

## Episode 5.21

### Speaking In Riddles

#### Eight Months Ago:

The queues ahead of him seemed to go on forever and they weren't in a hurry to move either. The pair just in front of him gossiped excitedly with bags that looked like they weighed as much as their owners. While he tried to work out how they managed to carry them this far he saw the queue further up budge up slightly. He didn't let that get his hopes up. Just like the last few times that happened, his part of the queue didn't bother doing the same unless a large gap started to form.

Nathan glanced behind him at the petite woman standing next in the queue, she appeared just as frustrated as he was. They exchanged smiles before he looked down to check on his only bag by his feet.

"Excuse me," a male voice said from beside him.

"Hey," Nathan blurted out. His head shot up to confront the guy who thought he could push in. Before he could say anything else he noticed the man standing nearby wasn't carrying any luggage, all he held was a pile of PADDs. "Wha... what?"

The man gave him a friendly smile despite his outburst. "I'm not a Voyager passenger, I'm not pushing in sir."

"Oh well, neither am I," Nathan said.

The smile didn't waver. "Ah, Leda. You've just been transferred I assume." Nathan thought about answering but he didn't think he needed to, he just gave him a nod. "I won't bother you for long, sir, I just want to give you this flyer." He handed him one of the many PADDs. Nathan didn't even bother looking at it, at the very least he could erase it and use it for something else later. "I am amongst a select group who are dedicated to protecting Earth. We work towards getting our home to how it once was before there were Game Cubes and vampire infested cities."

"Yeah these flyers are pretty badass. Good luck with that," Nathan commented, his attention turned back to the queue ahead of him. That was starting to not seem as bad now.

The man didn't seem bothered by the rejection, his smile may as well have been painted on. "Well you see..."

"Move along, loon!" a different man further back yelled. Nathan spotted a brief twinge in the corner of his eye.

"Well you see, you probably are too young to remember what life was like before then. Starfleet was committed to exploration, seeking out new life," the man continued anyway. "Now because of another select group of people we are merely targets, helpless victims to a race who would have left us alone otherwise. I need a few volunteers to help us rebuild our way of life."

"What do you think most of the people in this queue are doing? The last time I checked the Leda and Voyager were exploring an unknown anomaly, not poking some hostile aliens in the arm over and over," Nathan snapped at him. The man was finally taken aback. "If you want to share your paranoid scare mongering, go bother the Romulans. They love that crap."

The people in the queue who were in earshot laughed quietly amongst themselves, leaving the man a little red faced. He stomped off to bother people further down who hopefully didn't hear anything.

Nathan glanced back at the girl behind him. "Is it just me, or are people getting crazier?"

"It's just the proximity to Voyager," she joked. "I wouldn't worry about it."

He smiled but it did worry him a bit. Nevertheless Nathan looked ahead of him again, directly towards where he thought the beginning of the queue was. The windows dotted along the wall there showed him where he was going. The infamous Voyager he had heard so many stories about. Small craft flew by every now and then, long corridors protruded into its hull or so it looked. The biggest one originated from where the queue was going.

Looking at it wasn't helping. The excitement about being on that ship just made him more irritated that the queue wasn't moving faster. He knew the reason why it was taking longer for people to board it than any other ship, it didn't ease his impatience though.

The man who bothered him was long forgotten.

## **Present Day**

"Hampton would you point that somewhere else?" B'Elanna said impatiently, her eyes squinting. The light being shone directly into them rapidly flew to one side, blinding two more people.

The whole of Engineering was in complete darkness. Consoles were dead, even the warp core had powered down. Only the flashlights in a few people's hands darting around everywhere, were breaking the unnerving blackness.

To make matters worse, the only sounds anyone could hear were the stressed voices of people accidentally bumping into each other or things.

"All right, quieten down!" B'Elanna snapped. Everyone knew to listen to her. Engineering turned deathly silent. "We need to narrow this down. Alpha team, go follow Andrews. I'd bet a week's worth of rations that this'll be where the problem is. Beta, check out that re-directing algorithm that Matteo discovered. Gamma and Beta, you're with me. We need to get the urgent systems back online and now. If you find anything suspicious or out of place, even just a spec of dust, tell me immediately."

"Yes Lieutenant," everyone responded at different times.

The Bridge wasn't much better than Engineering. The flashlights concentrated around the Opps area, where Harry and Ian were working.

"How could you not see this coming?" Chakotay asked.

Ian noticed he was saying that to him, or at least his voice came from the torch shining just under his face. It caught him a bit off guard so he stopped what he was doing. Harry turned around and knelt down just behind him, he signalled his hand on the way down. One of the torches followed him.

"There wasn't anything coming. Everything was clear for a normal warp jump. This shouldn't have happened," Ian stuttered.

Chakotay was about to respond but got a flashlight in his face, and by a person standing next to him as well. He just managed to see an outline of a face in the edge of it. "Are you still doing that evil First Officer thing, how cute," Danny said and in not her usual flirting voice either.

"You don't know the half of it," Harry commented.

Chakotay pushed the flashlight to one side so he could stop his eyes from burning. "It was a reasonable question. Starships shouldn't lose power during a warp jump."

"I didn't stall it," Naomi's voice protested from the front of the bridge.

A few screens on the Opps station flickered back to life, but very weakly. In the dark though the console shone brightly enough to still see. Harry quickly stood up to study it, Ian turned around and almost bumped into him. He had to take a step to one side.

"Good work," Chakotay said.

Harry shook his head, "It wont last for long. I had to hook it up to one of the flashlights." He studied every bit of the panel. "I thought so. Something is draining away our power..."

"That'll explain why the re-route didn't work," Ian said.

"Where or whom?" Chakotay asked.

"I don't have that information here, not really. All it says is it's coming from inside the ship," Harry replied.

Chakotay sighed impatiently, "doesn't take a genius. We need to send a team to investigate it."

"How? If we're all thinking the same thing, then you're suggesting sending two of us down thirteen decks to our deaths," Danny pointed out.

"A bit optimistic, aren't you?" Chakotay commented.

Danny rolled her eyes, not that anyone could see that. "Well the last time this happened somebody did die."

"Only he didn't, we just thought he did," Ian said.

"What do you suggest we do? In case you haven't noticed we're powerless and we have no way of asking for help. If anyone has any better ideas, lets hear it," Chakotay said.

Naomi threw her arm up even though no one would see it. She spoke up anyway, "oh, we get more flashlights and hook 'em up."

Right on cue the one powering Opps ran out of power, the station immediately went dark. Harry looked more amused than annoyed. "I have one."

"I assume it's better than hers," Chakotay muttered.

Harry winced slightly, "not much better no. The independent systems are still working; life support, gravity control, Holodecks..."

"I never got that. Why is the Holodeck independently powered? Surely lights or maintenance consoles should be. Replicators, the Doctor. Heck even an electric butt scratcher would be more important in a power cut than the damn Holodecks," Chakotay ranted impatiently. He ignored Danny's giggle.

"I thought we could find a way to re-route the Holodeck power to the Bridge and Engineering. Maybe that's why," Harry continued.

"Oh so just in case, lets feed power into Neelix's stove independently so we can just re-direct it to the engines or fire suppression system, instead of actually having those systems with independent power in the first place. Brilliant," Chakotay said.

Harry's shoulders, "I didn't design the ship. Look, the second we re-direct power to these systems, whatever's draining us will drain that too."

Danny resisted saying the comment in her head, mainly cos she and the others were confused. "Then why suggest it?"

"I wasn't done. We have another independent system. This one is designed to counter outside influences draining our power, use it against them to erect shields," Harry said, immediately regretting it.

As expected Danny laughed and for a while too. Ian gave her a brief disgusted stare, then looked confused.

"So let me see if I got this right. Your better plan than investigate Deck Thirteen, is to toy with the shield that protects Voyager from any supernatural intruders?" Chakotay questioned.

Harry thought about it briefly, then nodded. "The shield system would block any attempt to drain our power, so yes."

"We don't even know what's causing this. It could be that actual system doing this as there hasn't been any portal activity for a while," Chakotay said.

Ian raised his hand up. "Hang on. What are you guys talking about?"

Chakotay ignored him, "it might even be a portal opening that the shield system can't help with. Maybe we should find out before we start messing around."

"I agree, even if I don't know what you're talking about," Ian muttered.

Harry glanced at him, "Voyager was under attack by ships that would open rifts, demonic rifts around the ship. Like that rift over ten years ago they would drain our power in order to grow..."

"He gets it enough to know that we shouldn't be rash. We need to find out what's happening on Deck Thirteen, if anything. Though I'd be very surprised if it was something else," Chakotay said.

"New shield drains the rifts so they close," Harry muttered to briefly finish off what he was saying.

Naomi's eyes lit up, "oh so it's like infinite power?"

Chakotay groaned into both of his hands. Everyone else just shook their heads.

A light bang echoed down the corridors. A tiny ray of light shone on a wall. It emanated from a partially open door directly opposite it. The light itself sat in between the cracks of the door while a hand tried to forcibly open it further. Eventually it did and the light fell to the floor with a lighter thud.

"Damn."

A figure stumbled sideways through the still small gap in the door. They crouched down to retrieve the only source of light around.

Something ahead of him groaned loudly, he even felt the vibration under his feet. The light was quickly pointed in the direction he thought it came from. All he could see was a door directly ahead. He straightened back up so he was standing again.

"Maybe it came from somewhere further away," he thought aloud.

Muffled voices then travelled down the corridor, worrying him further. They definitely came from the same direction as the earlier noise. He decided to go down towards the door slowly, all the while checking behind him frequently just in case. While his head was turned the door ahead broke apart, sending small pieces of it flying forward. He jumped out of his skin and looked around. Luckily he wasn't close enough to get hit by the debris.

His shaky hand pointed the torch towards what was left of the door. The middle of it was now lying in bits on the floor, while the top and the bottom were roughly dented outward from whatever did this. The top of the door didn't look too stable either, it looked like it would break off at any time.

A woman's voice, still a little muffled, emanated from the new hole. All he managed to catch was, "fit through that."

The flashlight reached the door, for some reason he could see nothing but further metal through the hole.

"Someone's up there," another voice, this one male and clearer, said. He recognised that voice immediately.

"James?"

"Nathan?" the voice said.

Nathan was close enough now to get a better look. The torch lit up what appeared to be the roof of a turbolift just waist level with him, just below the impact point on the door. The hatch was open. It all started to add up with him now.

"God, I hope I don't get stuck," he heard the familiar sound of his sister's voice. Now he was even more concerned, he thought about climbing through the hole to get to her. No sooner than he thought that, a pair of arms appeared out of the hatch to rest against the roof. A head and shoulders quickly rose into view as well. Nathan put his hands out to push himself onto the lift. "No!" she said quickly. "The safety clamps are broken. We've already fallen once."

"Okay, okay," Nathan stuttered nervously, the guilt made his cheeks turn red. All he could do was wait.

Despite her complaints earlier, Jessie didn't get stuck like she thought. She managed to slide across with her legs at her side towards Nathan. Relieved he leaned forward to help her out of the hole. Something was off while he did that, she seemed to be favouring one of her legs. His suspicions were quickly confirmed when she winced halfway out of the door. Carefully he moved his right arm around to support both of them before carrying her to freedom.

Her weight was a bit of a shock to him, so he quickly crouched down to sit her on the ground. It felt like she knew, he could even feel the heat from a glare coming from her.

"Are you all right?" he quickly asked.

"Fine, it's just my leg. I think I twisted it when the lift did its free fall," Jessie replied. She anxiously looked towards the door.

"I got her, you coming out?" Nathan called towards it.

The pair of them watched the door. Even though it had only been a few seconds, Jessie grew a little impatient that nothing was happening. James appeared from the hatch, crouched down and jumped down into the corridor a mere five seconds later.

"Take your time," she snapped.

James smiled to hide his uneasiness. "Sorry, thought I'd turn the light off before I left."

"Haha," Jessie muttered mockingly.

Nathan laughed for real but nervously, he glanced up at James who was pulling a similar face to him. "Fourth time and you still don't know that you shouldn't piss off a pregnant lady." He got a slap across the back of the head for that remark. "Hey, I was defending you!"

"Don't call me a lady. Do I look like some slapper walking around in a pretty dress?" Jessie grumbled at him.

Nathan again looked up at James while mouthing *what*, he shrugged back in confusion.

"Sooo, free fall huh?" Nathan said to change the subject.

James nodded. "Yeah, when the power cut the lift just stopped, no problem. Few minutes later. It was just a second or two, but still..."

"Stopped just in time," Nathan sighed in relief.

Jessie looked a little calmer than before, she gave her brother a puzzled look. "What are you doing here? I thought you'd be on the bridge."

"Well they needed help in Engineering and I was an Engineer first," Nathan answered. He noticed the couple staring at him blankly like he had just said something strange. "You know, Leda Engineering. I asked to move to Voyager for some excitement. I got it."

"No, we can't be any lower than Deck Eight. Lifts don't free fall sideways," James said.

Now Nathan was puzzled too. "Well yours must have. Maybe Voyager's tipped forward." Jessie pulled a face as she raised her right hand to tip it. "Backwards rather. I was on my way to Deck Thirteen to check something out. I'd barely climbed down one deck when the power cut happened."

James and Jessie shared a very worried look, she had turned a little pale. James turned to look back at the broken turbolift door. "Please tell me we're on Deck Twelve then," he said.

Nathan laughed nervously, making the other two even more worried. "Nope. The sudden stop made me lose my grip, I slid and think fell from the ladder, I'm not sure. I just woke up on the Jeffries tube floor."

"Oh crap, I knew it," Jessie groaned. She started to get back up, but her painful leg tried to put her off. Both James and Nathan rushed to her aid, she just waved them off. "I'm taking my bloody chances with the lift, at least it won't fall very far from here."

As if on cue they heard a rumbling sound. Nathan noticed the lift that was there had vanished. The rumbling only lasted a few seconds, it was followed by a light bang.

"Still!" Jessie stuttered. A twinge in her leg made her lose her balance. Both men caught her on both sides. She growled as if in disgust, "oh stop it, I'm not an invalid. I'm fine!"

"Jess you've probably broken your ankle. Take it easy," James said carefully. It wasn't careful enough, he got a glare for his trouble.

Nathan chuckled nervously again. He assumed James had an ok hold on her if she stumbled again and removed his hand. "If it makes you feel any better I haven't seen any portals here. In fact until you guys I saw nothing weird."

"Sorry but no it doesn't. We need to at least get up to Deck Twelve," James said. "I'd say I got a bad feeling about this, but at this point it's obvious something will happen here."

"Sure you can try. I tried climbing back up that same ladd..." Nathan said. The look his sister was giving him could have melted metal. "Hmm ha, er, I'm not the one who put it there."

James frowned, "put what there?"

Nathan gestured his hand above his head, "reached out my hand and blam... felt like a wall. A really wobbly, jelly like wall. I was just about to move on to find another escape point when I found you two."

"A wobbly, jelly wall?" James couldn't believe he was saying, his face blank. Nathan shrugged apologetically. "So a solid forcefield, you think?"

"I guess," he said.

Jessie's face turned pale again, James even felt her trembling a little. "It's him. He's trapped us here."

"No he hasn't. Smashing a few walls or ceilings is more than a habit to me now," James said.

Nathan eyed the broken door, his eyes widened briefly. "Wait... who's *he*?"

### **One Day Ago:**

Apart from the hum of the engines the entire room was quiet and peaceful. The only light came from a red one underneath the window, it was too dim to light up anything. It did give the window a soft red tinge.

Even in her deep sleep, Jessie tried to roll onto her side but had trouble doing it. Instead she mumbled in her sleep and edged a little to one side, nearer to James.

The corner of the room lit up for a second. In its place, a shadow moving forward towards the bed. The tiny light over the top of the window seemed to bounce off something metallic the shadow had.

It was standing beside the bed now on James' side, the light settled on its left, showing its humanoid features. Quickly its arms raised up together, the hands clutching a long and metal object. They didn't stay up for long. They sharply pushed down, aiming whatever they were holding at the sleeping pair.

The object was mere inches away from Jessie's stomach when it stopped dead, another hand was holding onto it near the tip. The shadow didn't have time to react to that, the weapon was pushed back towards them. It struck them in the face, forcing them stumbling backwards. They lost their grip on the object during their fall. James meanwhile leapt off the bed, still holding it. One quick toss in the air allowed him to hold it by the handle.

The intruder hit the wall, creating a loud bang. The noise startled Jessie awake.

James headed over to them, but the light appeared again, enveloping whoever it was. They were gone when it faded away.

"What the... what's going on?" Jessie stuttered as she sat up.

James looked down at the weapon in his hand. "I'm not sure."

"The attacker was Human?" Lena said in surprise.

James nodded grimly. Annoyed he tossed the weapon he took from his intruder onto his desk. "Humanoid at least."

"But why?" Lena said. She glanced toward the sofa sitting near the window of the office. Jessie sat on it clutching herself, her gaze was miles away though. Lena turned her head back, "who were they after?"

James' eyes drifted Jessie's way, although his face didn't look as sure. "It was quick, dark... I don't know." He shrugged, "I just saw a blade falling."

"It was obviously me," Jessie grumbled without breaking her gaze.

"There's nothing obvious about it. A random crewmember has no reason to kill you," James said.

Lena's eyes half rolled, "um, a random crewmember has no reason to kill you either."

"Really?" James said blankly.

"They wouldn't need a reason. Nothing's happened with this pregnancy, so why not?" Jessie rambled, her head shook as she did it. "God, I'm so close. Can't let me have one."

James walked over to sit beside her, his hand reached over to clutch one of hers. "You will. I... no we will make sure of that."

"Yeah. If it's just a regular person, should be a cinch," Lena commented.

James glanced at her briefly, he had an awkward look on his face. "Sorry, I didn't mean I was going to make you help out."

"I thought you did. I'm basically useless right now," Jessie said quietly.

"Jess that's silly. You've got most of the senior staff and crew tip toeing around you. Sometimes I do," James said with a small smile.

Jessie just rolled her eyes though. "Yeah right, we've been through this before. Oh look, a dozen super strong science experiments versus just me. No problem. Ohno a tiny pregnant woman, somebody help me!" she grumbled mockingly.

"Yeah uh... it wasn't a dozen," was all James could respond with.

"You're not forcing me anyway. I want to help," Lena quickly interrupted. "Though I'm not sure if the intruder was entirely regular anyway. Didn't you say there was this light?"

"I never said regular, I just meant not demonic," James replied.

"Lets hope they weren't pregnant too. That's the weakness right there," Jessie said.

Lena couldn't help but laugh, she tried to hide it behind her hand. "I dunno Jess, nobody wants to mess with the pregnant girl but nobody wants to mess with Jessie either."

"Yeah, I might just sit on someone. Sheesh, you two are pansies," Jessie muttered.

James smirked a little, "so yeah, you're so helpless that no one will want to hurt you. Right?"

"Oh good, turn it on me. I love that," Jessie sighed. She finally looked at him, "lets face it, I've been stabbed three times during pregnancies. My odds aren't good."

Lena shrugged, "doesn't that mean it would be really stupid to do that again?"

"Three? Are you counting the Chute?" James asked.

"Why not?" Jessie muttered.

"Well it was meant for me," James said in a bad attempt to make her feel better. The cold stare he got back told him that wasn't a good way to do it. Though he kinda knew that while saying it anyway. "Look, it'll be fine. I've got every Security crewmember on duty looking for and talking to anybody they can find, with the description I gave them."

"Shadow person with sword, sure," Lena smiled.



Despite the situation James laughed briefly. "I got a basic height, weight and..." Again he was getting the look, he felt himself shrink a bit. "We stick together, it should be no problem."

"Famous first words," Jessie muttered to herself.

Lena smiled weakly between the two, she took a step forward in James' direction. "What can I do?"

"Well, maybe you can keep an eye on the nursery and school. Just in case," he suggested.

Lena's eyes seemed to light up a little, "sure, no problem."

*Lieutenant Kim's Log, Stardate 58813.6: Energy reserves are running low, so we are on route back to the Krralef homeworld, again. However it is going to take longer than we hoped it would as the many power transfers to the Enterprise have taken its toll on Voyager as well. Right now we're chugging along in short warp four bursts, which will add at least another week onto our journey time.*

*Luckily sensors have discovered a dilithium deposit on a moon only a few hours away. Hopefully that should help speed things up.*

Nathan hurried down the corridor until he reached the turbolift door. His finger tapped the panel beside it. He could hear the turbolift rising up towards him. Seconds later the door flew open. Seeing that there were three men already inside the lift about to step out, he stood to one side to let them go first.

They walked forward, one of the men stopped directly in front of Nathan. His head turned to stare at him.

"Um, wha..." Nathan only had time to say before the man carried on walking. "What was that about?" He shrugged and stepped into the turbolift.

### **Engineering:**

Hands on her hips, eyes on full stare down mode, B'Elanna stood in front of the warp core. No one dared to approach her while she did that. One of the Engineering officers swore they saw the warp core flicker and then slow down at her intense gaze.

One of the nearby consoles beeped, making the person manning it panic. Fortunately for her the temperamental warp core was B'Elanna's only concern.

The door opened, B'Elanna's eyes narrowed like that was the last straw amongst hundreds. Footsteps approached. Several crewmembers shook their heads at the ones responsible, each with wide eyes. Their warnings were ignored.

"The Enterprise is fully *fueled* and yet we're still having rest breaks."

Everyone within range quickly rushed off to tend to something further away than B'Elanna.

"Really, how on earth did you figure that one out?" B'Elanna hissed.

"Well the signs were subtle but I used this advanced device called a window..."

B'Elanna swung around to glare at the newcomer, her eyes flashing. "I wouldn't finish that if I were you. In fact, I would leave while you still have a head."

Chakotay gave her a friendly smile for once. Her stare had not yet gotten to him. "What's wrong?"

All he got was an eye roll. "Have you got a day or three? I can sum it up for you if you'd like. Voyager is not a power station."

"Ah," Chakotay sighed.

"Ah," B'Elanna said mockingly. "We've had to re-route from many different sections of the ship. One moron tried to relocate the anti-portal forcefield. You know the one powered by alien energy that opens up a door to demon dimensions. I'm just as eager to farm some energy reserves as you are."

Chakotay's eyes fell on the warp core. To him it seemed normal, humming away like nothing was the matter. B'Elanna knew what was coming, she answered him before he even asked. "It's the same problem as before. The warp core hasn't been the same since our *landing*. At least I'll have some time to get a good look at it while we re-cooperate and figure things out."

"That doesn't help me as all I was told was that it was being random," Chakotay dared to point out.

B'Elanna rolled her eyes, it looked like she did it twice to Chakotay but they just lingered up for longer. "Oh now you want technobabble?"

"I wouldn't want to hold you up any longer. Just the basic gist of it will do," Chakotay answered with another smile.

"How kind," B'Elanna muttered sarcastically. "Basically the core appears to be working perfectly, until you want to go back into warp. It suddenly doesn't have enough power to do so. It goes right back to normal afterwards."

"How did you fix it last time?" Chakotay asked.

"Yes cos I never would have thought to try that again," B'Elanna said. "We're busy re-routing it but like I said, Voyager's done two power transfers to the Enterprise. Thankfully both were just minimal ones or we'd be dead in the water. We don't have many options left."

Chakotay frowned, "why now? We were damaged then, it made sense that a few relays, connections would be fried and give false readings like the core being perfectly fine. Now? It..."

"Doesn't make sense, I know," B'Elanna sighed in frustration. "I haven't found a pattern yet, but I will."

"Random does seem like a good word to describe it then," Chakotay said. "Maybe we should concentrate on the Enterprise's warp core then. They may be able to tow us instead."

The look on B'Elanna's face told him to quickly back away to avoid getting hit. Once he was out of leg and arm reach he took another step back just in case.

"The Enterprise just has enough power for life support on the Bridge and Engineering, as well as the core, and yet it works just fine, first time," she spat. Chakotay took another step backwards. "Just tell them to wait where they are, we'll catch up. I won't be towed because of some moody little system that is hiding from me. I'll find it. We'll just have to catch up on impulse power for now."

"I won't do anything of the sort," Chakotay said mid step backwards. "The Enterprise should continue to the source of the dilithium, they need it a lot more than we do. They're not going to steal it all and leave Voyager dry. There's no need for the dramatics."

Before she could respond to that, one way or another, he hurried for the exit. "Carry on," he tossed over his shoulder just as the door began to close behind him.

His eyes squinted as if that would help him see it better. His left hand started to shake slightly, so it clenched for a moment while the other continued the delicate work.

"Almost done, my beauty," Damien whispered to whatever he was working on.

The room fell into complete darkness. Damien held still and waited patiently for the lights to come back on. When they did he resumed what he was doing, unaware that someone now stood behind him.

Carefully he maneuvered the last piece into place. A smile spread across his face. His hands moved down to lift it up.

"Oooh how pretty," a shrill voice squealed behind him.

Damien shuddered in revulsion, it took all he could muster to not grip his masterpiece too hard. The last thing he wanted to do was break it. When it didn't he stared devilishly towards nothing in particular, "you thought I'd break it, didn't you? Ha, so predictable."

"Break what, munchkin?" Annika cooed.

Damien quickly climbed out of his chair and turned around to keep an eye on her. "Wouldn't you like to know, you disgustingly nauseating and other adjectives that haven't been invented yet shrew." Annika's big grin was on her face, it almost made him shudder again. His ring finger reached around to a small button on the thing in his hands. "Goodbye and good riddance!"

He pressed but nothing happened, in fact he didn't even feel the button, let alone it being pushed into something. Damien looked down to find the device was no longer in his hands. He knew exactly what happened, all he had time to do was look up to confirm it. Annika stared at it curiously, accidentally triggering the button as she inspected it.

"No, don't!" he screamed but it was too late. Annika's body seemed to turn see through, it fluttered like it was made out of water and a breeze was pushing by her. Then she vanished. "Oh god, what have I done!?"

The doors beside him opened. Harry walked in with a cheerful look on his face. "So, how's that longer lasting cloaking device coming along?"

Damien started to squeak like a sad puppy. Harry was oblivious to it for a few seconds until it got loud enough to hear outside.

"What?"

"Let's hope it isn't," Damien stuttered. Anger took over and his head shook, a fist clenched. "Of course it works. I designed it. This is terrible!"

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yes we get it, you're the villain, helping the good guys is bad. Blah blah. Let me know when you can install it on one of our ships. We'll test it on a shuttle."

He turned to leave but he was surprised to find not only Damien grabbing his arm, but strongly enough to hold him back. "You don't understand anything, you pillock. We are doomed, it's time to give up, game over, user wins. The end! I'm out of here."

In Harry's perspective he tossed himself sideways onto the floor. He was about to comment when the villain started to try and bat something invisible away. His eyebrow raised Tuvok high. "Um... what, why... what are you doing?" All he got for an answer was a chilling scream. "Wait, is that? Oh..."

### **The Bridge:**

Chakotay stepped off the turbolift just in time for the lights to switch off briefly, then come back on again. Everyone on the bridge didn't seem to react to it like it was a big deal.

"Let me guess," he said as he made his way over to Opps.

"It's just the lights. Looks like B'Elanna's trying to find another system to transfer power from," Ian said from the same station.

Chakotay's gaze hovered over to the helm, his brow furrowed as he saw the back of a man sitting there. "And here I thought Naomi had flown us straight back into the anomaly."

The helmsman turned around to glare in his direction. "I don't even know where to get offended with that... first." He spotted Danny staring straight at him at the science station. His eyes widened when she winked. Naturally he swung his chair back around. "Ookay, you weren't kidding."

Jessie rolled her eyes while James beside her smirked. "With Danny, I rarely am," she said.

Danny pretended to look innocent as she glanced over to her friends at Tactical. "What? Your big brother's a cutie."

"I had the chance to fly the famous Enterprise but no, I stayed loyal to Voyager. Why?" Nathan said to himself.

"Yes, why? Don't tell me Naomi's piloting it," Chakotay said, dreading the answer.

"Oh god no. We've only just repaired it," Jessie said in disgust.

Nathan shrugged, "no doubt Tom's flying it around himself, and here we are sitting pretty."

"Yes you are," Danny commented.

"Just like old times, great. Why are you here? You're an Enterprise crewmember," Chakotay groaned in her direction.

"Jess is due to pop any second and she's still working. It's history in the making," Danny teased.

Jessie's eyes narrowed. Chakotay glanced over to see she looked shorter than usual, another look told him she'd stolen a chair from somewhere.

"What else would I do? I can't walk anywhere so window clothes shopping is out, the holodecks are offline anyway..." Jessie complained.

"Window clothes shopping?" Chakotay muttered. Nathan just smirked in response.

"I tried sitting around the last time, it's bloody boring," Jessie finished off saying. "As long as no morons attack us, sending the ship swaying back and forth, I'm fine. If they do, I'll sort them out."

James cleared his throat while looking down at her. She shook her head at him. "Okay," he whispered.

The lights flickered on and off yet again. Chakotay couldn't help but feel a little uneasy. Something wasn't right.

"Commander!" Harry's panicked voice stammered from behind him. Everyone turned their heads towards the newly open door beside Opps. The sheer terror on his face unnerved them all, except Jessie who just found it irritating. "We have a problem."

Chakotay stared at the ex Ensign blankly, it hid his uneasiness for the moment. "Yeah so? Why are you only telling me?"

Harry tried to laugh through his fear but it sounded like a whimper. "Well remember when I said you should earn respect back before you take charge. Well you've done it. Congratulations, I'll go back to..." he said while pointing at Opps. Ian pulled a face as he tried to hog the station with him.

"Wait. What's the problem before you demote yourself?" Chakotay asked.

Before Harry responded his head darted around as if he was looking for a spider that had escaped. "Um... Damien's cloak works."

"And that's terrifying why?" James asked.

Harry ran over to him so fast it was like a blur. "Okay, this is your domain, you handle it! I'm gonna go beam over to the Enterprise and lock myself in a room."

"You can't. We've stopped again," Nathan pointed out.

Chakotay turned to look at the viewscreen. Sure enough the star streaks were quickly turning back into dots. He let out a big sigh. "This is getting beyond a joke. There's got to be more to it than power issues."

James turned his head to the right, but he could still see Harry's terrified stare towards him in the corner of his left eye. "Stop that. How is Damien doing what he is supposed to do my department?"

Harry looked at him like he was an idiot. He was about to tell him so delicately so he didn't get punched, even though the odds of that were still high, when he realised something. "Oh right! Apparently Damien finished it, tried to use it on himself and Annika snatched it."

Jessie pulled a disgusted face. "I hope you're not saying what I think you're saying."

Harry laughed but mostly in despair, "oh I assure you, I am."

"Annika is cloaked?" James stuttered. "How on Earth am I supposed to deal with that?"

"Why would you? She'll just continue harassing Damien," Chakotay asked.

James calmed down and nodded. "I hate to agree with him but he's right. We have more important things to worry about."

*"Annika," Jessie's voice said.*

### **Present Day:**

Confused Nathan glanced at the couple, hoping either of them would elaborate. Jessie needed a little support limping down the corridor so the pair had both volunteered.

"I really doubt she'd want to kill you, unless you tried to hang around Damien," James said.

"Eew," Jessie whined. "No, don't you remember? That time Voyager's power went and I was also like this, Annika was the one that caused it."

"Do you really think she'd do that again?" James questioned.

Jessie shrugged casually, "I wouldn't put it past her."

"I thought you said whoever did this was a witchy warlock dude," Nathan butted in.

James bit his lip to stop himself from laughing, it turned into a quiet snigger. "You have a way with descriptions, don't you?"

Jessie sighed, "Annika is or was a witch. I dunno if her dying and being sired changes anything."

"Probably not. Frenit being extra tough was probably because he was a Slayer before," James said quietly. His head shook, "no, if it was her, she would have made a big thing of it. The *dude* disappeared as soon as he was stopped, without a word."

"That's true," Jessie said.

Nathan was still a little confused, to say the least. "So, is this power cut and jelly shield a witch thing or not? Cos I'm completely lost."

The sound of footsteps approaching from ahead and a few behind them got their attention. A male voice spoke up out of the shadows, "I wouldn't say witch exactly." Nathan frowned, that voice was familiar to him. The foot steps stopped gradually, not all at once, hinting that there was more than two. They were close enough for the trio to make out their figures in the dark.

James took a step forward so the larger group would reach him first. He noted that the one who spoke seemed to stand ahead of the others. Nathan meanwhile turned so the new arrivals were on either side of him, keeping his sister in between him and James. She didn't look happy about it but kept a tight hold on his arm anyway.

"This will go a lot quicker and nicer if you just hand her over," the man's voice warned. He only got a laugh out of James as a response. His voice got harder, "believe it or not, but I'm doing you a favour. Perish the thought."

"I have to say, I've heard more intimidating sounds from Tom when he stubs his toe," James said.

The man grunted lightly. "Your superior posturing is dangerously misplaced."

Jessie rolled her eyes in disgust. "Oh god, what did you use to practice your speech with? A comic book, Damien's Guide To Dumbassary, or the one he used; Dummies Guide To Villainy?" James and Nathan laughed as quietly as they could.

"Villainy? What makes you think we're the bad guys here?" another male voice piped up angrily.

"You tried to kill my sister in her sleep," Nathan reminded them.

"A necessary evil," the lead man said in a smug voice.

Nathan couldn't help but shrivel up his whole face, the confusion started to give him a headache. "You're warlocks, why the big in for my sister, who by the way is a witch? The only difference is gender, right?"

Jessie stared up at Nathan, she looked a little offended. "Only difference?"

"You know what I mean," Nathan said quickly to defend himself.

"You wouldn't understand," the leader muttered.

"I know, that's why I'm asking," Nathan said while glancing between the shadows on both side.

There was a brief and slight movement from the larger group. As if out of nowhere a small ball of white energy appeared, highlighting a hand underneath it and a man's torso. The hand seemed to guide it higher and to the left, illuminating his face. Nathan recognised it as the man from the turbolift. It bothered him that his voice was familiar to him as well, and yet they never spoke to each other during their encounter.

A small smirk appeared on his face. "If you don't know, do not waste my time. Now," he said.

The shadows closer to Nathan and Jessie seemed to move forward, Nathan missed it by staring at the side lit up. He only noticed something was wrong when Jessie's entire weight leaned against him. His head turned to see her, now in front of him, swing her good leg up knee first. A man's voice cracked, then he saw a blur of a one fall down in front of him.

The leader sighed impatiently. Voices, all male started to mutter different things in unison. His fingers stroked within a centimetre away from the ball of light, his elbow pushed back. There was another impatient sigh, but it wasn't his this time. This one belonged to James. With little more than a gentle

shove, from him anyway, the leader stumbled backwards, taking a few of his group to the ground with him. The ones who weren't hit stopped their strange chanting.

"Uh... stratos fic..." a voice closer to Nathan stuttered. Nothing happened, at least until a body from the other group flew forward into him. Jessie gave the pair a kick each for good measure. Nathan was far too amused to do anything, not that he felt he needed to.

"Die you monster!" a voice screamed from the leader's side. A blur approached where James was now, but his back was turned after the last one. He couldn't resist. He grabbed a hold of the man at the last second, ducked down and threw his hapless attacker over his shoulder. The man slammed back first onto the ground.

There was still one more shadow left on that side. It seemed to get smaller as if it was backing off or running away. That left at least one more left on Nathan's side, who was still muttering random words in a panic.

James walked over to stand with Jessie and Nathan, giving them a bemused look as he did. "Want this one?"

"Nah, you look like you're enjoying it more than me," Jessie sighed.

"You're too good to me," James had to laugh. He reached forward to grab the guy. Just then Nathan and Jessie saw another blur come towards them. Before they could warn James, he had turned to toss his latest victim over towards the bigger group. Only instead he slammed into whatever was approaching. Nathan cringed at the resulting bang, Jessie just laughed.

"Damn right," she said.

James frowned in confusion as he looked down at where the two men probably fell. He casually shrugged. "Okay, one more?" His eyes focused on the distant shadow.

That one now had a voice coming from it, it sounded like insane ramblings in another language. James stepped over the many men lying on the ground to approach him. Unlike the leader, this man summoned a much deadlier looking ball of light, a flaming orange and yellow one.

"Get down," Nathan stuttered, even though Jessie was already ducking down anyway.

The ball of fire moved to one side, the man looked to throw it like it was a regular ball. It flew towards James. He ducked at the last second, assuming that the worst that could happen was that it would add another scar to Deck Thirteen. Instead of a crash he heard a pained scream, a man's. He swung around to find the leader of the group already falling to the ground.

Seeing that, the man who threw it scrambled away with terror all over his face. Only nobody really could see it in the crippling darkness. James however felt something from him as he ran away.

Nathan helped Jessie return to her feet, she winced all the way up. He stared towards James and the leader with his eyes wide. "We should go too."

James didn't answer him or even move, he just stared at the man lying still in front of him. Jessie more or less pulled Nathan with her to get closer to him, and put a hand on his shoulder. "James," she said softly.

"Worry about it later, come on," Nathan said in a trembling voice. He walked further down the corridor, Jessie limped after him but kept stalling and looking behind her. She worried as James still hadn't moved. Nathan shared a similar worried look with Jessie, he tried to hide it with a smile. "God Jess, I dunno if I can keep this up. My shoulder's knackered."

A dangerous look appeared on Jessie's face, "what are you implying?"

"Well... I'm only one man," Nathan teased her. He gave her a wink as if to say *play along*, then a nervous grin that said *please don't kill me*.

Jessie rolled her eyes. "You serious?" she muttered quietly. "You think me playing the damsel will get James to come with us?"

"No, I thought you playing the heavily pregnant girl with the broken ankle would..." Nathan explained. He got an elbow nudge and a hard one at that. "Is there ever a right thing to say?"

"No," Jessie answered honestly.

During their brief fight James had finally stood up and was making his way over to them.

"Good to know," Nathan smiled.

James cleared his throat to get their attention, they glanced his way. "Sorry, I was just making sure..." Nathan nodded, Jessie didn't look as convinced. "There should be one more Jeffries tube entrance around here. Maybe now the shield will be gone."

With her hair tied up in her favourite bun and her new sultry heels on, she should have been turning heads. The cleavage revealing catsuit she had picked out highlighted her new golden eyes perfectly. The ones that brought out her mortal blue-grey ones had to go, it still made her cry to think about the beautiful ice blue with dark sleeves. Although she had kept that silver rib cage one. That went with everything.

No one even looked at her though. Usually people would hurry away to take cold showers as laying eyes on her must be quite a treat, she thought. Only now they'd walk right by her, chatting about something other than her. *How rude!*

The corridor was dark, maybe that was why. Surely her golden hair glowed in the dark. She hated this mean darkness. It meant that not only would people miss her fabulous outfit and hair, but no light would reflect her sparkling skin.

One person ran towards her with a flashlight. Maybe they'd feel better if they complimented her magnificent chest, as everyone always loved to do. She took a step forward to stand in the light, her hands folded behind her back and her chest pushed out. *I badly need a mirror in front of me at all times. I miss out on this perfection.*

Something strange happened. The man did not stop, he continued running. *Oh, maybe he wants to hug me.* Any excuse for a grope. Her arms stretched out, then she noticed something absolutely terrifying. She couldn't see her arms even in this light.

The man did go for a hug anyway. It was so intense that it made the poor fella cry and fall backwards onto the floor. *Aaaw, how sweet.* He was passed out on the floor too, his face was bleeding. *I suppose I made myself too gorgeous today, bless him.*

Two more people hurried over. *That's more like it, this is what should be happening.* They stopped at the man on the ground to kneel down beside him. Oh, jealousy's an ugly thing.

The flashlight the fainted man held lay discarded on the floor. She knelt down to pick it up. Perhaps if she placed it by her chest it would highlight all of her glorious features; her skin, hair and...

"She must be nearby. We have to find her," one of the men said, stuttering nervously.

"I'll bet you do, you naughty boy," Annika cooed.

The man and his partner looked around frantically. Annika gave them a sultry wave.



"But alas, I belong to another. That's..." Annika continued.

The man screamed. *Aaaw, he's shy.* Then he ran off back the way he came. It was mighty strange. The showers wouldn't be working during the power cut.

The other person that was with him still seemed to be looking for her. *Who wouldn't? I can barely resist me.*

"Jeffries, help me get Johnson up. Jeffries?" she stammered. Luckily Annika wasn't interested in the random hugger as the lady dragged him away from her. Once she was out of sight the woman groaned loudly, "oh what are you doing?"

"Annika, naughty, floating flashlight, life flashed before my eyes," the man squeaked.

Annika smiled. She always had been a hit with the men, ever since she was freed from the Borg. They always seemed to turn into a quivering wreck when they saw her. She was dazzling before she was made into a gorgeous vampire.

"Come on, forget about it. We need to find her," the woman snapped.

Now that was rude, she thought. She was standing right there. If she wanted to soak in her presence all she had to do was notice her. Silly woman. "She doesn't deserve to find me," Annika huffed while stroking her hair.

"They're not looking for you, you stupid bimbo," a woman said from behind her.

Annika swirled around to see who was talking to her. Of course it was too dark to do that. Probably a good thing. Only she was good enough to have light shine on her.

"They're looking for me," she said.

That seemed unlikely. She sounded very plain. "Oh, now that is hard to believe. Everyone wants to be around me, even if they are too shy to admit it."

"Ugh, you're that Borg woman with the Mary Sue complex," the woman grunted rudely. Annika didn't like this woman. Annika was a much better name than Mary, and how could she get her mixed up with another woman? She was fabulous.

"Well at least I have not one but two names to establish my importance. I doubt you have." *Ha, that will shut you up.*

"I'm Ruby," the woman said plainly.

Ruby? What's such a spiteful and rude woman doing with a lovely name like that? At least it gave her an idea for a new catsuit. Red with ruby jewels on her chest.

"I've never heard of you, so no wonder you're rude," Annika said.

The woman laughed. "Oh good. Then this will be a surprise."

Surprise? Annika loved surprises. As long as they weren't those horrible accidents her clumsy Slayer friends tended to make. You'd think they would be more coordinated. She felt bad. That cute one didn't mean for her to fall from the top level of Engineering. Maybe...

Something tickled her chest, disrupting her thoughts. Her hand went to check what it was, it felt like a thin wire had fallen on it. All the way around as well, and that girl or someone else was trying to pull it off her. Maybe she wasn't so spiteful after all. She could just make out the girl's angry face as she tugged. Annika thought that the little people couldn't handle such simple things, so she gave her a hand and untied it away with little effort.

The woman was even angrier. *I guess some people are more sensitive to their failings than others.*

"Your skin is rock solid, how..." Ruby spluttered.

Annika laughed. "I'd say it is more like a beautiful porcelain that shines brightly in the sun. Or light. Thank you for noticing and for trying to help. That tickled my boobs. I wonder where it came from."

"I was trying to cut your head off you invisible freak," Ruby snapped.

Annika didn't know what to make of that. Maybe she was so hideous that she wanted to swap heads. Or maybe that was her word for her assets, some people are very shy about such things. She had to laugh, how silly, that wouldn't work.

"Oh you. The best way to win a man is image. A new outfit, a new hairstyle, maybe some make up... more for you no doubt..." Annika said happily. She was sure Ruby would appreciate her brilliant advice, but all she saw was a cold stare. "Perhaps get a more suitable name."

"I have no trouble winning a man. Not that I understand how we went from me killing you to this," Ruby muttered. "It's just keeping them from hiding things from me that's difficult."

Annika knew what the girl's problem was now. She felt sorry for her. "I suppose uggo's could have more difficulty. I didn't account for that. My Damien lives for me. He'd never cheat on me. Who would?"

"Does he always run away or spend time with other people but you?" Ruby said.

No. Damien was a super important man and his greatness and his intelligence and his charisma were greatly needed on this ship. None of them respected him but he still aided them. He was her hero. It pained her that he spent so much time away from her. That gift he made for her was odd but it more than made up for it.

"Silence, I thought so," Ruby laughed. Annika wasn't sure what was so funny. "Men never tell the truth. They think they're stronger than us and as such can control us. Pain is good control, it brings out the truth. I'm certain a bimbo like yourself wouldn't be able to handle some truth, as you plainly go out of your way to pretend that nobody hates you. Including Damien. I bet he can't stand the sight of you."

Annika didn't understand. What's not to like? She was beautiful and clever, always eager to help. She was Voyager's big hero. Everyone counted on her.

"Trust me, once they know nothing but pain you'll get the truth. Never fails," Ruby said.

Well it was true that when she was mortal and she stubbed her toe, whatever did it got told exactly what she thought of it. Things shouldn't get in her way, she thought. Perhaps this Ruby girl was onto something.

"Pain, how?" she asked.

Ruby shrugged casually, "oh, depends. I like to get a wire, wrap it around their ankles and..."

"Oooh, I've always wanted to try bondage," Annika giggled.

"Sure, whatever. Once you've got him, he'll be screaming his true feelings for you," Ruby giggled maliciously. To Annika it was just a giggle.

*How romantic.*

The saloon style doors groaned as they were pulled apart. James moved to one side to allow Jessie and Nathan to go through them. Once they were through he followed them and immediately turned back to the doors to close them again.

Jessie pulled a worried face as she glanced around their new surroundings. Tables and chairs were piled up and not neatly at one side of the room. Everything else not rooted to the floor scattered around it, mostly broken. The only piece of furniture that remained in one piece was the bar.

"I take it nobody came to clean this up after the crash," Nathan wondered aloud.

"We're not staying here, are we?" Jessie said in distaste.

James walked over to the pair, wincing slightly. "Nathan's right. It's the least likely place to hide so it'll be the last place..."

"Hide?" Jessie said, disbelief made her voice squeak a bit. She tried to sit down on the ground by the bar, Nathan knelt down to help. "It's just one guy."

"One guy who knows how to make fire. I'd rather be in an open area if he comes back," James said.

Nathan sighed as he stood back up. "I had that big words for the first time guy pegged as the power house. He was the leader after all. Obviously I was wrong." He noticed an eyebrow raising slightly, it made him smirk. "Oh come on, you did too."

"You could have just said that you thought the leader was the one to worry about," James said.

Nathan laughed quietly. "Yeah, but I'd rather be different."

Jessie shook her head. "I don't think so."

"Maybe we should barricade the door," Nathan said, glancing briefly at the only exit. "At least then we'll hear him coming."

"Yes give him kindling," Jessie muttered, her eyes rolled.

James gave her a bemused look, "we need to seem like we're not here. Putting tables in front of a door with windows in it, not a good idea."

Nathan casually shrugged. "Fine. So Jess hides on the other side of the bar." He got a growl which made him laugh nervously. "Then one of us goes and punches this last guy out, shield trapping us on this deck falls. Yes?"

"Please, I can do that better than you," Jessie muttered.

"No doubt but it kinda beats the point if we send you," Nathan said in a teasing voice.

James frowned, his arms folded. "I go, he finds you two first, problem. You go and he fireballs you to death, problem."

"We both stay here, Jessie kills us, problem," Nathan said, not seriously. "And I resent that I'm useless in both scenarios, Mr Narcissist."

"I didn't mean it that way," James said quickly and a little defensively. "I've done this before; gone off thinking I can handle it, when I should have stayed. Typically the one time I don't would be the time I should."

Nathan smiled sympathetically, he gave him a pat on the shoulder which was just frowned at. "Maybe we're looking at this the wrong way. Maybe the shield is magical and the only way to bring it down is magic."

Jessie groaned, "crap."

"How is that better?" James asked.

Nathan couldn't help but chuckle nervously. "Maybe the fireball guy will be more co-operative if he's conscious. Is all I'm saying."

"Crap," Jessie muttered.

"Something's not right about this whole thing. We're missing something," James said. "We were on our way to my office when the power cut hit, yet somehow we free fell sideways and downways to Deck Thirteen. The power cut itself for that matter. The shield."

"They wanted you two here, what's so not right about that?" Nathan said warily.

"I said crap," Jessie complained.

James sighed impatiently at their situation. "They seemed like a bunch of amateurs, yet they were able to manipulate the turbolift, cause a power cut, generate that shield. Why? Why here?" He felt something slam into his ankle, it stung quite a bit. He looked down to check but saw Jessie staring at him before he got there. Her eyes widened briefly. "What, what's wrong?"

"Jesus..." Jessie rolled her eyes. "I know it's not exactly original but, it's started."

Nathan turned towards the door, slightly panicked. "I didn't hear anything."

James' eyes widened, he quickly stepped forward and knelt down next to Jessie. "You mean..."

"Oh yep," Jessie winced as her hands covered her stomach. "I would have been surprised if it didn't happen."

James put one arm around her shoulders, the other hand clutched one of hers. Meanwhile Nathan was still staring at the door, bopping his head side to side to see through the window.

"To be honest, I dunno if this is really a bad thing," Jessie said.

"What do you mean?" James asked.

Nathan squinted his eyes, "how can you see out of there, there's no light."

Jessie closed her eyes, her head dipped slightly. "Well I'm basically a target sign at the moment, I was even before the warlocks turned on me."

"Jess, that's not true," James tried to reassure her.

"Although the curse still happens even when they're free from me," Jessie stuttered. Her breathing started to become rapid the more she thought about it, she clutched James' hand tightly. Her head shook. "I dunno what to do. Why was I so insistent on getting pregnant again? I'm selfish, that's why."

"Jessie, no," James whispered. The arm holding her pulled her as close as possible, he gave her a gentle kiss on the side of her head. "You're both going to be all right. I promise. I won't fail this time."

Nathan finally looked away from the door, once he did he realised what was really going on. He stepped back to give them a little privacy, while calling himself an idiot quietly.

"It's not you I think that will fail," Jessie said even though she felt a little calmer. "Duncan, Sasha, Amy... even she wasn't safe once she was free from me."

"You can't blame yourself for that. We got her and Duncan back, they were fine, they still are," James said.

Jessie cringed but only because of what she was thinking, a lone tear fell onto her cheek. "I didn't mean Amy. I meant her... her sister."

James felt the blood leave his face, he closed his eyes. "I see. That's not going to happen again." Jessie tried to turn her head to look at him but he was already too close to do that, she settled for resting against his cheek. "We'll get this one right, I promise. It'll be fine."

Nathan's shoulders fell. It didn't matter how far away he stood, he could still hear every word. He bit his lip and tried to think of something, anything he could do to help them. His usual banter would likely make them mad. He stood there for a while.

Engineering was still dark and hectic. B'Elanna rushed over to attack another station but instead she bumped into a chair.

"Hey!" it spat at her.

The chair was heavier than normal, someone was sitting in it. A brief flash of light from someone's wandering torch showed her they had the audacity to put their feet up on the computer too. B'Elanna growled towards them. "What are you doing, this is an emergency!"

"I know," a familiar voice emanated from it smugly. Then there was a crunch followed by some chewing.

B'Elanna shrivelled her nose up in disgust. "How did you even get in here Damien?"

Another crunch. "Duh, door was open," the voice mumbled in between chews.

"Ugh," B'Elanna groaned. She reached out to shove the chair and its occupant to one side. A smile crept on her face when she heard a yelp and bang seconds later. The computer station was her next target, which she was luckily a lot gentler with. The panel underneath it was ripped open. "Somebody toss me a new flashlight!" she yelled once her head was inside of it.

Damien muttered a few obscenities as he climbed to his feet and brushed whatever he was eating off his clothes. "Let me guess. Deck Thirteen back fire? Somebody leave Neelix's stove open? Nobody topped up the metre?"

His voice annoyed B'Elanna a lot more than it usually did, she even started to tremble. "Shut up, shut up."

Damien laughed until he heard somebody else join in, a female someone. It put him right off. "Cool off, I didn't come here to piss you off. That just became tempting."

B'Elanna just grunted in response. If she could see what she was doing she could work on blocking him out.

"I just need a new thermal imager. You haven't seen one have you?" Damien said, holding back a snigger.

"Why yes, it should be right there in the give a crap drawer," B'Elanna hissed.

Damien shrugged, "well a certain someone broke mine. It is far more important than Voyager's annual black out."

An Engineering crewmember finally ran over to the Chief Engineer with a new working torch. Damien saw and heard him bump into something, of course he ended up flat on his back. Then he heard another giggle. Since he wasn't laughing at the same time he could hear it a lot more clearly, his skin froze as he recognised it.

"Today would be great," B'Elanna muttered angrily.

The unknown crewmember groaned in pain.

Damien looked down at him and the flashlight he held. Quickly he grabbed it and ran for the exit. He didn't get very far. A few steps forward and a pair of arms scooped him up into the air like he was a little baby, or a damsel in distress. That giggle happened again and this time he had a front row preview of it. He felt himself bounce, as well as something else, as whoever grabbed him ran out.

"Lieutenant!" a different voice yelled from afar.

B'Elanna pulled herself out of the station, mumbling about it being a waste of time, and quickly stood up. All she saw were a couple of flashlights bounding her way. They got close enough to allow her to see the people holding them. "What is it?"

"Your suspicions were right. The anti-portal forcefield system's been tampered with," one of them reported.

"Until the power's up we won't know exactly where, but the algorithm that was inputted into it was definitely sending false signals," the second crewmember said.

"I designed that shield. It shouldn't cause a power down, and it shouldn't affect the damn core. If the false signal told it to put a shield up somewhere we would have been alerted as well," B'Elanna said impatiently. The two crewmembers looked worried, at least until her face softened. "Unless..."

### **The Bridge:**

"Something's wrong. It's not letting me in," Harry stuttered.

Chakotay leaned on the station to get a closer look, even if it was upside down to him. Harry continued tapping on the faded computer panels until they disappeared completely. He sighed impatiently.

"Do we have to send someone down there after all?" Chakotay asked.

Harry shook his head quickly, "no, no... I wouldn't recommend it."

"We've got to do something. Is the power drain coming from Deck Thirteen or not?" Chakotay said.

"It certainly looks that way. I was trying to get into B'Elanna's program to see if a forcefield was active, and well..." Harry said, his hand gestured to the computer. His other hand raised up to massage his left temple, it eased the oncoming headache he was getting slightly. "It doesn't make sense. If something is there draining our power, her system should be dealing with it. Either it's broken or something else is causing this, something we haven't prepared for."

### **Engineering:**

B'Elanna stared blankly at the three people in front of her. The pair she had talked to earlier stood to one side, mostly out of arm's reach.

"Are you sure?" she asked in a deadly tone.

The bravest of the three squeaked and nodded.

"I'm going to need more than that," B'Elanna muttered.

"Um," the brave one squeaked again. She tried to clear her throat. "It was blocking the entrance to the next deck. We could see it as soon as we climbed onto the ladder."

"That's it?" B'Elanna said plainly but dangerously.

Another woman stepped forward to hand her a tricorder, in the panic she nearly dropped it. B'Elanna took it and opened it up to have a look.

"We did try another route down but that was the same, sir. Deck Thirteen's completely cut off," the first woman said.

B'Elanna studied the tricorder, all the while her forehead tightened and her face scrunched. "This is..."

"We're sorry. There was nothing else we could do without power," the third one stuttered, earning a glare from the other two.

One of the crewmembers who reported to B'Elanna earlier looked confused. "How can it be cut off? I thought the forcefield Lieutenant Torres designed was only meant to keep out demons."

"It was," B'Elanna said in a worried voice.

### **Deck Thirteen:**

Jessie was now sitting behind the bar, resting up right in the corner. Her forehead was covered in sweat, her eyes were closed. James leaned not far away, staring straight ahead of him.

Feeling more than helpless, Nathan approached him warily. "How long?" he asked in a whisper.

"It's every half hour so far," James answered. "Hopefully it's enough time for her to rest in between."

"You're as wiggled as her," Nathan said a little too quickly, he regretted it immediately. James looked at him with the blank face he expected. "Jessie told me. You guys have had rotten luck so far. You're more than overdue a win here. She's mostly on time, no related injuries..."

"There's a warlock out there who wants her dead," James muttered.

Nathan nodded nervously. "True but that doesn't mean..."

"No, it doesn't. He tries it and he dies," James said quietly.

Nathan let out of a scoff without realising. He felt James staring at him. "No he doesn't."

"What? You saying I can't?" James said in disbelief.

"Oh I have no doubt that you could, no problem," Nathan said with his hands up like he was surrendering. "But you won't."

James was more than confused, his eyebrow raised higher than normal. "Jessie did tell you the whole story with Duncan right. Guy stabbed her, I killed him."

Nathan nodded. "Yeah, I remember. I know all about the two Cardassians, your dad and whatnot. That's why I said it."

"I never understand anything you say," James said while rolling his eyes.

"I get that a lot," Nathan smiled. "You get mad and you sometimes kill. It's a Slayer thing."

"No it's not, it's a me thing," James laughed bitterly.

Nathan smirked and pointed at him knowingly. "Ah ha, see!" James stared at his finger with his eyes wide and both of his eyebrows up. "You don't like being that guy, it's written all over your face."

"It's dark," James reminded him plainly.

"Whatever man. I'm right and you know it. What I don't get is why you act like you don't care. Like you're proud of being a killer, cos you'd change that in a heartbeat if you could," Nathan said.

James shrugged, "I dunno, the guy who stabs a pregnant woman in the back isn't somebody you grieve over."

"Case in point. It's like you want people to be afraid of you," Nathan smirked. He turned around to look directly at the side of his face. "Somebody might say that's guilt talking. If people think you're a heartless killer then they treat you as such, you're being punished for your crime."

"I certainly am now," James said impatiently.

Nathan's smirk slipped into a warm smile. "It sucked that the warlock got killed by one of his own people."

James scoffed, "no, he deserved it."

"Maybe, but he died because you ducked the attack meant for you. This guy wanted to kill your wife and unborn baby, and how do you react?" Nathan questioned.

James pulled away from the bar so he was standing straight. "You really need to learn how to speak English. Enough of this riddles crap."

"You looked mortified. For a moment I thought you were going to allow me and your pregnant wife to walk off without you, with a dangerous warlock on the loose," Nathan whispered.

"I was thinking, good god. Maybe that is a little traumatising for me," James said, shaking his head. He turned his body so they were face to face. "I don't know what you're doing but it's not helpful. So cut it out."

"You acted like that when that Shoytin guy died too. I'm sensing a pattern," Nathan ignored him.

"Really? Cos I'm just sensing a load of bullsh..." James muttered.

Nathan interrupted him by clapping his shoulder, it put him right off. "Now, now, not in front of the baby."

James stared at him blankly for about a minute, then to Nathan's relief he laughed but not in the way he wanted. It was more of an embarrassed for him laugh. "Did my sister put up with this sort of crap too?"

"Well, yeah I guess. I wasn't as..." Nathan chuckled as he pulled his hand back. Then something occurred to him. He stared at James with wide eyes as he turned to lean against the bar again. "Did you just bring up Debbie?"

"I don't think you've even met Lena or Yasmin yet," James said.

Nathan nodded timidly, "no, that's true. I'm just surprised that's all."

"Why, it was just a comment," James said, his head dipping. Nathan saw it as him withdrawing into a shell he had only just popped his head out of.

"You know, I'm sure she would have liked Jessie. The two would have got on great," he said quickly to coax him back out.

James sighed a little impatiently, "I walked into that one."

"Jumped head first," Nathan chuckled. "Debs always said that I was good at cheering her up, distracting her. She..." He noticed James frowning at him. "What?"

"Debs?" he said quietly but with distaste.

Nathan bit his lip for a moment. "What's wrong with a nickname? She hated her real name."



"I didn't know that," James mumbled uncomfortably.

Nathan smiled warmly. "Yeah, we even gave you one. I dunno if you remember it." He turned his head to look at him. He regretted that as it darkened the younger man's features a lot. It made him feel awful, a huge lump formed in his throat. "Um, so yeah. We quickly realised that my method of cheering her up never worked on you. I guess that's still true today huh, I'm sorry."

It was quiet for a while, as well as awkward. Nathan regretted saying anything. He turned to walk out of the bar area.

"Jay," he heard James say very quickly. It stopped him cold.

"What?" Nathan stammered.

"I assume that's the nickname you were talking about," James said in a low, almost silent voice.

Nathan's head turned to one side so he could only just see him. It wasn't enough so he turned on his heel. "Sorry, I didn't mean to..." he sighed angrily with himself. "Your question wasn't a hint to start blabbing on and on about her, it was just a one off remark. I'm such an idiot."

Since it was so dark and he was a few metres away now he couldn't tell, but James' eyes glistened as he stared straight ahead of him. "She called you Nate sometimes."

Nathan stared, his mouth slowly opening. He didn't know what to say to that.

"You, I only let her call me Jay. You using it didn't sound right," James mumbled.

"I thought, I thought you wouldn't remember me," Nathan stuttered.

"I remember a friend called Nate. I wouldn't..." James said a little too quickly. He shook his head. "I'm glad no one else thought of calling me that. I dunno."

Nathan found himself staring at the floor, he didn't realise until he saw his foot shift nervously. He tried to force a smile and laugh as he lifted his head back up. "You would always snap your name at me everytime I tried. I remember now. I thought it was funny. I think you did too."

"Not really," James said while cringing a little.

Nathan's smile was a little genuine this time, but it was a sad one. "I think she'd be proud of you, you know."

To his surprise James laughed at that. "Yeah, my kill list isn't something to be scoffed at."

That annoyed Nathan more than he liked, his whole body tensed a little. "All Debs wanted in the end was you living a normal life. Friends, family, a job that doesn't involve killing monsters. She didn't want for anything else."

James glanced briefly at him, then figured he couldn't hide the guilt in his face so he immediately looked away to check on Jessie.

"So yeah, if it's a boy I got a great name for him," Nathan said. His face cracked into a smile.

James' face almost did the same, he kept it together. "As long as it isn't Jay." The pair laughed quietly to avoid disturbing Jessie.

If anyone had a torch or the power was back on, they'd likely see Damien floating sideways in a lying position, batting his arms around and complaining. Fortunately for him neither were happening.

"I know you don't do romance, and I suppose I should consider it futile," Annika's voice said.

Damien rolled his eyes and shuddered at the same time. "Please just say waste of time. You're torturing me enough."

Annika giggled rudely, "ooh, I knew you'd guess my cutey wutey genius."

"Guess? What the hell did I guess?" Damien grumbled.

Annika squeezed him closer to her. Damien hoped that she'd crush him to death to spare him anymore misery. Typically she eased off after he had been winded and left gasping for breath through the pain in his ribs. "My new tastes are very singular."

"Yes, you are a simple trollop. Tell me something I don't know," Damien wheezed.

Annika giggled, "okay I heard *show me*." She pressed the panel to open the door, forgetting there was no power. To Damien they were just standing and staring at a door. He rolled his eyes a few times before she realised.

"You'll never get through that, there's no pow..." he said but she walked straight through the door, literally, cutting him off.

To his surprise the room they entered wasn't empty. A petite innocent looking woman he didn't recognise or care about jumped to her feet, startled at the door suddenly being smashed through. The room was also filled with candles, giving it an eery glow. The woman, Ruby looked at him and then up a bit.

"I left the door open a crack," she said irritably.

Annika laughed, "it was quicker and I'm in a hurry."

"Hurry?" Damien started to panic. "Hurry for what?"

Ruby smiled maliciously. He calmed down a little after that. This girl wasn't as innocent as he thought, she hid her evil very well. "Welcome, to the play room," she said.

"What? If this doesn't have rabbit toys or a ball pit, I'm not interested," Damien grumbled. His anger wavered a second, "or maybe a tyre swing."

Ruby giggled darkly. Once again that calmed Damien down a bit. He heard Annika huff for some reason. "Oh there maybe a swing of some description."

"So, what do we do first?" Annika asked. Her eyes lit up, luckily no one could see that. "Oh, I'll put him on my bed."

"Your bed, I thought we were in a play room," Damien panicked again. He started moving again, luckily not for that long. Annika finally let go of him, only instead of landing on a soft bed, he felt like he landed on a table.

"Bang?" Annika was confused. "I thought beds were bouncy."

"Your bed sheets creped me out, so..." Ruby said while picking up one of the candles. She gestured it to the opposite of the room. Annika glanced over to see a pile of rubble in the corner. Even in the candlelight it looked black. Ruby giggled and hovered her hand over the candle's flame.

"Nooo, it took me ages to pick out my most favourite-ist picture of my snuggly buns," Annika cried as she ran over to the rubble.

Despite the pain he was in, Damien smirked and sat up from his awkward landing. "Your evil is simply delicious, captivating."

Ruby's smile went over to him. "Why if setting fire to a naked shower shot of a man holding a rabbit shaped sponge is evil, I don't want to be good."

"I apologise, that is quite rude of me. What is your..." Damien said, then his eyes widened in terror. "Wait, how the hell did she get a picture of me in the shower?"

"Probably the same way she got the Damien hair and eyelash collection I threw down the toilet," Ruby cackled.

Annika shrieked in horror. "I was going to make a fluffy rabbit toy for him out of that, you bitch!"

Damien dragged himself off the table and onto his feet. Saying he looked disgusted was an understatement. His eyes flashed in anger. "How dare you."

"Oh don't worry, I was putting in my hair as well," Annika said in between the tears.

Damien shuddered so violently he was surprised he was still in his body afterwards. "You remember that stupid catsuit you used to love that you *threw away*. Well guess what." Annika's eyes and face lit up. "I used to use that to scrub Ylara's bathroom. Every single inch of it!"

Annika's jaw dropped. She started to whimper again. Ruby meanwhile gave Damien a dark smile, her eyes sparkled. "Hmm, how come you and I never crossed paths?" she asked.

Damien gave her a similar look back, "I think we may already have. I recognise your devilish voice. Although I doubt you've been in the brig, as you'll have used your talents to hide your true nature."

Annika growled quietly. Her eyes even started to flicker from a golden yellow to blood red. Well they would have if she wasn't invisible.

"You are too rude. I only just escaped from that wretched place when the lights went out," Ruby smirked.

Damien walked over to her, the smile on his face grew into a wicked grin. "So you are her. I have admired your sadistic nature for many months now. Is that what you intended to do to me here?"

Ruby's resulting giggle was almost childlike, until she followed it with a sly smile and a purr to her voice. "Oh, you caught me. I was intrigued by you and I worried you would find me amateurish. This was the only way I knew to discover the truth."

"What?" Annika spat. The pair ignored her. "You were supposed to help find Damien's true feelings for *me*," she whispered.

"So you exploited the bint here to achieve that. I am impressed," Damien sneered.

"Well that was her fault, no one tells the truth," Ruby said with a blush forming in her cheeks.

Damien smirked maliciously at her. "You are so graceful and sweet looking, but deep down you're disturbing and cruel. Just like the rabbit. We should make beautiful evil together. What do you say?"

"I couldn't think of anything more nefarious and sordid," Ruby muttered. "I shall accept, but enough of this rabbit nonsense."

Strangely Damien didn't get mad, instead he smirked, "you don't mean that."

"Maybe, maybe not. There's one way to find out," Ruby smiled, her other hand raised to show a piece of wire clenched inside it. The pair were closing in when there was a loud crunch. Ruby fell to the floor seconds later.

"What the?" Damien grumbled.

Annika's voice sighed, then giggled. "See, I'm evil too. Kiss me!"

"Eew!" Damien groaned. He double backed when he felt Annika's icy cold breath in front of his face. "That's it, I've had enough. What did you do with that device you stole you dumb broad. I need it to er... generate evilness."

"Yes it certainly did. Ever since you gave me it people have been noticing me less," Annika said with a pout. She giggled afterwards, "you are so naughty giving me that..."

"Where!?" Damien snapped.

Annika smiled sheepishly and pointed at the floor. She of course forgot that he couldn't see her. When he said nothing she realised. "Oh, I thought the slapper would want it instead so she got it. Hehe."

Damien almost cried, but he knew if he did Annika would just collect his tears to drink later or something equally gross. "I'll... just make a new one."

"You do know my Damy Wamy, that you're my hunky devil, my cutey petuty, my last boss in shining armour. Or something..." Annika cooed.

"Or... something?" Damien said slowly.

"It implies hesitance, that I'm captivated by your handsomeness. Wanna make out?" Annika giggled.

Damien eyed the nearby door. He wasn't taking any chances. He ran for it.

"Oh god, there's got to be some somewhere," Nathan said in a blind panic.

James glanced over. All he could see was the bottom half of him sticking out from an open cabinet under the bar. He turned back to Jessie, her face was red and grimacing. James gently wiped the sweat from her brow with one hand, the other was too busy being crushed by both of Jessie's.

"It's Deck Thirteen and a bar, you'd think there'd be one," Nathan continued to panic.

Jessie sighed loudly, but to him it sounded like a long drawn out growl. "It's not going to be with the alcohol you know!"

"Ow," Nathan grunted as his hand brushed against broken glass for the tenth time. James rolled his eyes as a result.

"Try the other one," he suggested as the grip on his hand relaxed a little. Just in time, the part of it not being held was starting to get numb.

Nathan dragged himself out of the cabinet quickly, that made him bump his head on the frame. "Okay, we really need to find that med kit," he moaned as he checked to see if his skull was as flat as it felt.

"Yes, now we do," Jessie grumbled, her eyes flashing dangerously.

"So that's ten minutes," James said, he got a glare immediately. "I think."

"More like ten bloody seconds," she groaned.

Nathan opened another similar cabinet. He was attacked by falling bar equipment. Luckily he was sitting on his legs and not on his hands and knees like before. "Got to be in here."

"If there's no painkillers in there I'm going to use him for pain relief," Jessie muttered.

"I didn't work here, it's not my fault," Nathan complained.

"Maybe I should go to get that warlock after all. We can force him to get the shield down and..." James said.

Jessie's eyes widened in a panic, "no, no! I don't want that git anywhere near me when I'm doing this. It's fine."

Nathan's hand investigated the cabinet carefully. At least this time there wasn't any glass to rudely poke at him. His hand landed on the edge of a box. A smile grew on his face as he went to pull it out. He didn't want to say anything in case he was wrong, his head turned to quickly check if the pair had noticed him do this. They hadn't. Quietly he opened the box, relief flooded over him.

"Found it," he announced.

"Oh good. Any pain killers in there?" James questioned.

Nathan hurried over while rummaging through the box. What felt like hyposprays got his attention, he grabbed those and handed them over to James. He meanwhile picked up the flashlight to get a better look at them. Nathan saw a nod come from him, once more he was relieved.

To Jessie there really wasn't much difference one she was injected with one. She wasn't sure if it was that or the pain itself that made her feel drained all of a sudden. Her eyes were heavy so she allowed them to close. Unfortunately the pain kept her conscious so she could still hear everything going on.

"Did you find anything that can be used as blankets?"

There was a brief silence, followed by someone rummaging around nearby. "Just a... erm, I think it's a cloth to wash the bar with." There was a sigh. "I wasn't looking. I'll check."

"It's probably a long shot, it is a bar after all."

The rummaging continued. "It should be with the med kit. Emergency supplies and all."

She heard and felt a small sigh just beside her. "Jess, you..."

"Fine," she answered. Her voice sounded tired as well.

It was quiet, except for light bumps in the background. There was a louder one immediately followed by another *ow*.

"Do you want me to..." James' voice started to ask.

"No, no!" Nathan's protested. "I think I found something." Footsteps hurriedly approached.

Even though her eyes were shut, her point of view seemed to be getting darker somehow. The air around her sharpened, and grew colder. She no longer could feel James holding her or clutching her hand. The wall behind her even felt like it had vanished. Her eyes tried to open but nothing seemed to change. Panic started to set in. Had something happened? Had she died again? The panic turned into anger. No, she wasn't going to let that happen again.

The darkness in front of her appeared to swirl, distort randomly. It was now so cold her hands and cheeks were beginning to ache. At least now she was convinced she wasn't dead again. Something else was happening. The dark in front of her wasn't constant, a shape was forming. A man's face. He smiled at her. The shape grew bigger and quickly, almost like it was lunging straight for her.

A sharp pain in her abdomen dragged her away from it, she cried out. When her eyes opened this time all she could make out were James and Nathan's worried faces. Now that they were back the feelings she had before began to fade, they were no longer real. She was no longer freezing or alone, quite the opposite. The pain ripping through her ruined any relief she was feeling at that.

"That wasn't ten minutes," Nathan said as the pain started to ease a little. He attempted to put what felt like a blanket around her torso. That was the last thing she wanted right now. Now that the dream sensation was gone her whole body felt like it was burning up. James noticed her discomfort and quickly took it away.

"That's not why I asked for it," he said.

Nathan's bottom lip stuck out briefly, he winced slightly. "Sorry, of course."

"It's okay, really," James said with a sigh at the end. The blanket was draped across her lap and the top half of her legs instead. "What was the time anyway?"

Nathan looked down to a tricorder now in his hands. "Six and a bit."

"Ugh, at least this one's in a hurry to get out," Jessie groaned. The sharp pain had gone, but as always it had left a throbbing pain behind as a *nice* reminder of it. "What am I saying, only Sasha wasn't."

"I was hoping the power would come back," Nathan muttered. Jessie scowled at him, James just gave him a blank stare. He glanced between them nervously. "Well one of us is going to have to deliver this kid. That much is obvious. I don't know what to do, do you?" Despite saying that to James, he ended up looking at Jessie.

"Don't look at me. I'm usually dead or unconscious, or someone else is doing it!" she snapped.

James looked even more worried than before. "All I know is that someone pulls, while the mother pushes. I don't tend to watch."

Nathan's eyes widened, "pull... oh dear god. I'm not doing that."

Jessie thought about punching him, but she was too tired to lift her arm up for now. "Oh, it must be so nice to have a bloody choice. Men don't know how easy they have it."

"Well if it's that hard, why get preg..." Nathan stuttered. He shuffled backwards on his knees as Jessie's arm started to move. "Sorry, meant to think that." Instead he got a kick in the kneecap.

"You'll probably have to do it. I can't," James said as if he didn't notice all of that.

Nathan rubbed his now sore knee. "Me? I'm her brother, won't she find that weird."

"Weird is better than me worrying about pulling too hard," James said.

"Then don't, just get ready to catch," Nathan said, hopefully not seriously.

Jessie rolled her eyes as she glanced between the two. "Not that I'm super eager to have either of you looking at me down there, but both of you fighting over who gets to not do it? I think I may share the pain, if you know what I mean!"

Nathan laughed nervously and pointed at James, "it's his fault, kick him."

James groaned despite how nervous he was. "That's not why... I'm worried I'll harm our baby, you're just being a... well a baby."

"Also, why would you be weird about your husband delivering your kid? Surely he knows erm, what to expect," Nathan said as carefully as he could. He still got a kick in the face. James cringed as he fell onto his back.

"You're lucky my other leg hurts, I can't reach..." Jessie muttered, she proved it by moving her leg to try and kick him. She barely nudged him in the leg with it. "You won't hurt it. You can control your strength, we both know this. You were afraid you wouldn't be able to hold your kid's hands or even

carry them, but you did it. So stop being so..." Another pain shot through her, she squeezed his hand a little too hard. "Silly... god, I'm trying to talk here!" she screamed at her belly.

Nathan rubbed his nose as he pulled himself back onto his knees. "Yeah, still weird."

Once the latest contraction was over James sighed and looked to the floor. "Sorry, you're right."

Jessie pouted slightly, "just don't get put off me, okay."

"Oh, not so weird," Nathan said aloud when he didn't mean to. The couple stared at him again. "Nothing to worry about, it's dark. No one's seeing anything." He quickly checked his tricorder. Once he did he scrambled to his feet.

"Where do you think you're going?" Jessie snapped.

Nathan gave her a nervous smile. "Four minutes. Maybe I should give you guys some privacy."

Jessie shook her head, her eyes widened in fear as she glanced between the two. "He's going to be delivering, that means no one's going to be sitting with me?"

Nathan's shoulders fell, a guilty look appeared on his face. "No, of course not. I just thought you'd want me scarce while you get ready."

"Oh, yeah I'm all for that. I wasn't eager to do a strip act in front of you either," Jessie said bluntly, her sad face and voice instantly gone. It took Nathan by surprise, and James as well who just laughed briefly. "What?" she asked innocently.

"I'll be right back," Nathan pointed to the other side of the bar. He quickly hurried away so he was out of sight.

### **The Conference Room:**

Two torches sat at the front of the table, both of which pointed at a large piece of paper so it could be seen. The few Bridge crewmembers huddled around it as close as possible. Harry had just finished scribbling on it with a couple of children's crayons. Before anyone could make heads or tails out of his awful crayonmanship he dragged it away to sit it on the chair normally reserved for the Captain. Now only the people closer to the front could see the middle of it.

"Ahem," Ian coughed and pointed.

Harry quickly adjusted the flashlights to compensate. The only thing anybody could make out where badly drawn circles.

"I see you learned how to draw from Tom," Chakotay said. "Or his one year old daughter."

"It's not a drawing, it's a chart," Harry grumbled. Danny and Ian giggled quietly behind their hands. Not noticing that he pointed at the first circle on the paper. "The Softmicron attacks Voyager with a beam." His hand moved to the second circle, following a line he drew. "The beam drains our power." Then to another circle. "The power allows a door to open..."

"You don't have to simplify it for Naomi you know, you probably lost her at chart," Chakotay pointed out.

"Fine, a portal to our demonic counterpart opens. Or at the very least it opens a portal to somewhere demonic," Harry continued. He moved to a circle directly underneath the last one. "B'Elanna's new forcefield system activates." Chakotay rolled his eyes as he accidentally pointed at the previous circle by mistake, then went to the one to the left. "This shield in turn drains the portal's energy." The last circle was underneath the first one, not accurately though. Like the others it had a line coming from it as well as going to it, it joined up with the first one. "The portal has little power to keep itself open. It closes."

"Then why does it loop round to the beginning?" Ian asked.

Chakotay couldn't help but smirk. Harry started to flush a little. He looked at his diagram closely. "Oh, there should be another one in here." He quickly drew a rough circle in the middle of the line. "The Soft attacks continue, allowing the forcefield's area of cover to grow and..." He scowled at the new circle, scribbled on it and hovered the crayon on one of the earlier circles.

"Doesn't matter, Harry. How does any of that cause a blackout?" Chakotay questioned.

Harry smiled thankfully. The paper was flipped over to show a different "chart". Most of the room groaned even though it did look smaller than the last one. Once again he started at the top left. "The forcefield system is tricked into thinking a portal has opened." Another circle. "Forcefield goes up but there's no portal to draw power from." Yet another. "Instead it takes power from Voyager itself." One more. "Finally the ship only has enough power to generate the forcefield."

Danny pulled a confused face, she wasn't the only one. "What?"

Harry groaned impatiently. "Really? I couldn't put it any simpler than this. How can you not get it?"

"What's that bubble for?" Naomi asked.

Everyone else but Harry snorted into quiet laughter, Harry just lost faith in humanity and collapsed into the chair holding his chart.

"I don't wanna encourage further diagrams, but there's a lot missing," Danny said.

"Of course, if I'd solved the whole thing we'd have fixed it by now," Harry snapped.

Ian smirked and nodded slightly. "You mean like motive, point and why the power went off suddenly, not gradually. Yeah."

"It wasn't gradual, was it? We've been having trouble for a while," Chakotay said.

Harry sighed in relief, "yes, thank you. I don't know why someone or thing would do this, but that's what they did."

"Are you sure? Maybe it's a different kind of portal immune to draining," Danny said with an innocent smile.

"I'm sure!" Harry groaned.

Danny laughed and gave him a wink, "keep your undies on Harry, just saying."

"Before the last torch gave out, I found the usual alert system's coding had been changed. Why do that if there's a portal?" Harry said.

Chakotay climbed out of his chair to walk over towards the window. With his back turned on everyone he said, "is the independent systems still unaffected?"

Harry looked over his shoulder at him, "we're still breathing, so I assume it's the same." He gave him a frown while swivelling the chair around, "we have no guarantee that the forcefield won't drain anything we transfer to the Bridge. In fact there's a good chance it will. That's why I was looking at the counter forcefield system in the first place."

"You've found out a lot with just torches powering one station. We may not have it for long, but it may give us enough time to figure out a solution," Chakotay said.

"It's better than nothing I guess. I'll have to go down to the Holodecks themselves to do it, and as we don't know what's done this, I shouldn't go on my own," Harry said.



Chakotay smiled, "take Danny." Harry's face turned pale. "Or Naomi, it's up to you. We'll need Ian to do the transfer on this end."

"I'll take Danny," Harry said, immediately regretting it.

"You can try, but could you handle me?" Danny teased and winked. Ian rolled his eyes.

Harry shuddered, his already pale face managed to get whiter. "Naomi. I pick Naomi."

He wasn't sure if that was any better. The girl's eyes widened in wonder as she pointed towards him. "Dear god, that's a good charity thing. It talks."

"I'm not sure if we should be laughing at her or getting her checked for brain damage," Chakotay groaned. Ian sniggered anyway.

### **Deck Thirteen:**

Nathan was starting to regret *volunteering* for hand holding duty, he could no longer feel his right one after a crack or two. He had tried to loosen the pressure on that one by supplying his left hand as well, no such luck. He tried not to complain about it. The elbow in his eye taught him that the hard way.

The whole ordeal felt like it had been going on for hours when it hadn't. At first Jessie had tried to stifle any screams in fear that the warlock would hear them, but it was too hard for her to keep up. Nathan would wonder how she could manage it at all, the pain in his hand made him want to yell out, instead he kept his bottom lip tucked between his teeth to avoid it.

"God, isn't it over yet?" she cried.

"Well maybe if you were told to push," Nathan said in a tone that he hoped Jessie would recognise as not serious. At the very least he hoped it would distract her from the whole ordeal for a second to glare at him.

"A punch... sounds more fun," Jessie stuttered in between painful gasps.

Nathan laughed nervously, he had a feeling that wouldn't work. The punch though would, so he prepared to get that.

A few more minutes that felt like hours passed before they heard the hopeful sentence from James, "one more... I think."

"Ugh, if you're wrong... you're in a good spot to be kicked," Jessie complained.

Nathan winced, "ooph, yeah."

James hoped he wasn't, though he wasn't the only one.

A tiny cry told everyone he wasn't wrong. The mood of the room changed immediately. Nathan looked relieved as the grip on his hand finally loosened, though he noticed Jessie didn't relax as soon as it was over. That worried him.

"Nathan," James called him over. Jessie did tense a little, but Nathan noticed his voice wasn't panicked or anything that would indicate something was wrong. He gave his sister a smile before shuffling over towards him. In the dark he couldn't see much of anything. The flashlight had barely any life left in it, it had been left beside Jessie and it was currently barely lighting up her right shoulder and a bit of the wall beside it. He could just make out James and the flickering lights of the tricorder. That seemed to be shoved over to him, so he picked it up.

As soon as he hovered the smaller part of the device towards him, the light from it picked up a slight bit of movement. He tried to focus on the tricorder, that was top priority. The readings he got made him smile and so he gave James a nod that he hoped he saw.

"Well?" Jessie asked in a worried voice.

James got to his feet to walk the couple of steps over to her side, then sat down next to her. She felt a warm bundle being gently placed into her arms. Immediately she felt it move on its own. "She's perfectly fine," he told her.

A smile spread across her face, she looked down hoping to see anything. The torch light barely even touched her arm let alone the contents of it. She then felt James' arm go around her shoulders.

Nathan reached out to grab the failing light, then shuffled over to Jessie's other side. He debated silently how he could help her see without shining it anyone's faces.

"Well, that's two more boys we gotta make," Jessie said as seriously as she could manage.

James laughed nervously, hoping she was joking. Nathan froze on the spot with his eyes wide.

"That was too easy," Jessie had to giggle at their response.

Nathan finally moved, the first thing he did was laugh hesitantly. "And here I thought the only issue was that James here is the father of three daughters. I feel sorry for the males of this generation."

James nodded while trying to resist a smirk. He let it happen anyway, no one would see it. "Yeah, that is a *shame*."

"Pass me the round one, please," Harry said as he worked in the panel beside the Holodeck door. Something touched his hand, so he grabbed it and attempted to use it on the panel. Only it was just a tricorder. He turned around on his knees to stare at his team mate with a blank stare. "I said round."

"Yep," Naomi smiled at him.

Harry sighed, he pointed at the tool kit nearby. "The other round one."

Naomi shrugged and picked up something else from it. This time it was a device that looked like a mini phaser.

"How... how are you not understanding me? The round device," Harry stuttered.

"It is round. Everything's round," Naomi said.

"I think Chakotay's right about you," Harry muttered. Of course that made the girl confused. "The one that looks like that circle picture I drew, okay?"

Naomi laughed and blushed in embarrassment. "Oh right! Silly me."

Harry wondered what device she'd pick up this time. After some rummaging around she found something and handed it to him. He looked down at it, it wasn't even curved let alone a circle shape. In fact it was just a cube shaped little thing. "What, I don't even know what this is."

"It's my coloured lunch box. I can't get it open," Naomi replied.

Harry squinted at the tiny cube no bigger than his hand. In the dark it looked like a rubix cube. He hoped he was wrong. He put it down and went to get the tool himself, all the while staring at the stupid girl standing next to him. "After this, we're going to Sickbay."

"Why is it sick?" Naomi asked.

Harry's eyes shut tightly, only briefly as he was trying to work. "I really hope there was a comma between why and is, and you meant to say something else but it or are for that matter."

Naomi stared blankly, her eyes drifted to the left.

"Okay, here we go," Harry said to himself and quietly to avoid confusing her further. One click and the console started to buzz. He smiled.

### **The Bridge:**

Everyone glanced up as the lights normally reserved for the alert ones activated, only they were a white-ish blue. A few consoles started to flicker on and off. The primary ones stayed on but they were dimmer than usual.

"Emergency lighting online, we've got partial operations," Ian said from the Engineering station.

Chakotay smiled as well, "good. Let's find out what's causing this before we lose independent power too." He turned to Danny at Opps. "See if you can get a message to Enterprise. I don't care if it's just one word, and not one of your words, or a little beep. I want their attention."

"That might be tricky but I'll try," Danny said.

"Maybe not, it doesn't look like the power is draining," Ian said while he tapped at the station. He pulled a confused face, "that is weird. It drained the torches, so why not? You'd think whatever's doing this would be lapping it up." Danny giggled. "That's not even rude, Dan."

Chakotay chose to ignore her, "keep an eye on it. The minute something strange happens, I want to know about it."

The Thirteen Forward bar now was lit up by a light blue haze from the ceiling just above it. The rest of the room still remained cloaked in darkness.

Nathan tapped the flashlight they had needed before in his hands, it no longer had enough energy to generate light on its own. James stood nearby, in between two of the lights so they weren't shining directly onto him, with the new baby in his arms. She looked nice and snug wrapped up in his jacket, completely oblivious to anything going on.

The pair heard footsteps approach, they turned their heads in that direction. The light eventually allowed them to see Jessie carefully walk through the gap leading into the bar. James stepped forward but she put her hand out to signal him to stop.

"It's not that bad now. After that, a twisted ankle's nothing," she said.

Nathan sighed impatiently, "I could have been the one to move, you know."

"I liked the idea of getting dressed in this..." she said in distaste, then glanced down at herself. Her focus seemed to be the large baggy trousers she was wearing now. "Junk, where no one could see me. I might even go back and sit there."

"I could go out again and see if I can find anything cute," Nathan teased her.

"As if you'd know what's cute," Jessie scoffed, though it was debatable whether she was serious or just teasing back.

Nathan shrugged casually, "I imagine pink, fluffy and skirt like thing would be cute."

James shook his head, "no, no..."

Jessie scowled at her brother, her eyes narrowed. "I'm sure that would look great on you, but I was the one who needed new bottoms."

"Great? I'd settle for amazing," Nathan smiled.

"Amazingly horrible, yeah," Jessie shuddered as the image popped into her head. She decided to sit down nearby to lean against the bar itself. "I hate pink, and fluffy. Yuck."

"And skirts," Nathan added.

James walked over to sit down next to Jessie. "Maybe we should change the subject before a certain someone gets hurt."

Nathan sniggered, "yeah, thanks."

Jessie raised her shoulders as she sighed deeply. "Do you think we should talk about the child from the future thing?"

James looked at her with a frown, as soon as he did it came to him what she was talking about. "Oh. Yeah probably."

Nathan was more than confused. "Say what now?"

Jessie sighed. "Remember months ago when the Krralef's were on the Leda, and there were vampires. Kinda."

"Vaguely," Nathan winced.

"The portal they came through lead to the future, that's where they came from," James said. "I met a girl who seemed to know me, a Slayer, that reminded me of Jess."

Jessie nodded grimly. "He didn't tell me that she was a girl until, well now, just in case. He thought that she was a kid we didn't have yet."

"She wasn't Amy or Sasha, so I..." James said.

Nathan thought he got what was going on, "ah right okay. Did it ever occur to you that she could be a grandkid?"

James stared at him blankly, then at Jessie who started to smirk. "No," he said.

"There you go, prob solved," Nathan smiled.

"So my grandkids will be Slayers too, wonderful," Jessie muttered.

James shook his head, "no, I don't think so. The Krralef were obsessed with that ritual we did, and that our kid or kids would save them. They seemed to think what happened counted. Craig and Harry knew more than they were letting on, they weren't exactly subtle."

"Yeah but if the girl you met was our daughter, why was she killing vampires?" Jessie asked.

"Runs in the family, family tradition, hobby?" Nathan answered meekly.

"Amy's already been picked. When we thought it was Sasha she didn't show any of the strength that Duncan did, or James had when he was little. Amy sure does," Jessie said. She then pointed an accusing finger at Nathan, "a hobby? Over my dead body again."

"Heh, yeah," Nathan chuckled nervously. "You must have known you weren't getting a boy then, cos of the whole Duncan definitely runs in daddy's footsteps and Slayers are boy/girl thing, huh."

"No," Jessie pulled a face that made him feel stupid for saying it. "Amy is strong too, weren't you listening? Also, there was no guarantee that the kid James met was the one I was pregnant with."

James looked very worried at this point, he leaned in closer to Jessie to whisper. "You're not serious about the keep trying for boys, even the ratio thing right?" She smirked and gave him a playful elbow nudge. That didn't ease his paranoia at all.

"So, grandkid, great grandkid..." Nathan said, trailing off. "She knew you, that maybe pushing it. Grandkid."

"Grandkid's pushing it as well," James said.

Nathan nodded, "well it seems like only Duncan's going to be able to hook up with anyone, so it's not that ridiculous." Jessie growled at him. "Oh right. Overprotectiveness is the family tradition."

"If we hide his body on this deck, it's a good chance no one will find him," Jessie whispered to James.

"Fine, fine. Is this the kid you saw or not, lets settle it," Nathan said nervously.

Jessie knew it was pointless, but she looked over at the sleeping bundle in James' arms. So did he. Then she looked up at him to watch his face. He then looked up and darted his head between the two. "Really? She's asleep, it's dark. All I got is that they're the same gender. Maybe we should just talk about it later."

"What was her name?" Jessie asked.

James looked at her, slightly amused. "Should I wake her up and ask?"

As he expected he got a narrowed eye stare. In the dark he wasn't sure if it was in jest or not. "Careful, the pain killers have long since ran out."

"Okay, but we don't know if this is her. Maybe we should hold off the name until then," James said.

"No harm in finding out the details though," Nathan said. "I know I'm pretty curious."

"Details?" James said with a slightly raised eyebrow.

Jessie smiled between the two, "knowing him he'll want to know what cute thing she was wearing, so he can copy her style. That's a universe ending paradox right there." Nathan laughed mockingly, then rolled his eyes. "Seriously, James isn't the only one with a murder rap sheet."

"Give and take sis, and I know," Nathan said. "So what did she look like, name, anything?"

James glanced at Jessie, she gave him a nod and smile. He turned his head back forward. "Her name was Roxanne."

"Aaw," Jessie sighed, James looked back at her. "I kinda like it," she pouted.

Nathan chuckled, "if the baby isn't her, now we're in for a universe ending paradox."

"Not necessarily. The girl may have gotten the name from our daughter, a fake name or an intentional *name her this* alias," Jessie said with a smile. "You never know. Not calling her that may cause problems, not the other way around."

James moved his left arm and adjusted his right so it was the only one supporting the baby, just so he could groan into his left hand. "I wish I had never mentioned this now."

"Go for broke then, can't back out now. Hair colour, eye colour, height. Heck does she have Jessie's fashion sense, cos why not?" Nathan sniggered.

"Please. All my girls will know how to dress properly," Jessie faked a scoff. "Duncan's too stubborn though, it's too late. He's got that from daddy."

"I dunno. Amy much preferred the outfit I picked out for her this morning," James said with a sneaky smile. Jessie's eyes widened a little. "She even threw that top you picked onto Sasha's bed."

"She did? But the white really brought out her eyes," Jessie pouted.

Nathan shook his head, "yeah cos that's what kids want."

"All right Mr wearing the same pants he's worn for three days," Jessie mocked him.

"They're comfortable," Nathan said innocently.

James shook his head and laughed a little, "just don't tell her if you throw them on the floor every night, she'll flip out."

"You still try to do that," Jessie said, her lips curling a little.

"It fell off the bed," James said.

Nathan tried to stop himself from laughing, "what did?"

"Everything it seems," Jessie laughed too.

James lightly shrugged, "not everything. Some things fall off the chair as well."

"You know, for a Slayer you have terrible aim. You should work on that before you kill someone," Nathan was still laughing.

James scoffed, "who says I haven't already?"

"I did wonder if you hid things under the piles of clothes. Now we know," Jessie giggled.

James was about to say something when a loud bang shook the nearby doors. The trio's laughter was ancient history now. Nathan slowly slid down the wall so he was sitting down. James shifted along the floor so he could peer around the edge of the bar, he could just make out the doors. Despite what they had heard he could see nothing abnormal about them.

It happened again. The doors opened barely a centimetre. The left side of it trembled, the whole door groaned.

James pointed at the wall a few metres to the left of Nathan. He looked across to see what he was getting at. One of the overhead lights shone on the outline of a hatch. Nathan frowned and glanced back, his head shook.

The doors parted even further. They looked open enough to let someone stroll in without any trouble. The three heard careful footsteps go through them.

James shook his head as well, he gestured his head backwards at the now open door. Nathan's face tightened, he gave him a small nod.

"Anything?" an unknown male voice called from outside.

There were further footsteps, they passed by where James and Jessie were. Nathan shrunk himself down as far as he could to avoid them seeing him, being out of the emergency light's beams helped with that.

"Dead end," a voice nearby muttered back. "They'd be stupid to hide in here."

"What's that?" a different voice asked. This one came from near the door. A beam of light struck the wall just above Nathan. He was lying sideways on the floor at this point. The light waved slightly, then moved away to the dark empty part of the room. "I'll be damned, they did put a bar on Deck Thirteen."

Jessie leaned over towards James briefly, their arms briefly brushed against each other. He looked over to see her gesturing for the baby. Nathan meanwhile had dragged his body over to their side as quickly and quietly as he could.

"They couldn't be anywhere else. The deck is tiny, the shield's still up," the first voice said in the same volume as the man's by the door.

James carefully handed the baby over to Jessie, she winced at every movement she made but to her relief she didn't wake up.

"They'll not be in plain sight. Lets try the Jeffries tubes again," the second man's voice said.

They heard further footsteps pass by behind them, despite their words they weren't heading for the exit. Jessie carefully moved around so her right side was scrunched up as much as possible against the bar. To avoid kicking Nathan while she did this, her knees bunched up as well. Her ankle reminded her it was injured with a shot of pain up her leg, she bit her bottom lip to avoid making any noise. Something rattled behind them. James looked up to check if he could see anything. Nothing. They either didn't know they were there or were waiting for them to expose themselves.

What sounded like metal being slammed into a hard floor rang around the room. Jessie felt the bundle in her arms twitch, she glanced down and could just make out the infant's eyes opening. At the tip of her own she saw Nathan's worried stare fixating on them both. Another similar clatter made the girl's face scrunch up, a cry escaped her lips. The two men tensed up at the sound. Jessie brought the baby closer to her chest and lowered her own head, hoping the closeness would soothe her. A tiny hand reached up, clutching her chin and bits of her hair. It worked, but the damage was done.

James gave Nathan a look he'd seen before, a one months ago he'd used when telling him and Craig to run away and leave him behind. He didn't really have time to argue with him this time. A second or two later he had leapt to his feet and hurled himself over the bar. The usual sounds of fists hitting body parts, and bodies hitting floors soon followed.

Nathan hurried over to the other side again, he aimed for the hatch that was pointed out before. Once it was open, revealing a Jeffries tube, he looked behind him, assuming that Jessie would be ready to follow him inside. Only she wasn't. For some reason she was still in the same spot as before, frozen in what he thought was fear.

"Jess, come on," he whispered as loudly as possible.

"Something... coming," she stuttered.

Nathan was confused, he was about to ask when the fighting sounds seemed to grind to a halt. All he could hear now were gradual footsteps and a light clapping. He leaned his body to the right to see around the bar. All he could see there was a man standing by the door, clapping his hands once every five seconds.

James turned around while still holding one man by the scruff of his shirt, his other hand ready to punch. His eyes were a little wider than usual. The air had gotten a few degrees colder, it even felt like a cool breeze was blowing in from the door. Something inside of him was telling him to be careful. He didn't understand why, the man standing at the door appeared to be the one hit by the fireball. It should have killed him, it did. How on earth was he standing there?

The man clapped one more time. "Doing what you do best, I see." James noticed his voice seemed colder than before, sharper. "You're nothing but a bully picking on the weak."

"You attacked us," James reminded him.

The man smiled, though most of his face was hidden in the shadows. "Now you know why. Mutants such as yourself should be exterminated like the filth they are." He stepped forward, allowing one of the nearby emergency lights to shine on him. A part of his face was still dark though. James now knew why all of his senses were telling him to be concerned, the man's eyes were a hollow black.

Nathan crawled over to where Jessie was, concern etched into his face. "What? What's wrong?"

Jessie had a lump in her throat, it was difficult to swallow. Goosebumps covered her body, the cold air was starting to make her bare skin ache. "He's..." she tried to say through the lump.

"You're evil," James said mostly in disbelief. He dropped the man he was holding to the floor. In the corner of his eye he noticed the still conscious men behind him were backing away. "How? You couldn't, you weren't even dead long enough for a resu..."

The man laughed coldly. "Unlike you, witches and warlocks do not have to rely on pure anger or death to unlock their full potential. All we need is a key. The death you speak of, merely a set back." James shook his head, his mouth opened to speak. "I don't expect you to understand. Your kind rely on brute force, ours is a power of the mind."

"You were going to share it," one of the men stammered from his left.

"With you, hardly. None of you have any natural power," the man said in an amused voice.

James wasn't sure what was going on, but one look back at the other men told him they weren't fully clued in either. Some even looked afraid and not of him, but their own leader. He had good reason to be afraid as well, but he needed to stall him.

"Fine, I was really the one you wanted dead. Why don't we be clear from now on," he said once his head had turned back.

"Who said I didn't want the witch? She's filth too from rolling in the mud," the man sneered.

James shook his head, "but why? She's..." The man lifted his left arm up to hip level, James tensed. The arm did a light swipe to the right like he was swatting a fly away. There was a loud groan to James' right, metal tore itself apart. He turned his head quickly just in time to see nothing but a wave of metal fly towards him.

The man just laughed quietly as the entire room was overtaken by dust and powdered debris. He turned his attention to the left wall where the bar used to be, directly at where Jessie and Nathan were sitting earlier. The dust settled directly in his line of sight and no where else, yet he couldn't see anything but the wall. His face stiffened in anger. That soon faded as he heard the sound of a baby cry, which echoed from a confined space.

"Oh... oh god," Nathan stuttered as quietly as he could. All he could see was dust ahead of him. It was starting to creep its way into the dark Jeffries tube. He reached for the hatch door to seal them off from it, but he was pulled back by his sleeve. Startled he glanced back at his sister to find her almost on his lap. He barely had time to say anything when she tried to hand her crying baby to him. The panicked look on her face gave him an idea what she was doing. His arm flew out to block her path to the hatch. "No, no."

"He needs my help, Nath. He could be..." Jessie stuttered. She once again tried to force her baby on him, her entire weight now on his legs.

"Oh, no, no way!" Nathan stammered. His arm stretched out to close the hatch again, she couldn't stop it without letting go of her baby. All she could safely do was give him a punch in the shoulder, not a hard one either. Once the door was closed he tried to push her backwards so she was off his lap, but she struggled against that. While all this was going on the baby shrieked in obvious fear. "Jessie, stop..."

"You don't understand Nathan, he'll die," Jessie almost cried herself, the panic on her face was making him feel the same.



"Jess, we need to get away. Think of your daughter," Nathan said as softly as he could.

"I am," Jessie said sternly, again trying to force the baby onto him. "You take her, I'll..."

"Die," Nathan butted in.

Jessie shook her head, "I can't run away like a... like I'm a useless little girl. I can't leave him. Just please, take her and keep her safe."

"No," Nathan said. He stared at her to tell her he was deadly serious. She gave him a similar stare back. "If you're right and he has or will take out James, then we need to regroup somewhere else. If possible find somewhere to secure her safely, someone to help. All you'll do is run right into his hands."

Jessie's shoulders fell, she looked down at the terrified baby in her arms. The guilt washed over her. She gave Nathan a timid nod. "You're right." She began to move off, holding the baby with her right arm and her left pulling her along the tube.

Nathan stared down at the metal floor, a sense of dread tugged at him. "I'm sorry Debs, forgive me." He followed.

### **Engineering:**

The emergency lights and a few consoles being on had lowered the tension somewhat, however everyone was still darting around trying to find a solution. B'Elanna remained at one particular computer which showed a schematic of Voyager on its screen. Her finger hovered along the line where Deck Thirteen was, in the end she tapped it. "Why, why go off now? I don't understand it."

One crewmember hurried over to her side. "Should we go back down to investigate, Lieutenant?"

"No. That power had to go somewhere, and once I figure out what it is..." she answered. The ground trembled at their feet, everybody stopped what they were doing and clung onto something if they could. It only happened for a few seconds but it disturbed everyone for far longer. B'Elanna straightened up to stare at everyone, her eyes wide. "What now?"

The Engineering crew hurried to their nearest console, whether it was on or not. B'Elanna turned back to hers. One tap to the schematic enlarged the image. The line she had ran her finger over was now flashing red. "Internal hull breach between Deck Thirteen and Fourteen." Everyone froze. "There are lifesign readings there. I can't risk sending anybody when I don't know what did this." Her hand slammed on the console.

"Lieutenant," a nearby crewmember said. Her head swung around quickly. "I've figured out where the algorithm to fool the forcefield was inputted."

"Let me guess, Thirteen?" B'Elanna said.

The crewmember shook their head timidly. "Right here," he pointed at the station he was at. B'Elanna hurried over to him.

*"What are you doing? I didn't tell you to mess with that!"*

*She got a horrified look in exchange, he started to stutter. "Lieutenant? I was just..."*

*"You can't take power from the anti-portal system. First of all there needs to be a portal opening, and second it's definitely not compatible with our warp core," B'Elanna snapped harshly.*

*The crewmember was confused and terrified. "No. I went to help with the power transfer and I came back to find it like this." As he was talking somebody walked by the two of them, then stopped when he overheard. "I'm trying to stop it but I'm not familiar with the system."*

*B'Elanna sighed irritably. "Fine, let me."*

*"Lieutenant," the man butted in. "I can do it, they need your help with the plasma manifolds."*

*"Not again," B'Elanna grunted before stomping off.*

"Matteo," she said once her flashback ended.

The crewmember's eyes widened. "Matteo? But I thought he was the one that reported it in the first place. This isn't even his station, it's Jackson's."

"Only because Jackson returned early and found it," B'Elanna said, confusing him further. "Matteo came over just in time to fix the problem. Also despite the fact I told everyone to work overtime until this power issue was solved, I haven't seen him since he reported the so called bug."

"But why, why would one of our own do this?" the crewmember asked, not quite believing it.

The dust started to settle in Thirteen Forward, or what was left of it. The same man from the flashback leered around it with his black eyes, looking for something. The bar that used to sit securely into the floor was no longer there, in its place a charred scar which ran deep through to the below deck. Metal debris littered the rest of the room. Bodies lay mostly motionless amongst it. His eyes darted towards movement. One of his men, covered in deep scratches tried in vain to push a large piece of metal from half of his body. When he noticed he was being watched, he froze in fear.

His attention turned towards the wall. The cries he had heard were starting to fade away. Then he noticed the outlines of a Jeffries tube hatch. He made his way over to it, not caring that a body crushed by debris lay in his path. The sound of him putting his entire weight onto it even made him smirk.

Behind him a smaller piece of metal moved slightly. It lifted a little.

Another crunch of metal. It didn't matter, he was there. His hand caressed the Jeffries tube door.

He was seemingly unaware that someone slowly approached from behind. They carried one of the larger pieces of debris and began to lift it up to one side. It swung around to hit him. His spare hand casually raised chest high. It stopped the metal at the last second, barely an inch from his head. He casually swiped his hand over his shoulder. The attacker felt something push him backwards, he struggled against it but it was futile. He landed harshly on his back on the other side of the room.

"I knew that wouldn't kill you. Just get you out of the way for now," Matteo said with a smirk.

James pushed himself back onto his feet. Cuts covered his skin, which were tainted with red swollen patches. Once he had straightened up he found Matteo standing directly before him with a metre between them, staring straight into his eyes. Matteo's right hand lunged outward. James immediately felt something squeeze his throat. The hand curled slowly, the hold on his throat tightened.

"But why put off what you can do now?" he laughed. His hand raised, James felt his feet leave the ground.

Jessie stared sullenly at the floor while Nathan remained on the ladder, his foot continuously poking the nothing below him. He had a puzzled look on his face.

"I swear, the shield was there before," he finally said after the twentieth poke.

Jessie's stare didn't waver. "He probably took it."

Nathan nodded, then he pulled a confused face and turned as far as he could on the ladder. "Took who and what now?"

"When a witch or warlock has too much power they lose control. Once they have a taste of it they'll try to take more wherever they can," Jessie said quietly.

Nathan climbed off the ladder to join her, his face still showed how confused he was. "I thought the shield was made by the warlocks to trap us."

"Probably, but he doesn't need it now," Jessie muttered.

"Oh," Nathan sighed as he sat down beside her. "You would know better than anyone, huh?"

Jessie's eyes tightly shut. She felt the lump in her throat growing a second one, at least it felt that way. "I attacked both James and Lena when I was like this. I was still very much me though, at the core, and in my twisted mind I just wanted to toy with him. He..." Her head shook quickly. "I didn't want to kill him. This warlock will not care."

"I hate to rain on the parade but they wanted you first," Nathan said warily.

"It doesn't matter. When it first happened to me I killed everything in sight, regardless of what they were doing. The power channeling through you, you lose yourself," Jessie mumbled. Now she was staring straight ahead of her. "The time I attacked James, it was mostly out of grief and I'd already taken it out on the people responsible for it. I already had more power than I should have had, maybe cos I was used to it by that time... I dunno, I really don't know," she ended her sentence with a bitter laugh.

"He'll eventually run out right? Wear himself down," Nathan questioned. Jessie shook her head. "Really?"

"Unless another witch actually tries to drain it then no, the power is always there," she answered.

"Wait, was that what you were going to do back there?" Nathan asked fearfully.

Jessie's shoulders fell slightly. "I don't even know how. Maybe one of my books has the spell in it." Nathan watched her try to get back up, noticing the pain on her face as she did. "I don't think I could handle it, I may turn as well. I have to try though." She had no spare arm to help pull herself up, the pain forced her back down, annoying her greatly.

"I wonder, did he boost up on Voyager itself?" Nathan mumbled. Jessie looked at him. "Is that even possible?"

"I doubt it. The blackout happened before he turned," she said. Though the look on her face told him that she was still thinking about that possibility.

"How did it happen to you?" Nathan asked.

Jessie tried to get up again. She grit her teeth to bare the pain. Nathan decided to get up to help her, even though he had no idea where she was going to go.

"Jess?" he said once they were both up.

She sighed impatiently. "I thought you knew. One of your opening lines from when we met were *hey you were evil, that's cool.*"

"No, not really," Nathan said honestly.

"I'm not sure on the details. I died, I was resurrected by some ritual spell thing, and when I awoke all of my power woke up too," Jessie replied begrudgingly. Her hand grasped the nearby ladder. "Come on, enough chatting."

"His own minion killed him. Wait, I thought you'd turn evil if you did that power drain thingy," Nathan said in a worried voice.

Jessie swung around, even though it hurt her to do it, the look on her face made Nathan shrivel up a bit. "Then what do we do then, huh? Do you think when he's killed James..." her voice stung a bit, she took in a brief breath. "That he'll stop there? I don't know what he did in that room, but it didn't look like he spared his own people. Why will he care about anyone else on this ship, or any other ship, planet for that matter?"

"Well... if you turn we won't be that much better off. There has to be another way," Nathan stuttered.

"The conduit for the power drain has to be a witch, I'm sure. I really don't want to give it to an invisible Annika. Let's go," Jessie said. She started to climb up as quick as she could with her sore leg. Nathan sighed as he stepped forward to follow her.

His arms were covered in much deeper cuts than before, one of them bled more than the others. James grabbed the wound as tightly as he could, all the while trying to use the wounded arm's hand to push himself up from the floor. It trembled to tell him it was too weak to do it, he still tried anyway. It was more than just his arms, his whole body felt like it was ripped to shreds. His clothes were soaked with his own blood.

Matteo laughed at his attempts to get up. He waited for him to get onto his knees. His hand did a casual little wave, a spark flew from it and charged towards James. He quickly rolled out of its way. Even though it missed Matteo's laughter continued.

"Was she worth it?" he asked. He walked by his victim, just out of arms reach. "If only you knew," he laughed darkly. His body swung around to stare down at him. "She was always going to be your downfall, one way or another. I must admit, I prefer this way."

James discreetly reached for a nearby piece of debris, only a small piece but it was sharp enough. He held onto it for now.

"Now thanks to you, I'm all warmed up. So many violent ideas swimming in my head," Matteo cackled. He turned to one side and leered at the Jeffries tube hatch. "The whore won't have gotten far."

The piece of debris flew right at his head. It almost pierced his skull, but it stopped at the very last millimetre. To James it looked like all it did was poke him in the head, his shoulders slumped, he breathed out raggedly. Unknown to his warlock opponent, every attempt to get any kind of advantage but was thwarted built up his anger towards bursting point.

"Hmm, that's not nice," Matteo taunted. This time he didn't make any gesture. The debris flew backwards, aiming directly for James' chest. He tried to catch it with his better hand, only for it to slice straight through his palm and still puncture its target. The pain shot right through to his back, everytime his heart thumped it would sharpen further. His bloodied hand shakily went to grab the object without really thinking. When he did think his hand fell from it, leaving it sticking in his chest.

The warlock stood before him, his body leaned roughly to one side to almost a perfect right angle. The look on his face was degradingly sympathetic, insulting. "Aaaw, you never give up do you?" The pain started to dull, the anger was taking over. James wanted to return everything he did to him, but everytime he tried to fight back... "You see, that's the problem with you Slayers." ... was thrown right back at him. "So called guardians of all that is good, but yet..." He needed to get close, that was the problem. "... you are powerless to those with actual power."

James made another attempt to get to his feet. This time Matteo watched and let him, smirking at every painful move he made. Blood dripped from so many wounds onto the carpet. He kept one of his hands tightly gripped around the deeper arm wound. His opponent found his sorry state very funny, as well as James' resulting glare directed at him.

As soon as he was finally standing Matteo raised his palm. Nothing seemed to happen. James thought that maybe his powers had begun to drain, so he thought now was the time to attack. Only his legs didn't move, they remained frozen on the spot.

"You're nothing but a brute, punching and killing his way through every problem," Matteo continued his speech. "You're like those jock brats picking on the smart kids. Sure you're popular, loved during your school years. But when the real world hits you, you're a nobody. The smart kids prosper, they do meaningful things with their lives, while you stay the same."

James tried to clench one of his fists but even that was stiff and unresponsive. "Enough..." he mumbled through an also stiff jaw. His fingers moved only slightly. "Of this crap."

"If you're the intended hero of the piece then make me stop," Matteo taunted him. His eyes widened mockingly, "oh, you can't cos I'm not close enough."

"I can't, because you're a coward," James managed to mutter. Matteo's smirk twitched slightly. "You had to get juiced up to face me. What does that say about you?"

"You're ignorant. The power was within me all along, I am far, far better than..." Matteo hissed back.

James noticed some feeling in his legs return gradually, as well as his hand. "Yet I threw you and your friends around like trash. You knew you were weak, that's why you did this."

Matteo's black eyes seemed to flash. His hand swung out in front of him. James quickly threw himself to the floor, just in time as the spot he stood in before went up in flames. Matteo snarled as he re-aimed. "Talk all you want. You can't defeat me." James narrowly dodged a similar magic attack, however he landed on his wounded arm. His nearby chest wound throbbed as if it didn't want to be left out.

Despite the pain he was enduring, he rolled out of the way of another blast. Every attack the warlock made set fire to a different spot. He knew that the next one would force him to dodge into another fire. That was only one of many worries, the smoke rising from the fires was starting to obscure his already limited sight and made it harder to breathe.

He didn't wait for another attack, he hoped the smoke was affecting his opponent's sight as well, so he walked away only a few steps. He could just make out Matteo's figure in the smoke. His foot crunched against some debris lying on the ground. He looked down, it had cracked in two from his weight.

"You will never get close enough to hurt me. My mind is my weapon..." Matteo sneered in fury.

"Mind," James gasped in between a painful breath. The rubble by his feet was still his focus. There was so much of it, it was scattered all over. That wasn't it though. When they had arrived the furniture looked like it had rolled into the corner, probably during the crash. Metal tables, chairs, broken glass. He concentrated on it, imagining all of it being smashed against the smug warlock's body. His head throbbed the more he thought about it.

"Yours cannot help you here," Matteo said. Something rumbled behind him. He was confused, he hadn't done it. His body turned around. All he could see was smoke, yet the rumbling was getting louder. He didn't see anything strange until it was right in his face. He didn't have time to stop it let alone wonder what it was. It knocked him to the floor, landing right on top of him. The rumbling had not yet stopped. Chairs, broken glass and another table flew in his direction.

He tried to wave some of it away. All that was left was the table that seemingly hit him first. It flew away into wall. He was about to get up when a hand squeezed his throat so tightly he heard the bones crunch. There was a weight pressing down on him too, then he saw James' face emerge from the smoke and get close to his. He tried to raise his arm but it was forced down to the floor. It was getting harder and harder for him to breathe, and even harder to think of a spell to get him away from him.

Then he saw his advantage. There was a strange flicker in James' eyes, his grip seemed to weaken a little. Matteo smiled. He was hesitating, he assumed. His spare arm flew up to grab the piece of metal still in his chest. It took little effort to pull it out. He recoiled from that, his grip on his throat loosened fully. Matteo pushed him to the side as hard as he could, and scrambled to his feet. Then he noticed the debris cluttered around him, it made him smile.

"Telekinesis, I thought you were too basic for that."

James struggled to get up, his better hand meanwhile pressed against his chest wound to stop it from bleeding. The blood still dripped through the cracks in his fingers.

"Maybe you are more trouble than you're worth," Matteo grumbled.

Despite everything James laughed briefly, it hurt him more than he liked. "See? The fight doesn't go your way, you... you're not better than me. You're the one who's nothing."

Matteo's jaw clenched tightly, his teeth ground together. James couldn't see it but his eyes managed to get even darker. Both his hands flew out in front of him. James' body lifted off the ground, he struggled against it but any movement ached horribly. That didn't put him off, it just further drained what strength he had left.

"I beg to differ. Good riddance," Matteo said, his voice ice cold. His hands lowered sharply.

He had only been raised a metre in the air, but when he fell, it felt like he fell a few hundred. The air was smashed out of him as he slammed into and through something, and it happened again. Without thinking, he tried to grab whatever he hit that second time. He knew what would happen if he didn't. One lone piece of metal, he hung onto that and his fall seemed to halt. The metal groaned, telling him to let go or it would snap. The ground wasn't far away, his grip loosened and he slammed onto it.

His whole body not only ached, it screamed from every cut and stab. His chest wound was hot, his hand trembled as it returned to cover it. It brushed along the already soaking wet floor to get there. His energy had all but gone, he felt his eyes try to drift closed. The thought of Jessie and their newborn daughter forced them open again, and he tried to get up. The pain tripled to try and stop him. It forced him back to the floor. All he could do was stare up at the hole in the ceiling, he could just make out another in that deck as well.

One more and he would have punctured a hole in the ship's hull and been sucked into space, taking Matteo hopefully with him. His instincts had made him grab a hold of something to stop it. He hated himself for it.

Chakotay stared open mouthed at the Opps station, Danny hadn't budged from it even though Harry had returned. Her face was stuck in a cringe, Harry meanwhile was starting to drown in his own forehead sweat.

"What?" Chakotay demanded.

"I don't know. We've got three internal hull breaches. Two between Thirteen and Fourteen, and one between Fourteen and Fifteen. It must have been an explosion, there's a fire on Thirteen in that spot," Harry stammered. "Oh and we have a turbolift crash, luckily minor, at the bottom of the shaft."

"Must have been?" Chakotay groaned into his hand.

Harry was starting to get a little annoyed with him. "We are on limited power, the internal sensors aren't fully functional. For all we know this happened during the power cut or caused it."

Danny shook her head with her eyes wide, Harry gave her a stare that screamed *traitor*. Chakotay picked up on both, he focused on Danny. "Maybe the turbolift happened before then, but nope, everything else is new," she explained.

"You didn't mention the turbolift damage because?" Chakotay questioned.

"It isn't that bad and I doubt it was the..." Danny said.

"I said tell me if something weird happens!" Chakotay snapped.

"It already had happened," Danny said, glancing at Harry. He shrugged.

Ian cleared his throat to get everyone's attention. "There are a few lifesigns still in there, they're fading. Maybe we should do something instead of arguing."

"I'm trying to get the fire suppression system online but I don't have enough emergency power," Harry said.

"Fire suppression system isn't independent either? Shocking," Chakotay muttered to himself. "Transfer the Bridge power to it." Everyone stared at him in shock. Well almost everyone, Naomi was too busy staring at her nails. "Did I stutter?"

Harry was torn, his finger hovered over the command. "If we do that we may not be able to restore regular power. If we don't those people..." He pressed it anyway. The lights and consoles all turned off at once, leaving the Bridge in the dark once again.

"Hey," Naomi whined. Everyone groaned. "Why are we saving Deck Thirteen people anyway? Wouldn't they be the bad guys?"

There was a silence for a while. A few minutes passed before Chakotay sighed as loud as he could. "You're right. Harry, turn everything back on." He heard Harry groan quietly. "I assumed Starfleet Bridges should be crewed by people with brain cells. Naomi believes only terrorists and demons should be on Deck Thirteen. We're all wrong at least once."

Danny giggled quietly, but apart from that the Bridge was silent for a few minutes again.

"I don't get it," Naomi broke the silence.

The Jeffries tube door opened. Nathan clambered out of it quickly and turned around to face it. Jessie partly emerged from it. She handed the baby to him so she could climb out as well.

The pair hurriedly walked out of the short corridor into the main one, what they saw there stopped them in their tracks. Their eyes widened in horror, Nathan felt so sick he put a hand over his mouth. Bodies littered the corridor, each one with sickening cuts across their throats, killed instantly where they walked. The amount of blood made Jessie very dizzy, she tried to look up to avoid it.

"What... how?" Nathan stuttered.

Jessie reluctantly turned her head to the right to see further down the corridor. It seemed almost like a trail, a sick trail of victims. Another glance to the left told her the slaughter started not far from where they stood now.

"We can't go that way," Nathan said, gesturing to the right.

"That would seem to be obvious," Jessie murmured. Nathan stared at her with worry. "For all we know he wants us to go the other way."

"Perhaps we should go further up instead," Nathan suggested.

Jessie didn't look so sure, her eyes were still wide. Her head shook. "He wants us to see this and run. He knows where we are. He's toying."

"But you said he wouldn't toy, he'd just kill," Nathan stuttered. He found himself looking at the bodies again. The wounds looked fresh to him, that scared him further.

"Yeah... that's what I thought," Jessie said quietly. To his horror she began to follow the trail of bodies. He had to follow her to grab her arm. "Nath..."

"No, this happened recently. This is a breadcrumb trail, don't," he stuttered.

Jessie pulled her arm away, yet she still felt hesitant. "He'll expect us to see this and run away from it. He got here before us, so odds are he can appear anywhere."

"You don't sound so sure," Nathan commented.

Jessie's head shook, her whole body trembled. "I don't know. We need to get to the books. It's the only thing to do now." She hurried away down the trail of bodies, "the turbolift shaft should be just down here."

"Jess!" Nathan shouted after her. He tried to run after her but to his horror his foot caught on one of the bodies. He did his best not to fall face first, especially with a baby in his arms. Luckily he only stumbled, so he straightened up quickly. He found himself face to face with Matteo as soon as he did.

"How's this for paranoid scare mongering?" he taunted him.

Nathan's face turned ghostly white. The memories of the transfer to Voyager and the strange man now fresh in his mind. He had met this warlock more than once before. That didn't matter right now, he backed away to escape. Matteo only had to look at the wall to get him to fly into it.

Jessie heard the bang and swung around quickly. She saw Nathan fall to the floor, her baby rolled slightly out of his arms. Matteo was nowhere in sight. Even though her leg was still in a lot of pain she ran to him as fast as she could. Once she got there she knelt down to pick up her crying daughter, her other hand hovered over her brother to see if he was all right. His eyes were shut but she could see him breathing.

Unknown to her Matteo appeared out of thin air behind her. He crouched down to wrap his arm around her neck. He didn't give her anytime to react to that, he just dragged her up to his height. "Pathetic," he whispered into her ear before he tossed her to the ground. She landed face to face with one of the dead, her first reaction was to pull away from them while tightly clutching her baby.

Matteo paced nearby while staring directly at her. "Look at you. Weak, helpless. You lay down with... *him*," he said the last word as if he was going to be sick. "And this is your reward? A snivelling little girl."

Jessie's head shot up to stare him down, her eyes flashed with rage. "Who are you to judge me? We did nothing to you, you attack us, James knocks you on your worthless ass and you lose it?"

"That isn't how it works and you know..." Matteo hissed.

"Yeah yeah, resurrection spells need a lot of energy to revive people. That energy powers us up. I know all of that," Jessie muttered. "The only difference is you died for like five seconds, my death decomposed my body a few centuries, millennia even. My spell needed somebody strong, a lot of power. You, I probably could have sneezed you awake."

Matteo's black eyes widened, he pointed his hand at her. She quickly moved to one side to avoid being set on fire. "You are just as stupid as he was. Do not mock me!" he spat.

"Why not, you want to kill me anyway," Jessie grumbled. The fire burning beside her forced her to try and get up. All it took was a light hand gesture to force her back down. It was only a few inches from her skin, panic started to take over.

"True, but I haven't decided on the how slow yet," Matteo smiled, noticing her fear. "I'm liking very." He pointed at her other side, another fire started, blocking her escape.

Jessie stared between them both, her breathing became rapid. The heat was becoming unbearable. She looked straight ahead of her, the only way out was through Matteo. He stared at her maliciously. She clutched her daughter tightly, her hand tried to cover her eyes, hoping that it would spare her from this. Her cries could be felt through her body.

"Just say you're sorry and I'll kill you quicker," Matteo laughed at her terror.



Those words infuriated her, it distracted her from the fire. She stared defiantly at him. He rolled his eyes in disgust. "Suit yourself," Matteo spat. He raised his hand, this time directly in front of her, to possibly start another fire. She closed her eyes tightly.

Something pierced the air not far in front of her. This was it, she thought. Only instead Matteo grunted, his voice spluttered. There was a horrible slicing sound, then a loud thud. The heat from the flames vanished immediately. The lights flashed back on, piercing her eyes even though they were shut.

Jessie dared to open her eyes to see what Matteo had done. Only he wasn't standing before her anymore. She gasped. In his place was the badly cut and bruised James, with blood still dripping from his bigger wounds. That wasn't it. He held a large piece of metal that looked like it was from a wall, half of it was coated with blood and that dripped onto the floor as well.

Then her eyes caught sight of something lying on the floor in front of her. She had never looked away from something so fast in her life, the thought of it nearly made her pass out. The metal had sliced clean through Matteo's shoulder, all the way down to his stomach. It killed him instantly, his eyes were still black and wide open.

James let go of the metal and dropped to his knees in front of her. She thought he was kneeling down to check on her and the baby, but instead he hunched over, hands first onto the floor, his head dipped. She thought she could hear him sobbing. Jessie maneuvered herself to the left so she could pull herself forward towards him, without bumping into that... thing on the ground in front of her. She still held their baby, so she settled for putting only one arm around his shoulders to try and pull him closer to her. His head fell onto her shoulder much rougher than she was used to, it took her by surprise, but he seemed to need her so she kept a tight hold of him. Now that he was close she knew he was definitely crying, and she had a good idea why.

Nathan stumbled over to them, the side of his body that hit the wall ached so much he had to limp. The first thing he noticed was James and Jessie in an uncomfortable looking embrace. He looked like hell, there was barely any part of him that wasn't red. The second thing he noticed was Matteo's body lying on the floor. It took all the strength he had not to gag or throw up at the sight of it. It happened quick, he tried to tell himself. That was when he noticed James sobbing into Jessie's shoulder. He walked over to kneel down and put a gentle hand on his shoulder.

### **Sickbay:**

The doors opened. Nathan walked through them supporting his sister. The Doctor spotted them so he hurried over.

"Jessie..." he said.

"I'm fine, can you just check her first," she said.

The Doctor gave her a friendly smile and nod. "Of course, congratulations." He gently took the baby from her arms, she made a few squeaks in protest. "Can you lie down, I'll get to you next."

Jessie glanced behind her, concern immediately appeared on her face. "No, I... shouldn't be next." She looked at Nathan desperately, "where is he?"

"He was right behind us, I'll check," Nathan said calmly to re-assure her. He stepped back outside.

The Doctor was confused, he stared at Jessie with his forehead creasing up. "What's the matter?"

Nathan didn't have to go far, he found James standing outside with his head down, looking like he was talking to himself. Nathan was about to interrupt when the intercom responded to him.

*"The kids are fine, James. We had some flashlights, made a hide and seek game out of it," Lena's voice said. "Are you okay, you sound a little..."*

"Yeah, gotta go," James mumbled, he tapped the computer panel behind him to cut her off.

Nathan stepped closer. "You really should get treated."

He didn't get a response for half a minute, he waited patiently. "Not before them."

Nathan sighed, "I disagree. You're just saying that cos of what you did."

James didn't respond this time, he stared ahead of him.

"See, I knew you hated killing, even when it is necessary," Nathan said carefully. The only response he got was a stare. "He blamed you for the Softmicron attacks on Earth, for everything really. He did that to you, tried to burn Jessie and your kid to death..."

"What?" it was barely more than a whisper.

"Yeah, I know where I've seen him now. The guy tried to convince me back when Voyager was in dock, that he was trying to rebuild Starfleet to how it was before..." Nathan said.

"Me," James said quietly.

Nathan's shoulders slumped, his head shook. "No. The guy was a lunatic. I mean even if it did make sense to kill you, which it didn't, why Jessie too? He killed so many innocent people as well. You had to stop him. Jess told me that the only way to do that is drain or death. Draining was impossible. You did what you had to."

"Did I?" James asked in a low voice. "Or did I just see the people I loved about to die and lose it?"

Nathan stepped so close to him, normally he would have stepped away, then peered into his eyes. Nathan was worried a little that he didn't react to any of that, but Nathan smiled anyway. "You don't look evil to me."

"I... that's not..." James mumbled.

"You do though look like you're about to keel over from blood loss, so get in there before Jessie murders both of us," Nathan said with a carefree smirk.

James finally made eye contact with him, they seemed distant, almost like he was still on Deck Thirteen fighting for survival. Nathan held onto his smile, hoping that would bring him back to the present where it was all over. All he got was a nod.

"We're still missing something," Harry remarked.

Sickbay was now a lot more crowded than normal, the senior staff had decided to gather there. The Doctor was thankful only one person really needed his attention as it was getting a little difficult to dodge everyone.

Tom faked a laugh, "no kidding Harry. I debated doubling back for you several times. Should have done it sooner."

"I doubt that would've helped," Jessie said from a nearby biobed. The Doctor looked at her from the neighbouring one and hinted at her to lie back down instead of sitting. "I think I can handle sitting up, Doc."

The Doctor sighed impatiently. "This wouldn't happen if you didn't keep organising senior staff meetings in Sickbay."

"This is only the second time we've done that," Tom pointed out.

"It's everytime James suffers a beating, I notice," Chakotay commented. He noticed Jessie giving him a death glare. He pretended not to see it, "so yes, we are missing something."

"Not really. I asked around after Nathan told me about this guy. A lot of the crew remember him trying to recruit them for this... I wanna say cult," Harry said. "All men, which is odd."

"He missed a great recruit right here," Tom commented while staring at Chakotay. He rolled his eyes.

The Doctor coughed to hint that B'Elanna move out of his way. She side stepped so he could reach a medical tray, he then headed back to the biobed.

"So a man angry that there's Softmicron, Game Cubes and demons..." Harry said.

"Anyone who says *oh my* gets a slap," Jessie muttered.

Tom tried not to laugh, especially as he had thought those same words. Harry shook his head, "on Earth. Bands a group of misfits together, puts a no girls clause in it, waits nine months, and decides the best solution is try to kill the guy that is supposed to sort these things out. I love that logic."

"And his wife," Nathan added on.

Harry glanced at him briefly, "which makes even less sense."

"Idiots will always shift the blame onto an easier target, Human history is full of examples of this. People used to kill others just for not believing the things they did, which caused others like the victims to be wary of those who did believe, causing the rift they feared in the first place," Chakotay said, his arms folded.

Tom nodded grimly, "the Softmicron attack Earth, the Softmicron are too hard, lets just attack the guy they probably attacked Earth for. That doesn't solve a thing and likely makes the situation worse and they get even angrier. Killing Jessie was probably just something to hurt him, but when he powered up he stepped up."

"So the moral of the story is that Humans still have raving lunatics within them?" B'Elanna said. "I'm not buying it. Why did they wait so long? If Jessie was the original target, why the Evil trip? How come they didn't go for Lena? Also, I hate to say it as they're just kids, but why were Duncan and Amy left alone too?"

"He was angry at me," James said from the biobed the Doctor was hanging around. Everyone glanced over.

"That just raises further questions," Harry said.

James shook his head which annoyed the Doctor as he was trying to treat his face. "When the Soft sent cubes to Earth they focused them on one particular part of it, where I used to live or live nearby. Manchester, Stanley, Durham, Newcastle, to name a few."

"James, other places were hit. There was the one that took Jessie's dad away..." Tom pointed out, his eyes widened. "Ah ha, that's why." Jessie sighed and shook her head. "Sandi and Kevin were lost on a cube landing on Earth and that was centuries before any of us were born."

"I'm just saying that I can see why it would be easy to blame me for all of that," James said, his voice was tired. He didn't resist when the Doctor grabbed his face to hold it still.

Tom stared warily at Jessie, "so erm, where did your dad get taken? It's bugging me now."

Jessie groaned angrily, her eyes sharpened, "oh don't go there, Tom." He swallowed hard and for once took her advice.

"Still wondering what took Matteo so long," B'Elanna said.

"The guy was nuts. It probably took him the whole time to recruit people," Nathan said after a scoff. "He probably used stuff like the Voyager crash to convince them."

"Or learning a few spells takes longer than people think," Jessie muttered. There was a small squeak beside her. It softened her features. She turned to a small biobed sitting next to her. With a smile she picked up the bundle lying in it.

Harry smiled as well. "Well at least one good thing came out of this. What you going to call her?"

Tom's face turned very pale, "another daughter? I gotta have a good long chat with my boys." B'Elanna smirked at him.

Jessie looked down to find a pair of brilliant blue eyes staring up at her. She gave her cheek a gentle stroke, the girl squeaked happily. Jessie then looked over to where James was lying. The Doctor was still busy treating his injuries. Her chest ached and her throat had yet another lump in it. She felt so selfish for being happy briefly while he was suffering. Those thoughts were so distracting she missed Nathan walk over to put an arm around her shoulders.

"What was that name he mentioned?" he asked softly.

Jessie gave him a weak smile and looked down at the baby again. "Roxanne."

"Paradox inducing or preventing, or none of the above, it's still cute," Nathan smirked at her.

"Funny, I heard Roxanne not Lena," Tom blurted out. He coughed to try and cover it up.

"It's a long story," Jessie mumbled. "I'd rather not. It's something we both should decide on."

B'Elanna glanced around at everyone, "I think that's a good a cue as any to leave. We've got two ships to refuel and repairs to start, again."

Tom nodded quickly, "yes, yes. I know you wanted to avoid it, but I'll order the Enterprise to tractor us the rest of the way. The moon shouldn't be more than an hour away."

B'Elanna faked a scowl his way, "all right, have it your way." The pair headed out first. "I do wonder how long it will take for you to abandon Voyager for the hot rod again."

Tom laughed as they reached the door, "sweetie, the only hot rod is you." B'Elanna groaned in disgust and pushed him the rest of the way outside.

"Don't call me sweetie, it's creepy," she said once she was outside.

Everyone else quietly followed them, shaking their heads. Nathan hung around a little longer. He shared a look with Jessie, which she ended with a nod. He then followed the others out of Sickbay.

With the tractor beam keeping them together, Voyager and the Enterprise finally entered orbit of a large silver moon circling a green gas giant. Once they were settled the tractor beam was released. Not long later shuttles started to fly out of Voyager and headed for the rocky surface.

Compared to the bustle earlier, Sickbay was eerily quiet. The Doctor sat in his office tapping away at the computer. The primary biobed still housed the same patient it had for the last few months. Jessie walked over to a different one to sit beside James, who had been staring towards the primary one for the last ten minutes.

"Baby for your thoughts," she said, leaning her arms a little towards him.

James barely turned his head to look at her and back again. Jessie nodded grimly before moving back.

"It's okay, I think I know anyway," she said.

He didn't say anything for a while. When he did she wish he hadn't, "I'm so tired... so tired of being this monster."

They had the same conversation years ago, and years before that. That last time she thought she had convinced him for good. Obviously not. "You saved our lives," she said softly.

"Yeah, but at what cost?" James mumbled.

Jessie closed her eyes tightly but briefly. "Only you would feel bad for killing somebody who tried to murder his newborn daughter and his wife, the guy's own minions and... well killed a few people just for the hell of it."

"He wasn't himself though, just like you and I weren't," James said.

"From what I understand the so called man chose to power up, knowing full well what the consequences were," Jessie said. "I don't remember choosing, do you?"

James' face seemed to scrunch slightly. Jessie felt a little better to see him showing any kind of facial expression. "Once yeah."

"To escape a forcefield and immediately turn back. Yeah, that's the same," Jessie had to laugh at the silliness of it.

"If it were just him though..." James said, his blank face was back.

Jessie nodded. "I know. You said only months ago that you were done focusing on the bad, as it made you forget the good you've done. This is a perfect example."

"Maybe I could have knocked him out. I didn't have to..." James said.

"Yeah you did. The alternative was to get me or Annika to drain his magic from him, which would kill him too," Jessie sighed. "In my opinion me or Annika with that power is a terrible idea."

James looked at her with some life back in his eyes, just a little though. "Sorry, I was talking about..." He pointed at the other occupied biobed. "Daniel."

"Oh, when did we switch?" Jessie asked, resisting a smirk for now.

James' eyes shifted from one side to another, "round about the not just him comment."

"Hmm. Your sister was lying on her death bed cos of Daniel. You thought it was appropriate to hit him with a bed," Jessie said in a bemused tone. "Yeah I can see why you're worried. You got a reputation to protect."

James stared at her blankly, then he smirked into a brief laugh. Jessie smiled at him. "I'll never live that down will I?"

"Nope," Jessie replied nonchalantly.

"The guy's in a coma cos of it. Here I am laughing about it," James said, his smile and laugh long gone. "See?"

"The Doc says he's stable. He'll wake up soon enough and um... the guy nearly left your sister brain dead," Jessie said.

James nodded, "but he didn't. She's back."

Jessie sighed as she climbed off the biobed. James watched her, thinking that she had finally given up on him. He wondered how she had managed this long. Instead she stepped in front of him and gestured the arms holding their newborn towards him. He didn't know what to say or think now.

"I don't..." he mumbled.

"Yes you do," she said. "This is the little girl you delivered, the one you saved from a fiery death, your daughter. If you're going to feel bad about it, the least you can do is finally look her in the eye. If anything, it may give you some much needed perspective."

James sighed, hesitating slightly. Eventually he opened his arms so she could hand the baby over to him. The first detail he noticed were the girl's bright eyes staring back. He couldn't help but smile at her, his shoulders relaxed as if a heavy weight had been eased only slightly. Something worried him the longer he looked into her eyes. "She... she isn't her."

"Hmm?" Jessie was confused. Then she remembered. "You mean Roxanne? Are you sure?"

"Yeah. That girl had Amy's eyes," James answered quietly. "Hers is blue."

Jessie relaxed, she sighed in relief. "Oh, well there you go. The girl you saw was probably Amy giving you a fake name."

"I don't..." James muttered, the more he thought about it, the more confused he got. She was probably right, he thought. "Yeah." His left hand went to give the girl's cheek a stroke. Her own hand tried to grab it first, but merely brushed against his wrist. It seemed to be enough for her, she made another happy squeak.

"You know, I think everyone has a point. We've got to stop having kids. Too much cute can be dangerous," Jessie smiled.

"You're the boss," James smiled back.

Jessie laughed as she leaned in to give their daughter another tickle. They sat there for a few minutes, the only sound was the girl's happy squeals.

James' head dipped slightly. Softly he said, "I didn't want to kill him, or anyone. I don't ever want to do it again."

Jessie knew that, it was more than obvious to her. She knew he needed to say it aloud more for himself than her. She gave him a reassuring smile before resting her head on his shoulder. It seemed to relax a little with her there. She gave it a quick kiss before resting on it again.

**THE END**