walked back to his chair, expecting him to follow. Since he didn't he stopped halfway into sitting down. "What can I do for you?" he asked after taking another bite of his pizza.

"Look, the Doctor told me that you knew about the pregnancy and..." James started to explain very reluctantly.

"Ah, don't you worry, the Doc's a pro," Lee said.

"No, not that," James shook his head. "Not many people know, and the situation's very... complex. You haven't blabbed it to anyone have you?"

Lee seemed puzzled, his eyes averted. "Hmm, don't think so." He walked back over to him as if he were struggling not to laugh. "While you're here, I do have a question."

"No. Just keep it to yourself," James muttered.

Lee couldn't hold it back anymore. He grinned gleefully and lunged forward to give James a hug. "Can I be the godfather?"

James was too shocked at first to push him away immediately. When he did the grin on his face made him snap, "no you bloody can't. What's wrong with you?"

"Aaw, why not? I've always wanted to be a god father to a friend's kid," Lee pouted.

"What, since when are we friends?" James stuttered impatiently. "We went on one away mission, that's all."

"Why are you so grumpy, it's great news. I nearly told Claire earlier today. I might tell everyone tomorrow, it'll pick everyone up, you know. So will you and Jess take the kid back after it's born or something?" Lee quickly said excitedly.

James stared at him in utter disbelief, he was starting to shake a little from repressing his anger. "What? Why are you... It's none of your business. What gives you the right to tell everyone?" Lee didn't notice, he shrugged and continued to smile, making James visibly twitch. "Am I not speaking English here? Tell anyone and I'll rip your head off."

"Oh, somebody's in a bad mood. It must be that come back from the dead thing. I suppose that was quite a funny joke," Lee laughed.

"I'm not joking, I'm serious," James said, his face tensing.

"It's not very easy to pull off somebody's head you know. Anyway, when's the big day?" Lee asked.

"What big day?" James groaned.

"Well, I thought that since you're due a kid in a few months, you two would be getting married or something," Lee replied.

James' fists and jaws clenched. Still Lee seemed oblivious to it and continued to smile.

"Don't fret, my man, the baby is gonna be a cutey. You should be proud, not hiding it away from us. I'll do all the telling and you go do some yoga or something, chill out," Lee snickered, then pat him on the forearm.

The Conference Room:

The stench of coffee greeted everyone who entered. They expected a fun, useless morning meeting

because of it. Instead Kathryn was pre-armed with a death-glare, reducing the weaker members of the staff to mulch before they even sat down.

Harry was one of the last to sit down, in the middle of yawning so he was a lucky few to not notice it.

"Late night, Lieutenant?" Chakotay smirked.

"No sir, I'm fine," Harry said, glancing toward him. That was a huge mistake as he caught a side view of the Janeway glare and nearly wet himself in the panic.

"Ohno, who else died?" Tom asked. He looked around the table, spotted James and did a double take. "Um, I see dead people. Can anyone else?"

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "well I'm looking at a dead man, does that count?" Tom squeaked. "I'll get right to the point. Last night a member of the crew was murdered."

Most of the staff glanced around in shock. Annika was a little peeved as some looked at her expectantly, then grew confused.

Tom started to stutter very nervously, "murder's such a strong word. He volunteered and he's not even dead anymore."

"No," Kathryn groaned, eyeing him dangerously.

Tuvok stepped up, literally as well, "the victim is a Crewman Lee Williams."

James looked up with his eyes widening slightly as a few senior staff members talked between themselves. Nobody heard his, "what?"

"Somebody, most likely the killer, has tampered with the internal sensor logs," Tuvok continued. "I have a team on it now, however all they have found so far is who were on the same deck at the time of the murder. I wish to speak to them immediately."

Harry shuddered, "I don't suppose you're telling us all this to keep us up to date, right?"

"Correct," Tuvok nodded. He managed to look nervous, which surprised a lot of people. He turned slightly to address Chakotay, "Commander, with your permission I'd like to question Morgan."

Chakotay nodded, briefly eyeing Kathryn nervously. "Sure, I see no problem with that." He heard a growl come from Kathryn's chair.

"I'd also like to speak to Mr Stuart," Tuvok said.

Harry and Tom both didn't look surprised, but were a little nervous. Tom tried to shake it off by pulling a straight face and innocently saying, "who?" The brief lip curl gave him away. A mere second later his ear was grabbed and pulled so hard he stumbled off his chair. "Aaaaaaah, whyyyyyyyyy!" he cried out when he hit the floor.

His stretched ear was finally let go of, Kathryn gave the back of his head a little tap. "I'm so glad you find the death of a crewmate so funny, Paris," she said cold as ice. Tom shuddered as he rubbed his ear.

The doors leading to the corridor opened. The Doctor hurried inside and up to the table. "Ah, I'm sorry I'm late."

"I think with the circumstances Doc, no one's gonna blame you," Harry said.

The Doctor smiled gratefully. He went to the only available chair he could see and sat down at the same time Tom was about to. He pouted and backed off.

Craig tried to swallow a lump growing in his throat. "How is he, Doc?"

"Fortunately I was able to treat the injuries and revive him, however..." the Doctor's face turned grim, he hesitated a moment. "The damage to his skull was quite extensive. I've had to induce a coma to protect his higher brain functions, until it can be fully treated."

James glanced between him and Tuvok. "What time did this happen?"

Tuvok's eyebrow raised slightly, "his lifesign reading ceased at 2305 hours." The Doctor nodded in agreement.

"Oh," James said a little shakily.

Tom scoffed and rolled his eyes. "You would know, wouldn't you."

Fortunately for Tom, James didn't respond in anyway to that. He merely sat there, staring straight ahead.

"What is it?" Jessie whispered to him.

James shook his head timidly, "he, I saw him not long before that."

"Is that so?" Tuvok said with interest.

James looked up at him with a deer in headlights expression. "Yeah. So it must've been after."

Harry shifted in his seat uncomfortably, opting to look anywhere but in his direction. It got his neighbours Tom and Neelix, as well as Jessie's attention. She narrowed her eyes threateningly.

"I'm sure we'll figure this out soon. James, you go with Tuvok to the Security Office. I'll call Morgan," Chakotay said, glancing at Kathryn as if to ask permission. She sighed, he took that as a yes. "Everyone dismissed."

"I wonder how he died. That's so cool," Morgan said. She looked to James standing beside her, eyeing him curiously.

He though only stared at the Security Office door directly ahead of them. "Whatever."

Morgan rolled her eyes. "What's up with you? He's not dead anymore. There's nothing to worry about."

James' attention shifted to her. "Lee was killed a few minutes after I left him. If I hadn't been in a hurry to leave him, I could have stopped it."

"Oooh, I see," Morgan pretended to sound surprised. James frowned at her, confused at her tone. She spotted it and smiled kindly. "You can't think like that. That kind of thinking will ruin you. You know the attacker would've just waited if you did stick around, right?"

James' eyes drifted to one side. "I... well yeah I guess," he didn't sound convinced.

The Security Office doors opened, Tuvok stepped out of them. "Mr Stuart, since you admitted to seeing Williams already, I will speak to you first."

James nodded and followed him back inside the office. Tuvok gestured to the chair in front of the desk, then took his own. James sat down with his shoulders tensed.

"Might I begin with why you had visited Mr Williams?" Tuvok questioned.

"Right," James said while wincing. Of course Tuvok picked up on that and his eyebrow shot up. "I went to discuss some... little thing with him."

Tuvok nodded. "I see, what were you discussing?"

"A surgery he helped assist on. When I started temping there," James replied.

"Fascinating, I was informed that you and he were on different shifts. What time did you arrive and how long were you there?" Tuvok asked.

"I'm not sure exactly," James reluctantly said, "I'd just *woke up*, took a while to get my bearings. I know what time I left though, roughly, because I got home just after 2300."

Tuvok studied his body language; the tense shoulders, avoiding eye contact and the occasional sitting position adjustment. "Has Mr Williams done anything to, how can I put this, provoke your temper lately?"

James looked at him suddenly like he'd been slapped in the face. "What?" He scoffed and sat back a little, "oh I see. Jumping to conclusions. Very logical of you."

"That is not my motive," Tuvok said sternly, his eyes showed a little offense. "You didn't answer my question."

"I don't..." James blurted out, then took a deep breath in and out. It didn't help soothe his nerves one bit. He leaned his elbow on the desk and buried his face in his hand. "Look, it's not... I'm not that bad."

Tuvok stood up to walk over to the other side of the desk, keeping a careful eye on him. "Two weeks ago you murdered a man. You were at Williams's murder site. Surely you understand why you'd be a person of interest. You are clearly capable of it."

James looked directly up at the Commander with sharpened eyes. "I killed someone who had murdered the person I cared about the most. Fine. But Lee, it was just a little disagreement, a misunderstanding."

"What was?" Tuvok asked firmly.

"He wanted to..." James said, hesitating as he looked back ahead of him. "To blab some secret of mine, and he wouldn't listen. It's like he thought I was joking."

"So what did you do?" Tuvok questioned.

"Nothing, we argued," James replied quickly.

Tuvok strolled around to his other side, then leaned against the desk and looked directly at him. "He made you angry. You lost your temper."

"Not like that," James protested. Tuvok's plain expression didn't change. "I wouldn't kill somebody over something minor like that. This isn't the same thing."

"The sensors and its logs were hacked," Tuvok said.

James stared with his brow furrowing, "no, but..."

"You have a history of a violent temper. We have a fatal example only recently. Is it possible that you lashed out to silence him?" Tuvok said.

"Wait, that's ridiculous," James snapped.

Tuvok straightened back up but kept his firm gaze on him. "If you deny this, why won't you answer my questions? You were forthcoming the last time."

"Well yeah, I take it that doesn't count for something," James said irritably. He shook his head. "Look, it was barely even an argument. He talked, I argued, I left."

"Then it won't make any difference to tell me what it was you argued over. Perhaps then I can judge if it were trivial or not," Tuvok said.

James scoffed and stood up. Tuvok instantly was on his guard. "To kill over, no argument is worth that. You've already made up your mind anyway, I'm out of here," he said, then headed for the door.

"Computer lock the office from the inside," Tuvok ordered. The click stopped James in his tracks. Tuvok meanwhile tapped his commbadge. "Commander Tuvok to Team One. Report to the Office immediately."

"Yes Commander."

"Ensign, you are restricted to quarters until this case has been resolved. You are not to leave unless escorted by an authorised guard," Tuvok said.

James shook his head, then turned back around. "I didn't kill him. I wouldn't. All I did was hit him, once. He was fine when I left."

"Any reason why you are only telling me this now?" Tuvok questioned.

"Come on," James laughed bitterly, "we both know why."

The doors opened. Thompson, Foster and an unknown crewmember stepped through them but waited there.

"Please escort Ensign Stuart to his quarters," Tuvok ordered.

Thompson laughed genuinely until everyone stared at him blankly, then it was nervous sniggering. "You're pulling my leg, right?"

"I don't see what's so shocking about it," Foster groaned while rolling his eyes. James looked at him, eyes briefly widened in surprise. "Other than it didn't happen sooner."

"Well yeah but," Thompson whined. Tuvok cleared his throat. "Yes... sir."

The Ready Room:

"So that's it, case closed? I'm surprised at you," Chakotay stuttered.

Kathryn raised her hand near him, hinting for him to wait. "No, Tuvok's only saying that's he a suspect, not the only suspect."

"I agree the evidence so far is circumstantial," Tuvok nodded.

"Like what?" Kathryn asked as she focused on him.

"It took the threat of being house arrested for him to admit to assaulting Mr Williams, when before he claimed they merely argued," Tuvok started to reply. "Stuart was also one of two people on the deck who does not live there, and claims he left immediately before the murder but also has the means to cover his tracks, hence the sensor issue. He has the motive and the capability."

Kathryn and Chakotay exchanged similar puzzled glances. "What is the motive?" Chakotay questioned.

"Stuart insists that Williams was threatening to expose a secret of his," Tuvok replied.

"A secret worth killing for?" Kathryn huffed, then shook her head. "Hardly."

"He himself did not go into detail, so I enquired as the only clue he gave me was related to his probation in Sickbay," Tuvok explained. Kathryn's gaze averted, shoulders slumped. "I believe Stuart would be capable of murder if it meant keeping the crew and one crewmember in particular from finding out."

"But, everyone knows about the prisoner murder. It spread like a typical Tom rumour," Chakotay said. Then he noticed Kathryn looking down at her crossed hands sitting on the desk sullenly. "What?"

Tuvok's eyebrow raised quizzically. "I was not certain if you or the Captain knew, my apologies." Chakotay was more than a little curious after that, he was getting a little impatient. "Crewman Rex was pregnant at the time of her murder. Stuart killed her murderer to avenge them."

"Oh," Chakotay sighed in realisation. "I get it, makes sense."

Kathryn pointed a growing death-glare in his direction, making him shudder into silence.

"That is not all Commander. The foetus survived because of a volunteer surrogate. Said surrogate is married, and logically he has not been informed otherwise we would all know about it by now," Tuvok said.

Chakotay's face turned lily white. "B'Elanna. And Tom, yeah of course he doesn't know," he stammered. He shook his head, "no. We know James can be a bit overprotective, but him killing that man was still a shock. I understand it more now than I did before but..."

"If Lee threatened to expose this secret, his story checks out," Kathryn said, prompting a couple of eyebrow raises from Tuvok. "I can see him lashing out, if pushed too far. Killing him though? Absolutely not."

"This is not the first time, nor second, that he has been reported for violence," Tuvok pointed out. "For some time he had seemingly *calmed down*, but has recently escalated gradually over the years. Hansen has reported a number of incidents involving him, calling him a bully."

"Yes, I believe everything that attention seeker who tried to beat or even kill my daughter says," Kathryn muttered rudely.

Tuvok soldiered on as if she said nothing, "three years ago a security team covering Deck Thirteen reported being attacked by him before the explosion. They asked not to confront him because his interference apparently saved them from it."

"Oh lock him up for life, shall we?" Chakotay groaned.

Kathryn smirked briefly. "I get where you're coming from Tuvok. Still, you've already said the evidence is circumstantial. You're going on as if you're a prosecution lawyer aiming for the throat. Are you sure you're looking at this objectively?"

"Of course, Captain. However there is no evidence yet of anyone else's involvement. Mr Williams was well liked, considered a friendly, harmless individual," Tuvok answered. "Stuart had a motive, he has admitted to being in a fight with him and seeing him before the murder. Sensors were hacked, he is more than capable of doing that."

"Oh I don't know. I'm still trying to figure out how he deleted black coffee from any replicator I use, and no one else's," Kathryn grumbled bitterly. "He's good, too good to be found out so easily."

Chakotay nodded. "Yeah, true. If he had covered his tracks, you wouldn't know it so quickly." Tuvok's eyes glazed over, he recognised it as silent agreement. "Yes James has a temper, his behaviour lately helped us forget that, that's why the murder was such a shock. But at the same time, it's not that surprising. He's... what's the word, dedicated to Jessie. Murdering to avenge her is not the same as murdering to silence a secret that's gonna come out eventually."

"I agree Commander," Tuvok said to his and Kathryn's surprise. "However we cannot ignore the fact that within minutes of Stuart allegedly leaving Williams after striking him, he was murdered."

"Hmm yes, that is convenient. Almost as if someone saw their chance," Kathryn smiled knowingly.

"Indeed. But that someone must also know how to hack the sensors. Unless Stuart did it to hide the fight he had with him and unknowingly incriminating himself with the murder," Tuvok said. "I will continue investigating until there is firm evidence, of course."

Kathryn sat back in her chair looking thoughtful. "In theory, it should be easy. A punch in the face would leave DNA evidence right, skin usually. Depending on how Lee was murdered, you should be able to compare samples found on the injuries."

"The Doctor is running tests now," Tuvok nodded.

"I don't know, this doesn't add up and it doesn't sound like him," Chakotay said.

Tuvok eyed him curiously, "forgive me Commander, but we are talking about a self admitted murderer. It sounds exactly like him."

"Again, he avenged the woman he clearly loves," Chakotay said, glancing briefly at Kathryn and then Tuvok. "I mean, if they're having a baby together..."

Kathryn sighed impatiently, "apparently this love spell beam was real." Chakotay's jaw dropped, he stubbornly shook his head. Kathryn looked on in sympathy. "Most people were doing pransy stuff like writing love poems or serenading a helmsman with sappy boyband ballads," she said eyeing Tuvok playfully.

"Why would you assume I was responsible?" he asked uncomfortably.

Chakotay felt a little relieved at hearing that. "But James and Jessie were missing in that hotel for a while. So, okay..." he hesitated slightly, "they're *just* friends, but I stand by my opinion. At the very least he avenged his unborn baby, and lots of people would understand that. It's human nature. Lee's murder though..."

"Indeed," Tuvok nodded. "He clearly cannot control his temper due to his feelings for her. Whatever they may be, you can't deny that they are strong. In Humans as volatile as Stuart, that can be dangerous, as we have already seen."

"It doesn't mean he'd kill Lee to protect Jessie from, what, being humiliated by Tom?" Chakotay said, scoffing at the end.

"Love can be a dangerous, and unpredictable thing," Kathryn sighed sadly. Chakotay looked at her in surprise.

A very grim looking Jessie walked slowly down the corridor leading to her quarters. As she anticipated, Foster and Thompson stood guard with a third person she didn't know. Two of them were more interested in playing a game on a PADD Thompson had brought.

"What I would give to be in your position, Jess," Morgan said on approach, startling Jessie into stopping.

"Yeah, who wouldn't want a bunch of twelve year olds standing outside their home?" she said loud enough for them to hear.

Thompson looked up, shrugged it off and continued. The unknown gasped and snatched the PADD from him, "wait your turn!" Foster rolled his eyes.

Morgan sighed, "not that. I mean living with someone who'd kill for you."

Jessie's face scrunched up, "what? You don't believe that, do you?"

"Well duh," Morgan laughed, "he killed your murderer a few weeks back."

"You..." Jessie stuttered before her face froze with a slack jaw. She attempted to shake it off, "you scare me sometimes."

Morgan seemed surprised at that. "Why? You gotta admit, it's cool what he did. I really underestimated him."

"No I don't," Jessie grumbled. "He's no different to the James we've always known. Nothing's changed." She continued walking to her quarters.

"You don't know how lucky you are," Morgan said wistfully, then hurried after her. "My best friend wouldn't avenge me."

"Sad," Jessie muttered under her breath once she got to the door. Two out of three of the team scrambled to help Foster block her entrance. "Oh come on, really?"

Thompson shook his head, "nuh uh. He's not allowed out."

"I'm not trying to do that, I want to go in," Jessie said.

Foster took a step ahead of the other two, "if you go in there, you're putting yourself in danger."

Jessie laughed mostly out of disbelief, but also to hide her offense. "Don't be stupid. James wouldn't hurt me."

Morgan appeared eagerly at her side, cueing an eye roll from Jessie. "Or me, I'd kick his ass. I'll watch her back."

"That's not..." Jessie tiredly said.

"I suppose that'd be okay," Thompson said. Foster and the unknown stared at him blankly. "What, I've been waiting for someone to kick his ass."

"Coolio," Morgan giggled. She shoved Foster out of the way, making him stumble a few feet away. Jessie walked into her quarters mouthing what she said with a grimace. Morgan followed.

They both found James lying on the sofa looking sorry for himself. As soon as he noticed, he sat up quickly. Jessie sat beside him and Morgan sat on the chair nearby.

"Now come on, enough of that," Jessie said. With a friendly smile on her face she gave him a playful elbow to the arm. "You don't give up that easily. I won't either. We'll figure this out."

James turned his head toward her, "you assume that I didn't do it?"

Seeing his sullen expression made Jessie's cheerful mask slip for a second. It then helped her get motivated, "of course you didn't. You have no reason to kill Lee, or even hurt him."

James flinched and looked away, "I did though." Jessie waited patiently, hiding her concern. "He knows about the baby, and he was going on and on about wanting to tell the whole ship. I tried to talk him out of it, but I..." He sighed, annoyed at himself. "I snapped. Hit him. I left him to be killed, I may as well have..."

"No, don't do that," Jessie scolded him in a gentle, soothing voice. "It's not your fault. It could've been anything else. A violent person who he snatched food from, or someone who couldn't handle his chirpy nature."

Morgan stuck out her bottom lip and nodded. "Yeah maybe. He is a bit gross, and steals rations apparently."

James glanced down at his lap, head shaking. "Doesn't matter. Everyone will think it was me."

"Since when do we care about what other people think?" Jessie asked.

"Since I was accused of murder this morning," James replied.

Morgan grunted in disgust. "Ugh, that judgmental unemotional prick. So much for logic. Want me to slap him around a bit, or..."

Jessie's attention darted to her with her eyes wide. "I don't think that will help *somehow* Morgan."

As soon as she turned her focus back on James, Morgan pulled a face and wandered away.

"I hit him, so my DNA will be found on him. They're testing for it. They'll think I did it all," James mumbled.

"Yeah, that sucks," Morgan said.

Jessie once again looked up, then around to scowl at her and back again. "It's not going to happen."

"Of course it will. They'll toss me in the brig for the rest of this journey, all for something I didn't do because I couldn't keep my temper," James stuttered, his voice cracked. Jessie saw tears brimming in his eyes.

"No, no. They won't, I'll make sure of it," she said with a frog in her throat. She moved closer so she could wrap her arms around him. Instantly she noticed the tension in his shoulders and arms, despite it lowering when she did so.

"Don't worry Jess, the Captain is my mother. I could talk some sense into her," Morgan said.

"Why do you want to help, Morgan?" Jessie asked.

"Who wouldn't help a friend?" Morgan replied.

Sickbay:

Tuvok waited patiently at the door while the Doctor worked on the computer on his desk. He on the other hand was not looking very patient. He kept looking up at the Commander, rolling his eyes and sighing as he glanced back down, louder each time.

"You know, we do have this marvelous invention called a commbadge," the Doctor said after doing that six times.

Tuvok's plain expression didn't change. He barely moved at all. "This is the only lead we have. Besides, it doesn't usually take you so long to run a DNA comparison."

The Doctor once again exhaled loudly and irritably. "There were several samples to compare to. One of which was fine, the rest are partial matches. I don't understand it."

"Partial matches, and one is *fine*? Perhaps I can work with that while you work on the others," Tuvok said.

"Yeah that's the thing," the Doctor huffed. "The one sample that isn't a problem is somehow tainting the other samples. If I tell you who has matched, then you'll arrest the man for murder when I..." he chuckled bitterly, "I really don't think so."

Tuvok stepped forward with a curious expression. "Doctor, I do not run my investigations with only conjecture or partial evidence, nor do I decide with my *gut*. Explain please."

He got another sigh. The Doctor glanced up reluctantly. "The sample I recovered from the bruising around Lee's eye, that's a match for Mr Stuart," he said before turning his voice up more than double, "but..." Tuvok raised an eyebrow. "The others, particularly the killing blow, are only a 25% match with Stuart."

"That suggests he was involved, that he did more than strike him in the face," Tuvok said with certainty.

The Doctor shook his head at him, widening eyes, "no no, see, this is why I didn't want to report until I was absolutely sure. If he did do this, the other injuries would be a match like the first one. There's no reason why they'd be degraded."

"I see. What would cause this?" Tuvok asked.

"I don't know, that's the problem. The only theory I have is not possible," the Doctor replied. Both eyebrows were up now, Tuvok's face hinted for him to explain. "James was telling the truth when he said he hit him, but the person who assaulted Lee shares a DNA structure with him."

Tuvok recoiled a smidgen in surprise. "A relative of his? He has no living relatives on board. Not yet anyway."

The Doctor nodded. "Now you get it. It makes zero sense. Like you say, there's only really the unborn child. If you cast aside the ridiculousness of that idea, I'd get a 50% match, not 25%."

"Indeed. So it must be something else," Tuvok agreed.

"Right. I'm looking into other factors that could possibly affect a DNA sample, as I've ran various tests and got the same results. Unfortunately I'm running out of ideas, I'm close to suggesting another time travel incident with a very peed off grandchild," the Doctor chuckled.

"Perhaps," Tuvok said while in deep thought, making the Doctor pass a judgmental expression his way. "Perhaps it's not the sample, but the equipment. Thank you Doctor." He turned to exit, leaving the hologram baffled.

The doors opened abruptly and yet James barely gave it a glance. The Security team strode in, each of them grasping a rifle pointed toward him. Foster took the lead, if a bit anxiously at first.

"Tuvok wants to see you. Come on," Foster said.

James looked up at them all, not impressed at all. "You don't need those."

"Huh, right. Nice try," Thompson said nervously.

Foster looked back over his shoulder, first to Thompson, then to the unknown. "What are you waiting for?"

Thompson laughed as the unknown stepped forward, overtaking Foster. The laughter trailed off and his face went pale. "Are you kidding me?"

Foster stepped back, keeping his rifle trained on him. "I got your back."

"You little... pansy," Thompson grumbled, reluctantly going forward as well.

James stood up with an annoyed groan, "for god's sake." Thompson jumped back and re-aimed. The unknown, a few inches from grabbing his arm merely froze.

Two of the trio lead James down the corridor, with Foster trailing the back. They entered the turbolift, Thompson made sure he was as far away as possible even if it only made a few centimetre difference.

"Deck Five," Foster ordered.

James frowned, "Sickbay, why?"

"That is where Tuvok wants to see you," the unknown said with a scoff. James looked across at him, mouthing an oh. Even that unnerved him. James sighed and looked straight ahead instead.

A short uncomfortable turbolift ride later they stepped out. On their way to Sickbay the doors opened early. Annika stepped out, closely followed by an unknown woman. She headed their way for the same turbolift.

James didn't think anything of it until she spotted him and stopped, grunting in disgust. The woman following her didn't slow. She smiled coyly while her brow raised. He expected the two to bump into each other. Instead the woman walked straight through Annika as if she wasn't there.

"What?" James stuttered, slowing to a stop as well. The team instinctively did too and re-pointed their weapons.

Annika stuck her nose up in the air, "get that monster out of my way."

The woman giggled maliciously as she looked over her shoulder back at Annika.

"We can't, we're going to Sickbay. We're gonna pass at some point," Thompson said.

"Ugh, fine," Annika groaned. She turned around and stomped off.

The woman turned back to stare at James, giving him a wink before twirling around to follow Annika once more.

Foster meanwhile nudged him in the arm with the tip of the rifle. "Hey, don't get any ideas."

James tried to move his attention, but the woman turned the distant corner while staring at him with the same dark smile on her face. Once gone he couldn't shake off the cold feeling of dread he only just noticed she left in her wake.

"I've been meaning to ask, man. What's up with the name change, did you marry a guy named Stuart or are you changing your first name?" Thompson asked. Unknown and Foster glared at him, he smiled and winked.

"What?" James said with a frown. He looked around at the others. "You didn't see that?"

"See what?" Foster asked, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

"I only saw a woman scorned. What did you do?" Thompson snickered. "Oh, I get it, you slapped her around again," he winked. "Don't be put off, I think she likes it."

James stared blankly at him at first, but his nose started to shrivel up in disgust. "What's the matter with you?"

Foster again nudged him, "I don't think you have any right to be asking that. Come on, or we'll drag you there."

"Yeah, sure," James said while managing to resist a smirk.

The four made it to Sickbay. Tuvok waited in the office for them. The Doctor meanwhile grumbled and tapped on his computer angrily.

"Ensign, I have a couple more questions for you," Tuvok said.

"You couldn't ask me over the comm?" James said, glancing briefly at the team standing behind him.

Tuvok's shoulders raised for a moment as he took a deep breath. "Did you tamper with the Doctor's scanning equipment?"

James didn't answer right away. He stared at the Commander in disbelief, then rolled his eyes and looked away.

"Ensign," Tuvok said sternly.

"I don't believe this," James muttered to himself. "No, of course not. Why?"

Tuvok took a few steps forward. "Very well. Second question. We have verified cause of death; intense pressure to the throat. Whoever did this strangled him with so much force his neck was broken."

James couldn't help but notice the only figure lying on a biobed right at the edge of his peripheral. Coupled with what Tuvok said he could only flinch. "That's... I see. What's the question?"

"Do you think you are physically capable of doing this?" Tuvok asked.

"Physically?" James said warily. "You mean..." Tuvok nodded. "No."

Tuvok stared at him, unblinking. It made James feel a little uncomfortable.

"If you are innocent, then you would co-operate, assist us in finding the true culprit. Lying..." Tuvok said.

"I'm not," James quickly interrupted. Tuvok's eyebrow raised in judgement. "Look, I never touched him, not like that. Surely it'd be easy to prove that."

The Doctor growled. "You'd think!" he angrily grunted at his computer.

Tuvok briefly looked over his shoulder at him.

James stared as well. "Why, what's happening?"

"That's not your concern. Thank you, you can go back to your quarters now," Tuvok said.

"That's it?" Thompson stuttered. "We escorted Mr Stabsalot here, risking our literal necks apparently, for two questions you could've asked him over the comm?"

Foster groaned, "I do wonder how you've kept this job for so long." Thompson narrowed his eyes.

"It's important when questioning suspects and witnesses that you study their actions as well as their answers," Tuvok said patiently. "Now dismissed."

Engineering:

Loud chatter and laughter below pounded against Craig's sore forehead, even after he moved to the second floor to work.

He was caressing his forehead when he heard footsteps approaching him. He groaned, expecting one of his new workmates to be dumping more of their *paperwork* on him.

"I have a bone to pick with you," he heard Morgan say, surprising him into forgetting his migraine for the moment.

"Morgan?" he smiled until he realised what she said, then he looked worried. "You do?"

"Thinking about everything that was said, it occurred to me that you meant me," Morgan said, folding her arms tightly. Craig stared blankly, infuriating her further. "The blood donation. You did it to impress me."

"What?" Craig laughed very nervously. "No, no. I would never do that."

Morgan walked forward strangely close to him, peering into his face with squinted eyes. He thought he should back off since she was mad, but he couldn't convince his feet to do anything.

"You do like me, don't you?" she asked.

Craig attempted to swallow the lump in his throat with no success. "Oh god, um... no?"

Morgan eased off a tad, sniggering to herself. "You moron."

What happened after that, Craig assumed instead that she had knocked him unconscious and that he was dreaming it. A small kiss planted on his lips, topped with a flirtatious wink before she walked off, leaving him wondering what got into her with a stupid smile on his face.

"I'm just saying, if he thinks he's that dangerous then why couldn't he walk here, or ask for backup to escort him?" Thompson rambled on as he paced in front of the quarters' door.

The unknown watched him looking very bewildered. "Hang on, I'm covering for this guy because he's a suspect, right? He works in this team and has for years."

"Yeah," Thompson stopped and nodded furiously with his eyes wide. "You don't have to remind me."

"Well then, you'd know if he was like that, wouldn't you?" the unknown said.

Thompson grunted, "ugh you know it. The guy's got a screw loose. Thinks he's above everyone, and treats other guys like dirt. It's no surprise to me that he'd snap the way he did."

Foster approached them from around the corner. "All right, who's turn is it?"

The unknown darted forward, "oh me. I've been bursting for the loo." He ran off, leaving Thompson and Foster on their own.

"If he knew who we were escorting, he wouldn't need to go," Thompson smirked. Foster stared at him as if he had asked permission to date his mother. It wiped the smile off his face. "Dude, what's up your butt today? You're really grumpy."

Foster didn't respond, he continued to stare all around him with a suspicious look in his eye.

Something heavy slammed against the door, The pair jumped to attention, quickly raising their rifles. Foster pressed the panel to open it, then stepped back.

As soon as the doors started to part, a body tumbled through the cracks and slammed down by their feet. Thompson shakily crouched down to roll her over onto her back, he gasped and stumbled back in horror. "Oh my god, oh my... eew."

"Yes it's Annika, grow up," Foster scolded him.

Thompson very shakily pointed, trying desperately not to throw up.

Foster stared down with an intense frown. The body appeared to have been sliced from the belly, up through the middle of her chest and straight through the shoulder. He assumed it happened quickly. Annika looked to be staring straight up at him with her still open eyes.

Without hesitation he stepped over her to get into the quarters.

He found the living room empty. First he checked one of the bedrooms; a neat one with a shoe rack opposite full of women's shoes. Since that was empty as well he headed for the other bedroom, passing another door on the way.

That door opened, he quickly pointed his weapon toward it. On the other side James instinctively grabbed the tip of it with his left hand, realised that was a mistake and lowered it. "What the hell, what are you doing?" he snapped while tossing a towel he'd been holding in the right down at his feet.

"You. You're disgusting," Foster growled, "you're under arrest."

"Um," James looked confused as well as a little mad, "I already am."

Thompson cleared his throat from the door, Foster turned to him so he pointed to the floor in between him and them. Foster looked first, James followed. His jaw dropped slightly and his eyes flickered at the sight of a blood stained knife. Foster shook his head while clicking his tongue, not surprised in the slightest. He tapped his commbadge.

"Foster to Tuvok. You wanted the smoking gun, we've got it, and another victim."

"Oh what the hell, who is it this time?" Kathryn's voice answered to Foster's disdain.

"Captain, he called me. Explain Ensign," Tuvok's said.

James frantically glanced between Foster and the knife, "what? What other victim?"

Thompson made a sound that was a cross between a whimper and a recoil after Neelix's stew, getting James' attention. When he looked across he noticed the massive amount of blood by the door, then half of the body sticking out through the door. He attempted to step forward in a hurry but got a rifle slammed in his ribs for his trouble.

"Thompson for god's sake, back me up," Foster grunted. Thompson whimpered again, then went looking around for the rifle he assumed he dropped in his shock since he wasn't holding it. "I don't know how he did it Captain, Commander, but we heard a noise from his quarters. Opened the door and a body fell out. It's Annika Hansen."

"Oh, okay," Kathryn's voice said calmly.

The commline cut off abruptly. Foster looked a little annoyed, and was too preoccupied with that to bother with James walking over to Annika's body, still with the same expression he had after seeing the knife.

"Tuvok to Foster. Apologies for that. Please escort Stuart to the Brig. Seal off the quarters as you go. I'll send another team to check it out. Tuvok out."

"Gladly," Foster said, re-aiming the rifle at James' back as he had crouched down beside Annika. "Up, now."

"How did she even get in here?" James muttered only to himself.

Foster flinched, "you tell us. She tried to warn us all this time and we ignored her. Now look at her."

James stood up while at the same time turning to face him. "How the hell could I have done this? I just got out of the sonic shower, I didn't even know she was here!" he snapped.

"Sure," Foster scoffed, he pointed at James' still damp hair, "you killed her, dumped her there, then went to the bathroom to splash some water over your head. That's not an alibi you psychopath."

"I'm sure anyone with an IQ over ten would come up with something better than sticking a head in a sink," James said irritably.

"If you didn't do it, who did? You're alone in here, right?" Foster hissed.

James looked around, "well I don't know anymore. I was alone ten minutes ago."

"Oh my god!" the unknown security officer stammered on approach. He hurriedly got his rifle ready, noticed Thompson had his trained on Annika so he pushed that up too. "I only went for a pee, how could you guys screw up that quickly?"

"Clearly, Stuart has a talent for murder," Foster replied without taking his eyes off James. "Let's go Stuart."

"All right, but on one condition," James said.

Foster scowled, "you're in no position to bargain."

"Well..." James said hesitantly, "okay, just tell Jessie not to come back here, or even be alone."

"I see. One track mind. What did Annika do to her to cause this?" Foster asked, but still hinted he should leave by raising his phaser frequency.

James sighed and slowly turned to leave. Thompson and the unknown backed off so much they bumped into the wall, still with their rifles trained on him.

Security Team One encircled their ex-teammate, leading him to the brig at the bottom of the corridor. Thompson hurried his steps until he was alongside Foster.

"You really should keep to the side, back Ivans up if Stuart takes advantage of my back turned," Foster said.

Thompson wasn't listening, he hurried forward once again toward an approaching woman. "Laura, I didn't want you to meet up with me, it's dangerous."

Foster stopped first, James and the third Security officer did as well.

"Really Thompson?" Foster groaned.

James sighed and casually looked around while his mind raced. That all stopped when he noticed a familiar face entering the cross-section a ways behind Ivans. The strange woman only he seemed to see earlier who walked straight through Annika. James watched her closely, unnerving Ivans further as to him it looked like he was staring at him.

She hadn't seen him, seemingly too invested in following someone into an adjoining corridor who he only saw the back of.

"I'd say my shift's over in five minutes, but I gotta escort the serial killer to the brig. Very important," Thompson bragged, even his chest puffed up. Foster rolled his eyes.

Ivans briefly glanced at his two teammates. In those few seconds he felt his rifle disappear from his hands. He hurriedly looked back at it, then to the right in time to see James turn the same corner he saw the woman go down, holding the rifle.

"Uh... uh, red alert," he whimpered.

"Yes, that was the plan," Foster said through gritted teeth.

"Oh, so exciting," Laura giggled.

James kept a safe three metres distance behind the woman he was following. He tried to peer around her to see who she was stalking, but saw no sign of anybody.

Moments later she turned and strolled literally through a door. James turned his pace into a run. He'd only just got there and was about to hack the door open when he heard a girl's scream come from the other side.

He changed his tactics to get in much quicker. Once inside a wave of anger, guilt and despair crashed into him, stalling him in the door frame and nearly bringing him to his knees from the weight of it.

Another body, another victim lay sprawled on her front only inches from his feet. Her head was turned away from him so he could only see the back of her blonde hair, and the small frail body of someone no older than a teenager.

He knew what would happen if the team followed him, or anyone else showed up. And still he couldn't help but stumble forward and drop to his knees to check on her, hoping that his entrance had put off her attacker. With his sleeve quickly shimmied down to cover his hand, he used it to gently pull her onto her back. The sight of her face had him scrambling back with his heart racing, all of the blood drained from his face and chest, making his whole torso prickle and him nauseous.

Not that he cared about any of that. The face he couldn't tear his eyes away from he hadn't seen in so many years, and yet it hadn't changed one bit. A teenager barely over fourteen, small oval face. Her blonde hair lay dishevelled and damp with blood and sweat across her bruised right cheek. The eyes, still a striking blue just like his own only lifeless were pointed right at him.

"Oh my god," a woman cried behind him, breaking the daze he was in. He looked back over his shoulder at the hyperventilating woman in a blue uniform trying to tap her commbadge in a blind panic.

James found his head turning back to the blonde girl lying in front of him. Only this time she was a different girl, a similar age and hair colour but that was it.

"Naomi, my god. My baby, she's dead," the woman behind him sobbed. "Please Security, he's still here."

Then it all hit him, he darted back up to his feet and hurried for the door. Samantha Wildman got out of his way and rushed for her daughter.

The Ready Room:

Kathryn stared straight ahead, her face was unreadable, blank. Chakotay made sure to be more than out of arms reach, and so hung back by the window.

"Captain?" Tuvok prodded.

Kathryn blinked after what felt like five minutes. "Who this time?"

"Naomi Wildman," Tuvok reluctantly replied. Fire flashed in Kathryn's eyes and they were directed at him. Even he was nervous. "Ensign Wildman claims she found Stuart hovering over the body. Crewman Ivans said he took his rifle and escaped while Thompson was distracted."

Chakotay cringed while Kathryn's everything seemed to twitch angrily. "I don't believe this," she hissed.

"I have the entire Security force looking for him," Tuvok said.

"Hold on," Chakotay said, getting both their attention. Unfortunately Kathryn's stare was still set to melt. He steeled himself up to continue, hoping what he'd say would put the fire out. "With Lee and Annika, I can see why we'd jump. But Naomi? James wouldn't kill her. Perhaps he only found her."

"Considering he escaped from his guards on route to the brig in order to *find her* before anyone knew she was dead, and ran away when he was seen, I say that warrants a questioning at least," Tuvok said plainly.

Kathryn sat back in her chair with her shoulders up by her ears, staring at the unfortunate ceiling. "We need to find him, quickly."

"Kathryn?" Chakotay stuttered with a bewildered expression on his face. He dared to take a few steps toward her. "You don't believe he did this either, do you? It doesn't make any sense. Why these three people and why now, so suddenly?"

"The only explanation I can gather Commander would be his near death experience," Tuvok said. Kathryn slowly brought her head forward again to stare him down, which he attempted to ignore. "It has been known to affect Humans in a profound manner. He has already killed before, it may have become second nature."

Kathryn exhaled through her throat, it sounded like a growl. Both men froze. "Jump off the conclusions bridge later, Commander. First we find him and make sure he's secured. Whether I want to admit it or not, he's involved somehow," she said through a throbbing throat.

The Mess Hall:

Everyone around Morgan seemed to be talking all at once. Her head throbbed from the unrelenting noise. She looked around, hoping she could figure out who wasn't talking aloud and tune most of it out. Unfortunately wherever she looked people's mouths were flapping.

The group at the next table to hers got her attention last. One she recognised as Claire, the only quiet person there, sitting glumly a few lightyears away from the others. The red headed woman with her back to Morgan was talking very quickly and quietly, mumbling a lot of her words. She recognised her voice but couldn't place her.

"You know?" she said finally.

"No," one of the men smirked. Two others sniggered between themselves.

The woman retreated into her seat and stared down at her hands. Morgan then noticed she was Faye.

"So I hear the psychopathic freak offed a kid this time. Naomi Wildman," the man who smirked said.

Faye looked up with quite a bit of offense. She mumbled something they didn't hear. Morgan did but only because her thoughts were much clearer. "I just told you guys about Naomi. No one ever listens."

Morgan though was too mad from the man's comment, without thinking she slammed one of her hands down on the table, denting it so much it couldn't keep its balance. Most of the room stared at her in shock as the table fell to the floor looking sorry for itself.

"He's not a psychopathic freak, he didn't do it!" Morgan snapped, oblivious to all of that but the table she was directing her anger towards.

"Me too," Faye said, confusing her table into looking at her. She blushed furiously, "I mean, I don't think it's him either." Their judgmental expressions shamed her into hurrying out of the room.

Morgan scoffed in disgust. "I'll prove it, you'll see," she said, getting up. The whole room watched, some discreetly, her stomp towards the left exit. That door opened on its own, pushing a cool breeze her way. It stopped her for a moment. She sighed, looking relieved and carried on her way.

Security Office:

Tuvok gestured his hand toward the opposing chair in front of his desk. "Please." Then he sat in his own.

Jessie hesitantly stepped forward, glancing over her shoulder at the guards at the door. She noticed Craig on the right and frowned. "I thought you were moved to Engineering."

"Mr Thompson has been relieved for his earlier mistake. Security is short staffed," Tuvok said for him. He then folded his hands on the desk in front of him. "Do you know why you are here, Crewman?"

"No," Jessie answered.

"You are the one closest to Ensign Stuart. I thought that you might be able to answer a few of my questions," Tuvok said.

Jessie sighed impatiently, "fine."

"How long has Ensign Stuart been violent?" Tuvok asked.

"He's not, not in the way you want him to be," Jessie said bitterly.

Tuvok stared intently. "Perhaps I should re-clarify my question. How long has Mr Stuart used violence as a means to retaliate against someone who has wronged him?"

Jessie shook her head while pressing her lips firmly together, a dangerous glint in her eye appeared. "You say that like he does it all the time. You're wrong."

"Crewman, please answer my questions. If you believe him to be innocent, your testimony could clear him," Tuvok said. "I need to understand him to understand his motives."

"Motives? You've already made up your mind," Jessie snapped.

Tuvok sat back slightly to give him more space between them. "You misunderstand. He is our main suspect in a case that only has one suspect so far, and three victims with no link to each other."

The colour in Jessie's cheeks faded quickly. "Three? It was only Lee."

"Annika Hansen and Naomi Wildman," Tuvok answered. Jessie's jaw slacked enough to leave her mouth slightly open, she trembled. "Stuart was discovered in Wildman's quarters, hovering over the body. Annika was murdered in your quarters while still under guard."

Jessie shook her head rapidly, "no no." She looked him in the eye, "James didn't do this. I know he wouldn't kill Lee over something so stupid, let alone Naomi and..."

"And Annika? They have always been in conflict, have they not?" Tuvok questioned.

"Hardly. It's a one sided thing. James doesn't care about her, but she hates him," Jessie replied. "How did she even get in our quarters when it was being guarded? Wouldn't that mean that anyone could've got in, like the killer?"

"The man is violent and destructive," Foster said on approach. Craig looked put off that he even moved, let alone said anything. Tuvok wasn't that impressed with him for breaking his guard. Both of which he ignored. "His whole life, even the ones before, he's been a monster. His soul is cursed, it's only a matter of time." He stopped by the desk, staring at her intently.

Jessie stared back, bemused and a little annoyed. "What are you, drunk or something? That doesn't make sense."

"Crewman Foster," Tuvok sighed while caressing his forehead. Foster flinched on the word Crewman. "Are you covering for your brother again? I told you not to do that."

To Jessie it looked like Foster got something in his eye. "This was always my job, Commander. Jack always takes my things, now can I..." he irritably said.

"You failed your mental stability tests every year, Paul," Tuvok said. Jessie mimed *shocking*. "Ensign Jack Foster was accepted despite his tendency to be overly cautious. You are too paranoid. Please return to your proper post on Deck Fifteen."

"You said you were short staffed, and I'm an expert in this field," Foster said.

Craig started to stammer, "wait, Foster's a twin? Which one have I been working with all these years?"

Jessie rolled her eyes and groaned, "if you're quite finished, I've got to go and clean Annika blood out of my carpet."

"Hardly. I see Stuart as clearly as I see you now," Foster said as he leaned on the table, pointing his beady eyes at her. She moved her chair back looking disgusted. "He's been deceiving you all these years. He is a killer; he killed his entire family, even his step father. The man is a murderer."

"Too paranoid is bloody right," Jessie muttered in Tuvok's direction. When she looked back towards Foster he had peered in closer. She shoved him out of her space. "That's the stupidest thing I've heard in a while. James was five when his dad died. His mother was murdered by Cardassians. His step father was a part of the Marquis massacre. You're talking out of your ass."

Foster chuckled despite almost losing his balance from the push. "I don't think he can help himself. His cursed soul has tasted blood, and it must be nourished. Each life before him was despicable, all starting with his first."

"Oh Foster Two, back off," Craig grumbled, stepping forward. "Why are you blabbing about reincarnation? Even if it were true, how would you know what any of James's were?"

"I do, I have a nack for it. That man needs to be found before he kills again," Foster said.

Jessie turned towards Tuvok looking very frustrated. Even he was struggling as well, "I am the one doing the interview, Crewman Foster. Both of you please join another team and search for Stuart."

Craig was more than happy to leave, he stepped straight out. At first Foster seemed to do the same, but he stopped before the door opened for him.

"Did you know that he had a sister?" he asked.

"I beg your pardon," Jessie grumbled, turning around in her chair to glare at him.

Foster gave her an awkward toothy smile, creeping her out. "Stuart. I'm gonna assume that's a no."

"Crewman, dismissed," Tuvok warned him.

Jessie seemed a million miles away staring in Foster's general direction. "No. No he doesn't." She focused on Foster, "he's an only child. I've known him forever, I'd have known."

"You want to know why that is, that you don't know?" Foster sneered. "He killed her. Three years old. She was fourteen and he managed to kill her. If a man can kill a fourteen year old girl at that age then he could kill anyone." He finally left, leaving a very shell shocked Jessie unable to speak.

"I don't mean to alarm you Crewman, but Foster is correct," Tuvok said. He saw her head tilt ever so slightly in his direction. "To uncover why the Doctor's DNA tests were not accurate, I discovered her entry buried deep in Stuart's file."

Jessie started to laugh, even Tuvok could tell it was insincere. "I find it hard to believe that James killed his sister, at three years old. You really have span this one, haven't you?"

"Not at all," Tuvok said cautiously. "Information on her is scarce. The only mentions of her are unnamed in the reports regarding their father's abuse trial and a coroner's report with only a name and date, the rest clearly erased. All other traces of her have been wiped clean too, which is interesting."

"If Voyager had absolutely everything in Starfleet's records in its database, we'd be pushing it home. It's not relevant to anything," Jessie said but to convince herself, not him. "It might not be true, you misunderstood."

"Mr Stuart would know how to alter his file and any others related to him," Tuvok said.

Jessie huffed mostly out of disbelief, the rest annoyance, "why the hell would he do that? It makes no sense, I'd know about it. He'd have told me."

Tuvok stood up to walk around the desk, and then over to face her as she was still sitting in a twisted turn toward the door. "His father was tried for his abuse of Stuart. Despite the glaring evidence the prosecution had, he walked out with a restraining order and community service."

"So?" Jessie groaned to hide her surprise at hearing that.

"The cause of death, or rather the cause of the incident, were never concluded. The last theory before the case was settled was that his shuttle was sabotaged," Tuvok said. Jessie scowled up at him, ready to interrupt but he was too fast for her. "His mother, also murdered and yet the killer was never discovered either. The case was closed without investigation. His step father, presumed dead only. His body was never recovered."

Jessie ground her teeth while he was talking. Once she was sure he was done she spat back, "that doesn't mean James had anything to do with it, not in the slightest. So, he rigged a shuttle at five, killed this *sister* at three, and even better, he managed to off his step dad while in the Delta Quadrant. You're losing it."

"I am merely discovering patterns revolving around a serial killer suspect," Tuvok said plainly.

"Bull!" Jessie barked, shooting to her feet. "You haven't a clue so you're not even trying. Probably just looking for the simple excuse out of it, like the investigators for James' family probably did."

"Then why do you think he never told you about his father's lack of punishment, his mother's unsolved murder, or the existence and murder of a sister?" Tuvok asked.

The question slapped Jessie in the face three times over. She struggled to answer him, "I... I knew about his mum. I knew his dad wasn't in jail, but I didn't know the details and why should I?" She noticed Tuvok staring at her, waiting as if she hadn't answered him. It angered her once more, "he's clearly been through hell here, of course he wouldn't want to chat about it. I don't blame him, I wouldn't either."

"Even with you? His life long friend of twenty three years..." Tuvok said.

"Twenty two," Jessie mumbled.

Nevertheless Tuvok continued, "odd behaviour for a man who loves you enough to kill for."

Jessie's cheeks flushed a very bright red, at the same time her eyes shot wide open. "Hey, back up here. No one said anything about love. He had his reasons for killing that prisoner and it wasn't..."

"Yes, you and your baby almost died. I understand perfectly," Tuvok said.

"You..." Jessie blurted out until she realised he wasn't somebody who should know. She started to stammer, "how, why? Why are you doing this? I didn't need you to tell me about a mystery sister, or about his feelings for me. No, I don't believe you. I'm not talking to you anymore, I'm going to go look for him."

"In that case you give me no choice but to have you followed, for your safety," Tuvok said.

Jessie grimaced and her shoulders tightened. "Liar. I'll prove who did this before you tie him to the stake." She stormed out, muttering a few insults under her breath.

Down in the depths of the ship, one deck was still deathly silent. Lights dimmed, consoles off-line, while some still looked unfinished.

In one of the empty rooms, James sat in the corner by a lone window, watching the planet below.

Movement in the corner of his eye turned his attention toward the door, in time to see the woman he kept seeing phase through it. She clicked her tongue and shook her head as if in disapproval. "You're a hard man to find. Not suspicious in the slightest."

James opted to return to staring outside. The woman smiled and paced, keeping a close eye on him. "Why so mopey? I thought you were fine with being a cold blooded murderer," she purred. His eyes briefly glanced at her then back. "Uh huh. Because you know at times it can be just. Right and wrong, good and evil, there is no such thing. Life's far too complicated for such simple labels."

She strode over to stand near him, following his glance toward the planet. "Some don't deserve the gift of life. Someone must answer the call."

"Is that what you're doing?" James asked in a hoarse, low voice. Then he glanced up at her, "killing people you judge as undeserving. Even though there's no such thing as wrong or evil."

"You're still not getting it," the woman tutted. "Do you think their continued living makes the slightest difference? No one will grieve for the narcissist Borg or the disgusting pig." A scoff from the ground made her twitch.

"And the five year old girl?" James said, eyes sharpening.

The woman turned on her heel, staring down at him as if he were metaphorically beneath her. "Tough choices must be made. You know that better than anyone in this scrub of a crew. Bringing a child onto this little trip to nowhere, it's cruel. I put her out of her lonely misery."

James looked ahead of him, shaking his head. "Or you kill anyone you feel like and justify it later."

The woman grunted, slightly taken aback. She hid it with her malicious brow raising smile. "People like you and me, we answer a higher calling. You're still thinking like them, it's holding you back." James rolled his eyes and turned his head away from her. She knelt down right next to him and lowered her voice to a whisper that was almost seductive. "You felt it. That man, he forfeited his right to exist when he took your child's life."

"That's clearly not the same thing as killing an innocent kid," James said, his voice started to crack.

"That's not what your crew thinks, now is it?" the woman cackled at him. "You murdered a person, that's all they care about. It doesn't matter what he did. They will never trust you or feel safe around you again. You'll never be one of them." She flinched, then faked some concern, "oh, but you already knew that. You have for a long time, all your life. So lonely. I understand."

James sharply turned his head toward her. "You really don't. We're not the..."

"Same?" the woman squeaked, almost mocking him with a pretend scowl. "Oh sweetie, we are. The sooner you embrace that, the easier it'll become." Her hand hovered close to his cheek, he recoiled which made her chuckle and stand back up. "I suppose it is too soon. You need more examples."

"No," James sounded alarmed as he followed her movements, "not this time."

The woman giggled maliciously. "Oh don't be so uptight. We both know you'll come. It's in your nature." She walked away while looking over her shoulder. "I can help you. You'll never be in conflict again."

"Go to hell," he grumbled and turned away.

"Oh, if only you knew. I'm sure you will someday, it's only a matter of time," the woman sneered while she phased through the wall. He stared at the spot she went through. "Last chance," he heard her whispering, "shy kids get nothing. So easy to push... out."

Her parting words left him grimacing and fidgeting awkwardly. A part of him knew what would keep happening if he listened to her. A louder voice screamed at him to stop it.

The second voice won as it always did. He hurried out of the room and looked around. There was no sign of her, he had no clue as to where to go. He went through what she said, hoping she left him a hint. "Shy kids. Push, out?" It hit him, so he ran as fast he could.

Morgan walked around slowly, peering around at every inch of the corridor, carrying a bottle of coke in her hand. She heard a turbolift arrive ahead of her in the distance. There was no hurry to catch it, so she shrugged it off and kept strolling, passing large bay doors.

They opened, Faye ran through them and collided with her. It barely bumped Morgan and yet it sent her stumbling to the ground.

"Ow, you've got a hard arm," Faye said without opening her mouth. Her cheeks turned bright red. "I'm sorry, so sorry," she did say aloud quietly.

"Don't worry, it's fine," Morgan smiled.

Faye scrambled back to her feet, nodding nervously. She hurried away in the same direction Morgan was going, still saying sorry. Morgan decided to wait a bit before continuing on her way.

On the same deck only a few corridors away, a Jeffries tube door slammed open. James climbed out of the shaft. He peered around the corner to check if the coast was clear. It was so he ran to his right. A woman screeching close by stalled him, followed by a loud couple of thuds. His heart and shoulders sank, he was too late. He debated continuing, knowing that his hunter wanted him to.

"Oh my god!" he heard Morgan cry out.

That helped make up his mind, so he continued running.

Further down he saw Morgan first, stumbling then bumping into a wall, shaking violently. A few steps away lay Faye slumped against the opposite wall, her arms and throat bruised, and a bloodied chest wound.

"Morgan," James stammered. Her eyes darted toward him. "We should call the Doc, no you should. He might be able to..."

Morgan side stepped away from him fearfully. "Help, someone!" she screamed whilst clutching her arm. Her steps turned into limps on her right side.

Surprise froze him on the spot. "Morgan? What happened, what's wrong?"

Someone ran around the opposite corner to him. Morgan hobbled over to him as he laid eyes on the body. They drifted up towards James.

"Oh thank god, Foster. You gotta do something. He tried to get me too, but I'm stronger so pushed him off," Morgan stuttered.

"What?" James stammered, his eyes widened.

Foster quickly pointed the phaser rifle at him as well as a hateful stare. "You. You're one sick son of a bitch. Did killing that girl not get your killing rocks off enough?"

"I.. it wasn't. Morgan," James said, glancing towards Morgan. The sight of her unnerved him, smiling with brow raised, a malicious glint in her eye. "You're not..."

Morgan swiped the rifle up so fast it hit Foster in the face before he even noticed she had grabbed it. Down he went. "Surprise."

"Let her go, you're..." James said.

Morgan cackled exactly like the woman did earlier. "Why would I? She's a very useful tool, just like you. Now, who's next I wonder?"

The pair heard footsteps approaching. Morgan sighed before tumbling to the ground. The woman remained standing in her place, brushing her arms down.

"Oh cool, what's going on here?" they heard Emma's voice behind James.

The woman made a point of walking as closely to James as she passed by, staring directly into his eyes, until she was closer to Emma than him.

Emma meanwhile noticed him, and only him. Her face tightened with anger. "You, again?"

"No, it's..." James protested until the woman laughed over the top of him. She stood behind Emma, reaching around to pretend to grab her throat. "We need to get out of here."

"We? Yeah right. Always thought you were a creep," Emma scoffed. She backed away, the woman followed her every move.

James looked down sighing, "I'm sorry." Emma frowned but not for very long. He grabbed her arm and pulled her away from the woman, causing her to yelp.

"Get off me, or I'll tear your..." Emma screeched as she was forced to run with him.

They reached a dead end, the turbolift. Panicked, James thought better of it, and instead dragged her towards the shuttle bay. When they got there he turned to go in, Emma took the opportunity to aim her knee to in between his legs. The blow caught him off balance, he lost his grip on her and stumbled to his knees.

"I warned you. Next time it's off you prick!" Emma snarled. She ran off.

The bay doors opened anyway as he shakily got to his feet. "No wait, I'm trying to help you, she'll kill you."

"To hell you are," Emma stopped briefly to spit back at him.

James noticed the door and so looked across at it, only to see a fist right in front of his face. It felt to him like someone used a bar of platinum as a battering ram. It floored him once again, leaving his sight blurred for a few seconds.

He tried to look up, see who struck him but all he saw was a blur of black stepping over him. He knew where they were going. He struggled to turn his head, to follow them. As he thought the black blur followed Emma. "Behind you!"

Emma looked over her shoulder right as his eyesight cleared up. The black blur appeared to be someone dressed in a massive black cloak, covering their head. They blocked his view of Emma. He tried to get up despite the room shaking from side to side.

A shout from her, then a thud told him he was again too late. The cloaked figure ran off around the corner, allowing him to see Emma lying on the ground. He practically crawled over to her, hoping for the best as he saw no blood. It didn't take long for him to realise she was no better off, with her neck unnaturally turned to one side and still open eyes.

Everyone in the Conference Room felt their throats close up. Craig also shook and attempted to edge out.

"So let me get this straight," Kathryn snarled while pacing around the rest. "Thompson screwed up to talk to a woman, was kicked off and replaced with you. You left the office without your teammate, who is in fact not a Security officer but a twin of one, which you..." she pointed daggers at Tuvok, "knew about and let him."

"Captain I..." Tuvok tried to interrupt. He was death glared to submission.

"We can't find Foster, his brother's at home with the *man* flu, James is still missing, and now we have one more victim and a missing crewmember," Kathryn continued. Chakotay winced as she ended that rant while looking at him. "Am I running a starship here or a circus full of idiots?"

Chakotay shakily spoke up, "to be fair, if Craig waited for Foster, he would've gotten to the victims later not sooner. If he didn't and got there sooner, he'd be no match for a serial killer on his own."

"Um I want to object, but you have my back so..." Craig whimpered.

Kathryn sighed very impatiently, shutting them all up. "Who is it and what stupid motives have you made up this time?"

Tuvok's eyebrow shot up high. "Faye O'Tani is the deceased. Emma is missing, Captain." Kathryn waited, growing increasingly impatient. "She refused to give us a last name. I have no other information. The only link I have is that Stuart was the one who found Emma in the first place, she supposedly killed Damien defending him."

Kathryn waved her hand in his direction, rolling her eyes and stomping off. "That didn't take long. I suppose he killed Damien too. Or she's his accomplice."

"Perhaps the latter. There were other witnesses to that murder," Tuvok said, ignoring or oblivious to her attitude.

The doors opened, Morgan ran through them with a frantic look on her face. "Mum, dad. Something really weird is going on." Everyone stared at her blankly, making her feel more than a little defensive. "Oh all right, something more weird. I'm walking around looking for clues, I bump into Faye, she runs off. Next thing I know I'm waking up next to her body, and this weirdo is staring at me."

Kathryn frowned, "what weirdo?"

Morgan groaned and glanced behind her. The door opened once again for an out of breath Foster, with a fresh new bruise across his face. "He's got quite the imagination."

"It was not my imagination," Foster wheezed. "Stuart murdered Faye, you were injured, claiming he attacked you. Then he must've knocked me out."

Kathryn quietly seethed. Everyone but Tuvok were too distracted by the new arrivals to notice the steam rising from her.

"Wait, you saw him do this?" Chakotay questioned.

"No," Foster and Morgan said almost at the same time, she scowled at him.

He did so back, "apparently you did. You fought him off you. You looked terrified."

"Yeah right," Morgan laughed in disbelief. "I never saw James, and I'm not even hurt. Just a bit woozy."

"Well, you are stronger than him so... I guess..." Craig said. Morgan glared at him instead, he winced and yet blushed at the same time.

Foster stared at her thoughtfully. "You don't remember. He brainwashed you into forgetting, that'd explain your weakened state."

"Excuse me?" Morgan snapped with great offense.

Kathryn grumbled irritably. "Hold on. Craig only found Faye's body, but Foster found you as well. That means you both were there first, and you didn't think to report it?"

"What do you think I'm doing now?" Morgan muttered. She pointed her thumb towards Foster, "I had to keep stopping for this chump."

"I meant him," Kathryn snarled in Foster's direction, eyes narrowing.

Chakotay sighed, "okay. We badly need to find James. We need everyone on it."

Morgan's jaw dropped as she turned to her father. "Not you too, dad. It's not him."

"I'm not saying it's him, but while he's missing more people are dying. We can't rule out an involvement in some fashion," Chakotay regrettably said.

"Now wait a minute. Foster was the only one who claimed to see James. I didn't, and I sure as hell didn't whimper away from him after a beating," Morgan protested. She noticed her mother's eyebrow visibly twitching in anger, so she decided to get to the point. "How do we know it isn't creepo here that's doing this?"

"Unlikely. Foster was with the team at the time of Naomi's killing, as well as guarding Stuart's quarters when Annika was murdered," Tuvok said. Morgan pulled all manner of faces while he talked until she settled on one she liked; her nose scrunched up and miming him. "The manner as to some were murdered also doesn't..."

"Fine, he's like you; with an agenda. You don't care about finding the killer, you just want James locked up," Morgan cut in.

"Morgan," Kathryn said calmly to soothe her, "I should take you home. Something happened to you, and until we find out what it is, I'd feel better if you were somewhere safe and with me or your father."

"Yeah but..." Morgan whimpered.

Kathryn shook her head, "no buts. This isn't a discussion. Chakotay, Tuvok, keep me informed." The look in her eye told them that if they didn't they'd regret it. They nodded. Kathryn headed for the same door Morgan came in, she reluctantly followed.

Once gone Chakotay turned to Tuvok, "you were saying; about how the victims were murdered."

"They vary. Williams was beaten before strangled. Annika and Faye knives were used. Naomi appeared to have been merely pushed into the table, the glass punctured an artery," Tuvok said.

"So you don't think James did it, or you think he only committed some?" Chakotay questioned.

"I say they vary too much to be anyone else. Each killing matches Stuart's style in some manner," Tuvok answered.

Foster nodded to show his agreement. "There's something definitely not quite right with him." Chakotay gave him a *really* expression, which he didn't understand. "Miss Hansen was cleaved almost in half, with a knife. Whoever did it must possess an inhuman strength."

Chakotay and Tuvok shared a worried glance, Chakotay more so. "Maybe we should take a better look at her. She might yet still pop back to life and tell us who or what did this before anyone else dies, if we're lucky," Chakotay whispered.

Tuvok's left eyebrow joined the other. He was about to reply when the comm chirped.

"Sickbay to Tuvok. Um, you're going to want to come see this," the Doctor's voice nervously said.

"What is it Doctor?" Tuvok questioned.

Sickbay:

The Doctor stared ahead of him with some uncertainty toward James standing at the door, carrying Emma in his arms. He dared not move, unsure what his intentions were.

James walked towards the only free biobed and gently placed her onto it.

"I think, um..." the Doctor started to reply until James turned and looked at him. "Just come," he tried to say through sealed lips.

"I'd bring a few teams if I were you, armed ones," James said.

"Stuart? Are you confessing to the murders?" Tuvok's voice asked.

James sighed as he moved away from the biobed, looking over the other biobeds which were already taken by Lee, Faye and Naomi. "Yes. Yes I am."

The Doctor hurriedly went to tend to Emma, hoping that since he brought her she could be saved. He saw her neck injuries and his shoulders dropped.

One team armed with rifles waited for the turbolift to arrive. When it did James stepped out, flanked by another team. They escorted him down the corridor.

The people arriving at the nearby junction had to stop to let them pass. One of which was Jessie, she gasped and hurriedly followed.

"Wait, what are you doing? You're not arresting him," she called after them. No one responded to her. "He didn't do it. James!" she ended up shouting.

The only response she got was James briefly turning his head to one side then faced forward again.

Jessie followed until the first team and him went to the brig. The second team blocked her from going any further.

"He's dangerous. No one's allowed in there," one security officer said.

"Like hell he is," Jessie stammered angrily. "Let me talk to him, he won't touch me."

The same officer shook her head. "Sorry, we have our orders. It's for everyone's safety."

Jessie backed away a step, staring helplessly in the direction of the door. "No. I'm not going to let this happen," she said, then ran off.

Frantic knocking on the door made Morgan a little wary about answering. Kathryn told her not to answer to anyone from the next room, then she heard a lot of sounds like objects being tossed to the floor.

"Morgan?" a muffled voice she recognised emanated from it. Another couple knocks followed.

Morgan groaned and walked forward to open the door. Jessie was in the middle of knocking again when it did, so she knocked air once before hurrying inside. "Morgan, I need your help."

"What can I do?" Morgan asked.

"I dunno. The people who believe in James are running out," Jessie replied quickly, close to murmuring. "Everything was normal until you guys returned from that planet. You said something about feeling weird after. Maybe the answer's there."

Morgan scoffed and walked off towards the sofa. "I'm not going back to that hellhole, no way."

Jessie stared after her, blinking more than usual, the helpless feeling was flooding back. "I'm not asking you to," she said as the teen sat down. "This started after we picked up that Tolg guy. I just thought..."

"The guy's dead, Jess," Morgan said, then pulled a wary face, "deader. Tolg don't go around murdering random people."

"Well neither does James," Jessie said, making Morgan tense slightly and sit back. "I wonder where we put his body, maybe this guy's really unhinged like that Buck guy. He was an ex Tolg too, right?"

Morgan stared at her blankly. "So was he unhinged before or after James gave him a lung?" she sniggered.

Jessie gave her a similar expression right back, only hers was genuine. "What?"

Morgan shrugged, "if this Tolg guy was going around killing people, then how come no one's seen him? How did he get into your quarters, though how did Annika get in, cos that one gives me the heebies." She shuddered for quite a few seconds.

"Well I don't know, do I? We have to find out," Jessie said.

A noise from one of the bedrooms got both their attention. Jessie heard Kathryn calling for Morgan. She groaned and beckoned her head towards a different room, she walked that way herself. Jessie followed her into it.

"This is crazy, Tuvok already has a strong case on James. There's no way that this farfetched idea would convince him otherwise," Morgan said.

"Well it would explain the botched DNA samples. James hit him, then the Tolg alien guy comes along. We wouldn't have him on record," Jessie said, trailing off as her skin paled. Morgan stared at her curiously. "I wonder if the Doc's done a scan on the others. I should go and find out."

"Morgan, where are you?" Kathryn's voice called urgently.

Morgan winced, "I'm in my room, don't come in."

"Why?" Kathryn's voice asked.

"Uh," Morgan stammered, looking at Jessie with her eyes wide and desperate. She shook her head. "I spilt my drink on my leggings. I don't have any on."

Jessie groaned and covered her face. Morgan seemed pleased enough with her excuse though.

"If you're going to use my straw, throw it out afterwards."

Jessie cringed in disgust, she was a little relieved that Morgan followed suite. "Yeah, mum's nuts. You know this," she whispered.

"Yeah but I thought there was a limit," Jessie whispered quieter than her. "How am I going to get out?"

"Ugh," Morgan rolled her eyes. She went over to a chest of drawers, opened one and took out what looked like a jar of coffee. Jessie tried not to smirk, it was too hard for her though. Morgan scowled in response. "You owe me."

"Since when do you like coffee?" Jessie asked.

Morgan scoffed, "I don't, I just like hiding it." She hinted for her to hide beside the door. Jessie did so, then Morgan strolled out with the jar behind her back.

Jessie waited for some sort of hint that she could sneak out. It took a few minutes before she heard something that was far too obvious to miss. "*What, where? Oh my god! Hmmmghhh*" Kathryn almost drooled, then hurried footsteps faded away. A door shut.

Jessie quickly headed out, only then she noticed the abundance of toys lying around. She shrugged it off and escaped.

"*Oh Chakotay, you shouldn't have!*" Kathryn's voice giggled from another room.

Morgan rolled her eyes as she sat back down.

The last time she was outside the brig there were four guards armed with rifles. When Jessie showed up an hour later she only found Craig standing outside.

"What happened? Please tell me they let him go," she said to him.

Craig sullenly shook his head. "No sorry. There should be two of us though, he's on his *lunch break*, there's one inside."

"Any chance you could let me in?" Jessie asked with a weak smile.

Craig made a little strained whining sound as he eyed the door. "I don't know Jess. It's not that you're in danger or anything, but I can't risk him getting out."

Jessie sighed tiredly. "Look Craig, I promise I just want to talk to him. If he gave himself up, it must be for a reason and I wouldn't get in the way of that."

"Really? Because all these years I've known you, you so would. That's your thing with him. He does something stupid, you slap him out of it, and he probably does it anyway," Craig smiled and then sniggered.

"When..." Jessie said in a higher pitch, she tried to clear her throat, "that's not true."

"Okay, okay. You've got five minutes," Craig said, stepping to one side.

Jessie mouthed a thank you before going through the doors. Immediately she was ambushed by Thompson rushing over from the console.

"Woah, woah. No jailbreaking," he stuttered.

"Why does everyone think I'm going to let him out?" Jessie snapped. Thompson stared at her blankly, his eyes drifting over to the brig. She sighed, giving up. "I'm just here to talk to him. Maybe you should join Craig outside since he's on his own."

"Nuh uh, he gets no privacy, but I do have these though," Thompson said, pointing to some headphones hanging around his neck. "No promises, doll."

Jessie was torn between throttling him and shuddering in revulsion, she did the second one involuntarily anyway with a twitching angry eyebrow. "Oh god, I liked it better when you were relieved of duty."

"Me too," Thompson said, putting his headphones on. He returned to his console.

Jessie walked over to the forcefield to find James sitting on the bed, elbows resting on his legs, his head buried in his hands. She assumed he hadn't noticed her yet.

"James," she tried to get him to. He didn't move. "I know you haven't done anything wrong, and so do you. There aren't many people left who do believe you, so I need you to help me figure this out. What's..."

James moved his arms by his side, she assumed to get up. Instead he turned to the side and put his feet up on the bed. Jessie wasn't sure what he was doing until he turned his head away as well, towards the wall. It felt like a small slap to the face, it stung her.

"James please, why did you give yourself up? The murders will keep happening, this won't stop them," Jessie stuttered. "I know you wouldn't try to prove you're innocent by letting someone else die, so I know that's not the point of this, but still giving up isn't like you."

"It's safer for everyone this way," she heard James mumble even with his head turned away.

"What? That's the closest thing from true," Jessie said, fighting the urge to snap.

James slowly turned his head to look at her. She noticed he must have been crying at some point, his eyes were red and cheeks were a little damp. The feeling to comfort him was overwhelming but she couldn't. "They told you, didn't they? Tuvok, Foster. They'd question the closest to the suspect."

Jessie shook her head, "told me what?" James once again looked away, it gave her a pinching feeling in her chest. "What, that Tuvok thinks you're responsible for every person's death, including people in another quadrant. That Foster is some deluded creep who thinks he can see past lives. What?" she rambled.

James quietly sighed. He spoke but kept his gaze away, "I am, it's always me. My fault. People die because of me."

"Are you including your father in this; your mother," Jessie said gently with some care, "your sister?"

James looked at her suddenly, his eyes were wider than she'd ever seen. He appeared to be shaking which he tried to stop when he looked straight ahead of him. "You should go."

"No, not until we figure something out," Jessie said.

"But, I don't want you to die too," James mumbled.

"Then I won't, because you'll be with me. I trust..." Jessie begged.

James shook his head, "don't. I'm the one you need to be protected from."

"Oh come on. Why would you hurt me?" Jessie said.

"I've killed everyone else who's cared about me, why not you?" James said.

Jessie moved as close to the forcefield as she could. "That's not who you are. You try to protect the people who you care for, heck you protect people who you don't. It beats you up when you can't. That's all this is." James once again turned his head away so she couldn't see him disagreeing. "I know you better than anyone. I know that it's harder for you than most."

"No. That's not..." James stuttered, looking straight ahead of him. "You weren't there."

"You mean your sister?" Jessie softly asked. James' silence was her answer, she nodded. "You've never mentioned her, not once all these years."

"I guess not," James replied while averting his eyes back to the wall briefly. Jessie couldn't help but frown at his answer. "I was three years old. We went to the park together, me, her, mum and dad. I slipped away from them when she wasn't looking," his face scrunched up with pain and a little anger. "Apparently it happened when she went to look for me."

Jessie waited to see if he'd continue from there, but he merely stared at the wall in a daze. "What did?" she asked so softly it came out as a whisper.

"Somebody..." James hesitated as if it were physically painful for him to talk. "Beat, violated her, then left her for dead."

"Oh my god," Jessie recoiled in horror. Guilt smashed into her so hard it left her trembling. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought it up."

James shook his head. She didn't think it was possible but he managed to look sadder than before, almost drained. "That's why dad..." he trailed off and sighed. He didn't have to say it, Jessie knew what he was going to say and it left her feeling furious. She kept it buried for the time being. "He was right."

"No, no he wasn't," Jessie stammered. "You didn't kill her, somebody else did. You couldn't have possibly known that was going to happen."

"When he died he said that I lead him there. He wouldn't have been in that shuttle when it crashed," James said without any emotion. The way he said it took Jessie aback, leaving her speechless. "My mother. I could've stopped it, I should've been there. I always went with her, but that day I was too stubborn, too selfish."

"James, stop it!" Jessie cried out desperately and angrily. "It's not your fault. You didn't kill any of them, you understand me?" She immediately regretted her outburst. James retreated further away, his head dipped even lower and his whole body visibly tensed. "I'm sorry, I just..."

"And then there's you," James unintentionally said over the top of her. He stopped when he realised. Jessie's haunting stare caught his attention in the corner of his eye. "I can't save anyone, all I'm good for is death."

Jessie had no idea what to say that she hadn't already. The sound of Thompson's leaking headphones became the foreground of the whole room. She looked back over her shoulder, expecting him to be bopping his head or miming along, only instead she caught him staring in her general direction. No expression on his face, his eyes a few thousand lightyears away.

"*Sickbay to Rex,*" the Doctor's voice called over her commbadge.

Jessie shook off the creepy vibe she got from Thompson's staring and tapped it. "Give me good news, Doc."

"You were correct. I tested Annika first, I couldn't find another DNA sample on her but I did on the knife. That generated the same 25% match, without the punch to the face 100% result that Lee had." Jessie paced the length of the forcefield, worrying that it wouldn't be enough to clear James. *"There was something about it that was obvious, which I didn't spot because I was so pre-occupied with the impossibility of a 25% match in these circumstances. I'm hoping the skin samples I've found on Emma will confirm my findings. I do not want to get your hopes up until..."*

"What, tell me," Jessie said with relief. "Please."

"The chromosomes in the sample found on Annika and in the majority of Lee's wounds, they tell me the assailant was female."

"Huh?" Thompson mumbled, looking confused. He shrugged it off and concentrated on his console.

"Thank you Doctor. Please keep looking, don't tell anyone else yet," Jessie said, a smile spread across her face. She turned to James. "You hear that?" He didn't answer, he didn't seem to be even listening. "We're close to clearing you. Hang in there, okay. We'll find her." She hurried out of the brig.

James looked over to where she was, her words only then hitting him. He looked towards the door, suddenly very worried.

Thompson walked up to the forcefield, blocking his view entirely.

"What...?" James started to say, until he noticed Thompson smile at him while his brow raised. He pressed something beside the forcefield, then it flickered off.

Thompson continued to stare at him as he turned to leave until he was no longer able to. As the doors closed behind him, James heard him say in a taunting tone, "gonna be too late again."

Once again James' mind and instincts were in conflict, he stared at the door Thompson walked through. One side of him was always stronger than the other, so he got up and followed him.

As soon as he stepped outside he knew something was off. He knew the door was meant to be guarded but no one was around. He could though hear footsteps moving away to his left. He followed them.

Around the corner he saw someone waiting for the turbolift, alone. Even at the distance he recognised her. "Jessie?" he called.

Jessie turned around at the same time an occupied lift arrived. "James, how did you..." What felt like a phaser pressed into the back of her head.

"That's my question," Foster hissed suspiciously. James noticed the phaser and stopped abruptly. "Ah ah, yes, of course she's the way to make you understand. Co-operate. I should've thought of this sooner."

"Really, it seems like a stupid idea to me," Jessie grumbled.

Foster chuckled very awkwardly, like he was trying to sound tough but it came out sounding forced and cheesy. "Stuart won't hurt me, as long as you're in danger."

"Oh it's not him you should be worried about," Jessie said.

"What are you doing? No one's going to believe it," James said, hoping Foster wouldn't notice his very slight inching as he spoke.

Foster only frowned. "What's so unbelievable about it? You would justify anything if it meant saving or even just impressing this girl." Jessie rolled her eyes in response.

James pretended to laugh briefly, "yeah, so what would be the point in doing anything to her? Ruins the whole *James on a murder spree* story."

Foster's eyes narrowed so much it looked like he was squinting. "You're trying to confuse me. Perhaps she said something, yes..." he overdramatically gasped and then smiled, "that's why she was leaving. Even she isn't on your side. Pissed you off didn't it, you mons..."

Jessie had enough and stamped on his foot hard. As soon as she heard his squeak and the feel of the phaser leaving her head, she aimed her elbow backwards.

"Ohno you don't..." Foster grumbled, firing his phaser anyway. The blast went over her shoulder towards James running over to them. He tried to dodge, but was struck in the shoulder instead, it was enough to floor him.

Jessie instantly froze, her face a mixture of fear and anger. She went to elbow Foster anyway, but he had more than enough time to grab that arm and repoint his phaser towards her left temple. He pulled her back towards the turbolift. She struggled with him until she noticed James's shoulders and an arm move. The phaser dug in further, so she let him drag her the rest of the way. The doors started to shut. Foster let go of her arm to grab her commbadge, he tossed it outside.

The turbolift had closed by the time James pushed back onto his feet. He stared straight ahead where they were before, mind racing. "Computer, where is..." he began to ask, but he trailed off when he spotted the commbadge.

Sickbay:

The wrinkles on the Doctor's forehead had grown so much they were beginning to merge into one another. Once again the computer spat a 25% match result at him. The next task was to compare it to the previous ones, as well as run it through the crew's database in the rare chance that the sample he got was different to the others. He knew it wouldn't be. He had a feeling that it would yield the same results. His fingers on autopilot as he ran the tests, he thought about why Naomi and Faye's murders were so different, and why they had no DNA evidence on them. Especially Naomi since he knew she was pushed, there had to be something.

A noise from Sickbay startled him out of his head. He hurried out of his office, then hesitated, worried about who or what he was up against. He peered around the edge of the door, forgetting that the wall was made of glass and the person would see him anyway.

At the wall on the left of the three in a row biobeds, he noticed the Jeffries Tube door open. Then a figure climbed out. He was relieved but still a little hesitant to go over. "Mr Taylor, Stuart sorry."

James straightened up while closing the door gently. He walked over to him, an urgent look in his eyes. "Doc, don't call Security just yet."

"I won't, but you're taking a big risk coming back here," the Doctor stammered.

"Look, you won't get anywhere with those DNA tests," James started to explain.

The Doctor scoffed, "tell me something I don't know."

James shrugged as he walked by him toward the medicine trolley. "All right. The killer takes over people, probably anybody who's convenient." He rummaged around through the hyposprays, getting the Doctor's full attention. He stared in dismay for a moment before grabbing one side of the trolley and tried to pull it. James tugged it back from his hands. "Locking anyone up isn't going to make a damn bit of difference. She needs to be stopped in her natural state."

"I'm not sure I'm following. How do you know she's a she, and please don't touch these," the Doctor angrily stuttered. James sighed as he picked one up and stepped back. He brought the hypospray up to inject himself with it. The Doctor hurried after him, "if you do anything of the sort, I'll call a few teams here. I won't let you."

James stopped a centimetre short, tensing his shoulders and breathed in deeply. Once back out he looked annoyed, "Doc, she has Jessie. I can't just wait around for her to die."

"Then how is injecting yourself with random drugs going to help with this?" the Doctor snapped. He tried to take the hypo back but James brought it around his back. "Sickbay to..."

"Wait!" James unintentionally shouted. With a heavy heart he handed over the hypo. "It's just a theory. This woman she's not a member of the crew, she's haunting us. She can't kill on her own. I was an easy person for her to frame, or she saw an opportunity to have more fun, I don't know." The Doctor shook his head, not understanding. "The killer is already dead. The only way to stop her is to die too."

"Excuse me?" the Doctor bewilderedly blurted out. "You're talking about a ghost? Your plan is to become one? That is the most ludicrous plan I've ever heard, and you do know that's quite a damning criticism."

James groaned, mostly out of impatience. "I'll do it with or without your help. Here; I can be brought back, you can help me. If you call Security I'll do it somewhere else, where you won't know."

"James, do you realise what you're saying?" the Doctor asked, very concerned.

"Yeah, I'm guilt tripping you into not calling Security on me," James replied, smiling faintly.

The Doctor narrowed his eyes, a brief scowl on his face. "Letting you leave would be against my programming, but so would assisting you. That is very cruel of you."

James nodded, his face fell. "Yeah, you're right. I'll think of something else," he said as he walked over to the station in the middle of the room.

His guard wasn't down yet, the Doctor knew he wouldn't give up that easily. He watched him like a hawk.

"Okay, got it," James said after he finished typing. The Doctor flinched, then acted as if nothing happened. "If you put a forcefield around me, remove the oxygen for ten minutes, you should be able to revive me again, correct?"

"Of course, I am the best in my field after all," the Doctor replied with only pride in his voice.

James walked around to the wall by the primary biobed near the office. "Let's get started then."

The turbolift doors opened. Jessie stepped out clutching her right elbow protectively. She spotted her commbadge nearby and knelt down to pick it up, all with her eyes pointing towards the part of the corridor where she saw James fall from the shot. "Damn it," she muttered, turning back towards the turbolift.

Foster woke up with a banging headache and unable to see out of his right eye. What he could see was a very blurry Thompson staring far too closely at him.

"You too huh?" he heard, and it sounded oddly sympathetic. He lent a hand to help him to his feet. "One second I'm on guard duty, right in the middle of the chilling middle eig... guitar solo, bitching..." he stammered. Foster tried to raise his eyebrow but it hurt to do so, and he still couldn't see out of that eye. He felt it, it appeared very swollen. "Um yeah, then I'm suddenly waking up in the corridor with a stinking headache and no sign of James. Looks like you suffered worse."

"Jessie elbowed me," Foster reluctantly said. Thompson didn't smirk like he expected, he nodded in understanding. "We must find Stuart before he kills her. She doesn't know how dangerous he is."

Thompson's lips twitched, humour in his eyes. "You're kidding right, dude? We've worked with James for yonks, you know he wouldn't hurt a hair on her head. Not just because she'd tear him a new one if he did so, literally. He fancies the pants off her."

Foster was momentarily put off with the worked together for ages part. He smiled, relieved no one had told Thompson yet about the brother lie. "And what always happens when an emotional brat like Stuart doesn't get what he wants? Come on. We must find him."

"Team three comm'd me in a few minutes ago. Said they saw him running into Sickbay," Thompson said. Foster immediately took off for the nearest turbolift. Thompson wasn't expecting it, it took him a

good minute to follow and fast. "Hey, please tell me you're going the opposite way. I'm not going in there until at least I have a new rifle."

Foster stepped into the turbolift, immediately turning around to face him. "I have an idea. If you wish to cower as more die, I'll do it alone. Deck Five."

Thompson stared, speechless as the doors closed in his face. "Wow, puberty's really took its toll on him," he commented while walking away.

At first he didn't think it had worked. James drifted off for a moment and awoke in the same place. It was only when he tried to press on the ground to get up, he knew it had worked. Unfortunately he had to fall through a couple of decks for it to really click. He had tried to grab anything to stop himself, his hand would pass through everything. It was only when he started to think about stopping that he did so, landing in the middle of a corridor, hovering a foot off the ground.

People approached. Even though he expected it, it still unnerved him when they didn't react and even walked straight through him. He looked around, unsure where to even look. That was when he noticed something off about his own body. He looked down to see a black patch on his chest, on further inspection it reminded him of an overly large Borg nanoprobe, only it pulsed, it's legs twitched as if it were alive. He reached for it, but the mere touch of it burned not only his hand, but his entire body.

"What have you done?" he heard a distorted voice snarl from all around him.

James quickly figured out it came from above him and looked up, on guard. The cloaked figure slid through the ceiling as if he or she were flying, landing gracefully in front of him. Despite the polished landing he felt so much rage coming from them. He could not see the face, even with the cloak only hanging over their head. Their face was nothing but a shadow.

"You, you're nothing but a puppet. What do you hope to accomplish with this?" The voice still distorted, and yet it sounded more masculine than he expected.

"Really? We're doing the talk first, surely we're both smarter than that," James said.

The cloaked figure chuckled. "I see this is not your first time." They backed away, then paced around him in a circle, walls or no walls. "Don't think the same rules apply in this realm. Here, you're nothing but a newbie. I on the other hand have walked the spirit world for many moons. If you think you can best me, you're more impulsively stupid than I thought. A perfect pup..."

"Yeah yeah, bad guy talk, I'm so intimidated. Why don't we skip to the part where you brag about your plans for no good reason, if you're that keen on chatting," James said.

"My plans?" the cloaked figure laughed mockingly. "Why plan? You people go down so easily. You stumbling into the area is just icing on the cake."

James shook his head. "Right, so it's an accident that you or your friend just happen to make sure I'm around for your kills? Maybe I'll get more sense out of her."

The cloaked figure snarled. "You petulant beast. Don't think you're not disposable to me. Leave L'Arana be and I won't smash your soul into a thousand pieces."

"Finally we're getting somewhere," James smiled, backing away as if to leave.

The cloaked figure lunged for him, but didn't run to do it, he floated across the ground. The cloak spread out, gunning for him as well like a separate entity. James wasn't sure how hitting any of it would go down, so for the moment he dodged to the right. Instead of the usual rolling onto the ground, he floated through a few walls and into somebody's quarters.

He heard an ear piercing shriek of anger and anguish, it grew closer. Even through the walls he could see a black cloud approaching. He willed himself up a few decks, just in time to avoid being blinded and deafened spiritually by a singing naked Neelix stepping out of his bathroom.

In Sickbay the Doctor stood monitoring the station as well as keeping one eye on James, slumped against the wall. He didn't care when the doors behind him opened and Foster walked in.

"Computer, deactivate the EMH," he ordered.

The Doctor disappeared into thin air instantly. Foster walked up to where he stood, staring at the scans in front of him. His eyes drifted up slightly toward James, a smile growing on his face.

The woman James kept seeing followed closely behind Tom, he looked around nervously while munching on some crisps. Even though she was following him, she wasn't keeping a close eye, she was looking around for something else.

"Here, blondy blondy," she sang, then huffed. "Here pushover."

Tom stopped abruptly to talk to Harry, she accidentally walked through him. She grumbled and backed off.

"Woah Harry, still have your head. What a relief," Tom said with a chirpy grin.

"Ooh, headless, what an idea," the woman giggled.

"Me? With a murderous James on the loose, you're the one that's shockingly still got a head," Harry snickered.

Tom laughed off his nerves. "I'm so glad you got my back bud, but I'm not worried. James comes running at me with a knife I'll tell him a strand of hair's gone loose to distract him, then sock him."

The woman looked at him with such disgust, even as a ghost she looked ready to throw up. "Ooh, where is he? I really want to kill him," she snapped.

"I didn't say a murderous Jessie. Good luck with that *bud*," Harry chuckled and walked off, leaving Tom even more nervous than before.

James ran around the same corner at the same time as Harry, he didn't have time to avoid going straight through him. He expected even in death his body would be shuddering at the creepiness of that. Fortunately the sight of the woman distracted him.

She spotted him too. "Oh finally."

"L'Arana, is it?" James said, putting her off her stride towards him.

"How could *you* possibly know that?" she hissed.

James didn't get much time to answer her even if he wanted to, L'Arana attempted to go through him as before. He pushed her back, leaving her looking gobsmacked.

"You... you're dead," she squeaked. Fury took over and she brandished a shaking finger at him. "I wasn't done yet. I can kill that lanky thinks he's witty deadbeat for you, so go back to your body and continue being a good little chump."

"Wha... who?" James said, peering around her. He managed to see Tom just in time for him to go into a room. "Oh, no thanks. If I wanted to, he'd already be dead years ago."

L'Arana's eyes sharpened, a mischievous smile spread across her face. At the same time James felt the approaching darkness that he did earlier. He hurriedly stepped back in time for the cloaked figure to float through the floor. He assumed that was the reason for L'Arana's expression, only his appearance soured her.

"I warned you, you fool. I'll crush you into oblivion, no need to wait for that inevitable fate of yours," the cloaked figure snarled.

"Uh huh, so why you wasting your time with spirit him? This is your chance," L'Arana scolded him.

The cloaked figure chuckled darkly as his head appeared to turn to one side. James took the chance to tackle him. The suddenness of the attack caught the figure off guard, he only had time to grab a tight hold of him as he fell through the floor, taking James with him. L'Arana glanced around meekly, shrugged and walked off as if nothing happened.

The timing had to be right, James hoped he started his attack on the right deck or it'd all be for nothing. Just before reaching the ground on what he assumed was the floor he was aiming for, he even more forcefully pushed the figure away from him and through the floor, straight through the hull and into space. James pulled himself back to stop from doing the same thing.

Mere seconds later he heard the man laughing, mocking him. His figure phased back through the carpet. "You still think like a mortal. Rookie mistake."

James didn't register his words, he was too distracted by the tear in the figure's hood, allowing him to see the side of a grotesque mixture of faces. The sight of it reminded him of something, he'd seen it before. Even with the tear in his disguise, he couldn't see his eyes and yet still could feel them trying to penetrate his very soul.

At first there was nothing but darkness.

"Doc, there's no response. His heart's stopped, breathing..."

"Is there still any brain activity?"

He awoke to three frantic faces hovering over him.

"Mr Paris, anything?" the Doctor asked.

"Nada Doc. He should've been recovering. He was fine, healthy when we left him and I don't see any change now," Tom answered.

He tried to speak but no sound came out.

"Make a note in the ship's log. Time of death 2103 hours," the Doctor said.

Death? He sat bolt upright in shock. I'm right here, he wanted to say. Even his movement didn't change a thing. Lee walked away sullenly. The Doctor and Tom talked straight through him.

To the right of him, the room was in the shadows. The ceiling lights were unable to penetrate the darkness he realised was steadily creeping over to him, a black foreboding mist. As it approached, it started to fade from where it came from; a man's body lying on a biobed. Somebody he never met.

The black cloud surrounded him. A pair of hollow, dark eyes within stared. It seemed to pounce, not for him but down for the biobed. He knew it wasn't tangible, but still he instinctively pushed it away with all the strength he had. He swore he heard a voice cry out in anger as the cloud evaporated up into the ceiling.

Everyone in Sickbay continued as if nothing happened. Tom stood nearby, still in a daze. Tom must have felt it, he thought. He got up from the biobed and turned to address him, but in his peripheral he saw something that shook him to his core. Himself, lying on the biobed with his eyes shut. The screens that showed his heart rate were a straight line.

James tried to stifle the rising panic. He didn't want to die, not like that.

"The last mistake you make. It looks like it's time to even the stakes," the figure sneered. Arms stretched out he swooped up to fly through the decks once again.

James' eyes narrowed, he jumped up to grab him at the last second. The figure tried to kick him off, but it only forced James to climb up more. At eye level he grabbed the edge of the hood and tugged. The rest of the man's face was the same as the glimpse he saw, except one part of the hideous face stood out. A piece of metal fixed to his jaw surrounded by rotting skin.

Jessie ran into Sickbay to head straight for the office. Barely through the door she spotted Foster at the console humming to himself. She didn't have time to wonder why, a brief head turn and she noticed James on the ground.

"Finally, we'll be even brother. Deserving promotion for Paul," Foster snickered.

"You..." Jessie growled, alerting him to her presence. He panicked and reached for the phaser he left on top of the console. Jessie kicked him in the back of the knee, knocking him straight to the floor. The phaser was her next target, she grabbed it and pointed it at him before he could recover.

"Computer, where's the Doctor?" The computer told her he was off-line Her eyes flashed with brewing rage. "Activate him."

"No!" Foster cried but could do nothing without getting shot.

The Doctor reappeared next to them looking a little miffed. He shrugged it off to return to the station, not at all bothered by Jessie and Foster. "Oh, eleven minutes." He walked over to James.

"You have no idea what you've just done," Foster stuttered.

Jessie raised the setting on the phaser. "How about now?" Foster whimpered as he cowered, covering his face with an arm. "Out, and I'll save this for later."

Foster nodded, "yes, yes we will." He pretty much crawled out of Sickbay.

Jessie followed him to the door, waited for it to shut behind him, then she pressed the lock command on the panel.

The Doctor casually pressed a hypo into James' neck, bringing him around. Jessie rushed over to kneel on the other side of him. "Is he...?" she asked.

"Sure," the Doctor grunted, getting up to return to his office.

His attitude poked her, but she was more concerned with the man on the floor. "What did you do?" she stuttered fearfully.

"It's the Tolg. He's the... killer," James tried to say through his struggle to breathe. "A ghost tries to trick me, he kills."

Jessie glanced over her shoulder just in time to see the Doctor put his feet up on his desk. She turned back. "The Nij guy? You didn't?" she said accusingly in more ways than one. Her anger returned. "James how could you do something like this? You only have one lung now, you have to be more careful. You could've died."

James tried to sit up but it made him wheeze. Jessie pushed him back down carefully, still with fury in her eyes. "Don't you dare... what if..."

"I couldn't let another person I care about die," James said.

Jessie's face softened a little, her eyes looked conflicted. "You..." She leaned down to give him a light kiss on the lips. If he wasn't awake then, he was after that. "Don't ever do that again, please," she whispered.

The Doctor walked past in the background, tutting. "No need for the mouth to mouth, it's only his lung re-adjusting."

Jessie sat up to glare at him. "I wasn't..." The Doctor stared at her blankly, making her stutter and blush. "Well no one was helping him." She got a roll of the eyes for the remark.

"I'll... fix him," James said, looking ready to get up again. Jessie shook her head. The Doctor dropped down suddenly on his opposite side, startling Jessie. She glared again for it as he pressed another hypo into him. "I have to stop him, he posses..." he had to stop to catch his breath, "he's done this before. He must have."

"You need to shut up and rest," the Doctor scolded him.

Jessie twitched as she repressed the urge to slap him. "Morgan might still be on our side. I'll update her. I'll come back for you. You take it easy." She got up to rush out of Sickbay before he could argue.

"What gives, turning me off before the ten minutes?" the Doctor grumbled. James weakly frowned at him.

Morgan glanced between one of the bedroom doors and the main one, looking pretty fed up. One more frantic door chime annoyed her enough to open it. "Jessie, it's really late. Mum's heard you."

"I need your help, now," Jessie said.

"What for?" Morgan asked during a big yawn. She walked off with little thought or care toward the sofa.

Jessie didn't notice, she hurried inside. "I was right. Nij's the killer. Only he can't do it when he's a ghost, he has to use someone."

"You're really stretching the already snapped rope, Crewman," Kathryn said from her bedroom door, death glare building up. "There's no such things as ghosts."

"Of course there is, this isn't the first time," Jessie stuttered furiously. A thought occurred to her, the anger fizzled to nothing. "Forgot that too, right."

"Jessie, I didn't want him to be the killer either, but this ghost story isn't going to convince anyone," Kathryn scolded.

Morgan giggled a little like a child would if she were trying to appear innocent. Both women looked at her suspiciously. "So dead guy takes over James, uses him to kill, then sods off back to ghost form? Am I getting that right?" she teased in Jessie's direction. "Sounds like locking him up was the right idea."

"No, the killer probably chooses victims near James. A ghost taunts him, lures him. He goes, thinking he can stop it but it's always too late. Somebody else is possessed," Jessie grumbled.

Kathryn's glare was fully charged up. She aimed it at her. "So it can lure him and possess-kill at the same time?"

"No... I, erm," Jessie stammered, completely thrown off.

"I hope you're not taking this seriously mum," Morgan laughed. Jessie stared accusingly at her. "If this were true, the Doc would've told us about other DNA samples on the bodies."

Kathryn's eyes glazed over, deep in thought. "I'll lock the door behind me. Don't let her try to leave," she directed at Jessie, then she sped out.

"Finally," Morgan sighed in relief.

Jessie heard the tell tale click of the door locking, her shoulders tensed. "I assume the plan is to knock it down, right? You can do that."

Morgan's eyes lit up, Jessie assumed she hadn't thought of that. What really got her attention was something she could not see. The cloaked figure, minus his hood, phased through the same door, stomping and angrily muttering to himself. "That yellow headed freak, can't even die properly. Meddlesome bastard."

"Yep," Morgan agreed and nodded. Jessie wondered why she took so long to respond with only that. "What do we do?"

Jessie looked a little unsure. It gave Nij the opening to answer her instead without overlap. "It's fine. No one believes him, but this one." He leered hatefully towards Jessie, oblivious to him. "We need to teach him a lesson. It's the only way to. . ."

Jessie decided then to answer, inadvertently talking over him, "well his body is here. Maybe if we dump him on the planet and get the hell out of here, he won't be able to haunt us anymore. It's all I got."

Morgan only heard from *get the hell out of here* because of the overlap. She looked a little dazed. "Uh."

Nij walked right up to Jessie, so close that if he were visible he'd be crotch kicked already. His furious eyes drilled into her. It went away with a literal blink of an eye. He turned to smile adoringly at Morgan. "Oh, it was right in front of us, this whole time. We do this for real. That'll get him back in line."

"You're only just catching on now?" Morgan said.

"What? You didn't even believe me earlier," Jessie muttered.

Nij growled, "I really want to do the honours. You're beating my score, can't have that."

"Hmm," Morgan smiled as she stood. "Well I do have a certain advantage."

Jessie felt very uncomfortable, she tried not to show it with an understanding nod and smile. "You mean the telepathy. Okay, I don't know how but, uh, I'm going to need help since James should be out of action for the moment."

"Ugh shut your mouth," Nij grunted and tried to hit her, but it went straight through her. Morgan tried not to laugh at that. "Thanks to the wannabe do-gooder, I've had to hold off on the beautiful death I planned to mark my fiftieth kill. Though I suppose I could save it for later."

"Yes leave it to me," Morgan said.

Nij grimaced, while Jessie once more was put off by her delayed response. "Right, um. Maybe we should start on the door?"

"I have a better idea, my sweet," Nij cackled as he hurried over to Morgan's side. He leaned in to whisper in her ear, "I'll race you. Remember the last time, all that blood, oh it was so romantic."

Morgan looked away thinking about it, she laughed. "I'll give you a head start."

Nij cackled maliciously, he ran back through the walls.

"First, I need to get something. Wait here," Morgan said before skipping off to the bedroom Kathryn had come out of earlier.

Jessie anxiously turned toward the exit. She hoped that watching James all these years she'd be able to trick it open. She hurriedly tapped at the panel.

It was nowhere near long enough to do anything, it exploded from a sudden phaser blast. Jessie heard Morgan snickering as well as the settings being changed. She ducked out of the way, forcing Morgan to miss and change her aim.

There was very little for her to take cover behind, so Jessie ran for the opposite bedroom. Once inside she used the panel to lock it, knowing it would only stall her for a few seconds. Then she looked around, expecting something in what she assumed was Morgan's room that'd be useable as a weapon. She remembered her saying she liked to collect knives, so went for the drawers to rummage through them, only to find kid's clothes. Then she remembered, Kiara lived with their mother, not Morgan.

A loud bang had her head darting to look over her shoulder. The tip of a blade had pierced the metal doors and had dented the area around it. Jessie internally scolded herself and abandoned the knife hunt. Instead she ran to the side of a cupboard and hid behind that.

Just in time too, as soon as Morgan pulled the knife out of the door, or attempted to, the force of it brought most of the door along with it. "Oh Nijy, you don't know what you're missing, should've listened to me," she laughed and stepped inside.

Jessie pushed the wardrobe with all the strength she could muster, toppling it over towards Morgan. "Hey, no fair," she squeaked, then attempted to dive out of the way. Jessie hurriedly climbed over it to get back out of the bedroom.

The phaser rifle lay abandoned nearby, Jessie grabbed it quickly. She noticed it had been set to slow vaporise. Quickly she changed it and swung around to aim, only to find a furious Morgan within arms reach of her. The girl lunged for her, grabbing the rifle. Jessie tried to at least keep a hold of it, it slid so fast from her fingers it scorched her palms. While she tried not to recoil too much from that, Morgan shoved her to the ground.

Craig looked over his shoulder before he reached the cross section. Typically he almost walked into somebody rushing from another corridor. He panicked at the sight of him, "James? What are you doing out of the brig?"

"Don't turn me in just yet, I need to find Jessie. She said she was going to see Morgan," James said.

"Oh yeah, Morgan did say I needed to stop over, something urgent," Craig said, looking relieved.

James nodded and lead the way down the other corridor neither of them had come from. They could hear the clatters coming from one of the quarters and so picked up their speed. Craig arrived first and nearly bumped into the door he tried to go through. James arrived and took a brief look at the panel.

"Oh, got it," Craig smiled, he reached over to the same panel to open a compartment under it.

James meanwhile walked around him to get to the door. Craig grabbed a little device to use on the door, only to find it already halfway open. His jaw dropped. James pulled it all the way open as if he were opening curtains.

"Hey, how..." Craig stammered.

James noticed Jessie on the ground and ran over to check on her. She was conscious but sore enough in her back to not be able to get up on her own. James helped her sit up with a supportive arm to her back.

"What happened?" Craig asked for more reasons than one.

"Morgan. She's possessed, she attacked me," Jessie replied groggily, checking her bruised head.

James sighed and looked down, annoyed, "damn it, I should've known."

Jessie tried to smile through her pain toward him. "Really, she seemed her usual blunt and psychotic self. I didn't notice until she started talking weird."

Craig nervously stepped closer, "uh okay, if Morgan attacked you and we couldn't get in, where is she now?"

James glanced towards the bedroom with the broken door and wardrobe partially lodged in it. "Take cover, now," he said quickly. He said it to Craig, as he pulled Jessie with him towards a nearby arm chair. Phaser blasts continuously struck the floor where they were before. Craig panicked again and hid under a table.

"I've got to get closer, disarm her," James said quietly.

Jessie didn't like that idea. Craig glanced over in horror. "You remember what Morgan told us, right? Taking on a Game Slayer, you're nuts; your funeral," he stuttered in a rising pitch.

James shrugged, "well I've already died twice in the last twenty odd hours, why not make it a lucky three." He missed Jessie point her own death glare in his direction when he peered around the chair.

Morgan switched her settings and re-aimed in their direction while stepping closer. James pushed the chair they were using as cover, slamming into her hard enough to knock her down, as well as dropping the phaser.

He didn't have to tell Craig to go, he was already scrambling out of the quarters. Jessie made sure to grab James' arm before she did the same. He meanwhile stretched across to reach the rifle.

"Oh no you..." Morgan grunted, grabbing it as well by the tip.

Jessie reached the door, but with James not moving her hand slipped from his arm and she took a little stumble into the door. She turned to go back, Craig reached in to drag her outside.

"Well, well..." Morgan sneered, "this should be interesting."

James noticed her other hand also reaching for the rifle's handle. No time to really think about it, his own spare hand shot across to join the other. She pulled while he held onto it as tightly as possible. The metal groaned as the rifle bent out of shape, she hadn't noticed it, but James was keeping a close eye on it.

When her eyes flickered down to it, he let go and bolted for the door. She clambered to her feet and attempted to aim the rifle, only then noticing her pulling it had made it a near C shape. Furious, she slammed it onto the ground.

"When are you going to tell me just what the hell is going on?" Craig asked mid jog as soon as James caught up with them.

Jessie slowed to a stop before the turbolift, glancing over her shoulder to check on James. "What, Morgan is possessed by the serial killer not enough for you?" she wheezed.

"Actually," James said, then took in a sharp breath. "Possessed by one of the serial killers." The turbolift arrived, they hurried inside it. "Shuttle bay."

"One of the..." Jessie blurted out in annoyance, then her face softened, "oh that actually makes more sense."

Craig's eyes were wide enough that they'd probably fall out. "No, no it doesn't. Why are we going to the shuttle bay?"

Jessie was about to answer but had no idea either, she looked at James quizzically. She grew a little suspicious when his face seemed hesitant.

"They need me, they'll follow me," he answered. "If they're not on Voyager the crew will be safe. So will you."

"Ohno, no, no, no!" Jessie snapped. Craig whimpered and stepped back, James looked a tad unnerved by it. "You're not going down there alone, I'm going. You'll just have to pretend I'm tagging along so you can keep an eye on me."

"Uh," Craig unintentionally interrupted. The pair stared at him. "Also, you don't know for sure. The villains may want you off the ship."

James sighed, defeated.

The Bridge:

"Er, Lieutenant. Someone's launching the Flyer without clearance," a man at Opps said.

On the Captain's chair Harry groaned, "no, I don't want your soggy broth mum." He snored once and his head slumped onto his shoulder, where he started to drool.

The Delta Flyer landed amongst a massive amount of vehicle debris scattered across a concreted open area. Standing nearby a dilapidated building multiple stories high, the right corner of it breaking apart from the top floor, damaging the floors below.

Despite aiming for a car-free spot, the starboard wing still clipped one, leaving behind a purple scratch. The door at the back lowered until it struck a car sitting behind it. James, Jessie and Craig had to climb out through the gap.

"Tom's going to kill you," Craig snickered, spotting the scratch.

"He'd better get in line," James said flippantly. He lead the way towards the building, neither of his party looked keen about it.

James carefully tapped the closest door so it'd open. Craig shimmied in front of him to peer inside while Jessie kept an eye on the sky. He looked around the massive high rise reception hall, wide stairs leading up to multiple floors and what looked like a lift with a broken door.

"The plan is really hide and seek with ghosts?" Craig asked.

"For now, we keep them occupied," James answered. The ceiling directly above them rumbled and groaned. They all glanced up, unable to see why.

Seven floors above them on the roof, another shuttle had *landed* on its side. A very woozy looking Morgan attempted to walk out, but as soon as she left the shuttle's artificial gravity the planet's pulled her to the tarmac onto her side.

"Ugh, so close," she gagged as she stood wobbly. After a minute she looked a little better and attempted to walk off towards a hole nearby.

A pair of beady eyes peered out from the shuttle. They waited for Morgan to slide carefully through the hole before he stepped out and suffered the same gravity mishap she did.

The team of three made it to the sixth floor, only to find the stairs going further up had crumbled to dust. They headed down a hallway that branched off every couple of metres to the right and left. Each length had two rooms, what little was left of them with their crumbling walls and piles of debris.

At the first right hallway a continuous dripping sound caught Craig's attention. He glanced down the partially flooded corridor. White mulch floated in the mucky water, which seemed to be still raining through the tile-less ceiling.

He turned to have a closer look. While he was watching one of the last tiles fell in front of him. Despite that he wasn't startled.

It did however get Jessie's attention. She looked around behind her to find him gone. "James," she whispered.

James stopped as well. Jessie beckoned her head towards the flooded corridor and stepped back to follow Craig. James quickly double backed, only to be blocked by a figure jumping out from one of the rooms a couple of metres ahead, brandishing a phaser at him.

Jessie heard the commotion and swung around. "Great," she muttered as she heard Craig step up behind her. "Come on, we can't split up."

Craig reached around to press a hand against her mouth, the other hand twisted an arm behind her back. He laughed as he dragged her down the flooded path.

"I really don't have time for you," James groaned.

The figure blocking his path huffed while making a stabbing motion with the phaser. "You, turn yourself in and there won't be any trouble."

"Foster," James sighed. He heard the hurried, splashing steps further down the corridor. His face tightened with worry. "I promise I'll go back to the brig later, but for now, there's something only I can do."

"Hmph yes, murder more innocents," Foster spluttered with widening eyes.

James' did too as he spotted a figure drop down from a higher floor in the distance. They slowly made their way toward them. "Okay, Foster you win." He raised his hands up as if surrendering, Foster's eyes narrowed to a near squint. "Make the arrest."

To his relief Foster took a step forward, but he stopped and pointed his other hand at him. "What are you up to?"

The figure, which James could clearly make out as Morgan brandishing a new rifle, was the same distance behind Foster as he was away from him. "Nothing, coming here was a mistake," James said genuinely. He could see Morgan or rather L'Arana's signature smile as she pointed her own phaser. "Just take me out of here."

Foster chuckled suspiciously. "Nice try," he hissed. James' face and hopes fell, still he kept his arms up.

Morgan raised her fingers resting on the tip of the rifle to give him or Foster a little wave.

"Foster please, I'm trying to help you," James said, gesturing his eyes toward Morgan. She looked ready to fire. "Down!" he yelled and darted forward.

The phaser fired as Foster backed away from him, striking him in the head. He dropped to the ground instantly, leaving behind a smirking Morgan lowering her phaser.

"Oh James," she pretended to scold, and pointed a disapproving Janeway scowl at him. "You just can't help yourself, can you?"

To her surprise James didn't stop in his approach. She raised the rifle to swing it at his head. He grabbed it, stalling it in midair and swung it and her into the wall. Enraged, she screamed and swung her leg into his knee, loosening his grip for a fraction of a second. She pushed back, slamming him into the opposing wall, cracking the brickwork. The ceiling tiles above trembled, one dislodged.

"Good boy's stay," she said with a smirk. Morgan pulled back, throwing him to the floor. It couldn't handle the sudden impact, it groaned and tore. James' attempt to get back up buckled it, the floorboards caved in.

Every floor after that he hit suffered the same but quicker, nothing was remotely slowing his momentum until he smashed through what he thought was concrete, and landed in a windowless storage room.

The wind knocked out of him, his sight started to blur and darken.

"Oh Debbie, you didn't, not again?" his mother Susy asked, restraining a laugh.

"Of course not," was the put on innocent reply.

Three year old James jumped up over and over, trying to reach something. A hiccup left a nervous smile on the teenaged girl's face.

"He's way too young to be drinking that," Susy whispered to her.

The girl's smile briefly wavered. "Yeah, like a lot of things."

His father Peter glanced over at them all, his face harsh and tight. "Debra," the girl flinched and avoided eye contact, "I don't want a drunk alcoholic baby. He's whiny enough sober."

"Oh dad. Don't be mean," the girl playfully scolded him, though her eyes were another story. She picked up the little boy to give him a cuddle, "I think he's adorable."

"Then you can keep him," Peter coldly said as he stood and walked off.

The girl stared after him with a cold glint of her own in her eye.

"Just ignore the old misery, sweetheart," Susy forced a smile. Her daughter's smile was back when she glanced over her shoulder at her. "I'll tell you what. Why don't I get you and James an ice cream too." Susy uncrossed her legs to stand up. "I'm sure you can handle him for five minutes."

"That's a great idea, mum," the girl's mood elevated.

Susy gave her daughter a warm, genuine smile back. When she walked away the girl sighed and focused all of her attention on the toddler squirming on her lap. She tried to reach the closest bag but with him there she couldn't. With the boy back down on the grass, she was able to shuffle over and turn to rummage through the bag.

She had no idea that the second her head was turned, James was running away.

A security officer carried the drenched, frightened boy into a reception area. There his parents sat, waiting for something.

Susy's eyes lit up at the sight of him. She ran over to collect him from the officer, snuggling him tightly. "Thank god, you've found him. Thank you."

Peter walked over without giving his wife and son a first glance, his focus was the officer. "Where is my daughter?" he barked.

The officer bowed his head narrowly. "I'm sorry sir. Follow me." He lead the family into a hallway.

It was a long walk to their destination, a double door leading to what looked like a basement. Inside they saw their bruised daughter lying on a slab, her skin deathly white.

"I'm afraid we found her a mile from where we found your son. The coroner believes the attack was..." the officer hesitated, especially with Peter's piercing eyes on him, "sexual in nature. I'm so very sorry."

Peter's stare drifted toward his son, Susy tried her best to cover his eyes but he had fidgeted enough to be able to see his sister. Peter walked over to take him from his wife to bring him closer to the slab.

"See this son, you did this. I hope you live with this for a long time," Peter said in a cold voice.

Susy sobbed so much she couldn't breathe.

Sinister laughter stirred James from his nightmare. He could feel something rough, a little pressure on the right side of his face. His eyes struggled to focus, all one could make out was a large blurry shape directly ahead of him. Everything else was hazy, dark but getting lighter.

A loud thud close by and whatever was pressing against his cheek softened slightly and turned. He attempted to glance to his right, he could see Craig standing literally over him.

"Aaaw, were you waiting for me?" he heard Morgan say innocently.

Craig chuckled while slipping an arm around the small of her back. "Always, my sweet."

James was already feeling dizzy and sore from the fall, strangely enough he started to feel sick as well. He attempted to get out of Craig's hold on him, Morgan slammed a foot into his stomach for his little trouble, leaving him gasping through the pain.

His sight began to focus. The blur in front of him took shape. He managed to make out Jessie's unconscious face with a gash across her forehead, when Morgan walked into his line of sight, mostly blocking her.

"I'm four for six, so she's all yours," she said.

"Ohno, I've got a total score of 49. I insist on giving you the chance to catch up," he heard Craig say.

Morgan growled, but even dazed James could tell it wasn't sincere. "Oh please, Nijy. You can't keep up with me, just admit it. I'll give you this one as a little present."

Craig pressed his foot down harder. "A present? I dragged the little firecracker down here. I have the boy's many bruises to prove it." His tone was playful.

"See," Morgan said smugly. James felt a twinge, telling him otherwise. "That's what you get for choosing the schmuck. How hard is it to control your anchor, killboy?"

"You've got a lot to learn in this game. You draw too much attention, limit the suspect pool," Craig grumbled.

Morgan giggled, "I love it when you get all, grrr. I think it worked rather well, don't you?"

Craig's voice and demeanour changed to soft and seductive like a flick of a switch, "this time."

Morgan winked and twirled around to walk over to where Jessie lay. "You haven't told me what your plans are for the big 50. I want to see it."

"I can't just pick any old person for it," Craig said. He clicked his tongue, "I thought you knew me. So much for being my heart."

"Oh I do, how else would you keep other parts of you in line?" Morgan smiled as she crouched down next to Jessie. Her fingers ran along the gash, even unconscious Jessie grimaced from it.

"All right. Lets decide this like adults. Eenie meenie, whoever is mo kills the whelp's girlfriend," Craig snickered.

James heard more than enough, he grabbed Craig by the ankle. He cried out in pain before he fell back into the wall. Morgan swung around in time to see him crumple to the ground, face down. James quickly got up to his feet.

Enraged Morgan stood and ran to tackle him. James ducked at the last second, when she reached him he used her own momentum to toss her over his shoulder.

He ran over to tend to Jessie, while constantly checking behind him. Craig was down, but it didn't take long for a very angry Morgan to clamber back to her feet, red in the cheeks. Seemingly learned her lesson, she focused her rage on the nearby storage containers.

The noise of that brought Jessie around, but the throbbing pain in her head made it feel ten times heavier.

"You..." Morgan growled before another kick to a metal box. The side of it cracked, "won't..." Shards of it flew all over. "Ever win." She grabbed the sharpest piece she could find, then turned back towards James and Jessie.

He stood on guard, expecting the worst from her. She still managed to surprise him by throwing the shard not at him, but down near his feet. He knew it was for Jessie. Quickly he dropped down in attempt to grab it, block it, anything than the alternative. He managed to catch it, not before the tip impaled his other arm.

"Ugh, this guy's getting on my last nerve," Morgan whined, opting to find a second best piece.

James pulled the metal shard from his arm, he stared at it, thinking over what had happened. Then it hit him, he felt his chest ache where his lung once was, where he saw the strange probe when he was a spirit. He knew what he had to do.

Craig meanwhile awoke and sat up, groaning in pain but most of all anger. Morgan found a piece she liked and stood again. They froze as James pointed the shard at himself, in the same spot. He didn't give them a chance to even say one word, he plunged it into him. They screamed, and ran for him in a futile attempt to stop him.

He felt his body drop to the floor, and yet he still stood where he was before. Glancing down he saw himself, blood had pooled in the new wound in his chest.

"No!" he heard L'Arana screech at him.

Nij's voice overlapped her, "you fool, do you think this makes the slightest difference!" James looked up in their general directions. Morgan and Craig's bodies were left discarded on the ground, the two spirits closed in on him. "You are and always will be a killer, you'll burn, just you wait."

L'Arana laughed mockingly, "unlike us. We'll be around."

James heard a girl's voice behind him. He didn't dare look with the two ghosts approaching him. The voice spoke louder and clearer, he recognised her, she was calling his name.

"I told you. You'll never be redeemed. Why else would you be here with us?" L'Arana taunted him.

"Better to embrace your talent than face oblivion," Nij coldly said.

James heard it again, the voice calling for him. He turned around to see where or who it was coming from. That face again, the one from his dreams. A young blonde girl, smiling warmly at him. She seemed to be beckoning him over.

"Debbie," he whispered painfully. The chance to see her again, apologise and talk to her, the feeling was overwhelming. The two ghosts behind him were tuned out, he walked over to his smiling sister.

Nij and L'Arana didn't look impressed. They stared at one another, nodded, and attempted to leave. Only something invisible held them still, a massive pressure pushed at them from all sides. Their spirits began to burn from the inside out. The screams were deafening. James looked around to see their entire essence burn until they were dust.

It was eerily silent for a moment. It was broken by the sound of a woman sobbing to his left. He knew that voice, the sound of it in that much pain drew him back. Still, he looked over his shoulder, the girl obscured by a blinding light, he had to turn away.

Morgan stood closely behind Jessie leaning over James' body, her face red and drenched with tears. Morgan looked on helplessly, "I don't think we'll make it out of this building in time."

Craig tried again to tap his commbadge with one hand, while the other rubbed his sore back. He looked around for any exit to the creepy basement. "Anderson to Voyager, come in please."

Morgan placed a hand on Jessie's shoulder, "Jess, he's gone. We need to get out of here." Her hand was slapped off.

"Don't worry, she'll come around eventually. Let's find a way out," Craig said meekly like he wasn't sure. "The Flyer's outside, that much I know. It's getting there."

The pair took one last look at the inconsolable Jessie crying over her dead best friend. They couldn't help her, not until they found the stairs.

Morgan peered at the ceiling, spotting the hole ten feet above. "Oh, we can find something to climb on." Craig hurried over to some boxes that hadn't been smashed to bits, Morgan followed.

Jessie straightened up, desperately trying to wipe the tears but more quickly came. Her other hand reached over to caress James's cheek. She leaned in once more to give his other one a sweet kiss while her tear soaked hand clutched one of his. She swore she felt it twitch, her hopes shot up. Quickly she sat up to check the pulse in that hand.

"Oh my god," Jessie sighed in relief, though her tears still fell.

James opened his eyes. He looked up at her, concerned. "What are you crying for?" he weakly asked while trying to sit up.

Jessie met him halfway to embrace him on mainly his left side, being careful to avoid his injury. He heard her whisper through tears, "I thought I lost you this time."

"I... I'm sorry," James whispered, holding her back.

Morgan and Craig wandered over looking similarly gobsmacked.

"Wait, what?" Craig muttered.

Morgan laughed in disbelief, "I think he just likes to scare us."

"Yeah refresh my memory, how many times today?" Craig asked. Morgan shrugged.

Sickbay:

The Doctor feared he'd be deleted any second. The awkward silence had gone on for fifteen minutes. He decided to take a chance to break it. "You understand, don't you?"

"Hmm," Kathryn made a noise, the rest of her seemed to be elsewhere.

"I had my suspicions earlier, so I thought you should..." the Doctor explained.

"Hmm," Kathryn repeated.

The Doctor frowned, he suspected she wasn't even listening. "Coffee ice cream." Even that didn't work, he was very concerned. "Morgan wasn't really the killer, and neither was anyone else. When I got partial matches for Kiara it did strike me as odd, that's why I never reported it."

"Hmm... what?" Kathryn said, looking at him. "What about coffee ice cream?" she asked with little interest in her tone.

The Doctor sighed. He wasn't convinced at all. "I can't be sure until I do a scan of her, if that's all right."

Kathryn's eyes widened, she suddenly sounded very alarmed, "no, absolutely not."

"It's not invasive in the slightest," the Doctor said reassuringly. "Didn't I do a DNA comparison when Morgan joined the crew?"

"Hmm," was Kathryn's response yet again.

"Fine, fine. It doesn't matter now, one of our victims has identified her attacker as a not three year old toddler," the Doctor forced a chuckle. Kathryn stared at him blankly, he knew that was her unamused move on face and quickly cleared his throat. "And another singled out Craig of all people. James was right about the possessions."

"Just how does Annika keep miraculously surviving these definitely death experiences?" Kathryn asked, eyes narrowing a tiny bit. "Hmm? I don't think I'd trust her testimony, personally."

The Doctor nervously glanced away, "I told you already Captain, at the beginning. Morgan's or rather Kiara's DNA technically was a partial match for a few of the murders. You know, you called me an ECH, emergency cun..."

"Yes, yes. I haven't forgotten, I'm just planning on what to do with your program if you make so much of a peep about this," Kathryn said with a smile.

The Doctor actually started to sweat, he didn't understand how. "But, what about James? Everyone thinks he's a serial killer. Surely you..."

"Oh, a Justin Timberlake and Rihanna concert, you strapped to the first row. That'll do," Kathryn snickered.

"Fine, I'll leave out that little detail. All of our victims are recovering nicely anyway, that'll clear him," the Doctor said very fearfully.

"*Bridge to Janeway*," Chakotay's voice called.

Kathryn's eyes narrowed dangerously, "be sure you do." She tapped her commbadge, "yes Commander?"

"The Delta Flyer is returning. Since you're in Sickbay, I thought I should mention they're requesting one to be beamed directly there, it's an emergency."

The Doctor rolled his eyes, glancing over towards the busy Sickbay. "I still don't have any beds. Hang on." He ran out. To his relief one of the beds was unoccupied, he realised quickly Emma was missing. "Oh shoot, she left the neck brace behind."

"Was she one of your so called Kiara victims?" Kathryn asked icily from directly behind him.

He jumped out of his metaphorical skin. "Yes, uh no. Morgan yes. I haven't had a chance to talk to her."

"Oh okay," Kathryn said pleasantly, "excuse me, I have a craving for coffee ice cream for some reason." She hurried out.

"Worked eventually," the Doctor muttered in relief as a transporter beam filled the empty bed, as well as rematerialising somebody standing next to it. He glanced over and groaned, "not again."

He was starting to miss Kathryn's odd and dangerous behaviour once faced with a very, very angry Jessie delete-glaring him.

THE END