

Episode 5.17

Five

ONE

Her eyes narrowed at the face staring directly at her, mocking her with a smirk and steely blue eyes.

"Janeway!" she hissed. Her hands flew out, clawing at her unfortunate victim "Nyah, Raaawr, nyaaah, die, die!" the resulting growls echoed around the empty chamber.

A cough from behind her made her stop in her tracks. "I'm over here."

She blinked a few times. Sure enough the person or thing she really attacked was in tatters, barely hanging off the wall in front of her. As it was just a poster it still mocked her, her attack had barely ripped through the face. The temptation to attack again was strong. Instead she swung around to face the real intruder.

"Janeway!" she hissed in the exact same voice as before.

"So I've heard."

The woman before her was not the nemesis she was used to dealing with. She had aged about twenty years but she still had the same cocky face she always did. In fact she looked even worse, if that was possible.

"You were foolish to come here. You cannot destroy my network," she snarled. "In fact, your plan stops here with me." Her hand reached out to the real intruder, needles shot from her hand and into the person's neck. Only nothing happened, she felt no resistance, nothing corporeal.

"Did you think I'd just beam in here?" her opponent taunted her. "I'm not really here, but I am nearby."

"A hologram," she whispered.

"I'm here to negotiate."

She had heard that one before, a skeptical laugh escaped her. "You infiltrated this time, gave Voyager the technology to destroy us, only to negotiate with us?"

"Of course not. I wanted to get Voyager home," the intruder snapped. "But my younger self, you remember her?"

Her eyes cast back to the tattered poster that somehow had found itself into her chamber. "Vaguely."

"Yes," the intruder nodded in understanding. "She can't go home quietly. She wants to destroy you first, to hell with going home. She sent me to do that."

"But you..." she was even more suspicious than before. "You don't want to hurt us?"

The intruder smiled in a grim way. "No, I've grown older, wiser. Now all I care about is my crew. This is the only way to do it. If she destroyed you, Voyager will take sixteen years to get home."

Finally, an advantage. A smile spread across her face. "Very well. Let us negotiate." One thought made the intruder in front of her disappear and a transporter beam bring in the real deal. While she was still stunned she lurched forward to pierce her neck, this time she knew this one was real.

"Clever ruse, Captain... or Admiral. Hiding on my doorstep," she cackled. "Now your technology will be ours and Voyager will perish."

Voyager shot through the tunnel, protected by an armoured shell. Looming behind them, a Borg sphere. It closed in, it was only a matter of time.

She felt her entire weight tumble to the floor, she had grabbed the nearby railing for support with her only hand. Her eyes widened as they drifted to her opponent, her skin now a sticky pale with implants piercing through her cheek.

"How!?"

The smirk was back, anger grew inside of her. "Must have been something you assimilated."

"It's working. The shockwave's right behind us," Harry reported as he clung on to his station.

Tom's hands flew across the helm, sweat dripped from his forehead. "It's no good, the sphere's almost on us!"

Her determined blue eyes stared straight ahead at the viewscreen, the sphere filled the entire thing up. She knew exactly what to do.

"Maintain course," she ordered.

Chakotay passed her a small proud smile. She didn't have to look to see it, she knew it was there.

The poison coursing through her and her collective weakened her until she could no longer stand. A small smile spread across her lips as she took one last look at her nemesis.

"You think you've won? As long as you are here Voyager's future is uncertain." Her eyes closed. "Self destruct."

Her nemesis's eyes flashed with rage, it was probably the only thing keeping the collective mind from taking over. "That's the same result. You'll die, so will the Borg."

"Yes, but so will you. With you gone, none of this will have ever happened. Time is reversed."

Destruction was right behind it, the exit was close. The sphere made it just in time as the corridor was crushed by the shockwave. In its path were most of the Federation fleet, waiting for it.

The sphere shuddered as explosions from within tore it apart. As it exploded something flew out of it and directly towards the fleet.

"We did it," Harry stuttered. Everyone else were just as shocked.

"Earth," Tom added on.

The commlink beeped, and a voice soon followed. "I don't know how you did it, but... welcome home."

She smiled warmly, "thank you Admiral."

Voyager was finally home. She joined the rest of the fleet for the last part of her journey, to Earth.

The path in front of them twisted and churned. There was an explosion just off the right side of the fleet. In its place a blue shimmer appeared, the nearby ships were pulled slowly towards it. Many more appeared, dotted all around Earth's orbit.

Space split open directly in front of Voyager's bow, tossing the nearby ships in front of her to one side. There was nothing in its place, just darkness.

She threw herself to her feet. "What's going on?"

Harry was trembling as he looked at every part of his station, anywhere for an answer. "I don't know. The readings are off the chart. I've never seen anything like this."

The viewscreen showed the nothing in front of them, it seemed to be getting bigger and quickly too.

"If it keeps going like this, it will collide with Earth," Chakotay said.

A familiar voice rang around the bridge, "wouldn't that be a shame!"

Despite the situation she groaned. "Q. Now's not the time to babysit your boy again."

A white flash appeared only briefly beside her. Q stood beside her in its wake. "Funny you use that word, time," he smirked.

She swung herself around to look directly at him. Only then she noticed that her first officer had frozen, mid standing up. She quickly checked to see if the same was true for everyone, it was.

"Do you know what is happening here?"

Q nodded. "I do. That's why I'm here." He also turned around to face her. "Time is fractured, a paradox has formed."

Guilt spread across her face, she tried to shake it off. "Admiral Janeway. What we did..."

For once a sympathetic smile appeared on the Q's face. "Not exactly. The damage was already done, the timeline just needed one little push and here it is."

"If you knew this would happen, why did you tell me about it now?"

"This had to happen. The timeline was on course to oblivion. It had to end before we could attempt to repair it," Q replied.

Her head shook, her forehead ached; it was what usually happened when time stuff happened. "I don't understand."

"You don't have to," Q said with another smile. "Are you wondering why I've come to you?"

"Because I was the one who tipped it over the edge?"

"It's not like you to doubt yourself," Q said. His own head shook a few times. "It's because I need your help to fix it."

"How? Time travel is not my forte. Ironic considering," she muttered the last sentence.

"I wouldn't worry about that, I'll take care of the main details. You just need to do one little thing," Q said.

She frowned in confusion, "stop my future self from interfering in the present, stop her from even coming here?"

"No," Q chuckled. He turned to face the viewscreen, slowly he approached it as if he was admiring the lack of view. "Earth was always going to be doomed to oblivion, it was just a matter of when and how. The timeline's been broken for some time." His head turned to look over his shoulder, "at least in your perspective."

"So what did break it?" she had to ask.

"It's complicated. Are you sure you want to hear it?" Q smiled as his body swung around to face her again.

She wasn't, but she had to know anyway. "Yes."

Q seemed to think about it. She worried, that couldn't be a good sign. "I'll keep it as basic as I can. Events that should have happened, never did. People who were in certain places, were not." His eyes grew a little playful, she didn't like that one bit. "People who should exist, don't."

"I think I'm more confused than I was before you said that," she grumbled.

"I know," Q smirked. "Time travel, is not for mortal hands. You play with it, it will fall to the floor and break. It's not a matter of if but when. So many have tampered with it, so much has changed." The smirk faded, it was replaced by a somber look. "Only you can do this, but it's a lot to ask."

"Oh? What do I have to do?"

"You have to go back, back to a much earlier point. Then you have to decide which one event is the one you must change," Q replied. He got the confused look he expected. "It will be difficult to determine which event it is, as it'll seem so trivial. All I can do is take you to that week..."

"You can't tell me? Wouldn't that be easier?" she asked.

"I can't. If I tell you, you would not go through with it," Q said.

She found that insulting. Earth was at stake, more than that she figured. If it would help, she'd do anything.

Q seemed to sense this. "If I told you what to do, you'll wonder why it affects the timeline, and then I'd have to explain what will be the result. You will not want to make such sacrifice."

She felt the heat leave her cheeks. Her skin prickled. "Sacrifice? You should know I'd sacrifice myself if it meant saving lives."

Q smiled bitterly. "I know, your fate would never bother you." The sense of dread she felt before grew, she knew deep down he didn't mean her, not literally. "I can't tell you. I won't."

She stared towards the viewscreen and gazed deeply into the void in front of her. It was such a cruel fate to finally make it home after seven years and this happens. Not only that but having to re-live it all over again?

Her head turned side to side to look at her crew, frozen in time. Kathryn Janeway would do anything to get them home, it wasn't a difficult choice.

"All right. I'll do it."

Q sighed as if he hoped she'd say no. She was a little puzzled to say the least. "I feel that I should warn you that you'll be re-living your life but everyone else won't be. Nobody will remember this. Once you've made the change, your memories of the future will no longer be relevant so you won't be needing them..."

"I understand." She said that too soon, the re-living your life part got her thinking. "How far back are we going?"

Q smiled, "where's the fun in telling you?" He got a scowl as his answer. "Are you sure about this?"

Kathryn took in a deep breath as she took one last look around her bridge. She didn't have to think about it. "Yes."

A piercing white light shone in her eyes, her hands flew up to protect them. Kathryn felt her body tingle as the light enveloped her.

TWO

As the light faded the room seemed to be spinning all around her. The only thing that felt constant was the surface she appeared to be sitting on now. Her hands gripped the edge of it, hoping it would keep her still.

She heard a voice, "... two weeks. We'll be back before the holidays end."

The voice was familiar to her, and thankfully the room was slowing down.

"I'm not sure my folks will be happy if I ditched them at Christmas," another familiar voice said.

Kathryn focused on the voice, that seemed to work well. The room was now only a blur, there was a figure in sitting in her view.

"It's just once, and the night life is supposed to be the best. Kathryn agrees with me," the first voice said. Kathryn didn't dare turn her head towards the other voice in case the room span again. "Kath? You okay?"

"Yeah, just thinking," she replied.

The second voice seemed to scoff. "I thought this was a cultural visit. You know to see all the ruins, castles, churches."

"That's what I told my parents, and it isn't totally a lie," the first voice said playfully.

The figure grew more detailed, finally she recognised who she was sitting with. A quick glance between them as they argued and Kathryn knew exactly when and where she was. The two girls were her friends from High School, they drifted apart once they graduated and left to do different things. Now she felt like what Admiral Janeway must have felt like. *Twenty nine years. When you said I'd be re-living my life, you weren't kidding Q. This better be just a joke.*

The girl who the first voice belonged to turned her head Kathryn's way. "So, what do you think Kath?"

Kathryn was very grateful that a full cup sat in front of her, she reached for it as quickly as possible. "I... I don't know." A giant sip of the cup soothed her, if only for a moment.

"Come on, it'll be fun. We'll go sight seeing; universities, old cities, bars, castles. You know, all the touristy stuff," the first girl smiled.

The second girl gave her a suspicious stare, "what was the third one?"

"Cities," the first girl improvised.

Kathryn tried her best to remember this conversation and how it went, but it wasn't particularly memorable. *I should keep things exactly as they are until I figure out what does need changing.* "Where are we going exactly?" She raised her drink again, catching a blurry reflection on the rim of the cup. It was too distorted to see if she looked the same or not.

The first girl groaned into her hand. "Duh, England."

"She said exactly," the second girl said as she nudged her with her elbow.

She was right, but that was enough to jog her memory. Her friends, Daisy and Natalie decided to take advantage of their last Christmas together before graduation split all three of them up, by going away to England. Kathryn had turned them down so she could study. Starfleet Academy was her top priority then and she couldn't afford the time off, even at Christmas. She relaxed a little. This felt like a decision that wouldn't destroy the timeline. Then another thought came to her. It isn't small though. This decision may have helped her pass the entry exams. Going with them may change that and further down the line she wouldn't get command of Voyager. Maybe this was it after all.

"There's no hurry Daisy, Kathy hasn't finished her first cup yet so I have time to persuade you both," the first girl smiled deviously.

Kathryn barely heard her. Q did tell her that she'd have to make a sacrifice, maybe giving up Voyager was the sacrifice. She had no way of knowing. Q hadn't given her enough information. He did say he'd take her within a week of the decision. She tried to think of anything that may have happened while her two friends were away. Her sigh created a tiny tidal wave in her cup. *I may as well be trying to remember what I had for breakfast nearly thirty years ago.*

"All you want to do is go to bars and get drunk without worrying about parents," the second girl, Daisy said.

"Come on!" the first girl, Natalie whined. "We've been trapped in school since forever, next year we'll be going off to Academies or jobs. Then before we know it, we'll be tied down with babies and hubbies that'll never let us go. This is our only chance."

Something about that second sentence made Kathryn twinge a little, she had no idea why. She never had either of those things. Starfleet was first on her list and she had been engaged a few times, both ending in different but brutal ways. Then Voyager and her crew were her only concern. There wasn't time for anything or anyone else. She did remember the sting when Admiral Janeway told her that Chakotay and Seven would marry in the future. It was absurd to her as it came out of nowhere, but she put that down to jealousy.

"That's comforting," Daisy muttered.

Still that wasn't it. It just felt like to her that Natalie's entire argument had been nudged into her arm, with a *hint hint* on the end. Why? The holiday was the only lead but it didn't sit right with her. She expected something a lot more dramatic, especially with what she had seen. How was her following her two seventeen year old friends into bars going to repair cracks in the timeline? *Now I know you're having a good laugh, Q. What choice do I have though?*

"Why not," she said aloud, surprising both of her friends. Natalie's soon wore off and she smiled broadly.

"Well it must be a good idea if Kath is onboard," she said in Daisy's direction. She only sighed and shrugged. A slight nod later told her she was onboard as well.

Kathryn was regretting this already.

The room was spinning once again. This time though it wasn't a huge backward jump through time. It was the result of Natalie's insistence of drinking a cocktail in every pub they ended up in.

Kathryn leaned on the bar, hoping it would keep her from falling over. That was probably the only coherent thought she had. The future, the temporal paradoxes and rifts, Q, all of that was just a blur, like a bad dream. For a moment she'd forgotten she was supposed to be a seventeen year old girl on holiday. When she remembered all she could do was laugh at how ridiculous that was. She didn't notice a man approach her.

"Hello," his voice startled her.

"Who?" she stuttered, looking around for the source of the voice, even though it was right beside her. When she spotted him she had to crank her neck to see his face. He towered over her until he sat down on the bar stool. Then he was just slightly taller than her.

"Can I buy you a drink?" he asked. She noticed his dark eyes, dark hair... dark almost everything. Even his smile was a little unnerving, not that she'd given him the satisfaction of showing it.

"I'm not that drunk," she snorted.

The man didn't look offended in the least. He just chuckled. "No, you'd have to be to find that joke funny."

Kathryn briefly wondered if he'd leave her alone if she told him she was really a woman in her forties, reliving her youth to fix a temporal paradox. It would still be funnier than his so called joke.

"Sorry, the other guys were using that line on some of the girls in here and they'd fall for it," the man seemed a little annoyed. *Is he serious? Maybe I should tell him I'm twenty years older than him.* "I'm just glad there's a little class in this place."

She'd have to be a lot drunker to even believe him let alone fall for that. "Really? Does that work?" Kathryn turned so she could face him but she stumbled back, luckily landing on the stool behind her. She cursed inwardly for that. At least now she was able to get a better look at the buffoon sitting next to her. To her surprise the smile she had thought was unnerving was warm and a little charming. It suited him, he looked almost handsome. *Damn, good thing I'm not a silly teenager anymore.* She'd forgotten already, her face blushed. *Nah!*

"You're not from here, are you?" he asked.

Kathryn didn't dare shake her head in case it made the room spin again. "No."

"What's your name?" he smiled that smile again.

"Kath..." she had to stop herself, that smile was intoxicating. *Stupid alcohol. Stupid teenage hormones.* She didn't want him to know her real name, but it was a little too late now. "ey... Kathy er..." She spotted Natalie nearby trying to get poor Daisy to down a couple of shots. The drink was playing with her memory too, all she had to do was think of a surname. It came to her. "Williams."

"Hmm, that's a pretty name," the man said. "I'm Peter Taylor. Nice to meet you."

Somehow she knew this man was trouble, but at the same time he seemed nice enough. *I can handle him if he gets too flirty. No problem.*

Kathryn didn't need to hear the results, she could see it in her older cousin's face. All she could think about was how she got into this mess.

"Well actually, it kind of depends on what you did there," her cousin said eventually.

That was still under debate, Kathryn thought. She remembered going on holiday with her friends to England, she remembered the beginning of the first party, as well as the rest of the holiday. That particular night in question was blurred and hazy, but unfortunately she could remember the basics of it.

What she couldn't remember was why she had wanted to go in the first place. Studying for the Academy entry exams was all she wanted to do over the holidays. Why had she gone? That decision had been stolen from her mind. She didn't like that one bit.

"What are you going to do?" her cousin asked her.

"Nothing," was her first answer. Eventually she answered with a better one, "I guess I have someone to see."

"You do realise you may miss the entry exams. They may even ask you to wait until..." her cousin reminded her.

Kathryn nodded. "I realise that."

"This will seriously delay your career in Starfleet. Are you sure..." her cousin again tried to talk her out of it.

Kathryn felt oddly determined though. She was never one to shy away from a challenge. It was not like this had never happened to anyone before. A small smile crept onto her lips. "I'm sure. Just remember what you said when I'm the youngest Captain in Starfleet. I'll be sure to remind you if you don't."

Her cousin smiled and eventually laughed alongside her. "Not even death would stop you. What was I thinking?"

Kathryn just smiled back. Truthfully she still felt a little scared about what was to come. The decision she made two months ago may well have changed her life forever. Why couldn't she remember making it? It was the only thing truly bothering her.

2351

Her bags were packed once again. She stood in between them, staring straight at the front door. She couldn't bring herself to go any further. This felt very wrong to her, she had thought about it more than enough over the last two years. It really was the right thing to do.

A tap at the door brought her back to Earth. Her hand reached for the door, she noticed it was trembling as she did so. To her relief her cousin Leanne was on the other side of the door, smiling warmly.

"Hey Kath, I heard," her voice was sympathetic.

Kathryn's throat closed up, the tears were threatening to appear. "Yeah, I said I'd do it but I can't."

Leanne's face fell, her hand clasped her cousin's shoulder. "Then don't. Take him with you."

"I heard that," a voice behind Kathryn said. Kathryn tensed a little and Leanne tried her best not to scowl as Peter Taylor walked over to the pair.

"I'll... just go and say bye to him," Kathryn said through her hoarse voice.

"He's asleep, I doubt he'll be able to hear you," Peter said, almost breaking into a smirk.

Kathryn caught it in the corner of her eye. Her body once again told her what she was doing was wrong. The smile he now had on his face reminded her of the night she met him. It reminded her how easily it was for him to lie and pretend to be something he was not. She could never remember why she had decided to go on that trip. All that she did remember was that at the time it seemed like an important decision. All of these thoughts brought back a question she had long forgotten.

"Leanne, can you give us five minutes?" she asked.

Leanne nodded, "sure. I'll wait outside."

"No, you shouldn't be standing outside at this time. The living room is fine," Peter said, gesturing to the door behind him.

"Oh, so there's a nice side to you being sexist," Leanne said in a mocking tone.

Kathryn was surprised to see he was a little offended at that remark. It made her feel a little better now that his smile was wiped off. "I'm not," he muttered.

"Uh huh," Leanne wasn't convinced. She gave her cousin a nod as she walked by the pair.

"So, second thoughts?" Peter questioned her.

That smile was back. It gave her the boost she needed to ask him. "What happened that night?"

She knew he would but it still annoyed her when he laughed in her face. "Did mummy and daddy not teach you about the birds and the bees?"

"I'm serious," Kathryn said, arming her best death glare. He was strangely the only one unaffected by it. Not that strange, she thought, he always had that *men are better* attitude. "I didn't want to be there, at all. I don't remember choosing to go there, but I did. I'll never figure that one out..."

"I assume you were drunk before you even packed your bags for that holiday," Peter sniggered.

Kathryn almost growled. "I'm not that woman. I don't do things I don't want to do, and I certainly don't get drunk and spend the night with the devil." She got another expected laugh, this one though chilled her to the bone. "I can barely remember the details after the introductions. Just tell me, I'm leaving anyway. What does it matter now?"

Peter's face turned a little serious. "You're right. It doesn't matter."

"I meant it doesn't matter to you," Kathryn grumbled. "You knew exactly what you were doing that night, despite being married already."

"Please, you know Susy and I were having problems," Peter said.

Kathryn was surprised he even admitted that. "That doesn't give you the right..."

"This isn't about rights..." Peter said.

Kathryn scoffed and muttered to herself, "you're not wrong there."

Peter used that smile that always unnerved her. "This is about legacy, blood, family, traditions. I don't expect a selfish Starfleet brat like you to understand that." He looked down at her two bags before smiling back at her, even more creepy than usual. "Let me get those for you."

Kathryn only stared after him as he carried her bags out of the house, her eyes felt so wide they started to water a little. "Leanne," she managed to say.

Her cousin only just heard her, she walked out of the living room and into the passage with her. "Kath. You ready?"

"Almost," Kathryn replied as she glanced back at her cousin. Leanne recognised that look. That look always resulted in Kathryn doing something impulsive, crazy, and sometimes controversial. Kathryn used it towards the door, at least she assumed she did. "Once we're outside, I may need your help with something."

"What?" Leanne asked warily.

Kathryn shrugged casually as she looked back to her cousin. "I just forgot something, that's all." The smile Leanne got confirmed what she was thinking. She couldn't help but smile back.

2371

"It's only going to be a few weeks. Are you sure you're going to be okay?"

Kathryn heard a laugh behind her. It didn't make her feel any better. She looked at her case lying on her bed. The next thing to go in was her lucky coffee cup.

"Of course. I'm going to talk to strangers, steal their sweets. Oh and I won't tell you but I'll probably invite the whole town to the house. What could go wrong?"

"Wow, the sarcasm metre just blew up," Kathryn muttered to herself. The cup was now carefully wrapped up in so much paper, the cup looked three times its usual size. She turned around once that was safely packed in between some clothes. "I'm sure you could have gone further though."

She got a shrug as her answer. "Probably," the young man in front of her said anyway.

"It doesn't matter if you're two, twenty two or a hundred and two. I'm still going to be looking out for you," Kathryn said, arming a fake scowl. "You haven't escaped me yet."

"I dunno," he smirked. "You've got your own ship now. You won't want to come back."

He didn't mean it to but the last sentence gave her a heavy feeling in her chest. It wasn't long after her father died in the line of duty that she decided to quit Starfleet. She didn't want to put anyone else through what she went through. He had talked, or rather argued her out of it. She smiled slightly, she never thought her stubbornness could be beaten. Just as well.

"And then what? You'd hang around the house cooking and cleaning? You'd hate that. I'd hate that." He smiled and looked out of the window. "I don't want you to someday hate me for it either."

Kathryn remembered toying with the same decision when she took him back to Indiana. In the end she decided that it would be better for him to set an example, to give him someone to look up to. Somebody to be proud of. However the cost was too great. Losing her father almost destroyed her, she couldn't do that to him.

"I chose to have you," she struggled to say through a hoarse throat. "... and I chose to defy your father by bringing you home with me. I'd never blame you, understand? I just don't want you coming home to find a faceless Starfleet officer on the doorstep, waiting to tell you the bad news."

"I'd rather be proud of you for doing something you love, than come home everyday to see you miserable... cos of me," he had said. There was no winning with this boy. He had even said that to her face, not whilst staring at the window. He was deadly serious, and right.

She couldn't believe that she had been beaten by a kid as well. That thought filled her with more pride than she would admit to.

"It'll probably be made out of coffee knowing you," he said.

Kathryn looked up at him with worry. Had he been talking this whole time? Her face went a little red. "What, what will?"

The boy in front of her laughed briefly. "I knew the C word would do it." He shook his head. "You were thousands of lightyears away."

There was that feeling in her chest again. "Sorry, I just... What would be made out of coffee?"

"Everything probably," he smiled. "Sorry, you're going to be late transferring to USS Nescafe if you start thinking about that."

"It's Voyager," Kathryn pretended to scold him. "It's strange. It's a new ship but when I looked around it felt... familiar."

She got a shrug. "Inside all the Starfleet ships look the same."

"I suppose," Kathryn sighed. It wasn't just the corridors of the ship; its name, the specifications of it, the tour she was given, the people she met. Kathryn couldn't help feeling she had heard and done it all before. Obviously she hadn't. Voyager was her first command and it was fresh out of Utopia Planetia, more or less a new class as well. She never got nervous when assigned to new vessels, so that wasn't it. The mission itself wasn't out of the ordinary or particularly difficult. What was making her feel so uneasy? "Last chance, come," she found herself blurting out.

"I can't," he looked uneasy too.

Kathryn sighed. He was a boy in his early twenties. A boy that age didn't want mummy crowding him. He wanted, no needed some freedom. "All right. I'll see you in a few weeks." Her chest got even heavier, it was really starting to annoy her not knowing what it meant. She tried to shake it off. "Be good."

As she expected she got his usual smirk, "I won't."

It wasn't her first deep space mission and it wouldn't be her last. So why did it feel that way?

Kathryn thought she misheard. Her eyes widened and the blood drained from her face. The oddest part was the feeling that this had happened before.

"We're on the other side of the galaxy," Harry couldn't believe it either.

She felt like such a liar, not that she planned this or had any idea that this would happen. That's what she thought though. When she stared at the array on the viewscreen in front of her, she felt a twinge of familiarity. *How could this be?*

The memory faded into the black she was staring at through her Ready Room window. She had sensed somebody walk into her office, silently waiting for her to finish. A brief glance to her left told her who it was.

"Are you all right, Captain?" he asked.

"Yes Tuvok, fine," she lied to him. He wasn't going to fall for that, but why not try?

As she expected he approached her. "I checked the crew manifest, your son isn't listed."

"He's twenty one, Mr Tuvok, I didn't..." Kathryn almost hissed in response.

Tuvok stood by her side. "He was twenty on your last mission when he joined you. This is the first one you haven't brought him."

Kathryn bitterly smiled, "isn't that ironic?" Tuvok only responded by raising his eyebrow. She turned to face him. "I'll be fine Tuvok, really. It's him I'm worried about. In a few weeks Starfleet will consider us lost and he'll..." her throat almost closed up, stopping her from finishing her sentence.

"You've raised him well, he will be fine. He'll survive," Tuvok said.

Kathryn's bitter smile grew, she fought the tears in her eyes. "Seventy years! I won't even be here, let alone..." she sighed to stop herself. "I thought it would be two weeks and I'd be back, there was no point in disrupting his life to bring him. Just one mission I leave him behind. Now I will never see him again. It's almost like someone's playing a joke on me." She turned back towards the window to stare at the stars no Human had seen before. "On all of us. The good thing is he doesn't have to be trapped here."

"Indeed," Tuvok agreed.

Kathryn stared at one particular star, it was a lot closer than the others. "The weirdest part is that ever since I've been here, ever since Kim said those words, I've had the strangest feeling of déjà vu."

Tuvok's eyebrow sprung up even higher. "Déjà vu, Captain?"

"I had a feeling the Kazon would attack the array, I recognised the Ocampan homeworld. Meeting the Neelix character made me think I should lock the door to the Mess Hall, then he asked to join the ship," Kathryn replied. Tuvok didn't know what to make of that. "I've done this before, but..." Her head shook, "they say déjà vu is literally you doing the same thing again, only you don't remember doing it before, hence the strange feeling. Getting stuck in the Delta Quadrant, this couldn't have happened before."

"The Kazon wanted access to the Underground, the planet could have looked like another you'd seen. The Mr Neelix one seems like what Humans would call common sense," Tuvok said.

Kathryn couldn't help but smile. He made perfect sense but she couldn't shake that feeling away. The only thing that was different was this conversation. Everything from the moment that wave tossed Voyager into the Delta Quadrant, in fact even the start of the mission, was familiar to her. Most of the time she didn't know what would happen, but when it did it felt so obvious that it would. She'd get feelings that some stuff would happen, for example she knew that Neelix would turn her personal galley into something horrible. It hadn't happened yet but she couldn't help feeling that it would. For now she hoped that Tuvok was right and she could concentrate on finding any shortcut home. For her crew's sake, for her son's sake.

2373

Captain's Log Stardate 51129.8: We are responding to a distress call from a system only ten minutes away at warp nine. They describe a cube shaped ship approaching and then the transmission cuts out. Cube can only mean one thing, so I've called for Red Alert and Battle Stations. I only hope that we can make it in time.

The Ready Room doors opened, Kathryn hurried out of them. "Report!"

Chakotay looked across at her just as he climbed to his feet. "We're entering orbit now. No sign of Borg activity."

Kathryn's face paled, "we're too late?" Her attention turned to her Ops officer. "Where did the distress call come from, Mr Kim?"

"The Western continent. There seems to be no sign of any damage," Harry answered as he worked. Like everyone else he looked a little relieved. A different panel got his attention, it beeped several times at him. "We're being hailed."

"On screen," Kathryn ordered.

Harry nodded while Chakotay took a step closer to Kathryn. He leaned in close to whisper, "is this one familiar?"

Kathryn shook her head. "No." Before she could say anything else the viewscreen switched to show an alien man sitting behind a desk. "Captain Kathryn Janeway, of the USS Voyager. Can we be of assistance?"

The alien man bowed his head. "Captain Janeway, thank you for answering our call for help. However the strange object has already left."

"Was it a ship?" Tom butted in before anyone else could ask the same thing.

The alien man frowned. "When it landed we tried desperately to communicate with it or scan it. Nothing was getting through. All we got was strange energy rea..."

"Wait, it landed?" Chakotay said in disbelief.

"Definitely not familiar," Kathryn whispered to him.

"Yes. It landed in the middle of the city," the alien answered.

Harry glanced down to double check his readings, he got even more confused. "There's no damage though. How?"

"We do not know," the alien man replied with the same confused look. "An object that size and where it landed, should have decimated the city. It landed and left. It was very strange."

"The Borg have certainly changed their tune," Tom commented.

The alien man shook his head, "this wasn't the Borg. Whatever it was, was made entirely of energy. That wasn't the strangest part though. This is why we called you, Captain."

"Oh?" Kathryn frowned.

"Our people who were within the cube's landing spot, claimed that they were transported somewhere else," the alien explained. "Not only that but when the cube left they were returned to where they were, but they were not alone." He had the entire Bridge crew in suspense by now. "The cube seemed to drop off some aliens at the same time. Most of them, matched the lifesigns on your vessel."

"Human," Harry stuttered.

Kathryn's wide eyes met with Chakotay's briefly, she looked around the Bridge at everyone who was there. They all looked a little shocked and confused, except for Tuvok who just looked curious to her.

"Yes, they said they were," the alien man said.

"How many?" Kathryn dared to ask.

"Fifty two," the alien man replied. That answer took the entire room by surprise. "We've been trying to find out if they know anything about the cube, but they would not discuss it. Their leader may be more talkative, at least I hope."

"Can we speak with him or her?" Chakotay asked.

The alien man sighed and bowed his head again. "I can arrange it, but it may take a while. He only said he wanted to make sure his people were all accounted for. He hasn't returned yet."

"A cube object lands in the middle of your city, drops off aliens, and you let them do their own thing. A bit risky, don't you think?" Tom said.

"Tom!" Kathryn warned him.

"I can assure you, we haven't. Our Security forces have done our best to round them all up, talk to them, so we can rule out an invasion. The leader, well we had no hope of stopping him. I have people keeping an eye on him but..." the alien answered.

"Once he comes back, tell him about us. We can then discuss this here. The last thing you want is more aliens beaming down," Kathryn said.

"Of course, Captain," the alien said with a smile. The viewscreen changed back to a view of the planet.

Kathryn turned on her heel to have another look around her Bridge. "Any theories?"

"Normally I'd say it was an invasion. It sounds like one," Harry replied. "We wouldn't do that though. We can't either."

"Perhaps it was some sort of vessel, only it was so advanced these aliens couldn't scan it," Chakotay suggested.

Tom turned his chair around to join in the conversation. "Or have their cities crushed by it?"

"It's still the most likely theory. Though what were Humans doing on board it?" Kathryn said. "I guess we'll get some answers soon."

The Conference Room:

The senior staff had mostly gathered around the table, two of them hadn't arrived yet. Kathryn stared out of the window as she waited for them to arrive.

"It's not like Seven to be late," Harry commented.

Tuvok's eyebrow raised, "no it is not."

"I did ask her if she knew anything about this cube," Kathryn said without turning back.

Chakotay entered the room whilst glancing behind him. He hesitated at the door, leaving it open. "Captain?"

"Uhoh, that isn't a good look," Tom said warily.

"Our guest is here," Chakotay said.

Kathryn turned her chair around so it was facing the table. She grew a little concerned as she caught the uncomfortable expression Chakotay had on his face. "That's bad, why?"

"When I did my introductions, he insisted on seeing you right away," Chakotay answered. "I'd barely got the word Voyager out of my mouth..."

"Why wouldn't he be happy to be onboard a Starfleet ship, especially when you've been kidnapped by Borg wannabes?" Tom said.

Chakotay had to resist a groan. "He already knew he was coming aboard a Starfleet ship, Tom."

"Fine, we wanted to see him anyway," Kathryn said with a shake of her head. "There's no need for this drama, Chakotay."

Chakotay didn't look so sure. "All right." He gestured his arm towards the open door. When he did somebody walked in to stand beside him. Kathryn's eyes widened immediately.

"James?" she almost stuttered.

"Mum," the newcomer said with a relieved smile.

Most of the room's eyes widened at this point. "Mum?" Tom managed to whisper.

Kathryn rushed out of her seat to greet him. The rest of the room, excluding Chakotay and Tuvok looked at the nearest person, getting more confused by the minute. The pair meanwhile hugged tightly.

"What... how are you here?" Kathryn stuttered.

When she pulled away James pulled his own awkward face, Chakotay did the same. "I could ask you the same thing. We all thought you were dead."

"That's a long story," Kathryn said through her smile. "Yours sounds like it would be more interesting."

James looked around the room, frowning as everyone stared back with shocked and confused looks on their faces. He directed it back to Kathryn. "I dunno, yours stars the creepy crew." Kathryn glanced at her staff, her smile faded. "You'd think they had never seen a Human before."

Chakotay cleared his throat, a smirk formed on his face. "Perhaps it's time, Kathryn."

Kathryn sighed, she knew he was right. She glanced briefly at James, who seemed more focused on Tom's bewildered stare. It was developing into a smirk, unlike the others. "What else is there to say? I have a son, he's here... somehow. Can we get over it?" Nobody really changed their expressions. "Why is it so shocking!?"

"You've never mentioned him," Neelix bravely piped up.

"Nobody asked," Kathryn said defensively. "It wasn't easy you know. It was just painful to mention. Tuvok has been a friend of mine for many years, so naturally he knew. Chakotay, well when we were trapped on that world for two months, it was bound to come up."

Tom finally broke into a snigger, he desperately tried to stop it. The death glare could only be seen in the corner of his eye, but it was enough to get him to quieten it down. "I'm sorry. I just thought, Seven... no wonder you took to her."

"What?" Kathryn growled.

James cringed a little, he knew what was going to happen next. He looked towards Chakotay, "coffee time, maybe?"

"Good idea," Chakotay nodded. He quickly disappeared out the nearby door.

Kathryn didn't hear this exchange, she walked slowly over to Tom. "What does that mean?"

"Um well. Blonde, creepy eyes..." Tom started to stutter. James only frowned at that comment. "She's about the same age. Oh and Harry, similar age too and you mothered him."

"Shut up Tom," B'Elanna warned.

"So, the cube. You want to know?" James quickly interrupted before Kathryn could reach Tom.

Kathryn's eyes narrowed enough to make Tom squirm, she kept them that way as she turned her back on him. "Yes, we do. I don't have to explain you, do I? Imbecile," she said the last word while looking over her shoulder. Tom winced again.

"Well remember when you told me to avoid England, just in case I ran into Dad," James said with an awkward smile. "Considering how big the place is, I liked the odds."

"Hmm," Kathryn resisted the urge to scold him.

"Well naturally I decided to go," James said. He shrugged off the brief scowl he got in return. "I heard there was erm... something in Manchester I had to check out."

"Something?" Tuvok questioned.

"Probably a girl," Tom whispered and winked at B'Elanna. She gave him the smile that told him to be careful.

"Um, I'll leave that part out," James said, cringing slightly. "Anyway I wasn't there a day when the sky turned purple. The entire city just stopped when they saw it. Next thing anybody knew a giant cube was falling from the sky."

Chakotay returned holding a large mug of coffee. Kathryn's eyes lit up briefly when he brought it over to her. He stood at her side while she sipped at it.

"So the same thing happened on Earth?" Harry's eyes widened in shock. "What happened, did the cube not destroy anything like it did here?"

James nodded. "Yeah, but that's not the weird part."

"Alien drop offs?" Neelix questioned.

"No," James answered. In the corner of his eye he saw Kathryn downing the cup, her eyes going extremely wide as she did. He quickly reached out to snatch it off her. "Jesus, you couldn't get a bigger cup Commander Chuckles?"

Chakotay looked a tad offended, "it's Chakotay." That went away when Kathryn started pouting angrily, even more so when James started to drink the rest of the cup. "You wanted her calm."

"Yes, I also wanted her sane," James said once he was done.

Most of the room had seen all of this and were again looking at James in shock. Tom of course was the first to vocalise it, "that was the most badass thing I've ever seen. No one takes Janeway's coffee off her."

"I do," James said as he pulled another frowny face at the helmsman. "Anyway..."

"I mean you should have seen what she did to Tuvok once," Tom continued anyway. He stopped when he was faced with a death glare, but not Kathryn's. It was just as effective he thought. He shrunk into his seat.

"I see he's a chip off the old block," Chakotay whispered to Kathryn.

Her pout disappeared, she instead looked proud but a little angry too. It looked to Chakotay like she was just scrunching her face.

"The cube?" Tuvok said.

James nodded, "yeah anyway..." He glared again at Tom, he shook his head in response. "The weirdest part was I should have been crushed by the thing. Instead I was transported into this plain room. There was a lone computer describing a game. It explained we had to play it or we'd die."

"That is strange," B'Elanna said. "Not just the game part. It sounds like you were transported into the ship when it landed."

"Maybe," James shrugged.

"So you don't know anymore than we do?" Harry looked a little disappointed.

"I'm not done. The game was this odd tournament beat 'em up. We won and we were dropped off back where we were," James said. "I figured somebody should report this to Starfleet, if they didn't know already, but..." He stared down at the floor with a frown.

Kathryn looked a little concerned, she placed a hand on his shoulder. "But what?"

"They put the whole city on quarantine. Nobody was allowed to contact anybody outside the city," James replied. The room again looked a little shocked, Tuvok even showed some surprise. "The exception was me. An armed team insisted I come with them. That's when it gets a little weird."

"It wasn't before?" Tom blurted it out. He winced at himself for it.

"To cut a long story short mainly due to what happened there..." James said, he gave Kathryn a glance that told her they'd talk later. "Another cube arrived, this time I stood under it on purpose. Inside this one wasn't just a game..." he paused as he thought about how to explain it. "There was an army."

"It was an invasion," Chakotay said quietly.

"Considering that everyone was let go when we won, I worried that if we did again the army would follow. So..." James said awkwardly.

"You lost," Kathryn finished for him.

James nodded with his eyes closed, he frowned as well. "It worked, the army came with us."

"How come they didn't try to stop you then?" B'Elanna asked.

"Some did. Most of them weren't aware or couldn't get to the game area. It's still not really clear," James replied.

Tuvok's eyebrow was raised again. "If this cube is a vessel, a one with an army on it, how come you didn't unleash it on this planet?"

James shook his head. "I can't tell you that. All I can say is they no longer exist."

"Why, why can't you tell us that?" Kathryn asked with concern.

"It doesn't matter," James muttered with a little anger in his voice. Kathryn was a little surprised. "I can tell you though that losing doesn't just whisk the inhabitation away with it, it's not even supposed to do that. I missed one of the cubes on another planet and saw for myself." He turned to Kathryn and lowered his voice, "I've already said way too much."

"Interesting," Tuvok said. "If I understand you correctly Starfleet do not want the general populace to know about the cubes."

"You got that from that?" Tom said in surprise.

"The quarantine, banning communication, and the hints he can't tell us everything. It was simple," Tuvok said.

B'Elanna laughed quietly, Tom gave her a hurtful look. "He's right. Though why would Starfleet do that?"

"Possibly because they do not want to alarm their people about a deadly threat," Seven said from the doorway.

"Seven?" Chakotay said.

Seven walked over to the command team and the new arrival. "The same reason the Omega Directive was secret."

Kathryn thought about scowling at her for that, but she noticed James didn't look that interested in it anyway. "What can you tell us?"

"There is no official name for these anomalies. They are simply known as Game Cubes to some races, or plainly Cubes," Seven answered. "They are not ships, although it may seem that way. The Borg have not been able to decipher exactly what they are. Most of what they learned is from other races."

"Business as usual," Harry remarked.

"What they know is exactly what our guest has told you. The simulation is won, the people inside are set free and the cube leaves. The simulation is lost, the cube destroys everything in its path, including the people it has taken," Seven said. "There is a way to save the people inside it. I assume Starfleet knew about it and told him."

"Wait," Harry said, his face whitened. "It destroys everything? You mean the second cube in Manchester..." Everyone looked over to James who was back looking at the floor, guilt was very obvious on his face. "My god."

Kathryn directed a concerned glance to James, she placed her arm around his back to comfort him. "It's not your fault. You were caught in an unwinnable situation."

"I saved the city from being slaughtered by an invading army, only to get their city ripped apart instead. I don't know what's worse," James muttered. He shook his head, "I keep telling myself the army wouldn't have stopped in Manchester, but it doesn't help."

"The Captain's right. Do the Borg know who actually is responsible for this?" Chakotay said towards Seven. He glanced briefly at Kathryn, she thanked him with a small smile.

"No, but there must be an intelligence behind it. The Borg have wanted to assimilate them for many years," Seven answered.

"I'll bet," Tom commented.

James sighed as he lifted his head back up. "We've been trying to find a way back for months. Everyone were so happy to hear about you being here. Confused naturally, but hey."

"So you know where we are?" Kathryn asked him.

James nodded, "vividly. Most Cubes land in the Delta Quadrant. Since the aliens didn't have any clue what we were, it didn't take much working out."

"Do we have room for all your friends?" Chakotay wondered out loud.

"It doesn't matter, we'll figure something out. Unless someone wants to stay we're not leaving a soul behind," Kathryn said. "The question is will another cube attack this planet, should we stay for a while?"

"There's no way to know out here," James answered.

Chakotay frowned in his direction, "out here?"

James closed his eyes and silently berated himself with a mutter. "Forget it. There isn't just Humans in my group now. There are others, all of them want to get home. I don't know what to do, none of them want to continue Game hopping now but Voyager may not be going in the right direction."

"Why don't we bring them aboard, Seven might be able to find out where they need to go," B'Elanna suggested. "If we're going that way they should come. If not..."

Kathryn nodded and smiled, "sounds like a plan." Her smile disappeared when she turned to James for confirmation. He didn't look so sure. "What? You said that they're safe whether they win or lose..."

"It's not that simple. Some games are just simply games, but most of them tend to be brutal death matches. You can't die in a game but you definitely can get injured seriously. Also if you lose, there's a lot to live with," James said, ending quietly.

"It maybe some's only way home. What's different between now and then?" Tom said.

James glanced towards Kathryn with a guilty and sad look on his face. "Nothing, 'cos I... I won't be staying, I'm sorry."

Kathryn's eyes went a lot wider than they do even after too much coffee. "Yes you are!" she snapped.

"No I'm not," James said without flinching. Kathryn bit her lip in anger, he was just as stubborn as she was. This was going to be a long argument. "I can't abandon the ones who will be left behind. You wouldn't, so why should I?"

Chakotay had to clear his throat, Kathryn tossed him a brief glare in response. "Um, you can tell the others how to survive lost games. It's a bit silly to lose your rare chance to be with your people to help others to find theirs," Chakotay said.

"No it's not. This is exactly what I'm supposed to do," James said quietly. "I'm sorry," he said to Kathryn.

Kathryn stared out of the window, she couldn't bare to look at the last remaining person in the room. Anger still brewed inside her, she kept it under control for now.

"That's a little difficult to believe," she eventually said.

"Yeah, I thought so too," James nodded. "There's no other way to explain the things that were in that army though. Unless you think fading into dust instantly when you die is normal."

"Vampires. This is ridiculous," Kathryn muttered. "You're not a child anymore. Surely you can think of something more believable."

James glanced to one side briefly, a sigh escaped him. "You just don't want me leaving."

"Oh I'm sorry!" Kathryn sarcastically snapped as she swung herself around. Her hands went to her hip. James looked a tiny bit nervous now that she had done that. "How dare I!" She tried to calm herself down with a sigh. "How did you think I was going to react?"

"Like this," James replied. "How do I convince you I'm not just making this up?"

Kathryn's hands fell by her sides, her head shook. "I don't think you are. Years ago we reached a planet to get food supplies. A Security team went down to investigate first, see if it was safe."

"They were murdered," James finished for her.

"No," Kathryn said. "They just disappeared, as did the rescue team. We never did detect any lifesigns, humanoid anyway, yet a ship left the surface and shot into high warp. The shuttle was all that was left, but it was trashed. Whoever it was stole parts from it. We never found out what happened to the awayteams, we got distracted by something else."

"I see," James mumbled.

Kathryn turned her back on him again. "We were there two months, nothing out of the ordinary happened again."

"So you believe me then?" James dared to ask.

Kathryn laughed bitterly. "That you're a super hero that fights vampires, and giant cubes that fall out of the sky which plays games to destroy cities. What's not to believe?"

"I wouldn't call me that," James said uncomfortably.

Kathryn scoffed, "what would you call yourself then?"

"I don't know. There is no name for it. Starfleet say that for a few centuries we've been called Slayers, but that's not..." James said.

"I was going to go with insane," Kathryn laughed bitterly again.

James looked down at the floor, that comment hurt him more than he liked. "You knew. I was always different. Now that there's an explanation for it you act like this is new and ridiculous?"

"It is ridiculous!" Kathryn spat at him, once again swinging around to face him. Her anger dissolved when she saw his upset face looking to the floor. "You're my son. I don't want to lose you, again."

"I know. Wouldn't you do the exact same thing in my position?" James argued.

Kathryn sighed deeply. "You... you're not me and I'm not you. Yes I would, but I wouldn't expect you to just cos I would."

"What if I don't go, and those people go into more Games on their own. They run into a death match game which they can't win, an entire city is obliterated," James said.

Kathryn quickly butted in, "you wouldn't know, and besides..."

"I can barely live with myself knowing that Manchester had at least a cube shaped hole in it. It could have been flat lined by the damage, killing thousands. I can't do that again. I can't live with it. It's too much," James continued.

"But that could still happen if none of them chose to go. Are you saying you'd still leave anyway?" Kathryn asked with a tear in her eye.

"That's true, it could," James said in a worried voice.

Kathryn stepped forward to grab both of his arms, "you can't be everywhere at once. From what you've explained Cubes can land anywhere, anytime. You couldn't possibly be in the right place every damn time, and you can't be expected to win everytime. Didn't you say you missed one cube as you were too far away to get to it? Imagine being on the wrong side of the quadrant and that happens again."

"Stop!" James snapped. "Why are you doing this? You're just convincing me I should go, at the very least I can stop a few."

"We've got sixty thousand lightyears to travel. We can drop you off anytime we spot one, even transport you right underneath it. Surely that is more than or just as effective than your plan. At least this way you're not alone," Kathryn argued. "Please, think about this. Promise me."

"You don't think I've paid attention all these years? You knew it was going to be hard to go to the Academy and be my mum, but you did it anyway. You volunteered for the most challenging missions you could find. You risked your life more than once to save others. You could have died so many times, leaving me all alone..." James countered.

"You said you were fine with that, that you'd rather be proud of me..." Kathryn stuttered.

James nodded, "I am. That's the point. You've been a good example."

"Ugh, if I knew that my decision to join Starfleet would convince you to devote your life to *playing games*, I wouldn't have," Kathryn grumbled.

James smirked slightly, it made her shake her head. "I don't want to leave with you being angry with me. I hoped that you'd support me, be proud of me."

"I always was. You don't have to be some silly Slayer thing to do that," Kathryn said.

James' smirk faded away into a frown. "I don't have a choice. Face it, I'm a freak. I always thought why not do something with it?"

"Yes and how many times did *doing something with it* get you into trouble?" Kathryn couldn't help but chuckle. "Nothing's changed, has it?"

"No," James replied.

Kathryn let herself sigh one more time. "You are just like me. Once you set your mind to something, you'll do it. I haven't a hope in hell in convincing you. All I can do is support you and hope that this isn't the last time I see you."

"Of course it won't be. The Delta Quadrant is huge. What were the odds that we were in the same system at the same time?" James said.

Kathryn smiled and nodded. "I'll hold you to that. Didn't I tell you, you're not escaping me that easily."

"Damn," James commented.

Kathryn mockingly scowled at him. "At the very least stay with us until we find a new cube. One might not appear here for years."

James nodded, "sounds like a plan."

2374

"Come in," Kathryn called glumly. She tried to pick herself up with the cup of coffee in front of her. As usual it didn't work the way it used to.

Chakotay entered holding a PADD in his hands. "Weekly status report."

"Mmm hmm," Kathryn sighed. Her hand reached out to take the PADD. He handed it over while studying her face. She barely looked at it before returning to her coffee.

"Kathryn..." Chakotay said.

Kathryn's sigh cut him off. "It's been a year since he left. I wonder how he's doing."

"About that," Chakotay said reluctantly. Kathryn glanced up at him with wide eyes. "Seven and her new assistant have something Game related they wanted to show us."

Kathryn seemed a little disappointed to his surprise. "That? He was working on some early warning system. Games only take thirty seconds or so to land. What's the use in a scanner that detects them from a distance?"

"You've thrown down every idea he has. This one has merit," Chakotay smiled.

"He's just a silly boy that likes to build useless toys," Kathryn snarled. "Remember that stupid dimensional transporter he cooked up last week? The idiot just transported himself into Neelix's leola root patch."

"You haven't liked him since he deleted your babysitting program," Chakotay laughed.

Kathryn's eyes narrowed in his direction. "I never finished it, and it was more than a babysitting program. It's about possible ghosts, drama and..." Chakotay couldn't stop laughing. "He said he did it to make room for better things. You don't delete one program to make room."

"Two," Chakotay said once he stopped laughing. "He deleted Captain Proton. He said it was offensive. Tom hasn't spoken to him since."

"Fine, he can do one good thing," Kathryn groaned. "Fine, I'll humour him this once. If Seven wasn't working for him I wouldn't even look at him."

"Not to mention it's Game related," Chakotay smiled.

Kathryn almost growled at him, she held it back for now. "Yes I'm so selfish for looking into a possible life saving device. I'm terrible that way."

Chakotay's smile grew, "don't you miss the déjà vu days?"

"No," Kathryn replied with a snarl.

Astrometrics:

"We should really spell it with a X, it would warn people that if they want to come in here, expect X rated views."

Seven had tried her best to ignore him, but this comment she had to ask. "X rated?"

He turned to look at her, frowning in disgust. "Don't you have any other clothes?"

"I do not understand you," Seven said honestly.

"Of course not. I'm too complicated and intelligent for even you to understand."

He was the only one that could make her roll her eyes on this ship. Even Neelix wasn't this grating to her. "Perhaps we should get back to work, Mr Damien."

"It's just Damien," he groaned. "I thought Borg were smart. Though then again, they do need billions of people hooked up to each other to survive. Forget I said anything."

Luckily for both of them the doors opened behind them. Kathryn and Chakotay walked inside. "How's it going?" he asked.

"I finished my work on this days ago," Damien said proudly. "I've just had to spend the rest of the time explaining it."

"It would have only took two minutes but you preferred to talk about how *great* you are the whole time," Seven retorted. Kathryn didn't even try to hold back a smirk and then a giggle. Damien directed a glare in both girls' directions.

"Can we get to the point please?" Chakotay tried to calm everyone down.

"Yes, I do have better things to do," Kathryn huffed.

Damien's eyes narrowed. "This could be the only way home, but you're right, let's talk about coffee snorting and chair occupying."

"Damien we've been through this, you can't talk back to the Captain," Chakotay quickly said. He saw the steam rising from her in the corner of his eye.

Damien shrugged casually, "why not? She doesn't treat me with any respect." He passed a dirty glance to Seven. "I guess you have to wear a catsuit and get breast implants to get anything around here."

Chakotay got a nasty image in his head, he quickly shook it off. "Please don't do that."

"No problem, I'm not desperate enough like her," Damien smiled.

Seven's Borgified eyebrow raised quite high. "Perhaps we should discuss what we called them here for."

Damien raised his hand up to wave, but he just kept it front of Seven's face. "I'll explain this as simply as I can..."

"Shouldn't be too hard," Kathryn muttered.

Damien chose to ignore her for now, "Game Cube emerges from, let's call it subspace. No, let's call it a different place."

"Subspace is fine," Chakotay butted in.

"Fine. When it does it disrupts the planet's atmosphere, giving us that purple effect," Damien explained in a degrading voice. Kathryn pretended to look at a watch she didn't have. "Usually that's the first warning you get, but my scanner detects the Cube moving through subspace into our space. It then tracks its emerge point." He got a blank stare from Kathryn, just as he expected. "Ok. Cube comes out, scanner can see it before it does..."

"I get it!" Kathryn snapped. "That still doesn't give us much time to act."

"Of course it does. These measly systems will only detect something within a certain distance anyway," Damien said, gesturing to the controls. Seven took more offense at that than the hand in face. "My scanner can only work within the limits of the sensors here. Plenty of time to land and..."

"Land?" Chakotay didn't look so sure. "I thought these things land in cities, towns. How are we supposed to land in a cube's path?"

Damien shrugged, "that's not my problem."

Kathryn rolled her eyes. "Why don't you do something more suited to your talents." She shoved an empty cup into his hands, "coffee, black!"

"I thought that was *your* only talent," Damien sneered in return.

Chakotay noticed the steam slowly turning into a black cloud of smoke. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he said quickly.

"There is one other thing," Seven piped up. Damien scowled at her for it. "Until we can figure out how to disrupt the frequency which kills the people in the cube when it is lost, we can't risk doing anything."

Chakotay frowned in her direction, "but I thought James gave you everything."

"He did, we just have no way of knowing if it will spare Voyager too," Seven said.

Damien's eyes rolled, "you mean you have no way. I do. The cube wipes out everything that is rooted to the surface, the frequency obliterates everything that isn't, Voyager included. I've seen alien cars and pedal bikes being dropped off after a won cube. As long as they're not in the buildings, they take anything that's moveable."

"Maybe we should find a way to modify it, we may be able to avoid the city destroying part," Chakotay said thoughtfully.

Damien groaned, he was surprised when Kathryn did as well. "Why don't we try winning, then we won't have to worry about any of that crap," Kathryn said. "Seven, activate the scanner."

"It's my scanner," Damien grumbled.

Kathryn ignored him and continued, "as soon as you find one, if you have to, take helm control and take us straight there."

"Captain," Chakotay warned. He carefully gestured her to one side. "I don't have to tell you that you're acting irrationally."

"So why did you?" Kathryn muttered. She turned on her heel and swiftly walked out.

"Phew, I can breathe again," Damien sighed in relief. Seven's eyebrow raised again. "You telling me you don't smell it?"

Chakotay rolled his eyes. "Perhaps you could be a little more grateful Damien. If it wasn't for her son, you would have been killed by the second Game Cube."

"That would be like thanking my insane mother for all the wonderful things I've done," Damien said with contempt.

"Yes, when we get back to Earth I'll be sure to thank her in person," Chakotay said dryly.

"Good luck with that one," Damien smiled gleefully. Chakotay swore he saw some malice in his eyes when he did. He shook it off, it was just Damien after all.

"Perhaps we should test to see if the scanner will work before landing Voyager on its first use," Seven suggested. "Also we won't have time to cross any bridges. The cube takes seconds land, that's not enough time to find a safe landing spot."

"God, just land on top of a building. Voyager's not that heavy," Damien groaned.

Chakotay and Seven didn't even bother giving him a blank stare, they ignored him completely.

"If there's no place to land, we don't," Chakotay said.

Seven disagreed, she sighed. "The Captain will not do that. She will want to help the people and find her progeny."

Damien almost snorted into laughter, he caught it in his throat. Chakotay bothered this time to look at him. "I understand now. The chest. How else would anyone like her? Progeny."

"It is the correct term," Seven pointed out.

"Of course it is," Damien said in a patronising voice. "Trust me, she won't find James. There are Cubes being spat out in any random direction every few minutes, some even to places we've never heard of. This is just a very long express ticket home on many different trains going in different directions, not a miracle machine. Though I could probably invent that too."

"She found him once, it can't be that hard," Chakotay said as he turned to leave.

Damien rolled his eyes, "the hard part isn't finding a cube, Chuckie. It also isn't the actual game itself. If you think you can just board a cube and go straight home, you're as delusional as your Captain. Factor in searching for her son, and you know she won't stop 'till she does, and we're not looking at just a seventy year trip. You're never getting home."

Chakotay stopped at the door, he breathed in deeply and out again. Damien and Seven saw his fists clench.

"Then why did you waste your time on a Cube detector?" he asked.

Damien laughed, passing a smile in Seven's direction. Her blank stare and obviously her outfit made that disappear and he turned back. "I'm a genius. It was because I could. Besides, the Game system is interesting, unique. I'd love to learn more about it."

"It is fascinating," Seven agreed.

Damien groaned, "eugh, don't put me off. We've barely scratched the surface. Where did we go between Cubes, can a Cube really go anywhere? What's its limits, its weaknesses. How far can a weapon like this go? Why was it made, by who?"

"Okay I get it," Chakotay interrupted him quickly. He turned back around to face them both. "If we can use this system to get us even a lightyear closer to home, it's worth it. If we learn more about it, even better. However I'm not willing to jeopardise this ship or anyone in a Cube if we're not ready. We'll test it."

Seven gave him a nod, but Damien didn't look so sure. "It works. I used a simpler design of this to help the group reach the Cubes in time. After that missed one, the Slayer wanted to make sure it never happened again."

"The first cube we detect, set a course," Chakotay ordered. "We're just not going in it until we see it for ourselves." He turned to leave once again.

"Really? I'm smarter than her," Damien protested. Once he had gone he growled in frustration and rushed after him. "That crazy Captain is just going to fly us straight in, you can't stop her."

"Will you make up your mind?" Chakotay groaned as he walked down the corridor.

Damien stopped for a moment, then continued on. "What?"

"First you want to go in, then you don't cos we'll never get home, then you want to so you can learn about it. Now you're worried that we're going in," Chakotay explained.

"I don't care about going back to Earth. Nobody there appreciated my greatness," Damien scoffed.

Chakotay stopped and swung around. Damien had to stop to avoid a collision. "Again, make up your mind."

Damien's face stiffened a little, his jaw bones flared. "You weren't listening. The Cubes rarely hit the Alpha Quadrant, you can't just sit in a cube and wait until it eventually shows up in the right spot. You don't know where it is until you leave it, then you have to wait for the next one. You then believe that if you had just stayed you'd be where you wanted to be..."

"I was listening. This is why we should learn more about it before we dive in head first," Chakotay muttered. "It doesn't explain..."

"It does. I'm a scientist, so going inside a Cube now or later doesn't make any difference to me. I just don't appreciate my work being degraded like it was," Damien said.

Chakotay smirked at him, "if you were a scientist you'd know that everything must be tested, and..."

"It was tested in the field, I told you!" Damien shouted at him.

"You've made changes to it, that warrants further testing. A scientist would know that. You're just a little boy who knows too much," Chakotay said.

Damien gave him a cold glare, he took one step closer. "Your Captain is so obsessed with her just as impulsive freak of a son, she'll not only dive in to the first cube she sees, she'll do a somersault and twist. You know that." Chakotay's smirk disappeared, he did know that. "Like I said, when we go doesn't matter to me. I just thought I'd warn you." He continued glaring at him as he walked by him. "Don't want to die before we even get inside, do you?" he whispered.

Chakotay shook his head and gritted his teeth. His fists were still clenched from before.

"Oh please, that little spot in my ear is just trying to act superior. He does this all the time," Kathryn grumbled as she paced her Ready Room. "I asked him if he was so smart, why didn't he go to the Academy? His answer was he was too good for them."

"He has a point, not about the Academy anyway," Chakotay said softly. "If Voyager could surf the Cube network all the way home, then James would have told us that. He'd still be here."

"He wouldn't want to risk putting us in any danger," Kathryn said quietly, her head fell slightly.

The look on her face made Chakotay feel terrible, but now wasn't the time to worry about that. "You wouldn't either, would you?"

Kathryn arched her best death glare. Chakotay steeled his nerves to go up against it, but he could feel his insides withering. "Are you saying the whole Game Cube idea is an unnecessary danger?"

"I'm saying we should be cautious and not hop into the first Cube we find. I know you never said it directly, but you will try to anyway," Chakotay said.

"What, because I'm just a weak little girl who misses her baby?" Kathryn grumbled.

Chakotay shook his head, "no, because you won't want to stand by and just scan while a city is torn apart by one of these things." Kathryn's glare faded a little, it gave him some breathing room for now. "There's a lot to consider; a landing spot, whether Damien's right and Voyager comes with us, what if we lose the game, where will we end up? We may end up even further away than we are now."

"I like the way he waited until he finished his scanner before warning us," Kathryn said, rolling her eyes.

"We knew all of these things before then," Chakotay reminded her.

"Maybe, but I don't trust that little toad. He's playing us," Kathryn said. Chakotay wasn't convinced, he sent a frown her way. "Now that it's done, he suddenly has issues about how it's used."

"He's a chore, we all know that. It doesn't mean he's plotting against us. Your constant teasing doesn't help either," Chakotay said. Kathryn's glare threatened to grow again. "By your logic, Tom's an evil mastermind."

Kathryn burst out laughing. Chakotay tried to hold it back, but he couldn't, he burst into laughter as well.

Chakotay was the first to recover, but he had to wipe a small tear from his eye first. "Seriously though. Damien talks and then talks some more. He can't help bragging. I find it hard to imagine him scheming something, and being able to keep quiet about it. The only problem is a lot of the time, he's right."

"What exactly is he right about? We don't even know if his scanner works," Kathryn said now that she was calm again. "Wasn't Seven the one that said there may be a problem. He was the one whining that everything was perfect and we shouldn't question him."

"Kathryn," Chakotay tried to interrupt.

"From what you said, he only did that scare mongering because you weren't kissing his feet and saying how great he was. He's just an overgrown child throwing his own toys out of the pram," Kathryn said.

Chakotay smiled and nodded, "I know that."

"Then what?" Kathryn said, her eyes stared him down.

Chakotay looked uneasy at the look she was giving him. "Damien didn't have to say anything. I know you well. I just think there's many reasons to think this through. You can't just dismiss them because they come from somebody who is annoying."

"I knew that the Alpha Quadrant was a long shot. It doesn't mean we have to give up without even trying," Kathryn said. Before she could be interrupted she continued, "also the landing issue isn't one. Voyager is small enough to maneuver under the cube and land safely on any large structure without causing any damage. Don't think I've just decided to go in guns blazing without thinking about it."

"What about the games themselves?" Chakotay dared to ask. "Didn't James say sometimes, most of the time they're usually brutal fights to the death. A few members of James' group were injured during their trip, so..."

"He also said it was impossible to actually die in them," Kathryn muttered.

"That's not the point. What if we've got dozens, hundreds of these things waiting for us on our journey? It's a lot to ask," Chakotay said.

Kathryn sighed as she looked down towards the floor. "You don't think we should do this at all."

"I think we should inform the crew what could happen, get their say. It's their lives we're discussing," Chakotay answered. "The Cubes aren't going away anytime soon, what's the hurry?"

"Astrometrics to Captain Janeway."

"Still," Chakotay said.

Kathryn's eyes only half rolled as her hand went up to tap her commbadge. "Yes?"

"Subspace disruption on planet 05, sector 17498. We're in range," Seven's voice replied.

"Might as well take a look," Kathryn said.

Chakotay nodded lightly. "Should I tell Harry to contact the planet, warn them?"

"Good idea," Kathryn agreed.

The Bridge:

"Not such a good idea," Tom commented just as the ship trembled.

Kathryn narrowed her eyes towards the viewscreen. The planet was dead ahead, but in its path were an armada of alien ships. Each one fired a red ball of energy at them every few seconds.

"Hail them again!" she snapped.

Harry shook his head. The next hit forced him to grab onto his station to avoid losing his footing. "They're not answering."

"I think they are," Tom said.

"Astrometrics to the Bridge..."

"Now's not the time Seven," Chakotay warned.

"If the readings are correct, the Game Cube should be emerging from sub space in one minute."

"Yeah, I'd recommend diving. Take a run and jump," Damien's voice said.

"It's not our only option. We can retreat," Chakotay said mid tremble.

Kathryn gripped the railings near the helm tightly, she was still staring straight ahead at the viewscreen.

"Shields are at 10%, Captain. We cannot take anymore of this," Tuvok reported. "I agree with the Commander."

Kathryn noticed a small part of the atmosphere churning, changing colour. It was only a matter of seconds before they were a deep purple.

"Game Cube is beginning its emergence."

"How many people are directly under that thing?" Kathryn questioned.

Chakotay's shoulders slumped. Thankfully Tuvok was on his side, "Captain, even if we survive the journey through the alien's attackforce, we will just confirm their fears that we are the ones responsible for the Cube."

"How many!?" Kathryn hissed.

Harry swallowed the large lump in his throat, only just. "Two hundred thousand Captain."

"Versus a hundred and fifty of us," Kathryn said. She sensed Chakotay about to argue with her without even looking at him. "Don't say it. This is their first Cube or they wouldn't be blaming us. None of those people will know what to do. We do."

"Do we?" Tom stammered.

"Take us in, Mr Paris," Kathryn ordered.

Chakotay tried to pull himself out of his chair, but one last weapon hit threw everyone backwards.

"Shields are down!" Tuvok yelled.

"Captain, we'll not make it," Chakotay argued.

Kathryn nodded in agreement. "You're right. We have no choice now. Tom!"

"What?" Tom stuttered. He found Kathryn behind him already, clutching onto his shoulder. He decided to keep his next thought to himself. "Yes ma'am."

The alien ships continued their weapons fire on the defenseless ship. Voyager tried to dodge every one of them as she lurched forward towards the planet. A few shots pierced its hull but that didn't put the starship off, she continued into the atmosphere. The alien

ships held off their attacks when the starship plunged into the clouds. They instead just followed Voyager down, two of which dared to go in via the purple storm clouds nearby, destroying them instantly.

Voyager wasn't much better inside. The entire Bridge shook violently, stations were sparking uncontrollably.

"We're too close," Harry warned, his voice vibrating along with the ship.

Tom quickly wiped the sweat from his brow with his arm. He found that difficult as everything was shaking. "I know, I know."

"Captain, two of the enemy ships have been destroyed. The others have held off their attacks. We can safely retreat now," Tuvok suggested.

"No! We're going in," Kathryn snapped.

The clouds on the viewscreen broke apart, now everyone could see the alien city below them. The only piece of the skyline that could be seen was a dark purple, the entire city had a black shadow cast over it.

Despite breaking free of the clouds, Voyager still trembled but not as violently as before.

"It's just above us," Harry stuttered. "Dropping fast. We need to find somewhere to land."

"I'm looking but unless we want to land on a sky scraper..." Tom stuttered.

Kathryn's grip on his shoulder tightened, "it'll have to do."

Tom shook his head, "we'd have to slow down to accurately do that. That cube though, it's not giving me room to breath."

"Harry, let's see it," Kathryn ordered.

Voyage continued its decent towards the city, however only a mere kilometre above it was a huge cube shaped object blazing down from the sky. As Voyager tried to level off towards a tall building, the cube gained in.

Tom's whole body was sweating at this point, he worked as fast as he could. The purple on the viewscreen wasn't helping either.

"Let's not see it," Chakotay barked towards Harry. He nodded nervously.

The whole Bridge trembled even harder than it did while Voyager was in the clouds. It was bad enough to make standing people who weren't holding on tumble to the floor.

"Two hundred metres," Tuvok warned.

"This is going to be rough, hold on," Tom almost squeaked.

Kathryn took his advice and tried her best to get back to her chair. The trembling was too much and she fell to the floor.

"One hundred," Tuvok warned again.

The landing struts emerged from Voyager's belly as it closed in on the top of the sky scraper. The cube however kept its fast speed and closed in.

The people below began to panic and run as the cube enveloped the tips of the larger buildings. Like they were nothing it kept going at the same speed. It was chaos as everyone ran in different directions, clambered over anything in their way.

Voyager was within metres of the roof but it was too late. The cube caught up with them, its edge touched down on top of the saucer. The people who weren't running below watched in horror as the starship was ripped apart in a fiery explosion. Even worse, the explosion didn't even slow the cube down. It kept coming. The only change was the cube's colour distorted, lines flashed across it. Their own vessels flew out of the clouds, all but one collided immediately with the cube and were ripped apart like Voyager was. The last one turned tail and flew back up into orbit.

Nobody stood to watch it now, they joined everyone else and ran in all different directions. It didn't take long for the cube to hit the ground. When it did the screams stopped, an eerie silence took over the entire city.

2380 Earth

There wasn't a cloud in the sky. The sun was blazing, there was barely a breeze. Everyone were taking full advantage of it. The parks and beaches were full, outdoor shopping areas were so crowded nobody could see where they were going. Shuttles had been mostly abandoned as their owners preferred to walk in the sun instead.

Nobody expected it. The blue sky was still empty only seconds ago. Everything went black. Every single person stopped what they were saying and doing to look up to the sky which had suddenly been filled with black clouds. Panic started to set in as every single night light that had switched on to accommodate went straight off, one by one.

"You have failed," a voice boomed towards him.

Q felt a little intimidated by it, which was unusual for him. "I know."

"Your confidence in the Humans once again leads to your downfall, Q," the booming voice said. "We will find another..."

"No," Q butted in. "I know what went wrong. She remembered too much. It lead to things even I couldn't anticipate until it was too late. Just give me one more chance, I'll fix it."

"You cannot send her back again. Kathryn Janeway is dead," the booming voice reminded him.

If he was in Human form he would have been tempted to give him a finger, or just shake his head. Instead he only spoke, "I don't have to. The deed is done, it just needs a slight tweaking, that's all."

"You can guarantee that her memory will be truly wiped?" the booming voice asked.

"Of course," Q answered.

"If you could do that, why didn't you do that in the first place?" the voice demanded.

Q let out a sigh, "you saw what happened when her future self meddled with time travel. I wanted to avoid that again."

"You promised us that the changes you made would in itself avoid it," the voice said.

"Well it did," Q chuckled grimly. The voice grunted, he didn't sound amused. "I'll fix it. I swear. I will not fail again."

"See that you don't. We still haven't forgotten your past transgressions, after all," the voice threatened. Q's whole being winced at his words. "I trust you understand me."

"Completely," Q answered.

THREE

2351

Her bags were packed once again. She stood in between them, staring straight at the front door. She couldn't bring herself to go any further. This felt very wrong to her, she had thought about it more than enough over the last two years. It really was the right thing to do.

Three taps at the door brought her back to Earth. Her hand reached for the door, she noticed it was trembling as she did so. To her relief her cousin Leanne was on the other side of the door, smiling warmly.

"Hey Kath, I heard," her voice was sympathetic.

Kathryn's throat closed up, the tears were threatening to appear. "Yeah, I said I'd do it but I can't."

Leanne's face fell, her hand clasped her cousin's shoulder. "Then don't. Take him with you."

"I heard that," a voice behind Kathryn said. Kathryn tensed a little and Leanne tried her best not to scowl as Peter Taylor walked over to the pair.

"It's ok. I'll... just go and say bye to him," Kathryn said through her hoarse voice.

"He's asleep, I doubt he'll be able to hear you," Peter said, almost breaking into a smirk.

Kathryn caught it in the corner of her eye. Her body once again told her what she was doing was wrong. The smile he now had on his face reminded her of the night she met him. She couldn't believe she fell for his act, even if she was a silly teenager. She thought she was more mature than that. *Obviously not, I'm still just a kid.* That was why she was leaving. It was for the best.

"I guess," she eventually muttered.

"Where's her stuff, I'll get them," Leanne said. Her face went immediately red when she spotted the bags sitting at Kathryn's feet.

"It's ok. Women shouldn't carry heavy bags," Peter said as he crouched down to pick them up.

"Oh, so there's a nice side to you being sexist," Leanne said in a mocking tone.

Kathryn was surprised to see he was a little offended at that remark. It made her feel a little better now that his smile was wiped off. "I'm not," he muttered. The girls watched him walk out of the house with the bags. Kathryn's gaze lingered on the interior door for a moment.

Leanne gave her cousin another reassuring pat on the shoulder before walking out as well. Kathryn silently thanked her for it. The tears were now falling.

2369

USS Endeavor

"I'll teach her," he said in mid pace. "Nobody makes a fool out of me. Who does she think I am?" The pacing back and forth was making him a little dizzy so he stopped it. The next thought that popped into his head made him laugh. "Oh I'll get you your coffee, Commander. Enjoy, it'll be your last."

"Perhaps you should take a breath between insults, Commander," Tuvok suggested.

As he expected, he got an angry growl. "All I ask is people around here do their jobs. It would be like me asking you to do your rounds and you telling me to shove it up my butt."

"I disagree," Tuvok said with a raised eyebrow. Kathryn growled again, but as usual he was the only person who could survive it. "A more fitting comparison would be to tell me to bake you a cake and myself saying I'm busy with my rounds."

"What?" Kathryn was actually confused.

"That man you asked to make you coffee was an Ensign from Engineering," Tuvok explained.

Kathryn was still a little confused, "strange, I've never seen him before. Though in my defence, he does have a stupid emo haircut in his face. Probably for the best."

"He just transferred here from Earth," Tuvok explained.

"Fair enough. Who do I ask for coffee around here then?" Kathryn asked seriously.

Tuvok's eyebrow nearly escaped his forehead. "No one. There's a replicator."

"Ooph, someone's snooty," Kathryn scoffed. "I just thought that since..."

"You assumed wrong," Tuvok dared to say.

Kathryn didn't hear him, she was distracted for a moment. "Is it snooty or snotty? Who cares. What?"

"Perhaps you should take a break, Captain. You always get far more irritable when you've been working for too long," Tuvok suggested.

"I'm fine," Kathryn sighed.

"Bridge to Commander Janeway. You have an incoming call from Earth. Mark Johnson."

"Oh god, what does that whiny little pissant want now?" Kathryn growled as she walked away. "Patch it through to my office, take your time!"

"It's been years, I still don't understand her," Tuvok said to himself.

Kathryn stomped over to her desk, angrily dragged the computer over so it was directly in front of her and she plopped herself down on the seat like it was a huge effort. As soon as the computer switched on she decided to scream at it, "what!?"

The man on the screen didn't seem bothered or startled at all at being screamed at. He expected it. "Hi Kathy, bad day?"

"How did you guess that? Are you psychic or something?" Kathryn grumbled.

The man shrugged. "Just a hunch I had. Do you have time to talk?"

"Don't be ridiculous, I am very busy," Kathryn snarled. "You've got something in your hair."

The man frowned, he turned slightly to one side to tend to his silver hair. Kathryn took that opportunity to run over to the nearby replicator. When he turned back she had a bucket sized cup in her hands. Apart from that he wouldn't have known she had left her seat.

"Why do I always fall for that?" the man asked.

"Cos you're a schmuck," Kathryn answered with a sweet smile. He could only smile back as she slurped at the giant mug.

"Anyway... the Endeavor is due back soon. I thought we could use that free time to talk about the wedding," the man said. "And further ahead than that."

Kathryn's eyes narrowed over the rim of her cup. She slowly lowered it to the desk. "I told you. My career comes first."

"I know, that would never have to change," the man said meekly. "I thought why don't I join you, then you don't have to give up anything. Or you can continue your career and I'll be the parent."

Kathryn's eyebrow twitched, the anger was difficult to keep inside her. Another sip of the cup wasn't enough to calm her even a little.

"You always struck me as a maternal type, you said you liked kids," the man stuttered.

"Well you were struck wrong. I can come down there and fix that, if you want," Kathryn threatened.

The man shook his head, "there's no need to be like that. If you don't want any kids, we don't have any... it's..."

"I don't!" Kathryn snapped. "Did you really think I'd want to pop out an... kid, let daddy watch him all the time, and I never get to see him again?"

The man stared at her with concern. "Why wouldn't you see him or her again?"

Kathryn's eyes closed when she realised she'd said too much. Anger soon took over again. "I'm ranting, forget it. We're not having kids, at least not for a long, long time. If you have a problem with that, you can just leave."

The man sighed as he looked at the floor. "No I don't." Kathryn wasn't too convinced with his answer, it just made her all the more angry. "We'll talk about the wedding when you return, and that's that. Promise," he said with a smile.

"Oh bugger off," Kathryn snarled. She pressed a key to switch him off her screen. Once he was gone the anger melted away and all that was left was sadness.

Taking her cup with her she walked over to the nearby window. Kathryn stared solemnly into space, cradling the large cup in her skinny hands. The disobedient door chime to her office decided to go off when she placed the cup by her lips. Raising just one finger, she slurped at her beverage, determined to make the selfish crewmember at her door wait as long as possible.

Two minutes later the cup was empty, her finger was drumming the desk, her left eye was on the nearby replicator. Finally she replied, "come in!"

The doors opened swiftly for a younger looking Damien with a lot of hair in his face. He dumped a package on her desk. With a nervous voice he said, "for you ma'am." He turned to leave.

Kathryn jumped to her feet, "wait!" Damien jumped out of his skin. "Is it coffee related?"

"I... er... dunno sir... er ma'am," he badly lied. "Excuse me." He managed to leave much quicker than he entered, leaving Kathryn to curiously stare at the package.

She carefully sniffed it. It had a faint aroma of coffee, it made her drool a little. "This is from Mark isn't it?" she thought outloud. "Thought he could bribe me, well he's got another thing coming!" She had to be on the Bridge anyway so Kathryn marched out of her office. He couldn't see her do it but it was a statement anyway. She could always get the coffee later.

Moments after she left the package beeped, then exploded leaving the entire office in flames.

Damien cursed quietly to himself as Kathryn entered the Bridge safe and sound. She didn't even look irritated.

"What? I'm not late," she said.

"Your office just blew up," the Captain said, without blinking.

His attention went to the PADD in his hands. He tapped the panel labelled Plan A which had a cartoon drawing of Kathryn with a huge bun running around on fire, while a cartoon Damien smiled with angry looking eyes. It disappeared and was replaced by Plan B. This one looked like a drawing of a starship, him standing on it with his arms wide and people cowering underneath it.

"Nah, that'll take too long," he said. The PADD went back to Plan A. "The package was a little obvious. I just need more time." His finger went to alter it slightly.

"Really? Well then, I better go. I've got an office to clean," Kathryn said with shifty eyes. "Er, get someone else to clean... it." She dashed off.

The Captain sitting beside her before groaned into his hands. Tuvok's eyebrow raised.

"Perhaps we should discuss it with her later," he suggested.

"God damnit! Plan B it is," Damien muttered as his Plan A drawing was all wrong. He marched off into the turbolift.

"Discuss it?" the irritated Captain stuttered. "I'll be the first to *congratulate* her. Heck I'll throw her a Good Riddance party."

"Indeed," Tuvok didn't know what else to say.

2370

USS Voyager

Kathryn and an Admiral walked out of the brand new Ready Room, Kathryn was carrying a cup of coffee of course.

"It's a good thing you transferred when you did," the Admiral was saying. "Apparently the new first officer's replicator set itself on fire. He's still in intensive care."

Kathryn shook her head before sipping on her coffee. "I did warn them about that, but nobody would believe me. I suspected a lower member of the crew wanted that job."

"Probably, but the crew believe the ship is cursed," the Admiral chuckled at the ridiculousness of it.

Kathryn laughed with him, "as if that would happen. Where are we going next?"

"The science labs on Deck Thirteen, they're a killer," the Admiral replied. The two entered the nearest turbolift, passing two crewmembers building the back stations.

"Was that one of those irony jokes, you know like *haha that won't happen* and then it happens joke?" the guy asked.

The woman stared at him, then she rolled her eyes. "Don't be ridiculous, this is Star Trek. Now let's go finish off the shuttle replicator, not that they'd need it." The man's eyes widened as she walked off.

2371

Kathryn thought she misheard. Her eyes widened and the blood drained from her face.

"We're on the other side of the galaxy," Harry couldn't believe it either.

Kathryn was standing in front of the window, staring into space. The door chimed loud enough to break her out of her thoughts.

"Yes?"

The door opened for Chakotay, he wasn't alone though. Kathryn barely noticed as she made her way over to her desk. The first thing she did was grab her mug and sip at it.

"Apparently you and I have the same problem. I get why we have a bunch of kids on our ship; Marquis attracts angry, vengeful and even bored people of all ages, but Starfleet..." Chakotay said.

Kathryn rolled her eyes as she sat down in her seat. "A bit of a mix up. Before we were sent to look for you, they were supposed to get a bit of experience. That class should have been told it had been cancelled."

"Hmm, and here I thought it was just a bad fanfiction trying to bring in characters that were too young," Chakotay chuckled.

"Duh," Kathryn shrugged. "Any of yours can join our pre-cadets in the schools I told Tuvok to setup. What else have you got?"

Chakotay frowned as she downed the whole extremely large cup, with steam still rising from it. "Wow, um..." he tried to compose himself. "These are the last lot, they were the two who were kidnapped by the Caretaker."

"Mmm hmm," Kathryn said as her head turned to the replicator.

Chakotay turned to the group behind him. "Kids, you can go." The younger ones left quickly, the coffee smell was overpowering. There were only two left, one of them started to leave. "Not you."

"Oh so I'm old, am I?" she huffed quietly.

"I never said that," Chakotay rolled his eyes. "The last two are a problem. One worked in Engineering and that's full already. The other, well I don't think you have any need for a hacker."

"The day shift is missing someone to man the Engineering station, he/she could take that," Kathryn said from the replicator. Chakotay was a little shocked, he hadn't seen her walk there. The pair behind him were just as surprised, one tilted his head to one side and squinted his eyes.

"Okay, so that's Jessie sorted. I don't recommend him for the Bridge though," Chakotay said, gesturing behind him.

This time he caught Kathryn going back to the desk, she held another cup of coffee. "There's only really Sickbay left," she said.

Chakotay tried not to laugh, he felt one glare behind him. He didn't know it was the girl that was doing it though. "Thanks for that image."

Kathryn stared at the new Commander like he had walked in wearing a dress. To him she looked just as ridiculous with the giant mug in her hands and a straw sticking out of it. "Put him on the Bridge, I'm sure there's something else he can do if he's that clever. What's the fuss?"

Chakotay was torn between laughing again and frowning. "I wouldn't say clev... um, just he's got an attitude problem and..."

"It's rude to talk about people like they're not there," Jessie found herself grumbling.

"Indeed, you're one to talk about an attitude problem," Kathryn muttered between straw slurps.

Chakotay cleared his throat. "Ok you two, bridge day shifts. You can go."

Jessie rolled her eyes as she turned to leave, she stopped when she realised she was the only one doing that. "What? James, what's wrong?"

He finally stopped tilting his head and staring, then turned to her. "Is it just me, or is there something really odd looking on her head?" His finger pointed at Kathryn. Jessie turned her own head to look.

Kathryn's eyes widened, and she started feeling her hair.

James' did as well, he shook his pointed finger. "There, you got it."

Kathryn glared at him. "That is my hair." Chakotay meanwhile slapped his forehead with his right hand.

"Well it sure is odd, bye," James said. Jessie giggled as they both walked out.

"Chakotay," Kathryn muttered.

Chakotay sighed, "that's what I was talking about. He's rude, bad tempered and doesn't shut up."

"What are their names? I'll need to know when I start yelling at them," Kathryn asked.

"The girl's okay, well she was until he joined the crew. Jessie... erm, Jessie Rex something. He's James Taylor," Chakotay answered with a frown. He missed Kathryn's eyes almost falling out of the socket as they widened so much, he was too busy frowning. "Think Stuart is on the end, the step dad that joined was called that. Doesn't matter."

"Did you say Taylor?" Kathryn stuttered.

Chakotay looked puzzled. "Yes, is there a problem?"

"I think I might have erm, met his father," Kathryn replied. The urge to get a much bigger mug was strong, especially now that her current one was empty. "What are the odds?"

"Um tiny. Though to be fair his name is really common. He may not be related to the same Taylor you know," Chakotay said. He almost jumped out of his skin as Kathryn had gone again, she was back at the replicator getting the new mug. "How do you do that?"

She casually walked by him, staring at him with the judgmental eyes she gave him before. "Do what?"

"Uh the replicator thing," Chakotay stuttered. Kathryn's stare got even worse. He was starting to feel like he really was wearing a silly dress with the way she was looking at him. "That was fast, um. Forget it. Have you talked to Paris yet?"

"No, but I do have to address the crew. We've got a long journey ahead," Kathryn answered. A loud slurp echoed around the room. "I'm trying to think of what to say to them."

"I'm sure you'll think of something. Excuse me," Chakotay said over the slurps. He quickly left.

Kathryn sighed once she collapsed back into her seat. "Couldn't be him, it couldn't. Why does he have to be here?"

The Bridge:

Everyone stood mostly to attention, staring towards the pacing Captain. A few worried that her speech would last a while so they brought a PADD to read, or were standing next to something to lean or sit on. The Marquis crew were already suited up in Starfleet attire, which one of them found rather uncomfortable.

"This thing is hideous," Jessie whispered to James standing beside her. "Yellow and black, ugh." He tried not to smirk.

"We're alone, in an unfamiliar and hostile area of space," Kathryn started her speech. "We've already made some friends here," she said towards Neelix and Kes. "And some enemies." Her face crumpled as she tried to remember the middle of her speech, but it was gone. "Crap," she whispered. As everyone were still staring at her she quickly tried to cover that up and continue on somehow.

"Who would have thought that this eclectic group of voyagers..." Kathryn paused to let the pun sink in. Most of the Bridge just rolled their eyes. "Could actually become one crew. Starfleet, Marquis. Klingon, Ocampan... um," Kathryn stared at Neelix. "What were you again?"

"Talaxian," Neelix was offended.

"I thought it was Neelix, Mr Talaxian," Tuvok actually sounded annoyed for once.

"That's stupid. How could any moron get that mixed up, Mr Vulcan?" Neelix huffed.

Kathryn ignored them both, "Ocampan, Talaxian, that whiny hologram, Borg..." She frowned, "wait, that's not right."

"You think?" James commented.

Tom pouted, "I was going to say that."

Kathryn stared at him like he did say that, "even Mr Paris. Granted, we'll have our share of difficulties. Hopefully coffee shortages and office explosions won't be amongst them."

"Captain," Chakotay interrupted. Kathryn growled at him. "You do realise that's the Doctor's speech from Year of Hell, right?"

"No, yes," Kathryn badly improvised. "What's that?" Chakotay shrugged, he couldn't remember. "Ok fine, what was it?" Her face lit up. "There was this parable I heard as a child, and I never forgot it. A scorpion was walking along the bank of a river..."

"Really?" Chakotay groaned into his hand.

Kathryn started to pout as her mug or bucket of coffee had worn off. "We'll be looking for one person, amongst thousands..."

Everyone shook their heads.

"Here's the sequence of events, we will drop our shie..." Kathryn said.

"No!" everyone shouted.

"Oh fine, I'll improvise," Kathryn grumbled. "Yes our journey looks long and bleak, but it doesn't have to be. We're explorers, this is an opportunity to explore this unknown area of space. In the meantime we'll be looking for wormholes, advanced technologies, coffee brewers, spatial anomalies. Somehow, someday, we'll find our way back." She smiled broadly, "I knew I'd remember the end part. Nailed it."

Chakotay tried not to smirk, "uh huh, fifth time's the charm."

2372

Kathryn glanced menacingly as she stepped closer to the viewscreen. "I'm Captain Janeway of blah blah, don't care... why did you get me tea!?" she screamed at Chakotay.

"Maybe we should have introduced an ape as the Captain, we'd be better off," Jessie said.

"But Chakotay already tried," Danny said.

"That's it, I need a vacation," Chakotay groaned, he left the bridge.

"Um well, better make this quick. I need to talk to you privately," the man on the screen said.

"Fine I'll beam you here," Kathryn muttered. She waved her hand in Harry's direction.

"Thank you Cap..." he said before getting cut off.

The Ready Room:

"So Tryhard, what can I do for you?" Kathryn asked in a fake polite voice.

The alien sat on the sofa nearby, trying badly not to look offended. "Ligod."

"Why would I want to do that, and what about?" Kathryn was genuinely confused. "Also there's no reason to get angry at me."

Ligod stared blankly at the woman standing in front of him. "That's my name."

"Oh, that's a stupid name," Kathryn grumbled.

"Um, can we get down to business?" Ligod asked.

Kathryn shrugged, "whatever."

"As I'm a Watcher I am charged with searching and train..." Ligod started to explain.

"That's got to be the worst job I've ever heard. Don't you ever get bored?" Kathryn interrupted. She scowled at him, "that actually sounds a little pervy to me."

"Searching and training the gifted few known as Slayers," Ligod started again despite that. "That is why I'm here."

Kathryn's eyes shifted from one side to another, eventually they looked at him like he was nuts. "Ookay. Good for you."

"Ah, I didn't expect you to know what I meant," Ligod said cheerfully. "To put it simply, Slayers are people who are stronger than their species usually is. A lot stronger. They also have a natural talent for fighting, have excellent endurance and agility..."

Kathryn's nose shrivelled up this time, her eyes went towards the window. "Again, good for you."

"Oh I'm not a Slayer," Ligod laughed.

Kathryn smirked, "I never thought it."

"Hmm. The Slayers are generally used against the Game Cube phenomenon, but naturally they're useful for other more supernatural things. Again, this is why I'm here. I'm here to retrieve one as I need their help with an emergency," Ligod explained.

"Let me get this straight, you think a member of my crew is one of these natural Slayer people?" Kathryn questioned, her eyebrow now raised.

"Yes, but the whole Game Cube and Slayer subject is supposed to be confidential. Only Admirals and the Slayers themselves in your species should only know," Ligod said.

"What are the Game Cubes anyway?" Kathryn asked.

"I can't answer that. What I've told you is already breaking the rules," Ligod replied.

"So what is the emergency?" Kathryn asked.

"Well we live on the ocean colony several kilometres away from many thousands of native colonies. We've been living in peace, and they never bothered us and vice versa

until an incident one hundred years ago," Ligod said. He drank some of the coffee he held in his hand, he cringed and poured it in the nearby plant.

"They informed us of a threat so we sent our strongest Slayers, the Chosens of that current generation, to investigate but blend in with the natives. They never came back. Everytime our Chosens were at a suitable age we'd send them too, none of them came back either."

Kathryn finished her coffee, she stood up and headed over to the plant. "So, what's this got to do with us?" She stroked the plant, "oh and thanks for feeding my coffee plant, its favourite is coffee obviously."

Ligod pulled a disgusted face, "um you're welcome. Anyway the reason I'm here is that we figured the next batch of Chosens need help as the current method is clearly not working. We thought perhaps a Natural will be able to up the odds a little."

Kathryn continued to stroke the plant, meanwhile giving him the same *what a nutter* stare she was giving him before.

"Um, our Natural's are all on assignments elsewhere. Our Chosen has returned recently so she and her brother are ready to take on this immense challenge," Ligod said.

"I hope you know who to look for, cos I have no idea," Kathryn said. "Not that I believe you, mind you," she muttered to herself.

"We know a lot about him. His name is James Taylor," Ligod said.

Kathryn accidentally spat coffee in his face, "what!?"

Ligod wiped the gallon of coffee from his face, then he started to rub his soggy clothes. "I'm sorry, I know this will be difficult. He will be in good hands though. Miss Zare is excellent at what she does, her and her brother may not even need him."

"This is ridiculous," Kathryn spat. "You want me to believe there are people out there with the strength of ten men, and..."

"I'd probably times that by another ten," Ligod said meekly. "And that's just the Naturals."

Kathryn's eyes were very wide by this time. "But he... he's just a normal kid." She shook her head, "man, he's just a normal man. I mean yes he's good at winning fights, never seen him lose but..."

Ligod looked on in sympathy, it looked odd on him and a little patronising. "No mother can handle news like this well. However I'm sure you noticed his gift, especially when the child himself doesn't know. It's okay, take your time."

Smoke started rising from the Captain, her eyes were on fire. "Mother?"

"Watchers are supposed to know everything about their Slayers, including details like that," Ligod said with a smile.

Conference Room:

Tom stood bothering the only female guest, she didn't look too happy about it. Ligod

kept well out of the way, the young teenaged boy standing nearby him was clearly annoying him.

"If you guys are all so knowing, how come you only just found about this one?" the boy asked.

"Rean," Ligod warned him. His eyes shifted slightly, the boy noticed it and stared at him suspiciously. "He was very far away."

"It would be super handy if we knew about some object that picked people up and dropped them off at far away places," Rean teased. "Oh wait, we do."

"Shh!" Ligod shushed him.

The boy laughed as he wandered over to the other two.

"Soo, a date tonight. Pick you up at eight?" Tom said to his victim.

She pinched his nose hard, and kept a tight hold. "How about now, this is fun." The resulting crack made him squeal like a pig. When she let him go his nose looked a little crooked, but that was the least of his problems. The amount of blood pouring from it made him collapse on the spot.

James chose that moment to walk in. He looked confused at the helmsman on the floor. "Have I already been in here?"

Ligod rushed over to him. "Ah James, it's great to meet you."

"How do you know for sure I'm him, it could have been that annoying tall guy," James said after taking a step back.

"Watchers know their Slayers," Ligod replied.

"Oh great, a watcher, no way I'm doing this again," James groaned.

"I know, aren't their intro speeches and junk boring?" Rean said.

Ligod glanced his way, "Rean hush." The boy rolled his eyes.

"What's all this about then?" James asked.

"Simple. You are a Slayer," Ligod said. Both Zare and Rean rolled their eyes and shook their heads in disbelief. James meanwhile was torn between smirking and hitting the man. "Ah of course, you don't know. You must have noticed that you have strength others don't. That is why. Clear?"

"No, but a little bit of yes, but more don't care," James said.

"You should though. Now I am sending these two to a colony that we lost contact with many years ago. You're going to go with them to either find survivors, and find what happened. Or if nothing has happened, get communications working," Ligod said.

"There's still bits that I'm not clear on," James said.

Zare shrugged, "me too. Is that helmsman fodder?" She pointed at Tom at the front of the shuttle.

"I thought that one was obvious," James replied.

Tom cleared his throat. "Ahem, I can hear you!"

"According to the watch guy, that's what I am as well," James said in a hushed voice.

Zare shook her head. "Ligod's a moron, don't listen to him. We basically just need an extra hand as we don't know what we're facing."

"From a rookie?" James didn't look convinced.

A small smirk appeared on Zare's face, "leave my brother out of this." Rean scowled and stuck his tongue out at her. "That's the other reason you're here. Rean's strong sure, but this is his first mission and Ligod tells me you've fought a few strange things before."

James frowned, suspicion was all over his face. "How the hell would he know?"

"Told ya. Ligod's getting lazy in his old age," Rean commented.

Zare glanced at her younger brother, "what?"

"He's acting like James is all new to him, but what he says tells another story," Rean replied.

"He told you, he's from the other side of the galaxy. It's not easy to get there," Zare scolded him.

"She's not wrong," Tom commented. "She's also quite hot."

"Why are you here?" James asked, sensing Zare about to explode beside him.

"Cos I love the water, I've always wanted to work on the ocean but..." Tom replied.

"No, why are you here?" James asked loudly.

"I don't get what you mean," Tom tried to sound innocent.

The shuttle drifted through the ocean depths towards a large underwater station. Despite the dim shield surrounding it, the station looked powerless. A tiny gap appeared near the top of it, the shuttle flew towards it. Once it was through to the surface of the station, the shield reappeared. Doors began to open directly in front of them.

Once they were through the shuttle found itself in a bay with another ship. It landed next to it.

The group made their way through the bay, towards the large bay doors. What was on the other side shocked the Human members of the team. Instead of a ship or station metallic look, the whole area in front of them was built up like a village. However since the lights were not working, the darkness hid the damage time had done to everything. Water dripped from different parts of the ceiling far above them, as nothing was happening it was all they could hear.

"Well this is nice and creepy," Jessie said.

Tom glanced all around him, "are you kidding? She's a beauty."

Rean went ahead of the others, he stopped outside a hotel entrance. "Was this place a holiday resort or something?"

"Yeah it was the best around. Let's have a look inside," Zare said. She and Rean went up the steps, the others followed her. They all spread out once they were inside.

Tom stepped outside another door, it lead to the outdoor pool which was just as dark as everything else. He used the torch to look around the entire pool area. It was completely deserted.

"Why does the hotel look empty, ie no bodies," Tom said.

"Was there any survivors?" Jessie asked.

"No, this is odd," Rean replied.

"Yeah, where is everyone?" James said.

Tom turned his back on the pool area and walked through the door to get back inside. As soon as he did there was a loud thud behind him, it startled everyone.

"What was that?" Rean trembled.

The rest of the group walked over to where Tom was, he and they walked through the door to get outside.

"Was it only me who heard a splash too?" Jessie asked. She stepped closer to the pool and knelt down beside it.

"Jess be careful," James warned her.

"I know," Jessie nodded.

Tom pulled out a tricorder, "no-one's touched the water in a hundred years. The colony has no bugs, anything else alive, and plants except fake trees, right?"

"Right," Zare said.

"Why did it look dark even when I pointed the torch at it before?" Tom said. He started to fiddle with the tricorder.

Thanks to the darkness they barely saw it, but they felt a tidal wave emerge from the pool and slam into them. It knocked everyone off balance.

"Yuck! Not nice," Rean moaned.

Zare looked around nervously, "uh... where's that other girl gone?"

"Damn," James muttered. He rushed forward to drop himself into the pool.

"Is he nuts?" Rean said, looking up at his sister.

Zare glanced at him, "there should be a drain or something, try and empty the pool."

"Ok," Rean said, he rushed off.

Both Jessie and James surfaced, but Jessie looked unconscious. James managed to grab a hold of the side.

"I did it!" Rean yelled.

The water quickly drained from the pool, but not before Tom had decided to play hero too. He jumped into about two inches of water, he squeaked on impact.

"Ooh, found something," Rean called from afar.

Tom groaned, he stood back up. James walked over to him carrying Jessie. "Are you ok?"

"A few broken bones and dignity, I'm fine," Tom replied.

A bright light came on suddenly, everyone covered their eyes. Rean rushed over to Zare's side, squinting his eyes. Jessie woke back up, she quickly covered her eyes too.

"Ugh, that's not good," she coughed. James put her back on the ground, she wiped her arms.

Tom was the first to adjust to the light, his eyes widened in panic, "oh god."

"What?" Jessie said.

James collapsed suddenly, everyone just stared at him. Jessie quickly knelt down next to him, her eyes adjusted to the light finally. She looked around, noticing the whole pool walls and ground were stained in blood. She and James were also completely covered, while Tom's front was covered too.

"That pool wasn't dirty, it was blood stained," Zare stuttered.

"What happened to him?" Rean asked.

Tom knelt down too, his fingers went to check James' pulse, "he's fine, just unconscious."

"How did you get the lights to work?" Zare asked.

"Lights switch," Rean replied.

"The power mustn't have been drained, someone obviously switched the whole colony off when whatever happened, happened," Tom said.

Jessie suddenly collapsed too, Tom checked her pulse too. "Fainted, must be something in the blood that they accidentally swallowed." Zare pulled a disgusted face.

"Just a thought, why is there blood in a pool?" Rean asked nervously.

Tom screamed like a girl, this woke James and Jessie up. The other two stared at him.

"What the hell are you screaming for?" James asked.

"Behind you..." Tom stuttered. "Zare, Rean, below you." Everyone looked in the direction Tom had told them, they all gasped. Right at the side of the pool lay a body. "What the, how?"

James and Jessie quickly got onto their feet. Zare jumped down, she scanned it. "Rean, cover your eyes."

"Too late," Rean stuttered.

Zare continued to scan but just looking at it told her not to bother, "well he didn't drown." Standing up confirmed it, the body lying in front of her didn't have a head.

The group stood in the middle of a street, staring down at something. Well Rean was trying but Zare's hand kept trying to block his eyes. Tom looked a little shaken to say the least.

Right in front of them lay another headless body. This one also didn't look as fresh as the previous one.

Zare trembled as she knelt down. James took over hiding Rean from it for her, he moaned everytime he tried.

"I've seen this guy before," she said.

Jessie's face was scrunched in disgust, "how can you tell? He's rotted and headless."

"The clothes, the place..." Zare stuttered. "I saw this."

"You did?" Tom said. "I wish I did before I tripped over the dude."

"What do you mean you saw this?" James asked.

Zare slowly climbed to her feet. "In a dream. He was trying to fend off Hilare demons. That explains a lot."

"It does?" Jessie said.

Zare nodded. "Yeah. Their claws are poisonous. The poison quickly takes over and destroys everything. And I mean everything. This will be why there's no one here."

"Ouch," Tom stuttered.

"We do have two bodies though," James reminded her.

"Yeah, it doesn't make any sense," Zare said as she looked back down at the body. Something caught her eye so she knelt down beside it. "He has a Chosen mark."

"A what?" Tom asked.

"A bruise, tattoo or scar that shows who's a Chosen. He must have been one," Zare replied. "Oh god, that means..."

"The guy in the pool, we should go back," James said.

Jessie sighed, "yay."

Tom nodded furiously, "I second that yay."

"If these guys are as dangerous as Zare says, maybe you guys should go back to the shuttle," James said.

Zare nodded, "yes, and take Rean with you." Rean was nodding with her until she said that. He stared up at her with accusing eyes. "Don't look at me like that, you saw that coming."

"Did not. I'm stronger than him," Rean grumbled, pointing at James. He didn't really notice as he had his own protests going on.

"I can understand a kid and a wuss, but me? What gives?" Jessie said questioningly. Tom was about to say something, but he just pouted instead.

"You could say I'm practising being overprotective," James said.

Zare meanwhile ruffled her brother's hair. "You're still a kid, he's not."

"But... Ligod said this was my first mission," Rean continued to pout.

"Yeah and I've got to thank him for that little present," Zare muttered. She glanced back towards James, briefly catching Jessie beside him rolling her eyes. "Shall we?"

"Yeah," he nodded.

The pair were soon back at the blood soaked pool, each of them standing inside it.

James reluctantly knelt down beside the headless body, he carefully rolled it onto its back. Zare cringed immediately.

"He's a Chosen too," she said. Her hand pointed towards the mark on its arm. "He doesn't seem as aged as the other. This is starting to make too much sense."

"It is?" James said.

"Yeah, the last three lots of Chosens were killed by *unknown causes* according to reports," Zare said.

"Missing in action you mean," James said.

"Yeah I figure all of them came here and never left," Zare said.

"Not really, two generations are here at least," James said.

Zare glanced towards him, "yeah but the first pair were sent somewhere to observe activities. The other four were sent on a mission to find survivors somewhere. Damn I should have put it together," Zare said angrily. She put one hand over her face.

"I don't get it. If six Chosens died here, why would Ligod want to send more?" James questioned. "Also, why wouldn't he tell you about the previous attempts?"

"The first two were definitely killed by the Hilare demons. They must be still here. Who else will take care of it if we can't?" Zare replied. "Ligod thought Rean could deal with this, I'll kill him."

"Maybe that's why he invited another Slayer," James said in an uneasy voice.

Zare threw him a deadly glare, "he's thirteen. He shouldn't be here!"

"Not disagreeing with you there," James nodded.

"Good. He should stay with your friends. You should guard them while I take care of this," Zare grumbled as she made her way over to the pool's ladder.

James was still nodding until what she said clicked with him, he quickly rushed after her. "Wait a minute..."

"This isn't a debate," she snapped.

"Too bad," James said once he caught up with her. He quickly moved around to stand in front of her. "We're talking about demons that have killed off three pairs of Chosens. I don't think one solo is going to give them too much trouble."

"What, and a Chosen/Natural duo will do better?" Zare said with a raised eyebrow.

"Better than you alone," James answered.

Zare smirked at him with contempt. "You didn't even know what a Slayer was two days ago, let alone demons. A few vampires here and there doesn't make you a pro."

"Your brother knows more than I do, so by your logic..." James muttered back.

Zare's eyes flared up. Her fist flew up to hit him, he quickly dodged and stepped back. "Don't you dare. You're a rookie, he's a kid. I'm doing this alone."

"Then you'll die alone," James said.

Zare scoffed, then she laughed bitterly. "Oh, how does little Jessie put up with this crap?"

James felt his shoulders tense up a little. "What?"

"The macho act. I'm just a girl right, helpless without a strong male to help me out," Zare said.

"What?" James laughed in disbelief. "How did you get that from that?"

Zare walked up to him so they were almost nose to nose, or more accurately forehead to nose. "Well I've got news for you. I'm much stronger than you and if you're too insecure to handle that, then don't take it out on me. If you do..."

"I'm the insecure one? I'm not the one playing the gender card here," James said. "If it was Rean that was the adult one and he wanted to do the same thing, I'd still protest. I'd still come along and try to help him."

Zare's smirk was back, "you're not coming. You said it yourself, two Chosens couldn't do this. Maybe I can't alone but a newbie Natural sure isn't going to make any difference. You'll die for nothing. Face it, you're just a typical guy who can't handle the fact that a girl was picked to be stronger over him."

"Just because your ex trainee Slayer boyfriend was an insecure little boy, doesn't mean that every single guy is the same," James countered. "I have no problem with you being stronger than me, in fact it's a relief. I had a hard enough time with the strength I have, which I didn't want either, why would I want more?"

Zare shrugged, "well..."

"So a girl's stronger than me. So what? I don't honestly understand why that would bother anyone, but hey, believe what you want. I don't care what crap you come up with, I'm coming with you and that's that. You can't stop me," James argued.

"There's your answer," Zare sighed. "I can." She grabbed his shoulders and quickly threw her leg up to knee him as hard as she could in the stomach. As soon as he started to double over from the damage, she swung her fist into his jaw.

When he was down Zare turned on her heel to leave him behind. She stopped when she heard him start to get back up.

"Don't. It's suicide," he said. "We can think of something else. Just wait."

Zare scoffed, "something else?"

"There's always another way. Charging into a demon's nest, if you can find it at all, can't be the only way," James said as he slowly and carefully walked over.

"We're Slayers; we kill monsters, fight cubes. What else is there to do?" Zare muttered. She looked around the area in front of her. A nearby piece of debris caught her eye.

"That's probably what the other Slayers thought, and now look at them," James said, briefly glancing back at the pool. Zare picked up the large piece of debris when he did. "Sometimes going head first into a fight can work, but not all the time. We'll think of something else. If not..."

"No time," Zare whispered. She turned around and swung her new weapon into his face. The blow threw him to the ground, face first. She waited this time before turning her back on him. "I'm sorry. This is what Chosen's do."

Jessie's eyes widened as James returned to the shuttle with his new bruises and cut on his face. "What the... What happened?" she hurried over to him.

"Zare," he answered quietly so Rean couldn't hear.

He did anyway and he ran over to the pair. "What, where is she?" he asked.

James hesitated for a moment, but Tom and Jessie were wanting to know too and there was little time to be discreet. "She's going to take on the demons. I tried to stop her."

"Ugh, this is so typical of her," Rean huffed.

Tom hurried over as well, he looked worried. "She does this sort of lone wolf thing a lot?"

"She's the Chosen, I'm not old enough to help her. Yeah," Rean grumbled.

Jessie shook her head, "you tried to help her and she beat you in response." She looked towards Rean, "I'm not finishing that one."

"She doesn't know where they are, it gives us some time," James said with a sigh on the end.

Tom smiled smugly, "I can give you more than that."

"Yes, invisible girls talking to him," Jessie rolled her eyes. James frowned at the two of them despite his sore jaw. "Sensors picked up a lot of lifesigns appearing in a large warehouse not far from here."

"It's the demons' nest. I found that out," Tom said.

Jessie gave him a dirty look, he just smiled in return. "I think we could have figured that out without your imaginary friend, Tom."

Rean perked up slightly, "ooh ooh, I've got a plan."

"As long as it isn't charge in and get killed, I'm all ears," James said.

"How about we use the weapons on this ship to destroy it, or a bomb," Rean suggested.

Tom's eyes widened, "I dunno what's worse."

"Can't, unless you want to take us with it. The warehouse next to theirs is the shield generator. With that down, the pressure could crush the colony," Jessie said.

"Sounds good," James said.

"What?" Tom stuttered.

Jessie smirked at him first, then she smiled at the other two. "We can't fire at it, it's too far away and there's too much in the way. We could make something explosive and plant it nearby." She stepped over to the other side of the shuttle to pick up something.

"Fine, we could do that," Tom huffed. "But what about Zare, and how are we supposed to get in without being seen?"

"Zare should show up on the sensors, especially if she hasn't found the nest," James pointed out. He rushed over to the front of the shuttle just as Jessie was about to attack him with a regenerator. She huffed at the bad timing of it.

"She's always doing this. She doesn't get that she's not supposed to be alone in this Chosen crap. That's why she has me, that's why Natural's are picked out too," Rean grumbled. Both Tom and Jessie looked at him, Jessie soon glanced down to the floor. "She thinks it's her versus the bad in the universe, I... I don't get her. It'll be better when I'm old enough, right?"

Tom reached out to pat the boy on the shoulder. "Definitely kid." Jessie sighed and made her way to the front of the shuttle. "For now, you just be her brother. It's all she really needs at the moment."

"You okay?" Jessie asked quietly.

James nodded as he tapped on the controls. "Yeah, just a few bruises."

"Not that," Jessie whispered. "This Slayer stuff..."

James briefly looked over his shoulder at her. "Doesn't change anything. Yeah sure, I mean it's nice to know what was wrong with me all this time. It..." He hesitated a moment, it just made Jessie worry more. "Doesn't matter."

"There's nothing wrong with you," Jessie scolded him but in a gentle voice.

"I know," James said in a voice that made Jessie think he didn't mean it. He looked over again with a small smile on his face. "At least I'm not alone."

Jessie glanced back at Rean, then back at him. "Yeah."

"I meant you," James said as he looked back at the console.

"Oh," Jessie said, her cheeks slowly turning red. "Right."

James' face turned a little pale when the console beeped at him. "The only lifesigns are in the warehouse."

"We'd better hurry then," Tom said as he slowly approached them both. "I'll see what I can cook up quickly."

"There's no time," James stuttered. He gave the console a light smack, but it still was pretty hard to it. "I can't figure out which lifesign is hers. They're all different..." He turned to hurry out of the shuttle, Jessie quickly got in his way to slow him down.

"You'll be no better off than she is," she said.

"I know but we can't just leave her there. She'll be dead before the bomb's ready," James said.

Tom walked over to the pair, grabbing something mid way.

"Yes but what if they get you as well. Who will deliver the bomb then?" Jessie said. She felt terrible for saying it, her head shook in disgust. "I don't want to lose you."

"Um..." Tom tried to butt in.

"You're right, but we can't just wait for Tom to..." James said, then he noticed Tom beside him. "Stand around looking at us."

"Yeah, um... two things. One," Tom said nervously. He held out his fist and opened it up to reveal a couple of commbadges in his palm. "Give one to Zare and we can get her out. Nobody gave our two guests one, pretty stupid considering the awaymission."

"And two is about the bomb right?" Jessie said uneasily.

Tom looked a little guilty, he pointed to the back of the shuttle. The pair followed his finger, quickly noticing there were only three of them in the shuttle.

"Damn," James muttered. "Sorry," he said to Jessie before rushing out. He grabbed the commbadges from Tom and a phaser rifle as he did.

Jessie began to follow him but Tom cleared his throat to stop her. She turned around to look at him. "You monitor the commbadges, I'll replicate the bomb. We can still make this work," he said.

Jessie glanced back to the shuttle door with worry all over her face. She eventually looked back and nodded.

As he approached the warehouse he could hear the familiar sounds of a fight going on. He tried to run faster than he was already. He could see it now, its roof just peeping over the building he was running by.

Once he got there he quickly hid behind the wall surrounding it, right next to the open gate. A boy's scream, followed by rough voices laughing sent a chill down his spine. Slowly he looked around the wall. He could not see where the boy was, all he could see were the backs of very large monsters, each one with very long and deadly claws.

James lifted the rifle in his arm to point it ahead of him, his eyes quickly checked to see if the rifle was definitely on the right setting. The word Maximum confirmed that. He glanced again, this time the monsters were dispersing a little so he could see something, anything in front of them.

They were watching, cheering on a larger one. Its back was facing James, but he could see its arm lifting up into the air. His eyes widened as whatever it was holding, he could see now just peeping out from above its head.

"Zare," he whispered. He didn't have time to worry about it. He maneuvered the rifle around the gap in the wall and aimed at the middle demon. The ones surrounding it were constantly moving though. James was just about to fire when the demon's grip on Zare tightened into a fist. His eyes widened in horror, his skin turned ghostly white, his hands started to shake.

The demons laughed as the whole warehouse lit up, each one seemed to be generating the light. It only lasted for a few seconds, but James barely noticed it. What he had just seen had shocked him to the core.

In the corner of his eye he noticed something lying on the other side of the wall, curiosity got the better of him, or he didn't want to look ahead anymore. He didn't think his eyes could get any wider, but they did anyway. The thing lying nearby was tiny, the size of a small boy. His own started to shake as he noticed the still form had no head.

Something told him to run, and it wasn't just that. He quickly looked back forward, the demons had spotted him. They slowly made their way over, laughing over what they had done. That was when James saw the discarded body of Zare lying behind them.

"Time to test the Chosen power, boys," the leader cackled. The others laughed with him.

There were far too many, and what only one of them had done to Zare was fresh on his mind. James knew what he had to do. He turned around and ran as fast as he could. The only thing that followed him was haunting laughter.

It had only been a couple of weeks since the incident at the ocean colony, but it happened every night when he tried to sleep. The lack of it was starting to take its toll.

"You did the right thing," Jessie told him again.

"Hmm," James could only say.

Tuvok stood nearby with his arms folded behind his back. "Crewman Rex is correct. Sometimes the only thing you can do is retreat. You shouldn't..."

"Tell that to the next Chosens who are sent to their deaths," James said quietly, but loud enough for Tuvok to make out.

Jessie's head shook. "That wouldn't be your fault. Those idiot watchers shouldn't keep sending them. The colony is empty, it's not worth it."

"Hmm," James repeated.

"You are still a member of Security, Ensign. You can't avoid awaymissions for the rest of your time there," Tuvok said.

James only rolled his eyes at that comment. His head dipped back down to look at his hands folded across his lap. Jessie was about to place her hand on his, but with the rest of his team nearby, she didn't want Tom or Thompson making jokes, especially now. She settled for a hand on his arm.

"This isn't some supernatural mission cooked up by a homicidal prick, it's just a regular mission to find coffee by a tiny bit less homicidal coffee fanatic," Jessie said. She had managed to mostly talk herself out of it before she had even finished.

Tom nodded. "Yup, if we're going to die here, it'll be the usual boring way."

"Mr Paris," Tuvok warned.

Tom's eyes widened, "what? Yeah, we won't die. Nothing ever happens on supply missions."

"Has he got any two's?" Foster asked far in the background.

Thompson glanced over at the other four, then reached over to peek at the cards lying face down on the table. "No."

"Great," Foster grinned. He put a two card on the middle pile. Thompson's eyes narrowed. He had to pick up two cards from other pile.

Jessie's eyebrow raised as she'd seen and heard this exchange, but Tom hadn't.

"I don't know," James muttered.

"You don't need to. You have no choice," Tuvok said. Jessie shot him a glare. "You were trying to convince him earlier."

"Yeah until I remembered what happened last time Janeway ran out of coffee," Jessie said. "If James isn't confident enough, logically he's not going to be a useful addition to the team. Right?"

Tuvok's eyebrow raised. James finally moved his head to look at her, barely doing the same thing as Tuvok. She shrugged.

"Quiet virgins, I'm trying to think of my next move," Thompson snapped. He put down another card.

Foster pouted as he put down his next card, "I am not one of those!"

Tom looked over his shoulder, he quickly turned around just as Thompson was peeping at the discarded cards again. This time he was stealing one. "Hey!" He darted towards the table to grab his arm. Thompson tried to dodge it, which Tom followed. The pair looked like they were doing a one arm pantomime act as this went on for a few minutes.

"Mr Taylor was the most useful addition to the team when he was in a coma," Tuvok commented.

Jessie tried her best not to laugh, glancing briefly at James' tired face helped. She just gave him a sympathetic smile instead.

"Snooze you lose the Ace of Hearts," Thompson complained.

Tom groaned, "I was being nice, unlike you!"

"Yeah, you are a rock," Thompson grumbled.

Foster meanwhile shook his head.

"Look at it this way. If this team goes on the mission without you and something endangers them, as well as the supply team, then you will continue to feel this way," Tuvok argued. "The best way to fight what you Humans call Survivors Guilt is to continue as normal."

"What if I'm there and it makes no difference?" James questioned.

Tuvok's eyebrow raised again. Jessie glanced at him briefly, then back at James. "He's right, about the first bit at least anyway." James shook his head. "Zare and Rean didn't die because of anything you did, you've got to know that."

"I do know that," James said.

"Good. The team will need to be in the shuttle bay in ten minutes," Tuvok said. He walked out before anyone else could object.

"Then why are you beating yourself up?" Jessie whispered softly.

"Duh!" Tom butted in. He now held his abandoned cards, Thompson pouted behind him. "He's bad moody cos he didn't get to be the big hero. We guys are fragile that way."

"Speak for yourself," Thompson huffed.

James had just enough of his old self in him to roll his eyes and say, "no."

"No? You just don't want to agree with me or anything. You're mad that they fought and died, and you ran away. I would be bummed too," Tom said with a sympathetic smile on his face. "You know how you get over it?"

"If I didn't run away, I'd have been killed too," James muttered.

Tom grinned, "see, glad I could help. Let's go guys." He headed for the door. The other two members of the team didn't even look at him, they remained in their seats.

Jessie covered her annoyed face with her hand, she shook her head lightly. "God," she groaned. Her hand returned to her lap. "How can someone be that stupid?"

Foster put down his last card, smiling smugly. "Okay, time to go."

Thompson whined as he put his last two cards down. "Two out of three?" Foster only shook his head. "Damn it!" The pair headed out as well.

"Tom's half right," James admitted.

Jessie nodded to his surprise, she turned her gaze back on him. "I know. You don't like feeling helpless, especially when others are involved. I just wish you didn't always think that you have to do everything."

"It's not that," James said quietly.

"Zare thought like that, didn't she?" Jessie said. "The difference is you knew when to retreat and she didn't. You shouldn't feel ashamed at that, you should be proud of yourself. It'll keep you alive, which I want as well."

"So what do you think I should do then?" James asked.

Jessie smiled, "go down, do nothing but watch them screw everything up, laugh." Her smile grew as she noticed a one slowly grow on his face. "You're not going down to fight monsters, you've only been sent to stop the supply team hiding any coffee plants from Janeway. It's a do nothing job."

"Yeah," James mumbled with half a smile.

The Shuttle Sacajawea

"What are we supposed to be doing again? Tuvok lost me at shuttle," Foster asked nervously.

Tom shrugged, "Janeway still hasn't got her coffee supplies, plus we need some of that healthy stuff."

"Vegetables?" Foster smirked.

"That's it," Tom said. He ignored the sniggering behind him, well tried to. "Another team will join us once we ok it, we're guarding them or something."

"Guarding, from what?" Thompson asked.

"Probably Janeway herself," Tom smiled.

Foster took him seriously, he looked a little panicked, "oh god. We're going to die."

"Relax. What's going to happen?" Tom said just as the shuttle landed on the ground. "See? No crash, no problem. Unlike Janeway's *mission*, this will be a breeze."

Meanwhile:

"Captain, perhaps we should have a recess," Tuvok said calmly.

Kathryn looked up at him, her fist only an inch away from her victim's face. Her eyebrow twitched, "go ahead. I won't stop you."

"Wow, you're much more irritable this time. Curious," the man she was kneeling over chuckled.

Tuvok noticed their other guest roll his eyes, his eyebrow raised even further.

"How about I help you with that suicide thing right now," Kathryn growled. Her fist finally hit its target, though he didn't seem bothered at all by it. "Damn it, these Q's would make a lousy punch bag."

"I beg to differ."

Kathryn threw her glare towards the other Q, he just smiled at her. "You're right." She threw one more punch at the one on the floor, then she stood up. "Now, where were we?"

"A recess, I need to talk to my *colleague* for a moment," Q said.

The second Q climbed to his feet, he immediately pointed an accusing finger at him. "You know full damn well I won the last two times. Why must you play this game over and over again, it's cruel."

Q chuckled, "further proof he's insane. Excuse us." He clicked his fingers, the pair disappeared in a white light.

"God, how long does it take to get some coffee," Kathryn growled, her attention wavered to the planet.

"Indeed," Tuvok said quietly.

The two Q's reappeared in a quiet room.

"Grant me my freedom, Q. You did it twice already," Q2 complained.

"Yes and like those times, we must follow the plot already laid out," Q said.

Q2 frowned, "I thought we weren't supposed to do fourth wall jokes."

"I didn't mean that," Q groaned. "Make too many changes to the timeline and the consequences will be disastrous. You will not have to do this again."

"Oh I'm sorry if my re-occurring death and resurrection is such a bother to you, Q," Q2 hissed.

Q smiled, "apology accepted. Now, shall we return to the *play*?"

"We're in a play now?" Q2 looked confused.

Q only sighed in response.

"Them talking about doing all of this over and over again. I don't trust them," Kathryn said.

Tuvok agreed, he nodded. "It is likely another practical joke, like the ones he used to do against the Enterprise."

"Then we will no longer play along," Kathryn said. "I won't be a pawn in Q's little game, this ends here."

The planet:

Thompson and Foster stood outside the shuttle, both of them armed with a phaser. Of course that didn't make them any braver. The slightest movement like a breeze hitting a leaf made them jump.

"I knew I should have gone with James. Your nervousness is catching," Thompson grunted.

Foster glared at him, "it was your idea!"

"Um, I remember you being the first to volunteer," Thompson smiled.

Foster went bright red very quickly. "That's not the point."

"Uh huh," Thompson nodded. "Sissy."

"I'm not, I'm just sensible. You, you're just a..." Foster stammered.

Thompson moved around to face him, smirking away. "Just a what?"

Foster turned away from him, "you think you're so great, but nobody likes you. Get the hint."

The leaves rustled behind Thompson, this time it wasn't the wind that did it. A few figures pushed through the trees and bushes to join the two. They hadn't noticed yet since they weren't even looking that way.

"You mean James? He doesn't like anybody," Thompson sniggered. "Well except the Jessie girl, but we both know girls don't count."

Foster rolled his eyes, "no of course not, cos in Thompson's world girls aren't people."

The new arrivals looked at each other. One pointed at Thompson and licked his lips. The others shook their heads and pointed at the shuttle. He pouted.

"That's not what I meant, you're nitpicking. I meant every guy always likes a pretty face, no matter how much of an anti social freak he is," Thompson groaned.

The three people crept towards the shuttle, still unnoticed.

"Oh yeah, but it's not just him. I did say nobody likes you, remember?" Foster said.

"I thought nobody was just him and Tom, and who cares about Tom?" Thompson commented. He shrugged, "who cares about either of them. Though I guess if he isn't having a breakdown or coma's he is the one that does all the dangerous work."

The group disappeared around to the other side of the shuttle. Unknown to the squabblers they tiptoed inside through the open doors.

"Jesus, do you think I like you? Or do I not count as a nobody?" Foster asked. Thompson snorted into laughter, Foster's response was to shove him. That stopped him, his mouth dropped open in shock. "Well?"

"Don't push me!" Thompson grumbled. He shoved him back. "I thought we were buddies."

Foster laughed this time, he pushed harder this time. "I have better taste than that."

"Oh yeah!?" Thompson scoffed. His next shove was using his fist. Foster stared at him for a minute before doing the same back.

The three intruders snuck out of the shuttle and started to make their way back around. They waited by the side of it to check on the two so called guards. By this time they were rolling around on the floor, barely hitting each other.

"Wow," one of the intruders whispered. He shook his head at the others, they nodded back. They carefully walked back to the bushes they came from.

"Stop that, that's cheating!" Thompson complained as Foster somehow got him in a headlock. Thompson had a tight hold of Foster's hair and was pulling. The two rolled again, just catching the intruders slipping away into the shadows.

"Uhoh," Foster stuttered.

"Oops," Thompson also did. They quickly let go of each other and got to their feet as quickly as they could. "We need a cover story, fast."

Tom and James stared at the pair, their eyes pretty wide.

"What happened here?" Tom asked.

"These people broke in, beat us up and took a power module," Thompson replied.

"People? There are no humanoid lifesigns on this planet," Tom said in disbelief.

James glanced away to hide some nervousness in his eyes. "Yeah."

"No there were people, I'm sure of it," Foster stuttered. Thompson nodded furiously.

Tom smirked at the two. "Are you sure they weren't monkeys?"

"Well one moron did grab my hair," Foster muttered. Thompson gave him an elbow, Foster glared at him for it.

James stared at the window of the shuttle, Tom missed the elbow thing as he was watching him. "What?"

"Nothing. You guys should get back inside, seal the door," James answered.

Tom frowned, "um, you guys?"

"Yeah we shouldn't split up again," Foster said.

"I'm not suggesting splitting up. I'm suggesting that you guys stay behind and I go," James said.

"Hey I don't mind people, it's bugs I don't like," Tom said.

James shook his head. "I don't think it's people."

"Neither do I," Tom smirked. Thompson and Foster glared at him.

"I can handle it. You stay here," James said. He turned around and headed back the way he came.

"God that guy's full of himself," Thompson muttered, shaking his head.

"I don't care what he says guys, we're going too," Tom said.

"You're both mad, these people were strong. When I say strong, I mean freakishly strong like James," Thompson said. Foster glanced at him with wide eyes.

Tom cleared his throat, "we're still going. Freaks like James can still get shot, bring phasers." Thompson and Foster nodded nervously, they went back into the shuttle.

"You don't know that they were strong," Foster whispered.

Thompson pointed at a broken console. Foster shook his head. "See, this is why I'm great and you aren't." Foster resisted the urge to hit him again.

Tom rushed in as well. "Come on guys, hurry. We can save the day yet."

Tom lead the way towards a clearing, cradling a phaser rifle in his left arm. He stopped when he heard voices straight ahead. The pair behind him stopped as well.

"Cover," he whispered before hiding behind a nearby tree. They did the same.

"I told you it was people," Thompson whispered.

"Shh," Tom tried to hush him. He peeped his head around the tree to try and see inside the clearing.

"Aren't you glad you didn't fill up on wimps?" one man's voice sneered. A few voices seemed to agree with him. "You want more boys and girls?"

Tom looked at the others, they looked just as nervous as him. The cheering they heard didn't help.

"The ship will send more down to find their lost colleagues. They won't if they're still alive," the man's voice said. "I can't make it any clearer."

"Those two were wimps though, hardly snack worthy," a woman's voice said.

"Snack?" Thompson squeaked. Tom and Foster's heads swung in his direction, their mouths and eyes wide open. He cringed, this time he only mouthed, "oops."

They all heard a dark laugh, then footsteps approaching.

"Ok, I don't have to tell you," Tom whispered. He looked to the others, but they'd already gone. "Gee thanks, definitely didn't." He turned around completely and ran as fast as he could.

Voyager:

"Nobody's answering," Harry reported.

Kathryn sent him a death glare but quickly shook it off, it wasn't helping.

"I'm only detecting two lifesigns now, Captain," Tuvok reported.

"Damn it, get them out of there!" Chakotay snapped. Harry nodded.

The planet:

Tom felt like he'd been running for hours, he was almost out of breath. The voices behind him were gaining in though, he had no choice.

Luckily though he could see it getting lighter ahead. His arm was slapped by another tree branch in the way, it slashed him just like the last one. He couldn't let that slow him down though.

Finally the trees cleared. Dead ahead of him was a lake with a waterfall crashing into it. He had to change direction or he'd risk falling in. When he did his foot caught on something large and heavy. He heard and felt his ankle twist from the impact. At the speed he was running, he couldn't stop himself from falling hard onto the ground.

It was silent for a moment. The voices behind him came back in a blur. He tried to lift his head, everything span in front of him. He didn't have time to worry about that, he tried to push himself back up but his ankle screamed at him to stop.

"No," he groaned. With the strength he had left, he pulled himself into a sitting position. The area around him slowly stopped spinning. When it did he looked to his left to see what he tripped over. What he saw made him almost throw up, the pain in his ankle was a distant memory as he dragged his body further back.

He had hoped he just tripped over a rock or just a dip in the grass. No, he tripped over a body. The first thing he saw were the dozens of gashes spread all over his skin, each one stained with so much blood that it had pooled in the grass underneath. What got him the most was the open eyes almost looking right at him.

The last thing he saw before a transporter beam rescued him was the sickly sight of the body's twisted neck. He hoped it was over for him before he felt any of it.

The Conference Room:

Chakotay didn't dare look at her, just in case. He just kept his eye on the PADD in his hands. "Out of the original and *rescue* team, only Mr Paris returned. We've been unable to find any signs of Thompson, Foster, Davids, Reyna, or Harrison. Paris told me though he found um... the fourth member of his team." The silence was killing him, he swore the temperature in the room dropped. "Apart from that, what Tom has said about the attackers is... putting it nicely, ridiculous. I think he's in shock."

Tuvok dared to look Kathryn's way. She had her back to the two of them so it was difficult to gauge her reaction. However he had no reason to believe this would be different to any other casualty on Voyager.

"There are no alien lifesigns on the surface. The aliens must have masked them," he said.

"I prefer that explanation to what Tom was saying," Chakotay said.

"Indeed," Tuvok agreed.

"We have to be very careful here. From what he said, what happened to Ja... number four, the people who did this are strong and they are brutal. If we are to retrieve any of our people, we..." Chakotay said. He was interrupted by a cup of hot coffee, probably only replicated decaf, slamming into the wall just beside him. He was surprised, but not as much as Tuvok was. "Um..."

"Get out," Kathryn hissed. Her back was still on them, both of them were very grateful for that.

"Captain, we need to discuss this situation. These people have stolen technology from us, possibly killed indiscriminantly. Since they've masked their lifesigns they may have kidnapped our people..." Tuvok said.

Chakotay cringed slightly, he knew one was definitely not kidnapped. He didn't say that outloud though, he didn't want to be next.

"Bridge to Janeway," Harry's voice interrupted.

When he didn't get an answer, Chakotay tapped his commbadge. "Chakotay here, what is it?"

"I don't know where it came from, but a vessel has just left the planet. They've gone to warp."

Kathryn's fists were tightly clenched, as well as her jaw. "Follow them," she ordered. Chakotay felt a chill in her voice, he knew better than to argue with her.

"Yes ma'am. Bridge out."

"Was I talking to myself? Get out," Kathryn muttered.

Tuvok was the first to leave, though he was a little concerned with what just happened. Chakotay stared at her for a short time, he tried to think of something, anything to say. His head was blank. He turned to leave too.

Kathryn stared at the planet below her. She could barely see most of it, night had fell where they were. It didn't matter to her, staring at the planet felt like she was staring directly at a certain someone. The ship then jumped into warp, all she could see then were streaming stars.

Kathryn felt like she had abandoned him again. The last time she did it she felt sick, this time she was.

Ten Months Later

The holodeck doors opened. Tom and Harry walked through them in their beach clothes, grinning from ear to ear.

"I'm definitely trying the volley ball next time. I'll beat you there, no problem," Harry said.

Tom laughed, "you wish."

The pair passed another pair on their way into the holodeck, wearing similar clothes to them. Harry glanced over his shoulder at them.

"God it's been so quiet lately," Tom sighed.

"It was a good idea to have the resort on 24/7," Harry said. "After the changes were made of course."

"I thought we could do the same with Holodeck Two, something different you know," Tom said.

Harry winced, "if it involves bad Irish stereotypes, cows and old clothes, then I'm going to say you're out of good ideas."

The pair reached the turbolift. They stopped to wait for it. Tom looked a little uncomfortable. "Hey, give a guy a break. I'm still post traumatic stressey."

Harry just smirked at that. "It's been nearly a year Tom, you can't keep using that. At least you can't twice in one week."

"Damn," Tom sighed.

Chakotay's voice ran out over the intercom, *"senior officers report to the Conference Room."*

Tom and Harry gave each other a worried stare. As soon as the turbolift arrived they rushed inside it.

Conference Room:

"We knew this day was coming, but we're still not ready," Chakotay said. "Borg Space." He had already mentioned it, but the two words made everyone but Tuvok tense up again.

"At least we've had many months of nothing to ease us into it," the Doctor commented to lighten the mood. It obviously didn't.

"I'll admit we're a little rusty, but it's us, we can handle anything," Chakotay said.

"Except vampires," Tom whispered to himself, glancing down at his hands. Most of the room looked more awkward than tense, they avoided looking at him. Tom sighed, he was used to no one believing him. B'Elanna gave him a glance, he felt a little relieved at that.

"Some of us anyway. The Captain, does she..." Neelix remarked.

"She's been informed," Chakotay answered before he could ask. "Their space is vast, we've really got no way of going around it. We'll have to go through it. I'm open to suggestions."

"During previous encounters with them, people were able to beam aboard their ships and encounter no resistance. Apparently they weren't a threat. Surely one ship flying through their space is less of a threat than an incursion," Harry said.

Chakotay didn't look so sure. "We're going to need a little more than that."

"What can we do other than dodging any signs of a cube?" Tom commented.

B'Elanna looked a little disgusted for some reason. Anyone who saw it were a little confused. "I have a really bad idea."

Chakotay stared with a curious look. "I know we joke about it, but we can't attack the Borg with Neelix's cooking."

Neelix pouted, "I don't see the Borg being bribed, somehow."

B'Elanna tried not to laugh, it still didn't help her nausea. "No. We have someone onboard who used to own a ship with a cloaking device. Perhaps with some... persuasion he'll help us install that on Voyager." She saw Tuvok's eyebrow raise. "I know it's against some treaty that the Federation signed, but I hardly think it applies out here. There's no Romulans to piss off here, is there?"

"Damien?" Harry was surprised. "That guy hates us, still not sure why, he won't want to help. He's only here cos that said ship was destroyed anyway."

"Maybe he will if it means avoiding being assimilated by the Borg," B'Elanna said.

Chakotay nodded. "That ship was destroyed by a ship from the future, hardly a fault with the cloak."

"No but it means unless he's memorised the technical specifications, the cloak's just a dream in a mad man's head," Harry pointed out.

"We can only ask," Tom smiled. "And get laughed at. Where's the harm?"

"If the lack of a cloak threatens his own life, Mr Damien will have no choice but to consider helping us," Tuvok said. "If you recall the mission with the time ship he did assist us."

"Yeah cos he wanted to play Captain," Harry muttered.

Tom gave him a nudge with his elbow, "still a little sore about that, Harry?"

"Still, if the situation benefits him, he will render aid," Tuvok said.

Chakotay sighed, "all right. I'll ask him. We still need another plan in case he just laughs at me or can't do it."

The room was silent as everyone tried to think of an alternative to what was already said. Eventually Harry spoke up meekly, "why can't we use Neelix's cooking against them? They assimilate it, they eat it, they're all stuck in their Sickbay with food poisoning for months."

Neelix looked a little confused, "I don't get it."

Chakotay smirked at the Ensign, "I'll consider it. Unfortunately we're ducking, covering and asking a mad villain wannabe for help. Whoever complained about the last few months being uneventful, this is all your fault."

Everyone looked at Tom immediately. His eyes widened slightly. "What? I'm the last guy who wanted action. Apart from time travel escapades, my last bit of action nearly got me eaten and not sleeping for weeks." Most of the room groaned when he said eaten, B'Elanna was one of the few who didn't. She gave him a sympathetic smile at the last part.

"I still see him sometimes, looking at me. Like he was blaming me... god," he whispered. Under the table B'Elanna took his hand, he clutched it tightly. "No wonder Jessie can't even look at me... I can't stop making it all about me, stop it."

"You didn't do anything wrong, you survived," B'Elanna said softly.

Harry smiled slightly and patted his friend on the shoulder.

"Okay if that's all, dismissed," Chakotay said uncomfortably.

As it usually was the Ready Room was dark, the only light came from the computer on the desk. Everytime he came in he wasn't prepared for the look and feel of the office now. The usual smell of coffee was a forgotten memory. The plants she used to keep had withered and died. Even her old tea cup set had long since been destroyed. It broke his heart everytime he came in here.

"I figured I should discuss our only plans with you before I proceed," Chakotay had said. As usual it took a while for her to respond to anything, so he waited patiently.

Eventually Kathryn's shadow moved slightly, he saw her head turn to the left. "Cloak?" she said quietly.

"It's still risky. We know the Borg adapt to technology they've already assimilated. Damien's cloak, we dunno where he got it," Chakotay said.

Another silence took over the room for a while. "He built it."

"So he says. You want me to ask him then?" Chakotay asked. He just managed to catch a nod. "Okay. If we avoid cubes and use a cloak, we could make it. I don't know how long we'll have to keep it up, hopefully..."

"Dismissed Commander," Kathryn said barely louder than a whisper.

Chakotay nodded and turned to leave Kathryn alone in the dark again.

Damien had been laughing a while, so long in fact Chakotay had resorted to reading a PADD to pass the time. Eventually he stopped and wiped a few stray tears from his eye.

"You're really pathetic, aren't you?" he said finally.

Chakotay sighed, "yes, but after asking Neelix's help we've already scraped the bottom of the barrel."

Damien's smirk turned into a scowl. "Admit it, you're here because you know I'm smarter than all of you. Better. You need me."

"Then I'm sure the Borg will be getting a treat when they find us. Forget it," Chakotay grumbled. He turned to leave.

Damien chuckled, "nicely played, but I've dealt with those imbeciles before. They talk big, but they're just a lost bunch of misfits with a catsuit addiction that'll make you sick. Don't think of them as clever, though they may be smarter than you, they're just mindless lemmings. They..."

"Perhaps them assimilating you is not a bad idea. You'll bore them to death," Chakotay interrupted. "I'll prepare a shuttle..."

"You don't want them assimilating me. I know more than you could imagine," Damien said. "I even know of an advantage, something you can use against them." He sat down behind the Commander's own desk, he glared at him for it. A quick glance at the computer and Damien put on a fake pout. "Aaw, it might be a little soon for that."

"What are you talking about?" Chakotay questioned.

Damien's smile came back. "Do you really think the Borg are the biggest bad's around here? Think again. Though for now, I could help you hide. It won't matter later on though. I know what your Captain is like, I know what she's capable of."

Chakotay rolled his eyes, he marched over to lean on his own desk. Damien's smile turned into smirk as he put on the most threatening glare he could muster. "She's not here, I am."

"Yeah and why's that? Oh yeah, dead son. That was a bummer," Damien teased.

Chakotay's eyes widened as his face drained of any colour. "How... how did you know about that?"

"I told you," Damien sneered. "I know more than you think."

Chakotay reached out to grab him by his jacket, he pulled him over as close as possible. The smirk was temporarily wiped off. "I said how."

"She gave him up this time, didn't she? It made her just as pissy as I remember her," Damien didn't answer. He smirked again despite his predicament. "That spells trouble for you and I. She's rash, volatile and ready to sacrifice her own crew to get what she wants. Only now that he's kicked it, she's going to care even less."

Chakotay's grip on him loosened a little, Damien was able to clench his fist in front of his face. It immediately unclenched and went flat. "Boom," he whispered.

"God," Chakotay groaned. He let go of him, the hapless ex-villain fell on top of the table immediately. "I'd get more sense out of Neelix listing his pie ingredients."

Damien laughed as he pushed himself back onto his feet. "You've all forgotten, I haven't, it's okay. I'll help you with your little cloak, but remember this. When the going gets tough, Janeway gets mad. Since she's already mad, you can't even imagine what she'll do. You can at least say goodbye to your precious Voyager."

Chakotay shook his head, he could feel his eyes starting to roll again.

"Again," Damien sneered.

Chakotay frowned, "what again?"

Damien laughed again. "If she does crack, let me deal with her. I owe her for the last time." He headed for the door, still smirking away.

Chakotay held his arm out in front of him to stop him from leaving. "What last time?"

"The last time she got us all killed over her freak spawn, of course," Damien said like it was obvious. He ducked to get passed him. Chakotay was too busy trying to figure out what he was talking about to stop him leaving.

First Officer's Log Stardate 50767.4: We've been in Borg Space for nearly two weeks and so far we've been able to avoid a confrontation. B'Elanna and Damien have been working on a cloaking device for the remainder of the trip, I have been informed it is ready for testing. I only hope that putting up with Damien's tall tales have been worth it.

B'Elanna had gotten used to wearing ear muffs to work. They didn't completely drown out all the noise, but as Damien was still alive they obviously worked enough. Unfortunately now was one of those brief times where she had to listen to the moron's babbling's. She had pushed the right muff to behind her ear, but that was all she was giving him.

"... could blow us up to smithereens," he said.

B'Elanna was again used to him saying Voyager was going to blow up, so she wasn't sure whether she should ask him to repeat himself or not. This was the test day so she decided to take the chance. "What?"

Damien sighed loudly. "If we don't get the power feeding to that unit, it could overload and blow us up." He looked behind him at the current command duo, "where do you get these idiots?"

B'Elanna clenched her fist and also looked at them. Chakotay's soft smile settled her down a little. "I think we rescued you from your ship exploding, but I could be wrong."

Damien only rolled his eyes. "Yes, yes, turning it around on me so I'm the idiot I'm talking about. That one's never been done before. You're so clever!"

"Jesus, we all took James's sarcasm for granted, didn't we?" B'Elanna groaned. She resisted yet another urge to smack the man in the face. "In case you haven't noticed, I've muted you out most of the time. Something I think everyone should do."

"Ah, that's why my warnings about the unit on Deck Thirteen, section two have been ignored," Damien sneered. He shrugged, "can't get a monkey to do a genius's work. Excuse me." He wandered off towards the Jeffries tube.

Now that he was gone, both Chakotay and Tuvok dared to approach a seething B'Elanna.

"What's that about a unit without power?" Chakotay asked.

B'Elanna groaned angrily. "Ugh, the units installed to generate the cloak on only one deck have been giving us trouble. The power keeps getting drawn elsewhere."

"Ah, Deck Thirteen strikes again," Chakotay commented.

Tuvok's nodded in agreement. "Indeed, 97% of the malfunctions over the last year have been situated on that deck. It warrants an investigation."

"I'm already on it," B'Elanna growled. "I'm not the only one not listening. I told him that I sent a team down there just an hour ago to fix the unit, and that we wouldn't start the test till it was done. I'll be glad when it's operational."

"How long do you think it'll be? The longer we go on without a Borg attack, the more paranoid the crew seems to get," Chakotay questioned.

B'Elanna was about to reply when a team of three entered Engineering, she sighed in relief. "Let's find out." She walked over to confront them. "Status?"

"It's working Lieutenant," one of the team members replied. They looked relieved when she did, like it wasn't safe until then.

"Yeah, one of the connectors had been fried. We determined that too much power had gone through it," a second member answered.

B'Elanna was about to interrogate them further but the first member sensed it. "We made sure to test if it would do that again. We did it many times. Just in case we installed a new unit and tested that too. No problems."

"Good," B'Elanna smiled. "To answer your question, Commander, only five minutes."

Chakotay nodded, "excellent. Get Damien back before he ruins it and we'll get started. We'll be on the Bridge." B'Elanna pulled a disgusted face as she looked back to where Damien had gone.

He and Tuvok turned to leave. They were only metres away from the door when it opened for someone else. They were both surprised to see a distressed looking Kes.

"Commander, Lieutenant," she stuttered in between heavy breathing. "We have to turn around."

"What?" Chakotay could only say. He noticed she was trembling violently. He placed a gently hand on her shoulder. "Why don't we talk about this outside."

All three of them quickly left Engineering to join the quiet corridor. They didn't go much further.

"I saw... Voyager, the Borg and something, something else," Kes stuttered. "It's not just the Borg we need to worry about but..."

"You had a vision?" Tuvok stated. Kes nodded. "Perhaps we should examine what you saw further. Your telepathic abilities..."

"There's no time," Kes stuttered. "You are about to activate the cloak, it happens soon. We must turn around."

"Kes, calm down. If we turn around we'll still be in Borg space for another two weeks, it's not that easy," Chakotay tried to assure her.

"Voyager will be destroyed," Kes said.

Chakotay looked at Tuvok, as usual he looked calm. "Kes, until your abilities have been disciplined, your visions will be inaccurate, out of order. We need you to go through what happened again, but calmly."

"We don't have time!" Kes stammered. "They will find us and kill us. They will not stop, I'm certain of that."

"How do you know the cloak being activated is a sign of it about to happen?" Chakotay asked.

Kes shook her head. "I cannot explain it. I saw it, it was apart of the vision so it must have some relevance."

"Perhaps we should delay the cloaking test until we can examine her vision," Tuvok suggested.

Chakotay shook his head, "if she's right and it happens when we test it or activate it later, it won't matter if we do it or not. I'll update the Captain but I think she'll want us to go through with it anyway."

"We should turn around, change course. The Borg must know where we are," Kes said.

"You take care of that," Chakotay said to Tuvok. "I'll get Harry to check the long range sensors. Must be something we've missed." He turned back to Kes, "don't worry. Visions are warnings, right? They're not definite."

"I hope you're right," Kes whispered.

The Bridge:

Tom finished what he was doing, he looked behind him. "We're a couple lightyears down a different path, Commander."

"Good," Chakotay sighed in relief. He glanced over to the Engineering station. "We're ready." The person manning it only nodded and pressed one command.

In Engineering B'Elanna was seconds away from knocking Damien into a coma. He held onto her pair of ear muffs behind his back. The console they were both at beeped at them both.

"Okay, Bridge says we're ready," she said.

Damien smiled proudly, "I shall do the honours." His hand went forward to press something. B'Elanna slapped it away and did it instead.

Voyager continued its journey at high warp. Suddenly its entire hull shimmered before disappearing completely.

"It's working," Harry reported. "We're also getting reports from the crew who would normally see parts of the hull through a window. We're cloaked."

Chakotay looked relieved, he glanced at Kes sitting beside him. She looked even more tense than she was before.

"Okay. Keep us on course and..." Chakotay said. He was cut off by the ship lurching forward violently. Red Alert activated immediately. "Report!"

Harry was shaking quite a lot, "it came out of nowhere..."

Tuvok interrupted him, "Borg Cube, directly behind us. It appeared to come out of transwarp a second after we cloaked."

"I didn't see it," Harry stuttered.

Chakotay stared straight ahead of him, then at Kes. "They must have seen us before we cloaked."

"And they saw us do it," Kes whispered.

Chakotay cursed inwardly as he climbed out of his chair. Another jolt almost pushed him back. "If we weren't on their assimilation list, we are now. Change our course, Tom. Hopefully we can throw them off if they can't see us."

Tom nodded, "yes sir."

The Ready Room doors opened. It was a bigger shock than the Borg attack, especially when they saw Kathryn walk out of it. Her hair was unkempt and a lot longer than it usually was. The bags under her eyes seemed to be half way down to her nose. She also wasn't in full uniform, all that she had was the grey tank top and black trousers. Both of which were wrinkled from over use.

"What's going on?" she hissed.

Chakotay cringed, "the Borg. We think they saw us activate the cloak."

The ship shook a few more times, Tom winced with each one. "They're closing in, almost in tractor range."

"They're following?" Chakotay questioned.

Tom nodded, "looks like."

"They're following the cloak, not the ship," Damien said from the turbolift. He stepped off it. "I could explain but it'd be too comp..."

"You mean your perfect cloak isn't perfect. Colour me surprised," Chakotay groaned.

Kathryn glared at the ex-villain. The sight of her made him cringe, but smirk afterwards. "Woah, having your kid become vampire dinner isn't a good look for you, Kathy."

Most of the Bridge looked confused, if they weren't in the middle of an attack they'd have stopped and stared at the two in question. One person however did, leaving the Engineering console unwatched.

"What do you mean, her kid?" Jessie grumbled.

Damien jumped when he saw her as well. She wasn't the Jessie he was used to. It looked like she had made no real effort to dress herself up as she usually did. She looked almost casual, like she just planned to sit on the sofa all day. Her hair was lazily tied in a ponytail that hadn't been touched in a day, and even slept with. Like Kathryn her eyes showed everyone that she hadn't slept properly in many months, it didn't help that she had neglected her usual make up routine.

"I thought the vampire dinner part would be the OMG part. That's interesting," he snickered in Kathryn's direction.

Tom had turned a lot paler at the memory. It made him feel sick again. "Oh god, please don't."

Kathryn kept her deadly glare on Damien enough to make him wither at it. She made her way over to the command centre once she had achieved that. "Can you fix it?"

"Of course," Damien muttered. He headed over to the Engineering station, another jolt made him stumble on route. He tried to ignore the looks the person manning it was giving him. "This is what happens when other people do your work. They'll be picking up the trace radiation from the emitters, I had a way to counter it. It should have..."

Another hit pulled everyone backwards violently, a few consoles did their usual explosions.

"That's it. Change course," Damien said.

Tom briefly glanced back at Chakotay, he nodded.

The Borg cube fired another green torpedo ahead of it. When it collided with something, the hull of Voyager and its shields became visible for a second. Soon after it disappeared from sight again, the outline of the ship appeared, distorted. Another hit did the same thing, only this time that lone part stayed visible for a lot longer while the rest of Voyager remained mostly hidden.

"That last hit destroyed a few of the emitters, the cloak is failing!" Harry reported.

"Damn it," Damien growled.

Tom clutched onto his console with one hand, the other hand finished tapping the course correction in. "Course changed."

The wait to see if it worked seemed like an eternity, almost everyone held their breath and hoped. The trembling had stopped, but they still waited for the word.

Harry sighed in relief, "they're not pursuing."

"Stand down Red Alert," Chakotay ordered.

"I wouldn't," Damien commented. "The cloak's damaged, it could fail at any minute. As soon as it does they'll find us."

"Stop whining and do something about it," Kathryn hissed.

Damien's eyes narrowed in her direction, but her deadly death glare looked even worse than it usually did. He felt a bit nervous, and tried to cover that up with a smug glance. "I do it because it benefits me." Kathryn kept her stare on him as he quickly ran out into the nearest turbolift.

"That prick always drives me to a drink," she grumbled whilst walking back to her Ready Room.

Chakotay let out a deep sigh. "We need another plan and fast. I knew we couldn't rely solely on the cloak." He turned to Kes, "we need to talk. What happens next?"

Kes stared straight ahead at the viewscreen, her eyes still a little wide in terror.

"Kes?" Chakotay tried again.

Kes slowly glanced at him, "they won't stop. They'll destroy us."

"Yay for optimism," Tom muttered to himself.

Kes shook her head, "we have one advantage. The Borg they... have a weakness. It'll only buy us time though."

Chakotay remembered something that Damien had said earlier, it unnerved him more than he liked.

"This is only going to get worse and worse," Tom commented. He felt everyone's eyes staring at him. "What, I'm just hoping jinxing works both ways."

Chakotay rolled his eyes just as Kathryn walked out of the Ready Room again, holding a cup. "Yeah, I don't think so Tom." He then noticed the cup, seeing her do that made him smile a little. It didn't last as the smell wafting from it wasn't coffee. It almost smelt like tea. "But we can only hope you're right."

Two Weeks Later

Voyager dropped out of warp, leaving behind a trail of smoke leaking from its warp drives. Seconds later a Borg cube dropped out of warp too and followed the starship. It

immediately starting firing weapons at it. Parts of the ship seemed to be shimmering, changing shape.

The Bridge was in shambles; debris lay everywhere, a fire was burning at the back, a lot of the stations were blackened and off.

"They're readying the tractor beam," Harry reported.

"Warp isn't responding." Tom quickly tapped away, "evasive maneuvers."

Harry looked over his shoulder as the remaining bit of his rear station beeped at him. "The molecular structure of the hull is weakening."

"Kes," Chakotay whispered.

Meanwhile Kathryn was guiding an exhausted Kes down a corridor. An explosion ripped out the wall behind them, throwing them forward into a wall that was still in one piece.

"I can't stop it," Kes stuttered. "I'm sorry."

Kathryn quickly tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Bridge. Lock onto Kes' commbadge signal, beam her to the shuttle bay."

"Stand by," Harry's voice said.

Kathryn looked at the girl she had her arm around, she could barely stand anymore and looked almost ready to pass out.

"I can't, the molecules in Kes' body is unstable. I can't get a lock."

"It looks like we're going to have to do this the hard way, as usual," Kathryn grumbled. She tried to lift the exhausted woman from the wall to her feet. "Hold on."

Kes knew she had no choice, she ran with her down the corridor the best she could. More explosions ripped through the walls behind them.

Finally they arrived at the shuttle bay doors, where Tuvok stood waiting for them. He quickly approached the two of them. His hands went immediately to Kes' face to perform a meld. Kathryn backed off to let him do that, the thought of Kes leaving made her feel a little bitter.

"Our minds are one..." Tuvok groaned as whatever was happening to Kes was too much for him. "Are thoughts are one. Try to regain control for a moment. Just for a moment. Only for a moment." A shock flew through his mind, he was pushed back into the wall.

"You must hurry," he told Kathryn.

"Hull breaches on Decks three, four and five," Harry's voice reported.

"Emergency containment fields, now!" Chakotay's voice barked.

Kathryn held onto Kes before she could fall to the ground. She gently guided her into the shuttle bay.

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to hurt..." Kes whispered.

The two made their way into the nearest shuttlecraft. Kathryn opened the door.

Kathryn glanced at her briefly, "it's okay, it's not your fault. You can still stay."

"I can't. Look what's happening," Kes pleaded with her.

Kathryn stared into her desperate eyes, she nodded. "Good luck." With that she guided the Ocampan into the shuttle.

Once she was sat down, Kathryn backed away and rushed outside it.

"You too," Kes said as the doors shut.

The Bridge:

"The Borg will go after her, this is a stupid plan," Jessie grunted from the side of the Bridge.

Tom sighed, "we're not going to be much better. If I don't keep us clear, the tractor beam will hit us and we know what happens next."

Chakotay stood in the centre of the Bridge in deep thought.

"Kes is in the shuttle," Kathryn's voice reported.

"Acknowledged," Chakotay said. "If you can keep her covered, Tom."

Tom nodded, "I'll certainly try."

On the viewscreen the shuttle escaped and flew ahead of them. Voyager continued to shake.

"It's happening, it's happening to me," Kes' voice said.

"Her molecules are completely destabilising, so is the shuttle," Harry said, the ship shaking almost interrupted him. This one seemed a lot more violent than the others.

"They've got us," Tom stuttered. "They're pulling us in!"

There was no time to react to that, three figures dematerialised around the Bridge. The closest one to the helm went straight for Tom. Everyone who was armed quickly reached for their phasers.

Tom barely had time to glance over his shoulder, the drone was almost on him. A phaser shot slammed into its back, bringing it straight to its knees. Tom looked over to where the phaser fire came from, the only person in that direction was Jessie. He swore he saw a satisfied smirk on her face, the one she used after hitting someone she thought wronged her. He thought that he imagined it, that Jessie died a long time ago.

The remaining two drones were also shot down. Unfortunately all three were soon replaced seconds later.

Inside the shuttle Kes smiled as her entire body looked like it was fading away.

"Don't worry, I won't abandon you," she said. Light began to take over, consuming her.

The same happened to the shuttle. The light pierced the space around it, the shuttle could not be seen anymore. It continued to grow until it collided with Voyager.

Engineering:

"Rotate the frequency!" one crewmember yelled as phaser fire rung around the room.

B'Elanna swung around as the warp core suddenly sprung to life. "What?"

On the bridge everything was still shaking, the viewscreen was filled with blinding light. Even the invading drones seemed to be affected by it. Two were shot down. Jessie fired at the last one, but the shot bounced off its green shields. Seeing her as a threat, he headed straight for her.

Kathryn rushed out of the turbolift, she glowered at the last remaining invader.

"Damn it," Jessie growled as she quickly attempted to change the settings on the phaser.

"Bridge, the core is back online. Matter antimatter reaction is at 110%, no 120%... I don't understand."

Everyone felt the ship suddenly jerk forward, they each held onto the closest thing they could. Luckily for Jessie the drone about to attack her fell to the floor, she did as well.

Now the viewscreen showed the stars streaming ahead of them, only a lot faster than they were used to.

"My god, this speed. It's impossible," Tom stuttered.

The last remaining back stations exploded, Harry ducked as opps did. "We're coming apart!" he yelled over the noise.

The battered Voyager dropped out of warp as suddenly as it began. It finally came to a stop.

"We just dropped out of... whatever it was we were in," Tom reported.

Jessie quickly pulled herself back up and armed the phaser. She held off though when she saw the drone lying on the ground, with smoke rising from it. Kathryn stood over it, snarling at it whilst holding an upside down cup.

"Adapt to that," Kathryn growled at the unfortunate drone. She tossed the cup at its head, naturally it smashed.

Chakotay stared at her with wide eyes, he wasn't the only one. Jessie looked shocked that Kathryn seemed to be the one who saved her.

"Hot tea kills Borg drones. I'll have to remember that," Chakotay stuttered.

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "it's only unconscious. Either do a Locutus on it, or chuck it out the airlock." Tuvok tapped his commbadge to contact a Security team as he walked over to the drone.

"What just happened? Besides that," Chakotay said, gesturing at the unconscious invader.

Tom couldn't believe what he was seeing on his station. "We're ten thousand light years from where we just were."

"We're out of Borg space," Chakotay couldn't believe it either. "Kes saved us."

Kathryn didn't feel like they were out of the woods yet, looking around her battered Bridge didn't help. "You're half right. Tuvok..." Tuvok glanced at her. "Contact every department head, do a head count. I want to make sure all of our *guests* have kicked it."

"Yes Captain," Tuvok nodded. He stepped into the nearby turbolift.

"Chakotay, I want a full damage report," Kathryn ordered.

Chakotay nodded, he rushed over to take over Tactical.

Kathryn glanced around at everyone else, the last person she checked on was Jessie. She had taken a few steps closer to her. Kathryn winced a little. She hadn't yet noticed how different Jessie looked, she hadn't seen her for nearly a year, it took her by surprise.

"Thanks," she said, almost shyly.

Kathryn shook her head, "forget it. It's what he would have wanted."

Jessie reacted the way she expected. She appeared to swallow a large lump in her throat, her eyes started to tear up. In the end she nodded and turned her back on her to return to her station.

"We'll get out of this yet," Kathryn tried to tell herself. It didn't work, a feeling of dread still lingered over her. "We'll be okay."

A few weeks had passed and Voyager still looked like the Borg's punching bag. It wasn't alone though. Two large and very bulky ships were on its tail and bow. One of them

charged and fired a large torpedo at the already damaged ship. Like they weren't even there the torpedo went straight through its shields and slammed into the hull.

"Hail them again!" Kathryn hissed towards Opps.

"They're responding," Harry sighed in relief.

Kathryn armed her best glare, it was almost deadly enough to melt steel. As an alien man appeared on the viewscreen looking smug, it took everything she had to stop herself from charging over and actually punching the screen.

"Why have you attacked us? We've done nothing wrong and clearly we were already in distress," Kathryn barked at him.

"You have breached Krenim space. That act is a hostile one, punishable by death," the alien man sneered as he swiveled in his chair.

Chakotay's eyes widened, he shared that stare with everyone who was mostly doing the same. "Krenim, like the ones Kes warned us about after her backwards time travelling."

Tuvok gave him a knowing glance, he glanced down to work at Tactical.

"We've tried to contact you, but all we've received is a torpedo in our hull. As you can see we've already suffered damage, we're not a threat," Kathryn said.

"What is your reason for violating our borders?" the man only said.

Kathryn could tell that whatever her answer was, he was going to do the same thing as he did before. "Obviously we're trying to conquer your entire sector of space by throwing pieces of debris from our own ship at you, you overcompensating little prick."

The man looked amused, but not for the reason a lot of the Bridge crew hoped. "I would prefer to seize your vessel before it is barely worth recycling for scrap. Surrender now and I will forego the execution of your crew."

"Maybe you should give up and I will forego the shoving of my fist in your face," Kathryn growled.

Chakotay looked very uneasy at this point and he wasn't the only one.

The man ignored her threats, everyone assumed his ship was immune to the death glare rays. "Prepare to be boarded." He disappeared off the screen.

"If Kes' account is correct, matching the shield frequency to the temporal variance of the Krenim weapons should protect us," Tuvok explained. "I am inputting it now." The entire ship shuddered as another torpedo blast ripped straight into the hull.

"Yes yes, just do it," Kathryn muttered.

Voyager maneuvered to dodge another incoming shot, as it did the second enemy ship also fired. This torpedo flew straight towards the top of the saucer. As the others it

slipped straight through the shields and punched a hole straight through the ready room, just missing the bridge.

The Bridge felt the impact, none more so than Tactical and the Engineering station. Tuvok was tossed away from his station by the blow, just in time for it to explode afterwards. The Engineering station however had exploded on impact, sending its occupant flying hard onto the ground.

Kathryn was the first to respond, as she rushed over to where she landed, she glanced over to check on a still moving Tuvok. Crewmembers at the back of the bridge helped him up. Kathryn realised as soon as she knelt down beside her other fallen crewmember, that this one wasn't as lucky.

"Jessie?" she barely mumbled as her hand quickly checked to see if she had a pulse. "Damn it," she snapped when she couldn't find it.

Tom glanced over his shoulder, a lump formed in his throat. "Ohno..."

Kathryn climbed to her feet, she shook her head in rage. "Harry, reroute Tactical to any station we have left. We need those shields, and we need something to shove down those assholes throats," she ordered in a cold voice.

Harry looked a little shaken, he nodded. "Yes ma'am. Rerouting to the console next to the Captain's chair."

"Good," Kathryn snarled. She hurried back to her chair, barely breaking a sweat as the next hit tried to throw her off. "What was the temporal frequency?" she asked anyone.

"One point four seven," she heard Tuvok answer as he was carted off to Sickbay.

"In the mean time get us out of the Krenim borders, Tom," Chakotay ordered.

"No argument here," Tom said.

Voyager tried to turn and escape from its attackers, but they followed and continued their assault. Their attempt to escape seemed to anger them further, they fired even more shots than before.

One hit slammed a little too close to the starboard warp nacelle. It was enough to slow the starship to a stop. Lights were beginning to flicker on and off. One of the vessels overtook to get a few shots in at the front of the ship.

"Impulse engines have taken a hit, we've got thrusters only," Tom started to panic.

"Hail them again," Chakotay ordered.

Kathryn threw him one of her glares, "unless you want to surrender and be tortured, you will obey that order Commander." Chakotay sighed, he knew she was right. However they didn't have much choice. "I just need a few more seconds."

"We don't have it. They're targeting the nacelles again," Harry warned.

Tom glanced back at his friend, "thrusters may get us away in time, hold on."

Kes' consciousness seemed to float, she felt like she could be almost anywhere at any time. Her instincts had told her to keep careful watch of her former colleagues, she believed that push forward would not solve all of their problems. Kes would have sent them further but she could not risk overpowering their warp core.

Right now she believed it would have been worth the risk. Until she realised the full scope of her powers, all she could do now was watch as her friends were mercilessly attacked by a bunch of territory driven ego maniacs. She had seen for herself the damage they were capable of, yet even with her warnings Voyager was still no match for them.

Kes tried to reach out to help them, but it was too late.

"No," her whole being cried as the starship crippled under the last blow. All that was left were pieces of tiny debris. Now that she had evolved she could no longer physically cry, she still felt the way she would if she did though. It hurt a lot more that way.

Suddenly images began flashing in front of her. They appeared so fast, it was hard to keep them separate.

Voyager flies into a strange anomaly. It vanishes moments later.

A smaller starship than Voyager tries to land in the middle of a city. Unlike Voyager it isn't designed for it, it lands roughly. A strange cube shaped object falls from the sky above them.

James' body falls to the ground, it lies in the grass motionless. A group of people swarm around him, hiding him from her sight.

A M-class planet flashes purple, it fades and is replaced by a huge uninhabitable rock. It crumbles to pieces.

A young girl she had never seen before, laughs as she plays with another child close to her age.

Kathryn cradles a newborn baby. Chakotay and the Doctor smile nearby.

The girl from before disappears.

The boy she played with is attacked from behind by a strange man. He disappears as well.

The girl is older, she's crying. She's replaced by a different girl with bright blue eyes after she is engulfed in a white light.

Voyager flies towards the same planet as before. The ship flashes in and out of existence. When it disappears, the planet shifts between purple or disappears completely. Voyager eventually flies into complete darkness.

The cube almost hits the smaller ship, instead Voyager flashes into its place and is ripped apart.

Voyager is destroyed by the Krenim again.

A Borg Sphere approaches Voyager.

The girl from before is young again, she holds hands with an older looking James. Suddenly she's a teenager, but he's somehow younger, closer to the age Kes remembered him.

A shuttle flies into a strange looking anomaly.

The cube goes back into the sky, leaving the other ship behind. An image of the planet from before flashes over it.

The girl raises two weapons, she's nervous but ready for a fight. Standing beside her is James who does the same. The image moves, almost zooms out from them. Her view of them almost disappears as it flies over hundreds of figures, each of them standing opposing the two.

Voyager lifts off after a cube has left them.

Kathryn approaches the girl and the blue eyed girl.

Voyager flies with a Borg cube unharmed.

James' body falls to the ground again, only this time he rolls to one side and gets back up again.

The planet appears normal as Voyager flies into its orbit.

The girl smiles.

The images drained all of Kes' energy. Once they were over she tried to piece them all together, they made very little sense to her. The cube, the other ship, the girl and the planet were the primary focus of a lot of the images. She had never seen any of them before, she had no idea what they meant.

Once her energy began to come back to her, Kes decided to focus on the parts she did understand. The part that troubled her the most was the images of Voyager's destruction. If only she could fix that. Maybe once she had access or knowledge of her full powers, she could.

She wondered why she was sent those images, a lot of them didn't happen to Voyager and now that it was gone they still couldn't. Perhaps that is why she saw those images, they were telling her that she could save them and that was their future.

Even then it still didn't make sense. There was one minor detail that eluded her. James died a long time before *Voyager* did, why was he all over the images? Kes was thankful she no longer had a body, so to speak, or her head would have been thumping.

It then occurred to her. These images were just fragments; what caused them, what happened after them? They must be linked in some way, perhaps if she filled in those gaps she'd be able to connect the dots. She started with the earliest one, the simplest one; James' death. In one of the flashes he died as before, but the other he didn't. What happened after he did, and what would change if he didn't? Perhaps the people in the same awayteam wouldn't have died as well, the attackers may not have escaped. She had no way of knowing.

There was only way to find out. *Voyager's* fate was not going to get any worse.

FOUR

2372

There was so many of them, when only a second ago there were none. They quickly had surrounded their target. They waited for their leader to give them the go command.

"We are anywhere the Game Cubes can take us, Slayer. Nice of you to join us here," the leader sneered. He stepped away from the others, leaving behind the small child he was guarding. "Don't be so surprised, we know who you are."

"That's great, so do I," James said.

The leader smiled, "I am Frenit, and that's the last name you're ever going to have to learn."

James looked around without moving his head too much, there was no way out that he could see. There was no running from this one, he had to fight.

"Oh got no comeback for that one? You're not getting out of here alive. Did I mention that?" Frenit smiled darkly.

"Yeah, I'd be all talk too if I had a lot of minions to help me," James said.

Frenit's smile faded away. The little girl standing at his side pouted angrily. "Hey, my daddy's the best vampire around, you meanie."

"Shh darling, let the Slayer find out the hard way," Frenit said down to her. The girl huffed and folded her arms. He turned his head back ahead of him. "If you think any back talk's going to save you, then you'll be painfully mistaken. Ok boys, ladies... he's all yours." Everyone lurched forward. "BUT!" he interrupted with a sneer. "Don't forget to share."

James could only duck and dodge as the whole group charged forward towards him.

Tom, Thompson and Foster were wandering around the woods looking really lost.

"We can easily find him, he only had a few seconds head start.. god, that's the last time I listen to you," Thompson grumbled.

"You never listen to me," Tom said.

"I know, I should have remembered that," Thompson said.

Only metres away Kes' form appeared slowly from nowhere. She stayed hidden behind the trees, just in case they saw her.

"Shhh, do you hear that?" Foster whispered.

Tom nodded, "sounds like wind blowing through the trees."

Kes turned her head to her left, she heard something as well. There was very little time left, she had to hurry.

"Not that, I'm sure I heard people," Foster said.

"Fine, we'll keep going this way," Tom said.

Once they had gone, Kes hurried through the trees in another direction.

One of the men fell to the ground, as he did his whole body turned to dust. Another man's foot stumbled backwards into it mid struggle. He swung his fist at his attacker, his arm was only grabbed. His whole body was thrown onto his back. The attacker knelt down quickly to stab him in the chest using only a large tree branch.

He ran off before the man could turn to ashes. Others followed, running straight through what was left of him.

Frenit still watched with a smirk on his face as a woman's screams soon followed.

James was about to attack the second person who was chasing him, when two others surrounded him. He ducked down to avoid one hit, another kicked knocking him down to the ground. The three converged on him like a flock of vultures, only he rolled out of the way and jumped back onto his feet.

Frenit only had to clap his hands to stop them all from doing anything else. They did look disappointed. James wasn't going to listen to him though, he managed to get one more in the chest before the remaining two shoved him roughly back on to the ground.

"Nice, very nice," Frenit said, he didn't sound sincere. He walked forward towards him. "It's always nice to weed out the amateurs, isn't it? Now we'll have more to feed on."

James rolled his eyes as he got back onto his feet. "Really, we're talking again?"

"Not for long," Frenit sneered. "You think that because I have other vampires work for me, that I'm a pushover, unworthy of *talking big*. I think now that you've thinned the herd, I can..." James interrupted him with a punch, it took him by surprise for a second. He laughed as it barely hurt him, and James' shocked reaction made it even funnier to him. "You're right. No more talking."

"Yay," the little girl giggled.

James' eyes cast down to her, just for a second. Frenit hadn't seen it. He swung his own fist at him, James quickly ducked down to the ground and rolled forward. The girl was only a few steps behind Frenit, she squeaked and stumbled back a bit.

Frenit swung around just in time to see James grab her as he stood back up. Frenit's eyes widened in pure fury once James turned back around to face him. He kept a tight hold of the girl with one hand, while the other pointed a sharp tree branch at her chest.

"You really don't want to do that," Frenit snarled. "She's just a child."

"Daddy," the girl squeaked.

"Maybe you should have thought about that before you sired her," James said, slowly backing away. A few vampires behind him started to edge, he barely glanced over his shoulder. "Try it and she dies."

"You heard him, back off," Frenit growled.

The vampires panicked at the tone of his voice, instead of backing off they actually ran off to join the others.

"Ok good. Now return what you stole and we'll be on our way," James threatened. The girl wriggling in his arm and squeaking in fear made him feel like he was the bad guy. He felt terrible but there was no choice. He tried to ignore whatever conscience he had left by this point, it was harder than he thought. *She's just a vampire. She's already dead.*

Frenit pointed at the cave behind James, he didn't dare look back in case he lost his advantage.

"You won't get that far. I'll rip you apart before you even set foot in it," Frenit said.

"Is that before or after she's dust?" James countered.

The vampires behind Frenit actually backed off a step. Frenit's hands had clenched, the anger in his eyes almost out matched Kathryn's. James knew if he lost that advantage he would be in trouble.

"I have a better idea. You let her go, I give you the power module and I'll kill you for daring to touch her," Frenit snarled. "You know that's how it will end."

"Not if I keep her with me until we're about to go. It's your choice," James said.

Frenit smiled, much to his worry. "Would you really hurt her? She's a child, innocent. I don't think you have the stones to actually do anything."

"You stole her innocence when you made her a vampire," James said as he took one step back. Frenit seemed to follow. "I kill vampires, the age doesn't matter to me."

"Liar," Frenit smirked. He suddenly charged forward. James could only back off so far before he hit the wall of the cave. Panic got to him once he was within a metre of him, the branch pierced the girl's heart, stopping the vampire dead in his tracks.

"Daddy," she stuttered. Her eyes showed the hurt and feeling of betrayal before she vanished into ash.

Frenit could only see red after that. Red and the Slayer who stole away the most precious thing he ever had.

James tried to move to one side to slip into the cave but Frenit was way too fast for him. The vampire grabbed him by the throat so tightly he couldn't breathe. James was lifted off the ground with no effort. There was nothing he could do about it; any kick he delivered didn't bother him, no matter how hard he tried to grab his attacker's arm, he'd continue.

"I usually toy with Slayers, keep them alive, kill people around them," Frenit muttered. "Torture them, but you. You're not worth it," he hissed.

Kes ran through the last of the tree's, she stopped dead and looked on in horror as Frenit tossed James over his shoulder with a sickening crack. She gasped outloud as he landed on the grass, dead before he even got there. The vampires all heard her and turned their attention to her.

"No," she stuttered. They barely moved an inch when she thought the word *stop*. They did. Even the breeze stopped, insects stopped mid flight, the waterfall was frozen in time.

Kes berated herself for being too late, she hurried over to where James now lay. She knelt down beside him.

"I can do this," Kes whispered to herself. Maybe it was just for show, but she couldn't take any chances with this, her hand hovered over his neck. She willed it to get better, be unbroken. It took all the energy she had but it eventually worked.

When nothing further happened she worried, then she remembered. *Everything's stopped.*

"What if this was for nothing?" she wondered outloud, while looking straight at Frenit. She had no guarantee that he wouldn't just kill James again. What else could she do?

"What are you doing?" a voice came out of nowhere.

Kes glanced up, startled. She had heard that voice before. "I..."

"You have no business here," the voice warned her.

"Q," Kes whispered once she recognised it. "Why would this bother you? I'm just doing my job."

A flash behind her brought her to her feet, she quickly swung around. As she expected, Q stood before her.

"Which job is that? Reviving the dead or pulling a thread from the sweater of time?" Q questioned.

Kes didn't understand the second part, she couldn't help but frown. "Neither. I'm a healer, he..."

"You're not from this... what shall I call it? Timeframe, dimension, timeline, reality, parallel universe. Take your pick," Q said. Kes wasn't quite sure what to say to that. Q however wasn't finished with her. "Don't deny it. If you do we can both return to Voyager and have a talk with the other Kes."

Kes looked away, as if that would help with anything. "I... I still don't see why it's your business. Don't you have a Q to convince back to his cell?"

Q smirked but his eyes looked deadly serious for once. "You didn't like the ending, did you?" Kes' shoulders tensed up, she looked back at him with shock on her face. "No matter what changes you or I make, Voyager appears to be doomed."

He began to circle around her while keeping close attention. He purposely almost stepped on James everytime, like he was making a point. "Doomed one way or another to follow the same path. It's humanity in a nutshell."

"You're wrong," Kes stuttered.

Q was back in front of her, staring deeply in her eyes. What he was saying and the smirk on his face was malicious, cold, but his eyes told another story. He seemed almost sorry and sympathetic.

"Like me, you've fallen for the Federation slogan. We've changed, we are no longer barbarians, there's nothing we can't do," Q said harshly. "No. Humans don't change."

"Why do you even care?" Kes whispered.

"Voyager will be destroyed," Q said, forcing Kes' eyes to widen. "You can't stop it and if you think rescuing *him* is going to help you do that, then you're just as weak as they are."

Kes glanced down to James near her feet. He and the vampires were still frozen by her power, Q hadn't interfered with that or anything else. He could with a snap of his fingers undo everything, but he hadn't.

"You're right. Saving one person won't undo what I saw. In fact it won't even change the smaller, insignificant things," Kes said. "What are you worried about then?"

Q let himself chuckle at her for a moment. "Who said I was worried? Even with your new abilities, you pale in comparison to the Continuum. If you could change Voyager's fate, you'd be wasting your time. We just wouldn't let you."

Kes smiled confidently. "I'd call that a challenge."

"No, I'd call that a fact," Q retorted, his smile didn't waver. "What did you think? You'd save the Slayer, and he'd somehow rescue Voyager from the brink of doom?" He couldn't help but laugh at the thought of her thinking that. "No, things were better without him."

Kes shook her head, "how is Voyager destroyed better, and I didn't think that. Voyager was destroyed by two more powerful races, his presence wouldn't have done a thing."

"So why did you do it?" Q asked with a sneer. "Why does Voyager need one of those things so badly? Why does his existence really matter? Did you think for one moment that maybe you're cursing Voyager with even more pain by doing so?"

"Why does it matter to you?" Kes snapped back. Q was taken back by her outburst. "I saw it, he survived. I knew it was possible. Why couldn't Voyager survive as well when I saw that too?"

Q smiled again, Kes really didn't want to know why this time. He paced to stand closely in front of her again. "All it takes is one tiny nudge to set someone on a different path. Be careful, you leave them alone and they get lost enough to stumble back onto the original road."

Kes studied his eyes, they didn't give him away this time. "What are you saying? Are you talking about the consequences of making changes to the timeline?"

Q backed away with a blank stare. "If only it were that simple, my dear."

He disappeared in another flash. He wasn't the only one, Kes saw another flash in the corner of her eye. She quickly looked down to find that James was gone as well.

"What?" she stuttered.

Another flash in the distance, somewhere amongst the trees caught her full attention. She ran towards it, hoping that it would give her some answers.

As soon as she left the clearing, the vampires each unfroze. They looked just as confused as she did when they realised their free meal was gone.

Frenit grunted, his minions trembled in fear as his anger was still there and he had no one to take it out on anymore. Luckily for them he just stomped into the cave.

No sooner than they had relaxed, he appeared at the entrance again with an even angrier look on his face. "We're leaving this Cess pit, now! Get the ship powered up."

"Uh, yes sir," one of them stuttered. Fearing for her undead life she ran after him. The others were less than enthusiastic about following him.

Kes had to stop herself and quickly. The nearest tree looked big enough to hide behind, quietly as possible she did just that.

Not far ahead of them were Tom's team gathered around something. Tom had glared up at Thompson, scolding him. Foster shoved him to one side, he and Tom then knelt down.

Kes wasn't sure what to think when the pair stood back up, carrying James on their shoulders.

"Voyager, four to beam up. Hurry," Tom ordered.

"I..." Kes stuttered as they all beamed away. "I don't understand. What side are you really on, Q?"

Q2 wasn't happy, but he wasn't going to show Q that. He forced a laugh, though it was easier than he thought with what he had just found out.

"They will not be pleased with you, Q," he teased.

The pair stood too closely for each other's comfort. The environment was hostile, filled with a choking white mist. What they could see of the place they were in wasn't much better, jagged rocks were everywhere.

"Once again, Kathy surprises me," Q said. "She chose your freedom twice, then for no reason even I can foresee, she believes it's wrong to pass judgement on a Q. She's never been one for worrying over such things."

Q2 smiled but in a goofy way despite his fate. "Perhaps forcing her to have a child changed her more than you thought."

Q glowered at him. "Forcing her? That word is too strong. Allowed is more accurate." Q2 laughed quietly, it annoyed Q more than he liked. "Kathy isn't that different, she's just more bitter. That will get better."

"Oh, when? When Voyager is destroyed again? When humanity falls?" Q2 teased. "You can't stop it, no matter what you do. They will find out what you did."

"The Humans or the Ocampan girl? Unlikely," Q groaned.

"No," Q2 almost giggled. "The Continuum gave you one last chance, and you blew it. You knew the Ocampan girl would want to save them." Q stared at him with wide, shocked eyes. "Please, it's only been a few billion years, I understand you perfectly."

Q shook his head, "as usual you're talking nonsense."

"Am I? Why did you save the boy then?" Q2 asked.

Q's eyes narrowed. "I didn't, she did."

"Details," Q2 waved his hand in his face, and since they were so close, Q's as well. "He would have been killed again if you hadn't whisked him to safety. Why? I figured you'd want to cut your losses, even if he was your project."

"I did it for Kathy, as a thank you for siding with me," Q answered. "It will make no difference anyway. Voyager will enter Borg space, the Ocampan will save them, only for them to perish at the hands of the Krenim."

"Oh, weren't you the one saying even just stepping on a bug can cause ripples. That ripple hits another, and another... woosh, tidal wave," Q2 said.

Q sighed impatiently. "I didn't say that. I said it was like pulling a thread."

"Again, details," Q2 laughed.

"Perhaps you should focus on things more to your level," Q muttered. He gestured to the area they were in, briefly banging his hand on the rock face. Of course it didn't hurt him. "Re-decorating your home for eternity would be a good start."

"I'm on your side Q. You and I are more alike than you'd like to admit. We Q have lived for an eternity and for what? To stand around the Continuum doing nothing? We have a higher purpose, a duty. We are the universe's protectors," Q2 said. Q mimed his words and pulled a face while doing so. "I know you've got your bravado act to keep up, but I know you understand me. You agree with me. Otherwise why else would you try to save them?"

"I had a debt to repay to Kathy, you're imagining things," Q hissed. "Farewell." He disappeared in a white flash.

Q2 smiled to himself. "Good luck, Q. You're going to need it."

"He should be all right," Chakotay told her. "There was some damage around the neck, but nothing the Doctor couldn't fix."

"Good," Kathryn said quietly. Her back was on him, he had no way to tell how she was going to react to anything.

"Tom told quite a story," Chakotay said. "People broke in, trashed the place, beat those two up... maybe not that in that order, knocked James out and escaped. All without giving away a single life sign."

Kathryn didn't say a thing. He was starting to feel worried.

"We detected no ship, but they could easily have hidden that too," Chakotay continued. "They wouldn't have stolen such a specific part if they lived there, would they?"

"Am I meant to feel sorry for the people who attacked mine, over some measly little power module?" Kathryn hissed.

Chakotay swallowed the lump in his throat, well tried to, it wasn't going away. "I never said anything of the sort. I just mean they could still be down there, repairing something."

"Then we'll pay them another visit," Kathryn said, her voice dropping to below freezing.

"Yes ma'am. I'll prepare a few Security teams and..." Chakotay said as he turned to leave.

"No," Kathryn stopped him. "Tell Danny to prepare the ship for landing."

Chakotay stared at her, his mouth threatening to drop open. "Captain, the entire area is filled with trees. Where... no why? If these people want more technology, won't we be tempting them to attack us?"

"Exactly," Kathryn smiled. He couldn't see that though. "I'm sure we can find an open place to land somewhere."

"But..." Chakotay stuttered.

Kathryn turned on her heel so she was face to face with him. "We still need to top up our food supplies. I'd feel better if any teams going down were backed up by a starship, not just a shuttle guarded by two morons."

"Danny has never landed Voyager before," Chakotay warned.

"Then bring Tom back to the helm. What's the problem?" Kathryn asked. Her eyes dared him to argue back but to be prepared to be beaten for it.

To her surprise Chakotay didn't look unnerved by that, he just smiled. "Yes ma'am." He turned to leave.

Voyager stood mere inches away from the edge of the woods. The sun was shining, there were no clouds in the sky threatening to take that away.

Even the dense woods were lit up by the intense sunlight. The teams hunting for food supplies, each guarded by two Security officers with phaser rifles, were happy to be on a nice looking planet for once. Although the worry they'd be attacked were still lingering over them.

"Why did we have to be on coffee patrol?" Ian asked as he peered into a bush. The young girl standing beside him frowned until he bent down further to look inside. She smiled at that. "Oh, found some berries."

"Yeah pick them," the girl giggled.

Nearby Chakotay was staring at her with a blank stare. He then noticed what Ian was doing. "Really Lisa? Focus."

The girl shrugged, "fine! I'll go back to coffee hunting." She looked over to where Kathryn was. "Um, speaking of which." Her finger pointed at the spot Kathryn was before but now was not.

Chakotay glanced over as well. "What, it's not just coff... Captain?" He hurried over to Lisa's side while Ian was still bending over a bush, his head and shoulders were inside it.

"Wow, she's really determined," Lisa commented.

Ian seemed to be trying to pull himself out of the bush, it didn't seem to be working though. He made a few squeaks and ow's in the process.

Chakotay nodded, "you're not wrong." He turned to the final member of the team who wasn't a Security officer. He shrugged before he could say anything. "Great."

"Help," Ian's muffled voice cried.

"She must have a better nose than I do. I didn't smell any coffee plants," the nameless officer said.

Chakotay frowned, "I don't think that's all she was looking for. Come with me." He frowned when he noticed Ian. "For god's sake..." He grabbed his arm and pulled him straight out without any bother. "Come." The Security officers followed him away, smirking to themselves.

Lisa and the nameless guy giggled at the sight of poor scratched up Ian. They quickly hurried after Chakotay and the other two.

"What? What did I miss?" Ian stuttered as he rushed after them.

Voyager:

Tom entered Sickbay with his arms behind his back, he only just spotted James sitting on a nearby biobed when the Doctor confronted him.

"No," he said.

Tom looked confused, "no?"

"Maybe you can wait until he's better before annoying him. I am rather busy after all," the Doctor said. He looked confused as well, then he glanced back at his patient. "On second thoughts, that was backwards." He wandered off back into his office.

Tom shook his head. He wandered over to the only patient, passing Kes a smile as he did.

"Tom," she warned him.

"No, no. Not here to be annoying, I swear," Tom quickly said, stopping in front of her for a second. Kes' stare told him she didn't believe him. He continued anyway.

James gave him a similar stare when he stopped beside him. "Why? What?" he mumbled.

"Look, I'm not a *told you so* guy or a *you owe me* guy, either. I just wanted to see if you were okay," Tom said.

"Owe you?" James looked even more confused.

Tom felt a little uncomfortable, "uh, you know. You do don't you?" James shook his head slowly, he winced at the pain even that caused him. Kes shook her head to tell him not to do that again. "We found you, beamed you out. You were in pretty bad shape. Your neck all bruised. Um..."

"No. How did you without..." James had frowned. "The thieves, how did you avoid them?"

Tom smiled and shrugged. "Got lucky I guess. Since they got you too, Foster and Thompson were right about them, huh?"

James' eyes cast down to the floor, the frown he had seemed to be getting more intense. "Why didn't he kill me?"

"Um, why would they?" Tom stuttered. "Look hey, don't feel too bad. They only took a power module, it's no biggie. So there were more of them than you, nobody expects you to win every time, huh? This isn't another escaped from the decapitating demons situation, you know."

"That's just it. I didn't escape," James said.

Tom dared to pat him on the shoulder, "like I said. It's okay, nobody would blame you. Again, you were hurt pretty bad." He looked around, catching Kes rolling her eyes briefly. "Where's Jess anyway?"

"Doc kicked her out, not without a fuss," Kes answered for James. "Chakotay called for her anyway."

"Oh, he probably thought she could handle herself on the mission," Tom said.

James' eyes widened a little, he looked up at Tom. "What mission?"

Tom winced a little, "oops." His nervousness started to catch up with him. "I wouldn't worry about it. They only got you cos there were many of them right, not cos they were super strong like Foster and Thompson said. Right?"

"Super strong?" Kes said while she slowly approached the pair.

"Yeah, they trashed that shuttle quite a bit," Tom stuttered. "And you, well er... I've seen you take direct hits to the face and barely twitched. I have to be honest, when I saw you were taken down as well, I knew we had to get out of there."

"Forget that, what mission?" James asked.

"That's why I'm here. Tommy and Foster didn't put two and two together, they weren't on that ocean world with the demons, but I was. Then Janeway goes and sends more teams instead of skedaddling. So I thought..." Tom said. He brought out his arms from behind his back, revealing a bottle. "I was going to break it to you gently and all."

"Oh god," James stuttered. He hurried out of Sickbay before anyone could say anything else.

Kes stared at Tom, silently judging him. Tom opening the bottle and taking a brief swig made her less than silent. "You thought a bottle of alcohol would help?"

Tom cringed as he stared at the bottle. "It's not, it's that Cherry stuff he likes. It tastes weird." Kes rolled her eyes again.

Jessie looked behind her briefly before turning her attention back to in front of her. Her face screamed *what the hell*.

"I'll find you," Kathryn growled as she forced her way through a bush. At least she forced her way through half of it. "That won't stop me."

"Um, you do know you're not supposed to be on your own, right?" Jessie asked. She glanced behind her again, she could just make out the rest of her team.

"Gah!" Kathryn roared. She dragged herself back out of the bush, then glowered at the younger girl. "What are you standing there for? Help me find them."

"Them? Is coffee still all you care about?" Jessie grumbled.

Kathryn's glare froze the surrounding trees and even the air, but Jessie still stood there, glaring at her back.

"The aliens. Coffee can wait," Kathryn spat at her.

Jessie's glare vanished in an instant, her mouth dropped open in shock. "What the... are you sick or something?"

"Ha ha, I only care about coffee. I know what you all think of me," Kathryn growled. She turned back around to walk around the bush. It was only a narrow thing, so Jessie wondered why she didn't do that in the first place. "I do care for my crew, and those

assholes almost killed one of them just to steal a power module." She swung around to glare at the girl. "A power module!"

"Yeah. I'd like nothing more than to confront the ones who hurt him, but be realistic," Jessie said. "James doesn't get knocked out easily. If he couldn't handle it alone, what makes you think you and I will?"

Kathryn looked at her with disgust in her face, she shook her head angrily "Last time I checked he was still a human being, and they can get hurt, they can make mistakes. Also they can be overwhelmed by too many attackers. Honestly, you must think you're dating Superman or something."

Jessie also looked disgusted. "Eew, no. Red and blue, and the underpants on the outside. The cloak. Gross."

Kathryn rolled her eyes as she turned and marched off. "Superficial little cow."

Jessie felt the anger build up, she rushed after her. "What did you call me!?"

Meanwhile Chakotay's team were not far behind.

"Voyager to Chakotay."

Chakotay quickly tapped his commbadge, "Chakotay here."

"I don't know where it came from, but a vessel has just left the planet," Harry's voice said. "They've gone to warp."

Chakotay stopped, everyone else did afterwards. "What?"

"Hmm, so we don't need the muscle anymore?" Lisa asked with a pout. She pointed at the two Security members.

Ian stared at her bewilderedly. "Muscle? I have more muscles in my finger."

"Lisa, Ian, catch up to the Captain and tell her the news," Chakotay ordered. The pair looked at him like he had just told them to kill themselves. He probably wasn't far off either. They did so anyway. "Tom, prepare to take off. We'll have to follow them..."

"Tom went to Sickbay, he's not back yet."

"What?" Kathryn screamed. Lisa and Ian almost fell backwards from the intensity of it. She tapped her commbadge, "Janeway to Voyager. Why aren't I seeing you take off?"

"Um, Tom's just got back. Standby, we'll beam you aboard."

Kathryn waved her hand as a bug almost flew into her face. "Hurry it up, will you. Who knows what these pests are up to. We can't let them escape."

Lisa rolled her eyes, "yeesh, so they stole a power module and beat people up trying to stop them. That doesn't mean they're bad people, they're probably just desperate."

Would it be so bad if they got a head start?" The others stared at her, even Kathryn wasn't sure how to answer that. Jessie however looked a little concerned.

Four Months Later

An alien ship dropped out of warp and approached a golden and green world. Already in its orbit was a different alien ship. The first one slowed down to travel by its side.

Ligod rushed through the doors, barely giving them time to open.

"I got here as fast as I could, what's the status?" he asked. He was met with grim faces wherever he looked. He was approached by the person in charge.

"Didn't you say Voyager was nearby. Why aren't they here?" he demanded.

Ligod scoffed, he waved off his concern and looked at him like he was an idiot. "Their Slayer was a Chosen candidate, you fool. It still counts."

"Our trainees can't deal with this alone," the man in charge growled. "The Masters will tear them apart."

"Sending the Human down will destroy that planet. There is no alternative," Ligod said. "I didn't bother Voyager with this. They were already changing course when I sent the message. Leave them be. Have faith in your pupils, Chi'Tat."

The man stared him down. "It is your fault we have lost another pair of Chosens, Ligod. Now you send one of our few Naturals away and send our trainees into a futile battle to the death. The planet is doomed."

"You think one Natural would tip the scales? Against the Masters and the legendary slayer of Slayers, Frenit? Don't be such a drama queen, 'Tat," Ligod smirked. He paced around the other man, shaking his head. "All our trainees have to do is thin the herd a little. The Masters don't bother with things beneath them and neither does Frenit. The planet is far from doomed."

Chi'Tat's eyes were filled with anger. He had no reason other than his gut feeling to argue with him. All he could do was wait to be proven right.

Two Months Later

Captain's Log Supplemental: Voyager is responding to a distress call from a species called the Tendarans. Unfortunately we were a few days away from where the call came from, so I am hoping we're not too late.

Tuvok was the only one on the Bridge wearing his uniform. For some reason everyone else were wearing clothes tourists would wear to the Caribbean. Well almost everyone, Jessie just dressed the way she usually did.

"You said you wanted to know when we had arrived, Captain," Tuvok said.

Kathryn glanced at him from her chair, her eyes were calling him crazy. "Yes, so?"

"I did not expect you to go the Luau on route," Tuvok said. "Or at all."

"Why not? They have coffee cocktails," Kathryn said with a smile. Chakotay smiled back at her. "Can you hail the planet?"

Harry looked a little sorry for himself, the bright clothes he wore brought that out even further. "Not yet, we're almost in sensor range."

"Where's Tom?" Chakotay asked when he noticed the random crewmember at the helm.

Meanwhile:

"And further more, you Vulcan dudes are boring!" Tom drunkenly screamed and pointed ahead of him. "Oh yeah, you heard me. Boring. B'Elanna's way, way too interesting for you. She's mine. Stop stealing her!"

A few random crewmembers walked by, each one giving him a funny look.

"You're not even a main character!" Tom continued. He poked his victim with the finger he was pointing. "Don't you start with me! You Vulcans are all talk." Suddenly he lunged forward to attack the target of his screams. Unfortunately for Tom, it was just a wall. He slammed into it and fell on the floor. Naturally it knocked him straight out.

The Bridge:

"I think we're better off without him," Harry commented. His console beeped to get his attention. "We're in range."

"Good, hail them," Kathryn ordered.

Harry's face looked a lot whiter than it should be. Since he didn't answer, everyone looked at him and saw that.

"What is it Harry?" Chakotay asked.

"The planet. It's an M-class but there's no one there," Harry stuttered.

"What?" Kathryn climbed out of her chair. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. No life signs," Harry replied.

Chakotay also stood up to stand at Kathryn's side. "Damage?"

"None," Harry quietly replied. His eyes managed to get wider, "uh, we're being hailed."

"By who?" Kathryn asked.

Harry was very confused by now, "the planet. I don't understand."

Kathryn and Chakotay shared the same look, this didn't make any sense to them. "What was the original distress call, Mr Tuvok?" Kathryn asked.

"They claimed they were being invaded by three ships," Tuvok replied.

Chakotay sighed as he tried to get his head around it. "Some invasion. Not even a scratch and no one's left. I don't buy it."

"Me neither," Kathryn muttered. "On screen."

Harry shook his head, "audio only."

"Fine," Kathryn groaned. She waited for the nod from Harry to tell her to talk. "This is Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation Starship Voyager, we're responding to your distress call."

"Yes, Captain. Thank goodness you're here. We need help, fast."

"What can we help you with?" Kathryn asked.

"We were attacked. We've fought most of them off, but some are still trying to break into the Capital building. Please, help us."

"What happened to the three ships?" Chakotay asked.

The voice sounded a little impatient, "destroyed during the battle. If we didn't do that, we... that doesn't matter, please, help us."

"We'll see what we can do," Kathryn said. She gestured to Harry to cut them off. "For a building under attack, it sure was quiet."

"Yeah, none of this sounds right," Chakotay said. "If they're really in danger though, we can't abandon them."

Kathryn gave him a smile that told him to prepare for an argument. "Where was the signal coming from?"

"A large building on the northern continent," Harry replied.

"What?" Chakotay dared to ask.

Kathryn's smile changed to a sweet one, "what, what? That's where they're being attacked, isn't it?" She wandered over to where Tuvok was, "our guests were complaining we never let them do anything. Let them do something."

Chakotay couldn't help but smirk, "you're sending Damien's crew down? What if they really are in trouble?"

"Then we'll find out sharpish and send a few proper teams down," Kathryn said.

Tuvok's eyebrow broke a record for quickest and highest raise. "Indeed."

Not long later the Bridge crew were waiting patiently. The commlink was open and they could hear voices chatting amongst themselves.

"Oh boy, our first mission. This is much better than cleaning toilets," a squeaky, so called man's voice said.

"Oh I wonder if there are cute boys to rescue," a girl giggled.

"Damn it, I forgot my mirror," a man's voice grumbled.

Damien laughed, "here take this camera down too. I want to watch er... see what's happening so I can take advantage of the situation."

"Hmm, this is much better than a mirror," the man said.

"Ugh don't, you'll break it," Damien grumbled.

"Um, isn't it suspicious that Janeway's sending us and not a real team?" a young boy's voice asked.

The silence was a little painful. Damien interrupted by cackling, "exactly. We'll betray her, take over the planet and then Voyager. Now go."

"Why aren't you going then?" the young voice asked.

"I am, I'm just preparing for my grand entrance. I need dramatic music, a good pose and an epic camera zoom in quote. Go!" Damien ordered.

The others cheered. "Crap," the kid's voice muttered.

Not long after the transporter beam sounds were heard, Damien dashed onto the Bridge. "Frequency 2.67."

Harry rolled his eyes, "this is sick." He keyed it anyway. The viewscreen shifted to show the surface of a planet. Four figures were standing there, slowly getting surrounded by people licking their lips and growling. Soon the camera was shaking so hard nobody could see, the entire bridge was drowned out by screaming.

"Ohno," Jessie complained as she covered her eyes. "Nobody told me there would be blood."

"I knew it," Kathryn groaned.

Damien smirked as he munched on his popcorn. "Duh, it was pretty obvious."

Chakotay cringed when the camera moved to zoom in on a guy's face. "Should I tell James?" he asked.

"This is it Johnny, your number is up. You thought you were too handsome to die," the man said to the camera. "I love you." Everyone groaned in disgust when it zoomed in on his lips and he started kissing it. Luckily everyone had stopped looking when the kiss got worse.

Kathryn glanced over to Chakotay, "no. I think a planet possibly full of vampires is a bit out of his league."

"No you eat him!" one voice on the viewscreen yelled. The camera now seemed to be lying on the floor, filming two people shoving each other.

"No, you! I don't want Justin cooties," the other growled.

Jessie sighed, "so this is where the ship from New Earth got to."

"It wasn't where it ended up. There's no debris," Harry said.

"And they did say there were three," Chakotay added on. "They must have recruited two elsewhere."

Kathryn glanced down at the floor, "damn it. Here we are laughing at the FDA getting eaten, when thanks to us a planet has been slaughtered just like that."

"It's nobody's fault, Kathryn. We couldn't have stopped this," Chakotay tried to reassure her.

"And Justin dies again, I oughta sell this clip," Damien laughed, still munching on popcorn.

Chakotay rolled his eyes, "the only thing we're guilty of is not beaming Damien down too."

"Hmph, I'm too brilliant to fall for that," Damien chuckled.

Jessie glanced around at everyone. "Anyone who tells James about this, gets a crotch kick from me. Okay?" All of the guys nodded nervously. "Girls just get a black eye."

"He can't be expected to win against an army of vampires when he couldn't beat the few on New Earth," Chakotay said. Kathryn attacked him with her most vicious death glare. He shrunk a few inches into his seat. "I meant that in a nice way, really."

The camera was picked up, it was pointed in the face of the person who did it. Jessie couldn't believe her eyes. The person was Ligod and he looked a lot paler than she remembered him.

"Hello Voyager. You're not leaving are you?" he cackled. There was a crunch, then the viewscreen switched back to planet view.

"Ligod's a vampire?" Jessie stuttered. "How?"

"Captain, there's a ship approaching from the surface," Tuvok reported. "It is the one from the planet you called New Earth. They are charging weapons."

"Red Alert," Kathryn ordered. The lights dimmed immediately, the siren rang around the bridge. "We better stop them before they slaughter another planet."

"Yes we should, for justice and other crap," Damien pretended to cheer her on. Again he munched on his popcorn with a smirk. Kathryn only growled in response.

Voyager swerved out of the way of a few phaser shots, the other vessel fired a torpedo like weapon afterwards, that slammed into the shields. Voyager returned fire with a few torpedoes and phaser blasts of their own.

"We're evenly matched, Captain. Shields are holding on both sides," Tuvok reported.

Kathryn thought that glaring at the ship on the viewscreen would weaken it a little. Chakotay thought so too as he felt the vibes coming from it. He wasn't sure if it was the weapons fire or that, that made the ship tremble many times in ten seconds.

"They're trying to concentrate their attacks on the shields around the Bridge," Tuvok said.

Tom shook his head, "not if I can help it." Everyone felt the ship pull to one side.

"They have the right idea, do that as well, but concentrate on their engines," Kathryn ordered.

"Aye Captain," Tuvok said as the turbolift beside him opened. James stepped out just as another hit shook the bridge, he stumbled forward and grabbed the railing in front of him. "Ensign, now is not the time for a Security update."

"Yeah, I was half way here when I noticed that," James said. He glanced at the viewscreen, just catching Voyager's phaser barrage on one part of the alien ship. He wasn't the only one doing so, Kathryn stared intensely at it, almost as if her death glare's had a phaser fire option.

"No damage, or shield reduction. Their shields re-modulate in between each hit," Tuvok reported. Voyager trembled again. "Our shields are still holding."

Kathryn's eyes narrowed, "if only we could get a torpedo in there fast enough."

"Can we prolong the phaser discharge any longer?" Chakotay questioned while he pulled himself up to his feet.

"No effect," Tuvok answered. "The phaser fire does not weaken their shields, their shields seem to be just programmed to change frequency regardless of damage."

"A torpedo in between phaser strikes wouldn't make much difference," Jessie commented.

Kathryn leaned back in her chair, finally giving the poor viewscreen a breather. "There's got to be a weakness in that."

"Maybe there is," James said. He hurried over to the panel on the barrier behind Kathryn and Chakotay. Kathryn looked up to watch him work at it. "While the frequency changes, there is a weakness in the shield grid."

"That's correct, but none of our weapons could strike them in time," Tuvok said.

"I wouldn't say that," James said with a confident smile on his face. Kathryn didn't like the look of it. Jessie had briefly glanced over, she knew that smile all too well. "Transporters. Tuvok fires, somebody transports at the right time."

"Oooh, look who thinks he's the male Seven," Damien teased.

"Who?" everyone asked.

Damien shrugged and got back to his popcorn.

"Hold on," Kathryn said, she almost jumped out of her seat. "Somebody? Even in a normal situation I'd be suggesting a few teams, but this isn't..." Her face looked a little nervous, "um, I mean we'd always need more than just somebody. You're suggesting a team goes over to sabotage and..."

"No, I'm suggesting a somebody goes over to finish off what he should have done months ago," James said. The smile had gone, it had been replaced by a look of guilt. "I have to, that planet... it's my fault. I can't let that happen again."

Jessie quickly abandoned her station and rushed over to his side. "Ohno you're not. They'll have more over there now, they'll kill you."

"She's right. It's a lot to ask," Kathryn said. She turned her attention back to Tuvok, "one of us will get through the other's shields eventually, keep trying. We'll save our few remaining torpedoes for when we've done so."

"I'm not saying I'm going to attack all of them. Transport me over and I'll lower the shields from the inside," James said. Kathryn swung around to glare at him, her fists started to clench. "You never know, they might not even know I was there."

Kathryn shook her head, "you don't go alone."

"No, I do," James argued.

"I'm the Captain, you take orders from me, remember. Now's not the time to be your usual stubborn self," Kathryn snarled.

"Sorry, but this is my mess and my turf, so to speak. I'll take care of it," James said. Before Kathryn could death glare him to submission, he dashed into the turbolift. Jessie quickly followed him.

"James you couldn't have stopped them on New Earth. This isn't your fault," Jessie said once the doors closed behind her.

"Transporter room one," James told the turbolift. It went into motion. "I know that, I wasn't strong enough. I'm still not." Jessie gave him a look that just said *yeah and?* "I wasn't lying. I'm not going over to die in a blaze of stupid. The plan is to sneak and sabotage."

"Then why can't you bring a team along?" Jessie asked.

"One person has less chance of being caught than a team of three. Besides, I can't... I don't want to risk anyone else," James replied.

Jessie bit her lip and shook her head, her eyes were full of anger. He was more worried about what she was going to do than beaming over to a ship full of vampires. "I can't believe you've forgotten. Zare went charging in solo and died horribly. Her brother thought he could rescue her alone and died too. You aren't alone, you've got a whole ship behind you. You've got me. Don't do this on your own or you'll end up like them. You're better than that."

"Jess..." James stuttered.

"I won't let you," Jessie continued. "You know this weight you're carrying, this burden, nobody's put that there but you. Yes you're the Slayer, but you're not expected to be perfect. There's a whole universe out there likely filled with these things. Are you supposed to deal with all that? That's ridiculous."

"I know, but I wouldn't do this if I didn't think I could. I'm not like Zare. If I was I'd beam over to take them all on," James tried to reason with her. "I swear, the first and only plan I came up with involves sneaking around, disabling things and only fighting if I'm caught. I know I've got Voyager on my side, or I wouldn't include her in my plan." Jessie sighed and looked down to the floor. She soon felt a hand caressing her cheek, her eyes only looked up. "Please trust me. I'm not going on a suicide mission to cure my guilt or some crap like that. I just think less people means less chance of getting attention."

"Well..." Jessie mumbled, her bottom lip stuck out in a pout. "I wouldn't have thought that if you weren't all *those people are dead cos of me, let me do this*. Would I?"

James smiled and shrugged, "yeah, sorry. I won't lie to you, I do feel guilty for it. It hasn't clouded my lack of judgement though."

"Good, but I still wish you'd take at least one person with you," Jessie muttered.

James' smile turned a little mischievous, Jessie frowned at it. "Okay, deal."

"What? What did I miss?" she said in a confused voice.

Captain's Log yet another bloody Supplemental: Somebody has stolen the PADD I use to work out the Stardates, so I don't care if it's a new day, I'm using Supplemental. Now that the vamp ship has been taken care of, we've placed warning buoys around the planet they took over. According to James and the tosser Damien, the other two ships are nearby and they're just as minimally manned as the first one. I bet it was Chakotay, he's always whining that he doesn't know the dates. Anyway, they've sent themselves off in pursuit of them despite my objections. If it was anyone else, I'd half expect Damien to steal the damn thing, but since James is with him I am looking forward to hearing about his "accidental" death when James returns.

"So, after they've returned from the mission, what are we going to do with all these ships we've retrieved?" Tom asked.

Harry gave him a bemused stare over the rim of his glass. "Don't get any ideas. Just because the one James infiltrated had about ten vamps on, doesn't mean the others are the same."

"We'll still have one extra ship," Tom smirked. "I could probably do wonders on that beauty; paint her hull, add some *go faster stripes*, clean the blood out of the carpets, fail and put in new carpets, put in a manual helm control system..."

"Janeway won't let you have it. It's a wanted ship in this sector for wiping out at least two worlds. Having it would be like having an empty Borg ship in our fleet," Harry said.

Tom couldn't help but pout, "in that case, we should have stuck to the original plan. Shields down, beam James off, torpedo time."

Harry spotted Jessie leaving the replicator with a plate of food and look around for a place to sit. The Mess Hall was busy, there were no tables available. "Jessie would probably agree with you."

Tom looked over his shoulder. He winced as everybody pretended she wasn't there, looking for somewhere to sit. People were giving that away by having terrified looks on their faces. "She has been extra vicious lately." He looked back towards his friend, "and comfort eat-ey. The extra weight looks good on her." Harry's eyes widened in horror, that made Tom very very nervous. "She didn't hear me, did she? Oh god, I'm too young to die."

"No, but you've got to see someone about your suicidal tendencies," Harry stuttered, his eyes still wide. "She looks fine to me, I don't..."

Tom had another peep over his shoulder. "Hmm, she's still stick thin. It's just the..." He gestured to what he really meant. Harry tried not to look, but it was like his eyes were magnetic.

"Shhh," Harry hushed him as Jessie started to walk by. "Hey Jess, there's an extra seat here."

Jessie smiled gratefully, she quickly sat down and put her plate on the table. "Thanks, I didn't want to ask anyone." She soon started to dig in to her food.

"So er... any news from our ship robber?" Tom asked.

Jessie looked at him with a confused frown. "Damien?"

Tom's eyes widened in panic, "oh god, he didn't? Surely James would have stopped him."

"He did. Last message I got they'd captured the third ship, Damien decided he liked that one. What's the big deal?" Jessie said.

Tom sighed in relief, "oh good."

"Ookay, does it matter?" Jessie asked.

Harry shook his head, "no, Tom's just looking for his next hot rod project. Something's got to distract him from the lack of girlfriends he has."

"Oh please, I'm much nicer than that. I was just concerned about James cos she looked concerned," Tom said with a smile at Jessie, then a scowl at Harry.

Jessie shrugged, "I'm not. He can handle a few little vamps, and he's on his way back. We can go back to normal when he does."

The Ready Room:

"I'm sorry, did you say every four days a coffee would be brewed to release souls?" Kathryn drooled.

Chakotay almost slapped his own head in embarrassment. The alien man standing beside him looked a little confused, to say the least.

"A Chien, perform," Chakotay muttered.

Kathryn looked a little disappointed, though her pupils were still as wide as her eyeballs were. She skipped over to the replicator to cheer herself up.

"I'm sorry. We've had a rough time trying to contain some... er hostile people. A member of our crew is away doing that and she can't stop worrying," Chakotay tried to explain. Kathryn dragged out a coffee cup as wide and deep as the replicator. She almost spilt it in the process. "This is how she deals."

"I understand, I think," the alien said politely. "Five vessels have arrived before you did, not one has been able to help me. Different species means different ways of doing things." Kathryn meanwhile dunked her head in the hot coffee. Chakotay's head was bright red by this point. "Um, I... assume Federation is no different. Yes?"

"Human, Federation is just the name of our organisation," Chakotay corrected him. "And the Captain isn't a good example. If this ritual involves something only specific to your race, how can we help?"

"It's not, I mean it shouldn't be," the man answered. "I was told that a lot of species are not compatible because of the third rite, a lot of species have different customs, beliefs and some would do it too differently."

Kathryn's head was now almost invisible as she had already reached the bottom.

"What is it?" Chakotay asked.

"I'm afraid only Chiens and the subjects are allowed to know, the subjects will only find out before it's supposed to be performed. I never got the reason why either. I had to research it obviously," Thy said.

Kathryn lifted her head out of the *cup*, she smiled in contentment. "Of course we'll help you." She somehow tossed the heavy looking thing to one side on her way over to their guest. Chakotay again covered his face when she started to pinch the man's cheeks. "Cutie pa-tutie. Anything you want, we give... to."

"Oh dear lord, how long does it take to kill vampires, steal their ship, hit Damien with a shovel and come back?" Chakotay muttered to himself.

"Um, thank you? We do need to check your compatibility," the man stuttered, trying desperately to pull her hand away. She kept trying though. He looked towards Chakotay. "Perhaps a physician, or something in your database may..."

"Our Doctor, you can discuss it with him," Chakotay said. "Let's go now." He dragged the poor man away, Kathryn moaned in response.

"Meanie," Kathryn whimpered. Her eyes lit up, "ooh that reminds me. Coffee." She rushed to the replicator again.

Chakotay stared blankly in front of him. With every blink he hoped what he was seeing would vanish. It wouldn't.

"Tom, I said every couple should report here. Are you a couple?" he asked.

Tom looked around at the rest of the room with a pout. There were only a few people standing with him, but they seemed to be paired up.

"Well, I thought I'd show up and someone would volunteer," Tom said meekly.

The alien smirked in Chakotay's direction as once again the Commander was face palming into two hands.

"What?" Tom asked nervously.

"I need an established couple to do the ritual, people who have chemistry already, have a history. Do you understand?" the man replied.

Tom's pout only grew, "oh I see. Tom's excluded from that, I get it. Story of my life." He stomped out of the Cargo Bay muttering under his breath.

"I swear, this ship makes people crazy. It's got to be," Chakotay stuttered.

The man smiled at him, "I don't think that's true."

The doors opened again, this time Kathryn stumbled through them, crying her eyes out. "Chakotay! It's terrible, it's awful..." Chakotay didn't have time to react, suddenly he was hugged from behind. He got a nose full of coffee when she did so.

"What?" Chakotay resisted the urge to say now at the end.

"The replicator just said I was fat, it's so mean," Kathryn cried.

Chakotay tried not to laugh, "are you sure it didn't just say that what you ordered had too much fat in it?"

Kathryn stopped sobbing so quickly he was convinced she had been faking it. "Oh, silly me. It's not the first time it's done that." Chakotay shook his head and turned back to the rest of the room, they of course were smirking. Kathryn still clutched onto him though. "How's my ex angry warrior doing? Still at peace?"

"How could I not be?" Chakotay grumbled sarcastically. He was actually more amused than angry, but there were eight people plus a guest watching everything.

"Aaaw, keep up the good work," Kathryn cooed into his ear. She let go of him and started to walk back out. "Commander," she said in a flirty tone of voice.

"Oookay," Chakotay squeaked as he tried to loosen his tight collar. "Why don't you pick which couple you want to do your death ritual, Thy, and I'll send them straight down."

The man, Thy, smiled at him. "I already have."

Only a day and a half later

"Maybe not," Thy commented.

Kathryn lay on the floor nearby, cradling a giant flask almost the size of her torso in her arms. Her snoring was so loud, the birds nearby were disturbed enough to fly south. Chakotay sat next to her, looking a little embarrassed.

"Just give her a minute, she hasn't finished the flask," Chakotay said meekly. "So, what's this third rite?"

Thy looked down at the device with the time on it, he cringed a little. "I'm afraid we're out of time. We'll have to wait a few days to try again."

"Oh," Chakotay sighed. "I'm sure once our crewmember returns, Kathryn won't be replacing her blood with coffee..."

"Coffee!" Kathryn cried in her sleep. Her arms stretched forward into the air, hands were trying to grab something. "Yum yum, yum."

"As much," Chakotay said.

Thy stared down sadly, "I'm afraid not. Nobody can perform the rites more than once."

"I'm sorry," Chakotay said sincerely.

"Don't be. I made a misjudgment. I had this feeling in my gut that Humans would be the ones to complete the ritual," Thy said. "I knew it was a mistake to put my trust in superstitions."

Chakotay glanced over at Kathryn, she was back to hugging her giant flask again. "My baby. No more running off, you're grounded," she mumbled in her sleep. "Silly boy."

"Don't be so sure. Stranger things have happened," Chakotay muttered.

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"I'm definitely trying the soccer next time. You're going down," Harry threatened with a dry smile.

Tom stood next to him, smirking smugly. "Oh, didn't the several months of volley ball practice with the hot hologram help at all?"

Kathryn rolled her eyes, her fingers drummed across the armrest. "Those two do nothing but yammer on. I'm starting to feel like their arguments are repeating themselves."

Chakotay laughed, showing off his dimples. "They probably are."

Tom groaned, "god, it's been so dead lately."

Harry nodded, "yeah, it was a good idea to upgrade Neelix's resort program and let everyone use it 24/7."

"I thought we could do the same with Holodeck Two, something different you know," Tom said.

Harry couldn't help but cringe, "I hope this one doesn't involve you wearing a jet pack on your back. My idea of fun isn't spraying you with a holographic fire extinguisher."

Danny sniggered from her station, the two stared at her blankly.

"Hey, give a guy a break. After the whole rift's eating the ship adventure, I figured everyone would love to play an old fashioned sci-fi romp," Tom protested. Danny snorted, but didn't laugh.

"After the Invaders from the Fifth Dimension episode, I don't think you should show your face around the ship," Harry commented.

"Damn," Tom sighed. "Sometimes the best way to heal is to make fun, laugh. That reminds me, I have a hot date and you haven't, so mind helping me out?" Harry rolled his eyes as his friend kept talking, he slipped in an ear plug to block him out.

"Engineering to the Bridge."

Kathryn sighed, "what is it B'Elanna?"

"We have a situation Captain, a big one, you should see this."

Almost every seat around the Conference Room table were taken. All but one of their occupants were very tense. Chakotay stood next to the panel on the wall, he seemed to be running the meeting while Kathryn kept ducking down under her table to re-fill her coffee.

Tom was busy sharing one of his plans, so most of the room weren't taking him seriously. "Um no, we won't do that. We can get crewmembers to lure them to the holodeck or something. We won't need the doc, just program lots of holo weapons, big muscled armed guys and safeties off."

Kathryn bumped her head on the way up. Nobody noticed her re-appear, but some did hear the thump sound. They chose to ignore it.

"What kind of dumb idea is that?" Ian muttered, shaking his head.

Kathryn shook her sore head, "people, can we be serious for a moment here." Everyone glanced back toward her. Naturally no one had any idea what she had been doing. "There's one more thing, the Borg has one of our probes so they know we're here."

"Great, just great," Danny stuttered.

"We'll do what we can to avoid a confrontation, but if we do I have every confidence in our ability to succeed," Kathryn said, looking all around the table. "I have faith in each and every one of you."

"Naked indeed," Neelix muttered.

"Well almost every one," Kathryn sighed.

Sickbay:

The Doctor and Kes stood around the primary biobed, only they weren't treating any ordinary patient. A Borg drone lay still on it, the Doctor wasn't unnerved as he worked on the drone's fully mechanical arm. Kes however seemed extremely nervous, mainly for the Doctor's unguarded behaviour.

"They inject the host with nano technology that goes directly into the blood stream." He showed her by pointing at the monitor on the station. "Each nanoprobe attaches onto a blood cell, and changes it."

Kes felt even more uneasy as the Doctor went into more detail. She eyed what was left of the drone on the biobed with distaste.

"There's no way you can really stop this process once it's begun, but we can work on an antibody..." the Doctor's voice began to fade into the background until she couldn't hear it anymore.

A white flash before her eyes and everything changed. An eery green light filled a dark, mechanical room. In the centre of it lay a pile of body parts, all of them a lot like their *patient* on the biobed. They had been ripped, torn apart in an instant.

Another flash took it away. This time she saw a sky view of Voyager. A blazing ball of light blocked her view of it for a second, blinding her briefly, it soon slammed into the saucer of the ship. Another flash and Voyager was no longer there, only shards of metal scattered where it was before.

Another flash, she saw herself with a smile on her face. Her body seemed to be fading away into nothing. Once again she saw Voyager, this time shooting off into warp leaving a Borg cube standing behind them.

Kes saw her own face again. It flashed in between that sky view of Voyager and the debris field. That image stayed in her head a lot longer than she liked. The pain, the guilt, the anguish she felt at that very moment didn't feel like her own, but then she saw herself scream out a haunting, "no!"

The Doctor realised Kes hadn't responded to him in a while. Her gaze was lightyears away, horror was all over her features. He rushed to her side, touching her arm. "Kes? Are you all right?"

Kes heard his voice, it brought her out of that nightmare. The Doctor watched her with concern, he wanted to know what happened to her. She didn't know where to start.

The Ready Room:

"What about New Earth?" Chakotay suggested. He got what he expected, a scowl in return. "I know we decided to keep what happened there, there, but on H'Taria..."

"H'Taria was some delusional man that thought tossing some rocks into a lake and mountain climbing would make ghosts escape through the atmosphere and into some deep space afterlife. I wasn't taking it seriously," Kathryn scoffed.

Chakotay didn't buy it for one second. "When Kes was comatose, you didn't hesitate to jump through religious hoops to save her. You were serious about helping him, it was just... you were worried about James and his vampire hunt."

"Oh the humanity," Kathryn groaned. "How dare I!" she mockingly snapped.

"I'm not judging you for that. I just don't understand why you wouldn't just say that, instead of insulting somebody's beliefs," Chakotay said. He shook his head, "I know Thy didn't believe either, but that's not really the point."

Kathryn rolled her eyes, "what is the point?"

"Thy chose us because he thought there was something more between us," Chakotay replied.

"Oh yay, Thy would have fit in with this gossipy crew perfectly," Kathryn said.

"My point is you've acted like I believed it too," Chakotay said. Kathryn frowned at him, her hand resisted reaching for the coffee in front of her. "That's all."

Kathryn laughed, which took Chakotay by surprise. She tried to stop herself, luckily reaching for her cup did the trick. "I'll admit that I had a nagging feeling about the H'Taria's true love brings back the dead rubbish ritual, but that didn't bother me." She took a long sip. "I'm not bothered by what everyone thinks they know. You shouldn't either."

"I'm not. I just worried that... I didn't want you worrying over something else. You have enough on your plate with the Borg, vamps again, James again, as well as his baby drama," Chakotay tried to explain. Kathryn nodded. "I wanted to help with something."

"I see," Kathryn said, her mood seemed to drop when she understood. "I've looked over the logs of previous Captains who have dealt with the Borg. I'm hoping another perspective can help."

Chakotay seemed grateful for the subject changed, he sat forward in his seat. "Oh? Anything yet?"

"Nothing we don't already know. This is what Captain Picard wrote about them," Kathryn said, she tapped the laptop in front of her. Chakotay noted that she changed her expression to read it. "In their collective state the Borg are utterly without mercy. Driven by one will alone; the will to conquer. They are beyond redemption, beyond reason."

"I am Borg," the Borg drone said in a serious voice. All that was lost on James, as she looked six foot tall with her ridiculously huge heels. Because of this a certain part of her body was close to being shoved in his face. He tried his best to keep away from it. "And you're a cute little Slayer boy aren't you?" she cooed.

James violently shuddered and turned extremely pale. "You don't have anywhere I can throw up, do you?"

"The Borg aren't what we expected. They're crazy," James was telling everyone.

The Doctor stood over Tuvok as he lay with an injured head on a biobed. Kes and Chakotay stood nearby James, her armed with a tricorder. A heavily pregnant Jessie lay next to them on a different biobed.

"Hmm," Chakotay frowned. He didn't need him to tell him that, he saw that for himself.

Only minutes ago:

Chakotay kept on walking ahead of the newly assimilated Cargo Bay Two. A drone seemed to step out of nowhere in front of him. It wasn't any old drone though, he recognised that face anywhere. The Borg however had stolen everything else that was familiar about her.

"Since when do you point weapons at your allies? I thought you were at peace," Kathryn questioned coldly.

Chakotay froze on the spot, his eyes widened. "Kathryn?"

"No," she candidly replied, stepping closer to meet his stare. "We are Borg and you should lower your weapon." All Chakotay did was stare like he was catatonic.

The rest of Security rushed by looking panicky. Moments later the drone in heels did the same, except she looked cheery. She stopped, double backed to join Kathryn. "There's cute boys on this ship." Kathryn stared blankly at her. "They'll make excellent drones."

The drones and a few others were in the middle of standing in a straight line, waiting for something. For some reason that something looked like a coffee shop titled Starborg's Coffee. Even stranger still the Kathryn drone wasn't in it. She stood to one side, glaring at them. The only other person not in the queue was a familiar drone now wearing a bright pink catsuit, lying in the Jeffries tube next to where Kathryn stood.

"I think it brings out my eyes, don't you think?" she purred.

"You only have one," the Kathryn drone muttered.

"Aaw, someone's jealous of old Seven," she heard echo from the Jeffries tube. "They'll fit you with an eye piece soon, darling."

They all turned their heads at the sound of the Cargo Bay doors opening. Not the usual doors leading to the corridor, the ones leading to empty space. "Uhoh," all but Kathryn said before they all went flying toward the large open door.

Kathryn quickly grabbed onto an alcove, and hung on for a dear life.

Meanwhile in the Jeffries tube Seven was being pulled out. She screamed hysterically. She only got as far as the hatch door, her chest was too big to fit through.

All Kathryn could see was her kicking pink legs sticking out of the Jeffries tube. Despite her situation she rolled her eyes and shook her head.

"All remaining vessels are returning to their realm. The Borg have prevailed," the Kathryn drone said.

"You're welcome," Chakotay grunted. "Now our side of the deal."

Kathryn stood directly in front of him, staring coldly into his eyes. "We don't think so. This alliance is terminated. Your ship and its crew will be adapted to service us."

"Oh that's a surprise, I can hardly contain the heart attack," Chakotay muttered.

"Don't," Damien said, looking too interested.

Kathryn pushed Chakotay in the chest, it was enough to send him backwards onto the ground. Then she headed to the helm. Tom panicked, he quickly raised a phaser he had in his pocket and fired. A shield went around her as she closed on him, he was thrown half way across the room. The needles on her hand went straight inside the helm itself.

Cargo Bay Two:

"Chakotay to the Doctor, you're on."

"You know I'm sure a lot of people could just think about coffee, so..." James muttered as he stood in an alcove. The Doctor put a device on his neck.

"Janeway only seems to have connected with three people, the other two were needed on the bridge," the Doctor said. "Plus you can irritate her as a backup if the coffee doesn't work."

B'Elanna knelt next to a Borg panel nearby, she couldn't help but see something strange ahead of her. Seven appeared to be hooking herself up to something.

"B'Elanna?" the Doctor got her attention.

"What is that she's connected to?" B'Elanna wondered. Seven was now done, she picked up the device on the other end of the connection. It looked like a small pedal, it seemed like it was too as she started to tap her foot on it. B'Elanna wasn't sure what to think when the sound of air being pumped came out of it. Then she noticed the drone's chest getting bigger. "Oh!"

The Bridge:

Kathryn looked up like she was distracted. Everyone else watched on the edge of their lack of seats.

She quickly started talking to herself, "coffee is irrelevant." She whimpered a little, "mmm stop it, ooh big cup, jug, that's just... irrelevant. We don't need coffee, we are Borg."

Randomly she screamed out, "oh god no, don't tell them that!" Everyone jumped out of their skin. "Like I'd do something like that, heh heh." Tom was pulling himself up from the floor when he spotted a tiny bit of drool escape from her mouth.

"What the hell is James distracting her with?" Harry stupidly asked. Everyone stared at him. "I know, coffee but she was embarrassed. It sounds interesting." Tom tried to smirk back at him but the pain in his chest made that too difficult for him. "Surely all he has to do is picture a cup of coffee."

"He has to keep her distracted constantly, anything that's related to her humanity. The Borg can't know what B'Elanna is doing," Chakotay said.

"Oh," Kathryn said sadly. "No, please... I can explain." Suddenly her eyes widened, her voice began to choke up. An implant on her neck was starting to spark out of control. Her screams filled the bridge as she fell on top of the helm.

Tuvok rushed over to scan her. "Her connection to the collective has been severed."

The Conference Room:

"...The Borg definitely didn't get any real co-ordinates off us," Chakotay was saying.

"Definitely not, however we do not know for sure if this Seven of Nine is really disconnected constantly. We need to know for sure," Tuvok said.

"I'll get on it when I check on the Captain," the Doctor said.

Tom frowned at Tuvok, "*know for sure*, and twice in same paragraph. *Disconnected constantly*. You know things are bad when the Vulcan's grammar is worse than everyone elses."

"Seven of Nine threw her breast pump at my head," Tuvok said.

"I figured only Jess would need one of those," Tom said seriously.

B'Elanna smiled at him playfully. "Not that kind of breast pump."

"Huh?" Tom was confused. He tried to figure it out by imagining what else it could be. The first visual he got made him shudder. What he didn't know was that it was exactly the same one B'Elanna got earlier. "Nah, that's ridiculous."

Chakotay sighed, "I know the last few days have been a bit much, but I'm confident that'll we get through Borg space and whatnot after getting through all that." Everyone, excluding Tuvok, pretended to fall asleep and snore. Chakotay groaned in frustration, "you know I have been very close to snapping for a while, don't even push me."

"Well let's just hope we're out of the woods now," Tom said. "Everything's resolved; the Borg haven't a clue where we are, 8472 are gone, our vampire guests are space surfing somewhere, Kes' visions have stopped..."

"Tom," Chakotay warned him.

Tom just ignored him for now. "... And Janeway's no longer connected to the Borg. Now I can just get back to doing what I wanted to do, connecting with my beautiful girl here," he said whilst leaning towards B'Elanna.

She stared blankly at him. "You'll connect with something if you keep that up."

"Ah, that's the ending I'm voting for," Harry grinned.

Tuvok didn't look too well, he steadied himself using the table. "I believe that bump on my head has grown, I feel dizzy."

"No, it's not just you," Chakotay groaned. "Don't let your guard down. We're still in Borg Space and we have two ex-drones on board. Anything can happen."

"Yeah. We're lucky 8472 were here," Tom added on. "What would have happened if the Borg hadn't tried to assimilate them yet? We'd have nothing to barter with if we got caught by a cube or a hundred."

"Why waste your time thinking up alternate scenarios? We should be moving forward, not back," Harry said with a chirpy smile on his face.

Chakotay frowned at him and then Tom. "Why do I feel like that was a dig of some kind?"

"That reminds me. If Janeway and Seven are disconnected, why drag the new and now grumpy dad away to guard them?" Tom questioned a still dizzy Tuvok. "Are you sure it was Seven that hit you?"

"I am certain," Tuvok replied.

"Now grumpy? He's been a joy for nearly a year now," Chakotay commented. B'Elanna smirked at him. "The Borg situation has been stressful, I have good reason to be grumpy."

"I know he's the chosen one, or whatever, but taking a guy away from his new son. That's cold man," Tom commented.

"Natural, not Chosen. Natural pain in my ass," Chakotay grumbled. B'Elanna was still smirking at him, it almost made him crack. "As I said, we can't take any chances. If either of them are still connected in some way, James is the best defence we have against them. It was for everyone's safety, including his son."

"He doesn't usually kick up a fuss, especially if it means keeping Jess and now the kid safe," Harry said.

"True, but still," Tom sighed.

"No still about it. We've all been through enough this last year. We can't have anymore surprises thrown at us," Chakotay said.

James didn't really want to look at her, he just stared straight at the circular panel at the top of the alcove. Green lines seemed to spit randomly from the centre of it, the noise from the alcove seemed in tune with it.

He didn't realise that the person standing inside it was awake and staring at him. Eventually she spoke, "Ensign Taylor." Her voice brought him out of the daze. "You have been staring at us for four minutes. Perhaps you wish to be somewhere else."

James avoided looking her in the eye, but he still had to keep watch of her so he forced his attention down from the top of the alcove.

"I'm clearly not something you can or should slay. Wouldn't you prefer to return to your family?" the Kathryn drone said.

The last word made him wince inwardly. The way she said it in her cold Borg like voice didn't help either. "Surely after almost getting your neck broken and eye gouged out by a strong vampire, as well as taking care of his minions and the dimensional rift, you deserve a break. Some normality." What she was saying and how she was were completely different, the latter was filled with cold contempt.

James grit his teeth for the time being, he knew she wasn't done taunting him yet. Sure enough her next remark flipped the anger switch in his head. "You do not need to watch over me, it's a waste of a Slayer's time, is it not?"

"Perhaps I wouldn't need to if you stopped acting like you're the queen of the Borg," James snapped back. "You're supposed to be disconnected. You should be Janeway again."

"And that bothers you," the Kathryn drone stated.

"No," James lied, and he didn't bother hiding it.

"You know the truth." His eyes finally met with hers, though he could see Kathryn Janeway wasn't really behind them. "They tried to break the link while you reached out to find her. Instead you found yourself. It frightened you, did it not?"

He actually felt a chill wash over him as she spoke. He didn't want her to know that she did that to him though. A forced eye roll and a scowl would be enough to convince her. "No, just annoyed."

"You rejected it. It is why we are still..." the Kathryn drone said.

"Shut up!" James tried to stop her.

"It was your rejection that kept her away," the Kathryn drone said. "Yes your people successfully disconnected her from the Borg, but you... you pushed her back."

James shook his head timidly, "that doesn't make any sense."

"You found out she was your mother and you couldn't handle it. It destroyed her. Why would she want to return?" the drone continued.

"Stop," James pleaded with her.

"It does not matter anyway. You are a Slayer, a weapon," the drone said in the same cold voice. James couldn't look at her anymore but he couldn't turn his back on her either, he settled for turning to his right half way. "The Borg have not been able to learn anything more about them or their purpose. They will. They will come."

"No, they don't know where we are," James said quietly.

"They will, but not through me," the Kathryn drone said. James saw her arm reach for him in the corner of his weaker left eye, it was barely above a blur. He still grabbed it before she could grab him, he thought he was safe. "Resistance is futile," the drone hissed. Assimilation needles shot out of her hand and punched into his neck.

"No," Kathryn's voice cried out inside. "Stop this!" She tried to pull herself back. It was too late.

He couldn't help but yell out, not just because of the pain. So many voices rushed at him like a tidal wave crashing into the rocks, so many entwined together as one. There was nothing else he could do to stop it, his fist clenched and swung towards her. It struck her with enough force to knock her flying backwards into the alcove, smashing it on impact.

The damage was done though. His skin crawled as the parasite flowed through his veins. The voices invading his mind weighed him down heavily, it brought him to the ground. "Please, no..." his voice barely rose above the noise, the thought of being consumed by it terrified him.

Kathryn saw him fall to the ground in front of her. His skin was starting to fade to grey, she could see his veins darkening. She tried to reach out to help him, as before she expected her body to do something else. This time her hand did as she asked. With all the strength she could muster she crawled forward to reach him, ignoring the extreme pain she now felt across her face.

She expected resistance, he couldn't know she was in control after all. He just lay there. He wasn't gone though, she could see in his eyes he was trying to fight it. A nanoprobe then punctured its way through his cheek, the tendrils clutched tightly onto his skin.

"Hold on. Just keep fighting," she whispered. Her hand reached for the commbadge on his chest. "Sickbay, James needs help now!" Another tap, "Bridge..." her throat started to close up as a horrible thought came to her. "I'd go to Red Alert if I were you."

"Kath... Captain? What's going on?" Chakotay's voice asked.

"I... James has been assimilated," Kathryn answered, it hurt to even just say it.

"What, how?"

"Oh crap... if anyone needs me, I'll be in the escape pods," Tom's voice stammered.

"I... did it. Oh god," Kathryn stuttered. She tapped the commbadge again. "If I had not felt so sorry for myself during the link, this... you wouldn't." In the corner of her mind she could feel the voices start to crawl their way back, they were different this time. They weren't in unison, voices talked over other voices, she could hear panicked cries and confused terror. Screams.

"What's happening?" her head throbbed even more as the voices grew louder and more intense. She tried to concentrate. Maybe she could find James' voice in this mess, help him fight what was happening.

The Doctor finally arrived but Kathryn did not even notice him, he knelt down but kept his guard. Kes followed seconds later, her eyes widened at what she saw.

"This is... this is odd," the Doctor said. "The assimilation process has halted. The connection seems to be weakening."

The voices were far too loud for Kathryn now, too intense. The pain was crushing her. She could not find him, all she could find was further confusion. The last voice she heard was more angry than confused.

"Re-establish the connection. I cannot hear it. Why, why can't I hear them?"

Kes rushed to Kathryn's side as she collapsed to the ground. A quick scan told her enough, "the connection to the collective, it re-activated..." The Doctor turned his head to tell her to do something. She quickly finished what she was going to say, "it's overloading."

The Doctor glanced back at his own patient and tricorder scans before looking back at Kes. Shock was all over his face. "Quickly disconnect her again, the overload could kill her."

"James too?" Kes questioned as she got to work.

"That's the strangest part," the Doctor muttered. "The connection is only one way. I'm not getting the same readings as you."

"One way? Which way?" Kes stuttered.

"He can hear them but they can't hear him," the Doctor answered. "This shouldn't happen."

The Bridge:

The red lights were flashing, the rest of the Bridge lights were off. Everyone there were more than a little tense. Chakotay kept a tight hold of Tom's shoulder as the helmsman kept trying to leave his seat.

"Commander I'm detecting a cube heading our way. Its course is erratic, maybe..." Harry reported with a frown.

"On screen," Chakotay ordered through a lump in his throat.

The viewscreen showed the Borg Cube approach. Like Harry said its speed was inconsistent, it would almost grind to a halt every now and then.

"They're charging weap... maybe not," Harry said, his frown deepening. His eyes widened at the next readings he got, "they're getting ready to go to transwarp."

Tom glanced up at the Borg ship almost on their nose. "If they do that here, we'll be smashed into little bits." Chakotay cleared his throat. "Right, moving out of the way." Tom quickly tapped in the controls. Everyone breathed a sigh in relief as the menacing sight of the cube veered off the side of the screen as Voyager made its escape.

"Tom I'd pick it up if I were you," Harry warned. "The cube's initiated its self destruct."

"Crap," Tom hurried it up. "Straight ahead, anywhere... warp one."

Voyager jumped into warp just in time, the cube tore itself apart seconds later.

The Doctor's tricorder hummed gently, he smiled at it. "The connection's gone." Kes looked up at him with relief. "On both of them. We'd better transport them to Sickbay." Suddenly he got a catsuit tossed on top of his head.

"Yeesh, finally!" Seven groaned when Kes looked over at her. She quickly averted her eyes before she could throw up. "What do I have to do to get some attention around here?" Luckily for everyone she stomped off.

"How... how did she do that so fast?" Kes squeaked.

The Doctor slowly removed the offending garment off his head, he had a bemused look on his face despite everything. "Remind me to put her straight into a counselling program when we're done with these two."

Kes nodded. "Of course. Good idea, it's not like you can make her any worse."

The Doctor frowned at her. "Please stop saying things like that. It always makes me think you know what's going to happen and you're being sarcastic about it."

"That's silly Doctor. I don't know what's going to happen," Kes said in an awkward tone. He didn't spot it though, he was too busy frowning at the colour of the catsuit in his hands.

"Who'd replicate something like this?" he asked.

Two Months Later

Chakotay walked into the Ready Room, PADD in hand. "I tell you. Kes sends us ten and a bit years closer to home, and her replacement just sends us around the bend," he said with a smirk tugging at his lips. He stopped and sighed as he found Kathryn where she usually was; standing in front of the window, staring at the stars. "Cap... Kathryn?"

Her head turned a bit to her left, only to register that she'd noticed him.

"Is there a problem with the Starfleet transmission?" she asked.

"No, not at all. B'Elanna's still getting the letters. Unfortunately Seven claimed she'd be, in her words *Borg Superduper Faster* than her and decided to help," Chakotay replied. Kathryn was barely up to rolling her eyes. "The Doctor's counselling isn't working. I swear she's getting worse."

"Probably," Kathryn said.

Chakotay carefully approached her. "Still getting the headaches?" He only got a head shake as an answer. "What's wrong?"

"I received a letter from Mark," Kathryn replied.

"That's a bad thing?" Chakotay looked confused. He approached further. The look on her face gave the rest away for him. He decided to wait patiently for her to tell him, it was only fair.

"Four months ago he married a woman who works with him. I knew he wouldn't wait for me so why am I so surprised?" Kathryn said bitterly.

"I'm sorry," Chakotay said as he bowed his head.

Kathryn finally looked at him. "It's okay. I'm used to it." Chakotay frowned, he wasn't quite sure what she meant. "What was I expecting? Mark to wait seventy years for my return? James to find out the truth and go for a hug, forgive me?"

"Kathryn," Chakotay said gently to try and soothe her.

It didn't work, her anger was starting to leak. "I tried to assimilate my own son! He didn't forgive me immediately for abandoning him with his rotten father, so I sit back and allow that Borg persona to take over and do that. No wonder he's been avoiding me. And then there's you..."

"Me? You haven't done anything," Chakotay protested.

Kathryn shut her eyes and shook her head. "No, I never do. That's the point. I hid behind the idea that Mark would wait. I knew better than that and still I did so. I'm a coward and others suffer for it."

"I disagree. What happened to James wasn't your fault. There's also nothing wrong with believing in Mark, it's only been three years," Chakotay said. "You are being too hard on yourself."

"No, I'm being just right on myself," Kathryn said softly. "I didn't just hide behind that. I used the rules and regulations to put up walls. There were lines I painted which I expected you to stay behind." Her eyes drifted up to meet with his. "So what'll it be Chakotay? Indulge my feelings? Hold fast to protocol? What?"

Chakotay was taken aback, to say the least. "You have plenty of time to think about it."

Kathryn smiled up at him with her eyes as well as her lips. "You've been so patient with me. I am grateful for your friendship."

"I never expected anything like that from you just because that was what I wanted. I value your friendship too, more than anything," Chakotay said. Kathryn surprised him with a sudden kiss on the lips.

Meanwhile:

Harry stared, bemused at Tom's child like pout and arm folding at the helm. He couldn't keep it in any longer, he laughed at his friend.

"What's your problem?"

Tom rolled his eyes. "I hate Hunters, everyone does and yet here we are. Why can't we just delete it?"

"Why? It's important and a lot happens in it," Harry was confused. "Are you getting it mixed up with something else?"

Tom suddenly found a few hair bobbles thrown in his face. He heard a child's laughter immediately afterwards. For some reason he whimpered in fear.

"No Michael, I need those," Jessie scolded from her station. She reached out to pick up the baby sitting in the mobile crib in front of her. The little boy giggled as she tickled him as punishment.

"No," Tom finally answered Harry's question. He ran off screaming into the turbolift.

Everyone frowned, obviously excluding the baby, and looked at the closed door. "That was weird," Jessie muttered.

Harry nodded. He was about to say something when the screaming continued and the door opened. Tom ran out, with a freaked out Craig following him slowly.

"What, I only said hello," he said meekly. He wandered over to Tactical, but to Tom it looked like he was going to walk by it and over to Jessie. That made him panic even more and he ran off through the door next to Harry.

"Something tells me he's got Hunters mixed up with some bizarre episode starring hair bobbles and Craig," Harry said.

Jessie sniggered, "that sounds riveting. Can't wait to miss it." Harry nodded while Craig still looked freaked out as well as confused.

2375

James made his way down the corridor towards the turbolift doors. Once he got there he stopped to press the panel on the side. The wait for a lift wasn't too long, the doors opened within seconds. As it did, he wished he hadn't bothered.

"Uh... Janeway..." he said uncomfortably.

"James?" Kathryn was just as surprised. Her arms folded across her stomach. "It's been a while, how have..."

"I need to go to somewhere not here," James mumbled while trying to avert his eyes. Then he noticed her arms and soon realised she was using them to hide something; her larger belly. "You're... you're pregnant?" he stuttered.

Kathryn's eyes squeezed shut, her whole body had tensed up. "I..." she almost blurted out a lie, but she couldn't keep doing that to him. "Yes."

"This is ridiculous. How..." James said.

"You know how," Kathryn regretted saying.

James laughed bitterly. "I have a two year old son. You're pregnant with my brother or sister. Michael will have an aunt or uncle two years younger than him. Don't tell me that's not messed up!"

Kathryn took one step forward to exit the turbolift. He backed off simultaneously. The doors shut behind her. "James... it's too late, I'm sorry."

"Why didn't you tell me?" James asked, his voice almost cracked. The hurt in his eyes made her body ache.

"I wanted to give you some space after finding out, let you come to me instead of crowding you. I didn't know..." Kathryn answered.

"No!" James butted in. "You had times, plenty of times to tell me who you were to me. Instead you claimed you were just some babysitter, then played mum for over two years."

"I know," Kathryn sighed. "I can't change the past. All I can do now is try to make it up to you. I do lov..."

"No, don't lie to me," James interrupted her again.

Kathryn felt a sting in his voice, she tried her best to ignore it. "I'm not lying. You are the most precious..." James turned on his heel and charged away from her. She quickly followed. "You are the most important thing in my life."

"I didn't know I was a cup of coffee," James muttered.

That hurt Kathryn more than she expected, it stalled her for a moment. "Don't! You can't possibly know better than me. You have a son too, my feelings for you are no different."

James stopped dead in his tracks. He turned to stare at her in such a way it made her nervous. "I didn't, couldn't abandon him. How dare you!"

"I didn't. I wrongly assumed I was doing what was right for you. I failed and for that I'm sorry," Kathryn said.

"Why?" James asked.

"Why... why what?" Kathryn was confused.

"Why was leaving me with dad better?" James asked.

"I didn't know he was violent. If I did..." Kathryn answered. "I figured if you stayed with your father, you'd have a family; a mother, sister..." She noticed James flinch on the word sister, it held off his anger for now. "With me, I had no way of knowing what you'd have. It could have worked out perfectly; you, me, mum, Phoebe... dad. Though they could have easily disowned me for what I did, then you'd only have me. I know my dad wouldn't have, but he died while you were still young. What if it was just me, him and you. What if I joined Starfleet, would you be happy following me from ship to ship, losing friends along the way? Would I have quit my career and raised you alone?"

She sighed as many more possibilities flashed through her head. "There were so many ways I could hurt you if I took you with me. As I had no way of knowing he would be

violent towards you, I just thought he was a little sexist and rude, I thought him keeping you was better."

"Two years and you didn't see anything," James mumbled.

"No, of course not. I'd have thrown my life away if I had any idea," Kathryn said.

"That's nice," James said but Kathryn could tell by the way he did that he didn't mean it. "Raising me would be throwing your life away."

"Oh god," Kathryn groaned impatiently. Her pregnancy hormones were going wild enough without coffee withdrawals added on. She didn't need this too. "I didn't mean it that way."

"What else could it mean?" James muttered.

Kathryn calmed herself down as she saw the hurt in his eyes. Of course he took it that way. "If he gave himself away, somehow, I'd do all I could to stop him. Stop him before he hurt you. That's what I meant."

James turned his head to stare at the wall beside him. He tried to swallow a large lump in his throat. "A couple of times, I remember he used to..." he cringed as the memory came back to him. "You were around then."

"He did?" Kathryn gasped. "Son of a... I'm sorry, how could he? God. I should have gave him a good kicking."

James' anger had mostly faded as he saw her get more and more upset and angry. He didn't want to do that, especially now. "I wasn't blaming you for that."

"No, you're right. He was manipulative, shallow, sexist. I should have seen it coming. I just thought Susy and Debbie would make up for all of that," Kathryn said. "You have every right to blame me, I'm terrible." She felt a twinge in her abdomen, she tried to ignore it for now. "I failed you, I don't expect you to ever forgive me."

James looked concerned as she winced from the aftermath of the twinge. "Please stop, I shouldn't have yelled at you like this. Not now. You should calm down."

"How can I? That beast hurt you while I was in the next room, or something," Kathryn stuttered. "I couldn't protect you. I..." The next twinge made her double over, her legs buckled. James lurched forward to catch her mid fall.

"Oh god..." he stuttered with guilt all over his face. He tapped his commbadge, "Sickbay, medical emergency."

Sickbay:

The Doctor hurried over as James carried Kathryn onto the biobed. He quickly backed out of the way to let the Doctor get to work. The tricorder was already out, scanning away.

"I can't, not again," Kathryn stuttered.

"Try to stay calm," the Doctor said softly, while placing a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Stress isn't going to help the baby."

Stress. James tensed up even more than he was before. "I did... was this cos of me?"

The Doctor glanced back over his shoulder. "What, why?"

"We argued," James replied.

"No," the Doctor answered. The readings on his tricorder backed him up.

"I can't go through this again. It's too soon," Kathryn said.

James walked around to the other side of the biobed. "It's okay. The Doctor will help."

"No, you don't understand," Kathryn whispered to him. "I almost lost you too. Not even seven months along and you... they had to keep you on life support. I almost lost you, I did for a moment. Not again."

The Doctor frowned with worry as he activated the scanner that climbed over the biobed.

"The Doc's the best around, he won't let that happen," James tried to calm her down.

"Not that, that's not true and thank you, but perhaps I should give the prognosis," the Doctor said whilst reading the scanner.

James sent him a cold stare. "Oh I'm sorry. Is my bedside manner getting in the way of you being an asshole."

"James," Kathryn scolded him. "Is the baby alright?"

"There is internal bleeding. I believe there's a tear causing it. I don't know how but..." the Doctor answered. He glanced at James briefly. "It wasn't you, unless your words are literally sharp and you've been arguing for a day." He focused again on Kathryn. "I'll have to induce labour. We haven't got much time."

Kathryn tried to steel herself through the next sharp twinge. It was a lot harsher than the last few, it took her by surprise. Her fists clenched so tightly they turned white. She then felt a hand on top of hers, clutching it firmly. Kathryn turned her head to see that it belonged to James. She loosened that hand so she could hold his back. A smile managed to break through the pain.

Kathryn and Chakotay could only wait and watch impatiently for the Doctor to finish. He had his back to them both. Tom stood on the other side of her biobed with a medical tricorder in his hand. James stood further away, but close enough to still be a part of the situation. His shoulders had tensed up and stayed there for quite a while.

It felt like to the two future parents that they had been waiting for hours.

The Doctor finally span around to face them again. The smile on his face made everybody relax. "Congratulations. She's stable."

"She?" Kathryn whispered. "Thank goodness she's all right."

Chakotay smiled in relief. He felt the grip on his hand tighten, his head turned towards Kathryn. She didn't look as relieved as he expected.

"She will have to remain here where she can be constantly monitored," the Doctor said.

Kathryn nodded, her focus shifted to James. "Yes I know."

"Don't worry Kathryn. She's a Janeway, a fighter. I imagine she'll be out of there within a day or two," Chakotay smiled.

The Doctor's eyebrow raised, "I'm not that good. Please don't get her hopes..."

Kathryn tried to sit back up despite the lack of energy she had left. "James, I need a favour..." she stuttered. Chakotay looked at her in concern, James only frowned at her.

"Sure," he answered.

"I know you've got work to go back to, but can you stay here? Just in case," Kathryn asked.

Chakotay looked even more confused, "he's not a physician. That's all our daughter should need right now."

Tom glanced between everyone, he was more confused than anyone else in the room was.

James had a feeling about what she really meant, he gave her an assuring nod. Chakotay was still concerned and confused though.

"Kathryn?" he whispered.

Tom's confusion seemed to lift. "Oh you don't think that..." he gestured a finger in James' direction, he narrowed his eyes in response. "She's um, one of..."

"Tom," Kathryn growled. Tom quickly slinked away before she could hurt him... again. He still had a few injuries from the birth to fix.

Chakotay understood, at least he thought he did. "There's a twenty five year gap between them, do you really think she'd be picked?"

Kathryn's eyes were now wide, she seemed shocked at the accusation. Then she got angry when she realised Tom had started it. "What, no. Slayers don't run in my family. You don't see me killing vampires, do you?"

James shrugged, "you probably could."

Chakotay nodded, then he noticed Kathryn scowling at him. "It's a compliment. No, I thought... why else would you ask him to stay *just in case*?"

"It's a long story. I just want our little girl to be safe in there until she no longer needs it," Kathryn replied, pointing ahead of her towards the Doctor. "I don't want anybody taking her out too soon."

"Why would anyone do that?" James asked.

Kathryn stared at him for nearly a minute, he got more concerned with every second. "Forget it. Just stay if you want to."

Chakotay glanced back at James, he only shrugged. Chakotay sighed, he didn't think he would be worried again so quickly.

A week had passed, the worries from before had all but gone. Kathryn sat on the edge of the biobed, cradling her newborn daughter in her arm. The baby was still tiny; her head rested in the bend in her arm, her feet barely touched upon her wrist. Despite her size her eyes were wide open, she was cooing happily.

"She's beautiful. She's her mother's daughter," Chakotay said as he sat beside them both.

Kathryn smiled, "I know."

Chakotay could only smirk. He reached over to stroke his daughter's face with one of his fingers. Her lip curled a little and she gurgled in response.

"At least this one's a hundred times cuter than your last kid," he teased.

James overheard as he was standing only a few metres away. He shrugged and mouthed the word *yeah*. Kathryn glanced over just as he laughed without opening his mouth. She still gave Chakotay an elbow for his comment.

"He was equally cute," she hissed.

"Was?" Chakotay sniggered.

Kathryn scowled at him, but she did it in good humour. "She's a newborn, he's an adult..."

"Are you sure?" Chakotay smirked.

James couldn't help but roll his eyes. "Ok that's en..." He ended up shrugging it off, "nah."

"When she's an adult, they'll be equal again," Kathryn said awkwardly. She looked over to check if James was offended, he wasn't. He did look like he was going to object to the last part though. Her attention went back to the baby in her arm.

"We still need to give her a name," Chakotay said to change the subject he started.

Kathryn nodded, "yes, nothing I come up with seems to suit her." She leaned down to give the baby girl a kiss on her tiny forehead. A squeak made her melt inside. "The kids would make fun of her if we called her Angel."

James nodded, "I probably would too." Kathryn quickly scowled at him, again it was in jest. "What, you want to name her after a fictional vampire, go ahead."

Chakotay's eyebrow raised. "Yeah, no."

Kathryn actually looked disappointed. "Shame. It was the only name that worked." She sighed.

The doors to Sickbay opened. Chakotay glanced over and frowned as Security Team One walked in, with a brand new member alongside them. "Excuse me," he said before getting up and walking over to them. They stopped before they even reached James, let alone Chakotay.

"We heard the good news, Commander. Congrats," Foster smiled.

Chakotay was relieved they weren't here on business. He smiled back and nodded. "Thank you." He spotted Thompson giving him a wink and thumbs up, it just made him laugh. "Again, thank you."

A third member of the team stepped forward, he seemed a little shy. "Congratulations," he said quietly.

Chakotay nodded his thanks. At first he wasn't quite sure what this crewmember's name was, he'd seen him before but it had been a while. That was odd, he thought. Then it occurred to him and he smiled broadly. "My god. You're Lena's boy, aren't you?"

The crewmember looked surprised. Chakotay worried he was mistaken, he couldn't be though. The boy smiled nervously and nodded, killing his fears. "Uh yes sir, I am."

"Anderson... Craig Anderson. Yes I remember both of you well. I sound like a granddad more than a dad saying this but you've grown up, at least since the last time I saw you," Chakotay said. He put the pieces together when he glanced briefly at Foster and Thompson. "I didn't think you'd dump Engineering for Security."

"Yeah, I didn't," he laughed timidly.

Thompson smirked at him in such a way that Chakotay felt the need to hit him. He pushed that to the back of his mind for the moment. He gave the young man a pat on the shoulder before turning around to head back to Kathryn and his new daughter. James passed by him on his way over to the team.

"Tuvok's wanting to see us all. I think it's Deck Thirteen time again," Foster said with a worried face.

James nodded, "sure, can't be too careful." He spotted Craig look just as or maybe even more nervous than Foster. "Hey, it's okay. If worst comes to the worst, we can use Thompson as a pain in the ass shield." He and Foster smirked at the idea, of course Thompson didn't look too happy.

"The term is human shield, and I like the freak of nature shield better," he grumbled. The others ignored them, they just walked out without him. He quickly followed them.

Kathryn smiled and shook her head. She just missed her baby trying to do the same thing. Chakotay seemed a little uneasy as he stood beside her, she frowned at him. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Seeing Craig, I just remembered the mission where his mother was lost," Chakotay sighed. "I objected to her bringing her young son with her onto my ship, but in the end I let her anyway. I was going to send him home to his step father and sister after it happened, however you know the rest of that story."

"I'm sure he doesn't blame you," Kathryn smiled assuredly.

"I don't know, I wouldn't blame him if he did. I was the Captain of that ship," Chakotay said with a slight shrug of the shoulders. He caught sight of his daughter's face looking up at him, watching his every movement. "Listen to me, going on and on. We need a name for her."

Kathryn was deep in thought. She eventually looked up at him. "What did you say her name was?"

Chakotay wasn't sure why she was changing the subject. "Lena. Lena Anderson. Though I think it was recently Rise-Anderson. Why?" He heard his daughter squeak again, his thoughts went completely blank, all he could think of was how cute that was.

Kathryn smiled down at her. "Lena?" The girl reached her tiny hand out, squeaking again. "She did that when you said her name before, with Anderson junior. I think she likes it."

Chakotay glanced over towards the door then back again. "It's a unique name. He'll know where we got it from."

"What better way to honour his mother?" Kathryn smiled.

Chakotay smiled back, but with a suspicious look in his eye. "I like Angel. It suits a girl a lot more than a fictional male vampire with a soul."

"Oh, too late," Kathryn teased. She smiled as the baby was scrunching her face. "I don't believe she likes it anyway. Lena it is." The girl squeaked again. "It's settled."

Chakotay laughed. "Wow, and I thought I had a hard time just arguing with Kathryn Janeway. Now I've got two of you, I've got no chance." Kathryn's smile grew as she looked at him. "I wouldn't change that for the world."

2380

The smell of strong coffee lingered over the entire quarters. All she could do was pinch her nose to keep it at bay. Everytime she opened her mouth to breath though the small girl got a taste of it.

"Lena, hurry up! Your brother's here," she heard her mother call out to her.

In the main living area Kathryn was already on her fifth cup. James watched her sip it with an accusing stare. Her eyes tried to look innocent.

"What?"

"You're setting a bad example to that kid," James replied.

Kathryn shrugged, lowering the cup back to her chest. "Whatever do you mean?"

James smiled. "In a few years you'll be chasing her around, trying to calm her down after fifty pints of coffee."

Kathryn gasped, "ohno." She calmed down immediately, "don't be ridiculous. You never did that." It was a lie, but he didn't need to know that. She hoped he didn't remember that one time.

"It stinks in here," Duncan complained, he was pinching his nose too.

"I don't know why you're surprised," James commented.

Kathryn narrowed her eyes at him, then down at the two boys standing at his side. She then realised something. "Yes, coffee is bad. Leave Grandma Janeway to drink all that *hideous* stuff. Okay."

"Mike, do dad a favour and rescue Lena from here," James said down to the eldest boy. "She may have passed out."

The boy, now eight years old and already half James' height smirked up at him. "How? She lives here." James shrugged. "Okay dad." He shook his head, his black scruffy hair fell in his face when he did. Blowing the hair out of his face first, he ran off towards the nearby door.

"Where's little Amy?" Kathryn asked while taking another sip.

James couldn't help but smirk. "Well you know, like mother like daughter, they couldn't agree on what she should wear for nursery."

Kathryn laughed, "she's only two years old. Though with Jessie, I'm not surprised."

The eldest boy ran back into the living area, Lena ran after him, still pinching her nose.

"Is it safe to come in now?" she asked once she reached her mother. Of course just looking at her answered her question. "Mum, couldn't you wait until I was gone? I should cut you off."

"I'm so glad I didn't call her Angel after all," Kathryn said towards James. He tried his best not to laugh at that. She looked down to find her daughter scowling at her, still with her nose pinched. "You're late for breakfast."

"You were obviously early," Lena said. She grabbed a glass of juice off the table they stood next to. Then she ran over to the older boy. "Do you want to play hide the coffee again, Rob?" she asked him.

Kathryn's eyes widened in horror, "no!"

"Okay," the boy grinned. They both quickly ran into a different room.

"No, no, no, no," Kathryn stuttered as she ran after them. Just as she got to the door, she turned to scowl at James. "Control your child."

"I will if you will," James lied.

"Hmph," Kathryn grumbled as she disappeared into the room. "I can't believe *you* were the good one."

He looked a little disappointed, then he smiled. "That sounds like a challenge."

Duncan pouted, "they never let me play." He snatched the cup off the table that Kathryn had left behind, he looked around for somewhere to hide it. "Why does Aunt Lena call him Rob? It's weird."

"His middle name, sort of, she must prefer it," James replied. He pointed at a bookshelf nearby. Duncan grinned and ran over to hide the cup behind a few books.

"No, that's just my coff... regular pillow. Put that down!" Kathryn's voice screamed.

Meanwhile

The Alpha Quadrant:

"USS Leda to Starfleet Command, come in."

Several Starfleet ships dropped out of warp within seconds of each other. Each one carefully approached a world coloured in only purple.

"What is that?"

"I don't know. Try again."

There was only static.

"USS Leda to Starfleet Command, come in."

Kathryn ran into her daughter's room in the middle of the night to find her thrashing around under the covers. The sheets had torn in places, she was mumbling about monsters. Kathryn had seen this all before with James when he was little. It didn't make it any easier. She knew from the Zare and Rean encounter that it was possible for James to get a *partner* as well, but after twenty five years surely she shouldn't count.

Lena did though. The moment she broke her first toy by accident and claimed she just picked it up, was almost a mirror image of when James did the same thing. The only difference was she knew exactly why that happened. Lena was doomed to live the same fate as James, and it bothered Kathryn a lot. She tried to tell herself her daughter's nightmare was a one off. *Kids have nightmares about monsters under their bed all the time.*

She awoke in tears, but to her the dark room looked no different than her nightmare. Only it was quiet, very quiet. The sounds of people yelling and screaming seemed to fade away.

The following night it happened again. People were running from something horrible. They'd scream and fall one by one until she was alone. Then she'd wake up alone in her bed, tears streaming down her face.

The next day she felt more at ease as her older brother clasped her hand and lead her to his place. The nightmares were temporarily forgotten while she chatted and laughed with her older than her nephew. Robbie always had a smile on his face, which helped a lot as well. Everyone else called him by his first name, Michael, however after messing up his

name when she was learning to talk, he gave her his middle name. She had called him that ever since.

She loved having him around and couldn't imagine a day without them playing together. Even though she was his aunt and physically stronger than him, he was the one that looked out for her. He was more of a big brother to her than a nephew, something that she told her real big brother. It made him a little sad at first.

Staying at his place didn't help at all. The dreams got even worse. This time she was the one running away. The people running away from before were chasing her, their eyes were lifeless and black. A tall metal thing would appear in her path and she'd run right into it. A door would open and she'd be pulled inside it.

When Lena awoke her brother was already there, to give her a cuddle. She was safe there but the people's faces were still in her head.

The next morning she headed for the bedroom door. Her niece was still fast asleep in the bed next to hers so she tip toed. At the door, just before it would open she heard voices on the other side.

"She's having the same visions as me. I don't get it. She shouldn't," her brother said, his voice sounded desperate. Lena hadn't heard that from him before.

"Duncan and Amy don't have any. You're right, it doesn't add up," her *sister* Jessie said. "I hate to say it, but it's probably because she's your sister."

"Doesn't mean she's in the same generation as me. She's seven, Jess. She can't, I won't let her get involved in stuff like this," her brother said. He sounded scared now.

It happened again the following night, and the next until finally they stopped all together. Her mother took her home the next day.

"Mum, why do you take me to James's everytime I have bad dreams?" she asked.

Her mother looked a little sad all of a sudden. Maybe she had ran out of coffee again.

"Do I? I just take you over every now and then to spend time with him," she eventually said.

Mum was lying. Lena could always tell. Though most of the time her lies were simple like *no I haven't had any coffee today*. The non coffee ones were harder, but she'd just look away from her.

It would be a few more months before the dreams would return. Luckily the next one was just for one night. Somebody ran down a corridor on Voyager, a dark shadow swallowed him up. Lena decided to go check out that same corridor, though she had no idea which it was.

Her parents were busy that next day, she couldn't find her big brother then either. Something must have been happening. She knew that long before her babysitter arrived.

Craig worked with her brother, he was his friend too. He was a little odd sometimes but he was always fun to be around. They'd play games and watch videos on the computer.

Sometimes he'd take her out to play pranks on the Seven girl. He looked a little sad today though.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

He smiled at her, then shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing. Same old."

"Another girl turn you down?" she said with a shake of her head. Voyager was small, there wasn't many people on it. Lena wondered if he was asking girls he had already asked, he must have been. "Why don't you ask boys?"

Craig laughed genuinely, Lena smiled as he didn't look sad anymore. "That's not for me, but thanks."

"What's going on today?" she asked now that he was better. Craig always told her the truth, it was what she liked about him.

He seemed to hesitate though. "Well... A member of the crew's decided to hide from everyone. He probably didn't want to go to work."

"Maybe Neelix got him," Lena suggested seriously.

Craig laughed again, "yeah maybe."

"Why are the girls so mean to you?" Lena asked curiously. This question seemed to make him sad again, she felt terrible, it made her tummy hurt. "Sorry."

"It's okay. They're not," Craig said with a sad smile. "I'm just not very good at... anything really."

"You're stupid," Lena blurted out. "Everyone's good at something. Daddy told me that."

"Yeah, I'm good at scaring girls away," Craig laughed. Lena was confused, why was he laughing?

"I'm not scared," she told him.

Craig's smile looked a little better this time. "Thanks, I'm glad."

"Maybe you should be friends first. I hate it when people say that you're pretty when you're not, and act all weird and awkward," she said. He stared at her with a smirk, had she said something funny?

"Who's been asking you out?" Craig asked. "I won't tell your mum or your brother, I promise."

"Eew, no one," she complained. "I'm just saying. I see it when I go around the ship."

"Yeah yeah," Craig teased. "If you want my advice, not that it means anything as I suck at the dating scene, but just enjoy being a kid first. You never get to do that again, and you'll soon wonder where it all went."

That was out of nowhere, she thought. She didn't understand either. Maybe she would if she was closer to his age, she thought. That wasn't going to happen, he was way older than her.

Lena knew these corridors like the back of her hand. That thought made her look at the back of her hand, then wonder why on earth she'd memorise that of all things. She continued on anyway.

The starship had been her home for thirteen years and it had seen better days. A day barely would go by without something breaking or just going off for a second. Voyager was old and far from home, there wasn't much they could do about that.

Voyager was her home, so a part of her was glad they still had a long way to go. A few shortcuts here and there had helped, but they still had another twenty years to travel.

She arrived at the turbolift, as usual it took her three attempts to get it to listen to her. Usually she'd end up on another deck. Luckily this time it arrived on the Bridge, which she asked for.

"Lena, I'm afraid she's busy," her dad said.

"Busy?" Lena was sure there was nothing going on, no planets, no ships. "With what?"

The Ready Room:

Kathryn glanced between the two men in front of her, the need for coffee slowly rising.

"I'm afraid I'm not sure what you're getting at," Kathryn said.

"Ah, well that's simple. You're still here," one man said.

Kathryn looked towards the other, he rolled his eyes in response. "He's worse than that suicidal Q. I didn't understand him either."

"Yes," Q groaned. "I wouldn't worry about him though. He's still inside his asteroid prison."

"My patience is running low," Kathryn warned.

Q only smiled at the threat. "I wish I was here with better news, Kathy."

"Don't call me..." Kathryn hissed.

Q continued, "the Continuum have offered you and your merry crew a compromise."

"Why? What has Voyager done that is so awful?" Kathryn grumbled.

"Exist," the other man sneered. Q glared in his direction, he missed it entirely.

"Hardly," Q snapped. "You haven't been in contact with Starfleet for many years, have you not?"

"Of course not. Not since the Hirogen communications network," Kathryn said.

Q smiled bitterly. "Even if you could, you can't."

"Yes, your precious Earth is no longer," the other man said.

Kathryn's eyes drilled holes into him, it actually made him wither a little. He stepped back. Q only smiled though. "He's correct. They were invaded by a species you do not know. The Continuum find that unacceptable."

"Then why don't they do something about it?" Kathryn spat. "Oh and I don't believe you."

"Metaphorical fingers have been pointed, Voyager is the most common target for it," Q said.

Kathryn shook her head. The room felt a couple of degrees colder, and it was getting worse. "Why? We're here, we never met these aliens."

"Exactly," the other man said.

Q turned his head to glare at him again. "Why don't you go wait outside a gas giant, Q." The other man turned on his heel to walk outside.

"Why don't you two stop messing around and leave?" Kathryn hissed.

Q turned back to her, his face seemed contorted with worry. "I won't lie to you, Kathy. The Continuum has tried to intervene. However it all ends up the same way. Their compromise is unacceptable and they know I don't agree with it. Why else would they send me?"

"Since when does the Continuum care about Humanity? We're like ants to you, aren't we?" Kathryn demanded to know.

"It's bigger than you, Kathy. I'm sorry, I can't say more than that," Q answered. "However I can tell you this. If you and I don't figure something out, the Continuum will deal with this... *paradox* in the only way they know how."

"And what way is that?" Kathryn asked with a roll of her eyes. She frowned when Q closed his eyes and grimaced. To her he seemed actually upset about it.

"Voyager, will no longer exist. A clean slate," he answered. "I cannot help anymore Kathy. I'm sorry."

Meanwhile outside the other Q looked around the Bridge until something caught his eye.

"Dad, can I have some rations? James is taking me training today, and I need more than a bowl of cereal to get through it," Lena asked sweetly.

Chakotay smiled, his head shook. "I've already added this weeks to your account. Just try to make it last for a week, hmm?"

Lena grinned, "thanks dad." She ran back into the turbolift.

"Be careful!" Chakotay called after her. She gave him a wave before the door shut.

Q2 smiled, "wow. She's perfect." Nobody heard him. Nobody even saw him, he vanished in a white light.

She paced the room back and forth. The young man standing with her could only watch with a worried look on his face.

"I just wish that damn Q would leave me alone," Lena told him.

"He'll get bored eventually, Lena. Just give it time," he said.

Lena didn't believe that. The creepy Q appeared everywhere she went, spouting off some fate rubbish. "But Robbie, he's been following me around for weeks. What makes you think he's going to give up now?"

"He will, believe me," Michael told her.

"You'd better be right," Lena said, though she knew he wasn't. The Q was bonkers, and for some reason he liked her. He wasn't going to give up and it was not like she could hit him or anything. He was immortal, which made the situation even more annoying. It was embarrassing too. She hadn't even told anyone else, just him.

He had to go, she was on her own again. Nervousness started to sink in. Lena hated it, she didn't like feeling weak. That was what she hated about this Q the most. He had taken away her power. She felt like a helpless little girl all over again.

His ears must have been burning and assumed it was a summon, he appeared in front of her holding roses.

"Eew," she whined. As usual she gave him a punch in the nose. Once again it didn't work.

"I have the perfect solution, my love. You and I, the perfect specimens, will make other creatures wither in jealousy," Q blabbered on. Lena almost fell asleep whilst standing up, but with this guy around she forced herself awake to be on her toes. "Bear my child, that child will be the envy for all mortal and Q alike."

For once, his blabbering's actually made her burst out laughing. "I'm sorry, what? Have your kid? I don't think so you stupid, horrible little man." She couldn't stop. What she didn't see was that her laughter had actually angered him. The flowers dropped to the floor.

"She's pregnant," the Doctor said quietly.

Kathryn's eyes flashed with rage. "This just isn't possible, how could he have done that?"

"Mum," Lena said through her tears. Chakotay turned to her, he reached over to take her hand. She squeezed back a little too hard, but he didn't care, she needed it.

"I'll rip that little pervert apart, Q or no Q," Kathryn growled. Right on cue the two Q's appeared nearby. Kathryn wasted no time and marched over.

"You! It's about time you arrived. I want her back to normal!"

"What would be the point in that?" Q2 smirked. Kathryn lunged for him, he quickly transported to another part of the room.

"I'm sorry Kathy, but this was supposed to happen," Q said. "This timeline, it isn't supposed to be. The Continuum has decided this is more acceptable than erasing Voyager all together."

"What is he talking about?" Chakotay asked angrily. "This is my daughter we're talking about. He clicked his fingers and made her carry his child, for what, to fix the timeline? Sense has clearly gone out the airlock here."

Q seemed to be conflicted, Kathryn's deadly glare didn't help. "I will help. I can now use the child to set things back to the way they should be. You don't need to worry about it any longer. I promise."

Q2 glared at him from afar. "You'll do no such thing."

"Again, I'm sorry Kathy," Q said. "I'll set things right." He and the other Q disappeared.

2390

The corridors shook, crewmembers stumbled, some bumped into the walls.

"Red Alert, all hands to battle stations."

Voyager could only flee as a huge Borg sphere chased after them, firing weapons without barely a pause. Each hit that Voyager sustained slammed straight into the hull, the shields were gone.

The Borg were everywhere she turned. Lena stalled in front of another trio of them, while crewmembers behind her ran for the shuttle bay. She heard screaming as the drones approached her. A quick look over her shoulder and she saw that most of the group she tried to save had ran straight into another group.

She ran forward to pull anyone else away from them. They continued to run, now the long way towards the bay.

"Bridge to all hands, abandon ship. Repeat, abandon ship."

Lena had ran into so many crewmembers on her escape, there were many with her. Once she reached the shuttle bay she was alone.

Mum. Dad. James. Rob... Duncan, Amy, Jessie. Where are you all?

The Borg grew closer as she waited. The shuttles weren't the only means of escape, maybe they were in the escape pods, already getting away. Perhaps the other shuttles were full already. The drones were almost in arms length of the shuttle, she had no choice. The shuttle was launched.

There was a deadly silence as the shuttle escaped Voyager. She desperately looked around for any signs of escape pods and shuttles. There were none. The ship that was her home for fifteen years was getting smaller. One last strike from the sphere tore it to pieces in front of her eyes. The trail of destruction followed her, there was no time to grieve yet, she had to push the shuttle further away.

What she didn't realise was that she was pushing her shuttle into a black void. It disappeared from the Borg's sight, yet they followed her inside.

Nothing was left behind.

FIVE

"Beam my shuttle aboard, a Borg ship is coming!"

"What more should you idiots put me through to get this right?"

"A Q messed up, but it is a mess that can and should have been cleaned up in the first place. Lena was supposed to be born no more than fifteen years after her brother, the other Chosen Slayer. But the nature of her brother's birth stopped that from happening."

"Lena didn't belong in her timeline, she doesn't belong here either. Where I'm headed for she does belong."

A young female drone appeared right behind him. "Look out!" Lena screamed.

The needles penetrated her neck. Voices rushed at her with such force she screamed as loud as she could to be heard. Skin crawled, her blood ran cold. Her body fell to the floor.

Then it was quiet.

"She will get back to Voyager someday, I promise."

The demon grabbed Zare by the throat and pushed her into the warehouse wall. "Slayer," it hissed. It made her drop the axe, and it tightened its grip on her neck. It got closer to her. It then pulled an annoyed face, "this one's an imposter."

"James," Zare tried to yell out.

The demon forced its claw into Rean's back, he fell to the ground. Zare shook her head, "no, we haven't got time." She looked down at Rean, he fell limp in her arms.

Frenit stepped closer to him, "why, you scared of a little height or a little bit of water?"

James stared blankly at him, "I'm not answering that question."

"Aaaw how cute, now push him," Frenit ordered.

"You've got to be kidding me, he's dead."

"It doesn't matter, whatever you do will result in someone dying. Whoever that'll be is up to you."

"You may not be a Chosen, that I know, but you do have the potential to be a powerful Natural. You've just got to realise that something's always going to hold you back from getting there."

"Maybe that's why all the other Slayers die young, you watchers don't let them live."

"No, I don't see why my baby can't be the one. You can't stand the fact that my DNA could save the Q continuum."

"You know what I still can do. One little snap of the fingers will make that virus inside of Jessie, disappear in an instant."

Ian squinted his eyes as he ran toward the light, then an ear piercing scream from behind them both made Ian turn around. He quickly caught a figure running right toward him, it took all of his strength to hold her back. "James!" she screamed at full strength just as the anomaly started to die down. "No," she cried.

"The only difference is that this is the last time it'll happen. This way I won't hurt you."

"The visions, the Captain's daughter. Is this the difference you were talking about?"

"Q would say anything to you, anything to throw you off."

"Who are you?" Kathryn asked.

"Kiara," the girl said.

"I checked her DNA with Kiara's. They match," The Doctor said.

"Me? That's a funny joke, nobody comes here just to see me. Nobody seems to like me," Craig laughed.

"I like you."

"When I saw you I had a vision. I saw that you would be split into two girls. I knew that people wouldn't see you as separate individuals so I thought I had to do something."

"To cut a long story shorter, Kiara is Morgan's daughter, not Kathy's."

"Kathy, I put Kiara into you so you'd think that Kiara is your daughter."

"What the hell for?" Kathryn asked.

"So Morgan wouldn't be born," Q replied.

"But I remember being a kid on that sphere, are you saying those thirteen years on the sphere didn't happen?"

"Maybe that's a good middle name, because I was thinking of Lena."

"Lena, she's your daughter," James said.

"Exactly, and she nearly ruined my life," Lena said.

Kiara sighed in relief. She threw her arms around Lena and hugged her. Lena looked back towards the guys looking confused.

"You only try when she goes out of her way to hate you. You're going to have to be more understanding and caring whenever she needs it. For goodness sake, she doesn't have to ask, she's your daughter."

"Captain we can escape them. A Game Cube has just appeared on the nearby planet, co-ordinates 452 mark 64," Noah said. Everyone else were raising phasers.

"Right, what about the Softmicron, how did they get involved?" Lena asked.

"We captured a few during a game trip we both had, our supply had gone down you see. We discovered Softmicron were similar creatures. Since they have caused a lot of damage, killed millions, we figured killing an odd few of them seemed insignificant," Ransom replied.

"That won't last long honey. In order for Kiara to be able to stay on this ship, without taking it into a dimension filled with Teletubbies that is, she'll have to be trained. She can't do that while she's here."

"But you can't go. I know I am not the best mum in the universe, and I was never the best sister either but..." Lena stuttered.

"Lena you'd do it if it were you," Kiara said.

"Maybe but I've been horrible to you a lot, I was mad at the whole me being your mum thing for a long time but I wasn't mad at you. I have to make it up to you and..." Lena muttered.

"You're more like a sister to me, you've looked after me and stuff. I've got to do this or I wouldn't be a very good person."

"But... I love you," Lena stuttered.

"I don't know, somewhere I can do what I'm good at," Lena replied. She turned to face him, "is there a club for mopers and murderers?"

"Do you think she'll even want to come back after training?"

"Of course she will, what kind of question is that?" James replied.

"Listen Craig, I hope you're not going where I think you are with this. We split up twice because you couldn't trust me," Lena said.

"I do love you, I don't think that'll change."

"I heard that one, but you were the first girl who ever gave me a chance. If you don't love me that's fine, but that only really affects me doesn't it?"

"I'm sorry Lena, but that was the wrong mission. Noah set a course back to Earth, Angela you may resume command."

"Sorry Lena," Angela sighed.

"Thanks but I deserved to fail."

"The answer is no. I don't love you, heck I don't even fancy you. You don't actually trust me, and don't care about how I feel about you yet you still propose to me. I'm sorry if I'm sounding harsh but it's better than keeping you in the dark isn't it?"

"I'm not mad at her. Obviously I used to be, who wouldn't be? The thing is if she raised me, I'd be different and I would have probably lived on starships my whole life. Bottom line is, I never would have met you," James replied.

"Yeah but you always said it was the principle of the thing, and you went through a lot to get where you are now," Jessie said.

"So? If I had to choose between an 'easy' Starfleet brat life and the hard one with you in it, then I'd choose the hard one," James said.

"She's dead, I found her... in her bed, cold. I think her throat's been cut."

"Yes and when were you going to tell me? You had plenty of times."

"I'm sorry but I didn't want to hurt you guys," James muttered.

Despite the situation Lena laughed, "oh really, well if you had told me sooner then I would be less hurt and not angry at you."

"You're not a bad guy, and I know you really care for your family. But this isn't going to bring them back. Your kids need you now, now more than ever. Jessie believed in you more than anyone."

Craig stepped up and put his arms around her. She moved her hands so she could cry into his shoulder, and put her arms around him. "Don't worry, it's going to be ok."

Lena looked back up at him, "wait... yeah, everything's going to be ok."

"We could be, I'll wait for you, you know that."

"Don't let this get to Daniel but, I did have more fun with you. I can only be honest with you, right."

"Really, so..." Craig said.

"But he's what I need right now. Maybe someday," Lena said, looking uncomfortable.

"Yeah I do. She saddens me you know. Do you even know what pain she's going through?"

"I have a good idea," James replied.

"I don't think you do. She's so miserable, and so sick of everything. It's no wonder she hasn't tried to fight back," Ylara said.

"Time's up, she lost and now she's left us."

"She's gone Jess, Ylara won."

"You're wrong," Ylara said forcefully. "You can take my place. Go home."

"No. Answer me first. Has your suffering eased, has it gone completely? Did abandoning your life work out for you?"

"She cannot take your place. All you are doing is allowing the body to die. Stop resisting."

"No," Ylara's mind was made up. "I'm finally doing something right."

"It's all right. Everything's fine now."

The stars streamed by, each one looked exactly the same, stretched across the sea of black. It felt darker inside the room than the outside did, it was suffocating. No, soul crushing. She appeared darker as well. Her long hair covered the only parts of her face he would have been able to see, her clothes were dark and depressing.

He turned his head to one side to see Kiara lying on the sofa, curled up under a small jacket. Her eyes were restless but shut, she was dreaming.

She wasn't though. With her legs hunched up against her chest and her arms resting on her knees, Lena's attention was towards the window. He wondered if she had heard anything he had to say, he then wondered if he deserved to even bare his soul to her at all. All that he'd done was selfish and cruel. He didn't deserve to be in the same room as her. He felt that he still had to tell her though, confess that her pain was his fault, or maybe it was to explain what he did to himself out loud.

Craig realised that he'd been silent for quite a while and Lena had barely moved since he had come in. He was right, she couldn't have been listening to him. It was time to leave her be, he decided. Kiara would be furious if she woke up and saw him there, and the last thing he wanted was to upset anyone. Again. He turned to leave the dark room.

Craig was barely at the door when he heard a sigh so quiet, he almost didn't hear it.

"I... remember," he heard a light whisper.

He realised in those few seconds that he had held his breath when hearing the sigh. It felt like he had to actually force himself to breathe back out. He didn't dare turn back around, his head only looked over his shoulder. Lena hadn't moved yet, but it was definitely her voice he heard.

"I'm sorry. I was out of line, all the time," he said in a hushed voice. "I loved you, that doesn't mean that you owed me anything. I..." *Shut up Craig.*

"No," another whisper.

Craig listened to his own thoughts for once, he kept quiet and patiently waited for her.

It felt like hours before she spoke again, but in reality it was only five minutes. "My life... before I was here."

He wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not. Her life was in tatters, everyone who hadn't died had let her down, why would she want to remember all of that? Only her experiences made her the girl he loved. It then pained him to remember that probably wasn't even true either. The Q's had fabricated her childhood to fool everyone into believing she was somebody else. Most of her life was a lie. Maybe it would be for the best if...

"I was happy," she whispered, interrupting his train of thought. What she said not only interrupted it, it derailed it and crashed into a building. *Happy?* "Mum and dad, James and the kids, Rob... Michael. Then that Q came and..." She finally moved her head, her focus seemed to be on Kiara. "Took her, everything away long before the Borg came."

"I... don't understand," Craig voiced his thoughts out loud. He hated himself for that.

"I was alone and then... I was here," Lena whispered, her eyes were squeezed shut. Even in the dark he saw a tear roll down her cheek. "I forgot it all, what was me was gone. I belonged there, but I didn't. I don't belong here, but I do. I'm here, but I'm not."

"Oh my god," Craig stuttered as what she was saying dawned on him. He hoped he was wrong, this was too cruel.

Lena moved just a little so she could turn her head and look at him. He only just made out her eyes in the darkness, he could see the pain haunting them. "Who am I? No... why am I here?" She was back to staring out the window. "What am I supposed to do?"

Craig didn't know how to answer her. He just did what she did and stared out of the window.

THE END