The Personal Logs of Lieutenant Tuvix

by jamelia116

Summary

A sequel to "His Fathers' Son, this log entry-type story depicts the life of one Lieutenant Tuvix, a character who never lived beyond one episode of Star Trek: Voyager. As Voyager travels through the Delta Quadrant, Tuvix must sometimes walk a tight line to please two fathers who don't often see eye-to-eye. While the ship's journey unfolds quite closely to the way it did on the series in these logs, this IS an alternate universe. Some canon events and the outcomes of several members of the crew will change, thanks to the presence of the Vulcan/Talaxian hybrid who is a credit to both of his parents.

Notes

Disclaimer: Paramount/CBS own Star Trek lock, stock, and photon torpedo barrel. This is an alternate universe story based on a character who never lived beyond one episode of Star Trek: Voyager. I liked Tuvix and was sorry no attempt was made to find a way to keep him on the ship.

In "His Fathers' Son," Voyager's crew created a twin of Tuvix, using a method found in a database entry concerning Lieutenant William T. Riker, who was accidentally duplicated in a
transporter accident (TNG's "Second Chances"). The twin who took the name Neevok literally drew the short straw and sacrificed his life to bring Tuvok and Neelix back to their own separate lives. The surviving twin Tuvix is a fully-grown adult hybrid who never forgets he is "living for two."

And while this story stays quite close to the canon of the series, thanks to Tuvix's presence, this IS an Alternate Universe. Some series events and details concerning the crew will not be the same. The timing of some episodes may be a little different as well. The best thing about writing an alternate universe story, of course, is that if the fanfic writer doesn't like what the series writers did on the show, it's very easy to correct what the show runners "messed up." I hope you agree...
Stardate 49661

This is my first official personal log entry as Lieutenant (junior grade) Tuvix. Captain Janeway has added my name to the crew roster of the USS Voyager. Like Lieutenant Paris, and all of Voyager's Maquis personnel, my rank is provisional, as it was when I first arrived on this vessel. Captain Janeway will not confirm any rank she has bestowed until we make contact with her superiors at Starfleet Command in some way. Although I may possess Father Tuvok's memories and knowledge, I am not personally qualified for any official rank. When the captain discussed my status with me, she used Commander Chakotay's situation as an example. Although he had previously met all requirements for his current level, he'd resigned his Starfleet commission when he entered the Maquis. As a result, she could only offer a provisional rank to him when the crew of the Val Jean came on board Voyager. This was also true of Lieutenant Ayala.

Captain Janeway thinks I may eventually be accepted into Starfleet as a commissioned officer even though my persona of Tuvix never attended Starfleet Academy. Citing the precedent of Lieutenant W. Thomas Riker, the officer whose accidental duplication revealed to my crewmates a way to save my life, she believes Starfleet Command may evaluate my competence to serve in the position. If deficits in certain areas are found, I would need to take specific courses before my commission could be confirmed. From her own assessment of my knowledge, she doubts any will be found. This would be a logical way of dealing with my unusual situation. I was reassured to hear that although Lieutenant Riker had been out of touch on Nervala IV for eight years, he was deemed competent to serve without the need of remedial instruction. He moved to another ship in the rank of lieutenant shortly after he was discovered.

Father Tuvok currently holds the rank of full lieutenant. The captain did not feel comfortable giving me that same rank based on my own two weeks of service as Tuvix. I accepted this, of course. She would be justified in giving me the rank of ensign, even crewman, if she wished. After my meeting with the captain, I discussed her decision with Father. He agrees with the captain's reasoning. I must prove myself capable of functioning at the level of a junior grade lieutenant for an extended period of time before any consideration is given to raising my rank to a full lieutenancy. He noted that the only promotion given since Voyager came to the Delta Quadrant was to Lieutenant Rollins, but his was a "special case." Rollins was an ensign at the time the ship was lost, but the captain had received confirmation he was due to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant, junior grade, as soon as Voyager finished its current mission. Captain Janeway decided that since Voyager "caught" the Maquis on board the Val Jean, that mission was "finished," allowing her to grant him his new rank immediately.

While I may have Father's memories, it is also true I have just undergone a major ordeal and must adjust to my current circumstances. I remember all the meditation techniques Father has mastered
over many years of practicing the discipline, but considering my unacceptable behavior on the bridge on the day the captain told me she'd decided I must be separated back into Lieutenant Tuvok and Neelix, I have not yet learned to apply them. I must integrate the Talaxian emotionalism I "inherited" from Father Neelix into my Vulcan heritage. Until that has been accomplished, I will be under a great deal of stress. Holding the higher rank, with its concomitant greater degree of responsibility, could complicate this process.

I discussed this with both my fathers, of course. Dad expressed his own concerns about my capacity to accommodate all the aspects of my personality into one person, since Talaxians and Vulcans are so different. He pointed out, for instance, that although my behavior on the bridge was embarrassing in the extreme, and it would have been unthinkable for a Vulcan such as Father to exhibit his emotions this way, a Talaxian would say that display of emotion was the only reason I'm still alive today. When I begged for mercy and even accused the captain of trying to murder me, she was upset, but she decreed a one-day stay of execution to "say good-bye" to my friends on Voyager. That reprieve gave me the opportunity to request assistance from Lieutenant Paris, Lieutenant Torres, and Ensign Kim, who arrived at a plan which permitted a Tuvix to live on. I say "a Tuvix," because the twin they created of me had to sacrifice his life for our parents to come back to theirs. I will never forget my brother Neevok. I will honor him always for his sacrifice. We were together for just a few hours, but he is my brother forever.

I should note in closing that we have determined appropriate designations for me to utilize for my parents. To avoid confusion, "Father" is Tuvok. Neelix is "Dad."

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Stardate 49667

We expect to arrive in orbit over a planet Dad learned about from a friend of his. Paxim heads a convoy of Talaxians who do most of their business transactions in this area of space. The planet is supposed to be very beautiful, with a lush environment that allows for a great variety of edible plants to flourish. Paxim's crews have stopped there briefly on several occasions to gather food supplies, although they do not stay long, even though the planet is uninhabited. I thought it a bit odd they don't spend more time there if the planet is as rich in resources as they say, with no one living there to object to harvesting them. It doesn't really matter to me. Father told me I will be stationed at tactical while the away teams gather foodstuffs. I believe he assigned me this duty to assess my willingness to comply with his orders. Under normal circumstances, in the Alpha Quadrant, I would not be under his direct command. Here, however, our duty assignments must reflect our training and experience. Because I have Father's memories, I remain in Tactical and Security, and under his supervision.

Dad told me that after the food stores arrive on Voyager, I will be able to help him prepare various dishes for the crew, if I so desire. I will enjoy doing that. I just hope Dad will be willing to listen to my advice to be more judicious in the use of spices in our dishes. When I expressed this hope to
Lieutenant Paris, he said, "Good luck with that, Tuvix." Tom does not believe I will be successful.

We shall see.

Stardate 49672

There is no change in the captain's or the commander's conditions. They remain in stasis while our Doctor searches for a way to heal them of the disease they caught on that planet. It may be as beautiful as Paxim said it was, but there's a reason no one has settled there. I trust Paxim was unaware of these insects when he told us of the place. Perhaps he heard it was a bad idea to stay down on the surface for long but never knew why. If we make contact with him in the future, I will try to remember to ask him about it.

The Doctor is still hopeful he will find a cure. He told Father it is a type of disease with which he is unfamiliar. Apparently there are no comparable infections known in the Alpha or Beta Quadrants, the source of his medical database. The strangest aspect, he said, is that something in the environment seems to suppress the symptoms in the patient. The Doctor has been unable to construct a viable antidote as of yet, even though many of the science officers and Mr. Paris, who is trained as a field medic, have volunteered their off-duty time to work with the Doctor. With so many people working on the project, I trust they soon will find a way to successfully treat our command team.

I learned much of this when I spoke with Tom in the mess hall yesterday. He was unable to eat much of the dinner Dad served us. With considerable reluctance, I admitted I have been unable to persuade Dad to lower the amount of very strong-flavored spices in his dishes. I'll keep trying, but I fear Tom may be right. A vaccine to treat Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay may be easier to find than convincing Dad to go easy on his seasonings.

Stardate 49690

Today was a very sad day. Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay were transported down to the surface of the planet, which the team in Stellar Cartography has designated "New Earth." So far,
the Doctor has been unable to produce a cure for the disease afflicting them. While he is certain there is some factor in the atmosphere of New Earth which counteracts the effects of the infection, he has been unable to determine exactly what that might be. We even tried transporting a supply of the planet's atmosphere inside a containment field to Sickbay to see if that would control the symptoms. The Doctor woke up Commander Chakotay briefly to test his response, but his vital signs quickly plummeted. The Doctor had to put him back into stasis. Multiple factors on the planet may be responsible for the protective effect.

The only viable solution was to leave them on New Earth. A great deal of equipment was replicated and transported down to the surface for their use, including medical laboratory instruments. The captain is a capable scientist. When she enrolled in Starfleet, she expected to be a science officer; her interest in command came later. While her specialty is astrophysics, she is also trained in biological research methods. With the equipment, she will be able to look for a cure on her own. One of our precious shuttles was also provided to them. If the captain is able to find a successful treatment, the two can travel back to rejoin us on Voyager. They will need to find the solution quickly, however. Their shuttle has a top speed of Warp 4. Voyager's usual cruising speed, as long as our power situation is in hand, is Warp 6.5. It is unlikely they will be able to catch up with Voyager if it takes them long to find a successful treatment for their illness.

Just before she went into stasis, Captain Janeway turned command over to Father. When she woke up on the planet and discussed the situation with the crew, she ordered us to continue on our way to the Alpha Quadrant under Father's command. Many of the crew became very emotional about this decision. They're in mourning over the loss of the captain and the commander. Some, especially our Maquis crew members, have expressed uneasiness with Father in command. Father spied on them for Starfleet when he was part of the Val Jean's crew. They will get over it. Father is very qualified to be captain of Voyager.

I must admit I am a little perturbed with his new role myself, although this has nothing to do with his competence as a leader. Since I have his memories, I know how very capable he is. However, when we were preparing to beam Captain Janeway and the Commander down to the planet, Father called me aside and told me that with his new duties, he will be unable to spend time working with me on my mental disciplines. This is unnerving. I know I need his help, especially when it comes to mind melding. Although I have his memories of how it is done, I cannot seem to do it all by myself. The only time we melded successfully was when he was the one who entered my mind. The Doctor said I have "all" of the inheritance of both Father and Dad, but I worry that the blend -- or possibly that small amount of orchid DNA present in my genome -- may prevent me from ever attaining the mental attributes of a full-blooded Vulcan.

I hope we hear from the Doctor or from Captain Janeway very soon about a successful cure. Although it is selfish of me, I know, one reason I do is that I'm eager for my lessons in mind melding to resume. Who knows if my ability to do so might prove to be of grave importance to this crew? It may be needed at any time.

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Stardate 49724

Harry Kim is in trouble again. He's confronted Captain Tuvok on two occasions and was out of control both times. Hogan and Swinn have also insisted Father seek help from the Vidiians. I know how extremely dangerous it is to approach them. Even though the Vidiians are well-versed in medical techniques, if they were all-powerful in that regard, they would surely have found a cure for The Phage by now. They have not.

I recall that Dr. Denara Pel was aboard this ship for quite a while before my . . . creation? Constitution? I do not think "birth" is the most accurate term to describe how I came to be. I will have to come up with a better word for it. Perhaps "advent" would be appropriate.

I am digressing. I was discussing Dr. Pel as a possible source for a cure.

One of the only other Vulcans on board, Ensign Vorik, shared with me his opinion that while approaching Dr. Pel would be a logical thing to do, it is possible the Vidiians don't have a remedy, either. If they had a vaccine to prevent the infection, he believes they would have colonized New Earth. I have my doubts their failure to colonize this world means they have no cure. Considering their medical problems, the Vidiians may not have any excess populations who wish to settle on New Earth. However, if they don't have any antidote to the New Earth sickness, it would be far better for our crew to learn this now, rather than have their emotions continually churning over their captain's unwillingness to explore all his options.

Ensign Vorik told me Dr. Pel is "trustworthy." Tom and B'Elanna agree with him. My own memories of her from Father and Dad indicate they formed the same opinion of her. The Doctor is sure that if she didn't know of a way to treat the condition, she would tell us the truth. If there is, of course, it will be difficult to obtain it without attracting the attention of other Vidiians, who may have organ-harvesting, not to mention revenge for the loss of one of their ships prior to my "advent," on their minds. Captain Janeway thought it was not worth the risk; therefore, Father refuses to seek Dr. Pel's advice.

The truth is, I am very concerned for Father. He has all the qualities of a good leader except, perhaps, one of the most important: empathy. His history of conflict with Dad centers on his inability to grasp what it is like to be Talaxian. In a similar way, he does not see how upset the crew, which is primarily human, has become. Father's emotional control is rigid -- I know how essential that is for him, since his emotions actually are too strong for him to deal with in any way other than through rigid controls -- but the crew does not know this. That rigidity he projects clashes with the sensibilities of virtually every other member of this crew.
I would become very emotional myself if the crew should mutiny on his watch. I am caught between Father, who barely talks to me anymore, and my crew mates. I don't know what to do.

Stardate 49725

One crisis has been averted, but we may have a greater one on our hands if everything does not go exactly as planned.

The crew finally nominated the one person who could convince Father that he should at least talk with Dr. Pel to see if there is a vaccine available from the Vidiians. Kes got through to him. In her very quiet way, she can be quite forceful, and he listened to her. When they spoke to Dr. Pel, she confirmed the Vidiians do have a serum to counteract the effects of this planet's insect bites. She is willing give us some. In return, we are trading a sample of Lieutenant Torres' DNA to the Vidiians. When B'Elanna was their captive during the first year Voyager was in the Delta Quadrant, the doctor who held her was certain her Klingon DNA might hold the answer to a cure for the Phage. The Doctor used some to save Dr. Pel's life when she was on Voyager before my advent, so this Dr. Sulan may have been correct.

The tricky part will be making the exchange with Dr. Pel without other Vidiians learning of the transaction. They have a history of attacking any ships available and harvesting body parts of the occupants to "donate" to Vidiians suffering from organ failure due to the Phage. Dad lost both of his lungs to the Vidiians a year ago. If Kes had not donated one of her lungs to him, he would have been confined permanently to immobility in Sickbay, where holographic lungs could breathe for him, or he would have died. We will be practicing defensive strategies non-stop until the transfer is made and are certain we have escaped pursuit.

Stardate 49730

We have the serum and are on our way back to New Earth to treat Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay. We were unable to get the sample of B'Elanna's DNA to Dr. Pel, however. She was very upset with her fellow Vidiians, who spurned her desire to provide humanitarian aid.
Other ships surrounded *Voyager*, planning to capture us to steal our organs.

Father had anticipated their perfidy and made us practice ejecting and exploding a canister of antimatter, to allow us to escape from any attempt to capture us before it could succeed. It worked beautifully. Dr. Pel transported the serum to us just before our makeshift bomb exploded. Dr. Pel was not injured; the attacking Vidiian ships were incapacitated; and *Voyager* escaped.

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**Stardate 49894**

Today we arrived at New Earth. Captain Janeway was most unhappy with Father because he contacted the Vidiians. I'm certain she will get over it. The orders Captain Janeway gave him when she transferred command to Father were not binding. He had the right and the duty to change them as he saw fit. With prodding from Kes, that's what he did.

While the crew is uniformly happy with the return of the captain and the commander, they themselves have displayed a degree of awkwardness with this situation. Over a month ago, a storm damaged their medical research equipment beyond repair. Since then, they'd adjusted to living a very different style of life on New Earth than the one they've always led on *Voyager*. I hope they were not at odds down on the planet. They seemed quite stiff with each other when they arrived on the bridge this morning.

Lieutenant Paris has a theory that they were "more than just friends" on the planet, but now that they've returned, they'll go back to following the protocol forbidding commanding officers from having personal relationships with anyone under their direct command. Since everyone on *Voyager* is under the captain's direct command, that means "hands off" from everyone -- including Commander Chakotay. Lieutenant Torres and Ensign Kim scoffed at this, accusing Tom of expressing his "typical prurient interest" about their relationship.

After reviewing my memories, I cannot confirm nor deny Lieutenant Paris's position. The captain and the commander generally have displayed a warm but professional relationship towards each other. Their cool behavior on the bridge may be a natural response to having to reassume their command roles after being responsible only for themselves on New Earth for such a prolonged period of time. However, when human beings have broken off a sexual relationship but are forced to interact as colleagues later on, as in the case of a command team, awkwardness with each other may be expected. The dangers to a ship's crew, should matters become tense between former lovers, may be why the protocol was initiated in the first place. I chose to remain silent and refused to support either side in their discussion.
Stardate 49939

I thought I had retained all the memories from both of my fathers up to the day of my creation, but that does not seem to be the case. Perhaps I should have realized this was happening when I did not recall why there was only one B'Elanna Torres on board Voyager, after she told me about her duplication by the Vidiians. I remembered she had been split into two people, but not that the chief engineer's Klingon counterpart had been killed when Chakotay rescued the away team -- or what was left of it. Lieutenant Peter Durst had been killed by the Vidiians for his organs.

The Doctor told me I should not be alarmed. It is common for humanoids to experience the fading of some memories if they are not suitably reinforced. He was quite proud of the fact that since he is a holographic program, all of his are contained in Voyager's computer. He stated that his memory will remain as sharp as it was on the day of his creation until such time as his program degrades irreparably -- which he anticipates will not occur for centuries. I reminded him that if Voyager is destroyed, this will not be true. Then, like all the organic beings dwelling on this ship, he, too, will die. The Doctor was not pleased by this observation, but he granted it was a valid one.

At any rate, he evaluated the state of my memory. He found no evidence of any loss regarding the aspects of the tasks for which I am responsible as Lieutenant (j.g.) Tuvix. My grasp of the laws and regulations applying to a Starfleet officer, especially those relating to my work in Tactical and Security, appears to be as secure as Father's.

When the Doctor examined me about Dad's area of expertise, I demonstrated the ability to recall specific details from all the recipes in Dad's repertoire about which the Doctor inquired. I was able to describe how I adjusted the seasonings of certain of Dad's specialties to suit the tastes of our Alpha Quadrant crew members. During those occasions I have taken a shift in the mess hall, when Dad has been away on a trading mission, I've received many compliments from the crew. The Doctor told me Captain Janeway admitted she actually prefers my cooking to Dad's. She would never say anything about that to Dad, however, because she doesn't want to hurt his feelings. I assured the Doctor I certainly will never mention it to Dad, either, but I was pleased he relayed her comment to me. Since the Doctor is a holographic being, he cannot appreciate the taste of any food. Therefore, he is unable to give me his own opinion of my culinary expertise.

After I left Sickbay, I met up with Lieutenant Ayala. We were both assigned to Voyager's security detail for the day. Before our shift began, I spoke with him about my memory concerns. Mr. Ayala reminded me that one reason we constantly drill security procedures and review specific tactics in meetings or in simulations is for precisely the reason the Doctor mentioned. Memories may not be retained if they are not reinforced regularly. Humans do this by reviewing what they've learned and studying anything that seems to be slipping away from them. Father does this through meditation, while Talaxians like Dad enjoy reminiscing about the past with their friends and families. Mr. Ayala
told me humans like to "swap stories," too. He spends a lot of time with his Maquis friends, since they have a common history. They keep old memories alive by retelling them to each other from time to time.

Now that I know meditation may help me retain more of my memories, especially the ones I inherited from Father, I will work even more diligently to perfect these techniques. I believe Dad’s method of reminiscing with others may also be beneficial. I always enjoy spending time with Dad and Kes, with Lieutenants Torres and Paris, and with Ensign Kim during my off-duty hours. I will make it a point to continue to do this every day, if possible.
Seska and the Kazon take over Voyager. A trip back in time and space begs the question, why can we remember this, when all I know of temporal mechanics says we shouldn’t, since the past was changed?

Stardate 50035

It has been a very difficult few weeks.

The Kazon Nistrim, led by a former crew mate of Voyager's, Seska, took over Voyager and abandoned our crew on a desolate planet, called Hanon IV by the officers in Stellar Cartography. Now that we are back on board, I am again able to dictate entries into my personal log.

Hanon IV is not a pleasant place to live. Little Naomi Wildman, who is only a couple of months old, nearly lost her life because of the difficult conditions. Crewmen Hogan and Gaspar died on the planet, killed by predators. We all would have died if we'd remained there for long.

The planet's natives exist at a subsistence level, harvesting roots and other plants. They hunt small animals and must compete with the predators for the available food. While I was commended for my work foraging for food supplies with Father and Dad, there was little available to satisfy the palates of the crew. According to Ensign Megan Delaney of Voyager's Stellar Cartography Department, there wasn't much for us to eat anywhere on this planet. She said Hanon IV was "L-Class," which means that while its air is breathable, and the planet can sustain life, the temperature variations are so extreme, the environment is considered "difficult." I must agree with her assessment.

With the help of Dad's friend Paxim and his convoy, Tom Paris retook Voyager. The Doctor and a Betazoid crewman named Suder assisted them. When Seska took over the ship, she'd forgotten all about him, so she didn't check to find out whether he'd left the ship with the rest of the crew.

Suder had been confined to his quarters ever since he murdered one of the crew. Because this occurred before my advent, I never had reason to mention Suder or the unfortunate Crewman
Darwin in my logs before now. Father had been utilizing mind melds to help Suder attain control of his murderous impulses since he was incarcerated. Father said he'd made a lot of progress over the past few months. He'd developed a passion for growing orchids, which he may have picked up from Father during the melds. Growing orchids is one of Father's hobbies.

Unfortunately, Suder was forced to kill again in the fight to take *Voyager* back from the Kazon. He also lost his own life. Seska died, too, leaving behind her newborn child. She'd claimed Chakotay had fathered him, but when the Doctor examined the infant, he determined his genome is half Cardassian and half Kazon. The boy had no human DNA at all. Chakotay would have cared for the baby if he had been the father. Since he is not, the boy remained with the Kazon leader Maj Cullah, Seska's consort, who probably is his natural parent.

Everyone has been pitching in to repair the ship. All our systems need some type of work because the Kazon did not utilize our equipment properly. I suspect this is one reason Tom was able to retake the ship. Tom is very brave and willing to risk his life for his fellow crew members, but with his only allies a murderer, a hologram, and a convoy of Talaxian ships (which are not well equipped with weapons), it was an amazing feat.

I've been spending all my shifts at tactical, either as an officer manning a station or working to restore our weaponry and equipment to its specified capacity. The Delta Quadrant is a very dangerous place at the best of times. Without proper defenses, we will not make it much further.

Dad and I shared a quick meal with Paxim on his ship, just before they left us to our repairs. I asked him about what he knew about the planet we designated "New Earth." He said he'd heard the weather there was extremely unpredictable. Violent plasma storms erupted with very little warning. While the captain and commander were there, one of the storms destroyed their medical equipment. Paxim always assumed the danger from the weather was why he'd been advised to remain on that planet only as long as it took to restock food supplies. Now that he knows of the danger posed by insect bites, Paxim said he would be sure to add a warning about them to anyone he tells about this planet's resources in the future. I asked him if he would risk going there again. Paxim said, "As long as anyone going down to the planet's surface wears clothing and face screens to guard against insect bites, why not? The need to bundle up that way would reduce the enjoyment of the 'pleasant environment,' of course, but it's better to be safe than exposed to danger. However aesthetically pleasing the place it might be, I wouldn't want to be forced to spend the rest of my life there!" Dad and I had to agree.

I was glad to hear Paxim had not deliberately concealed the danger from insects. Later, I thought about what he'd said. The Doctor could not discover the unexplained "factor" that protected an insect bite victim from the full effects of their infection. I wondered if those plasma storms might have been the key? A similar storm seemed to be a factor when I was duplicated. We had tried to recreate the conditions on Nervala IV, when Lieutenant Riker was duplicated, but none were successful until a storm approached the shuttle where Tom, B'Elanna and I were attempting to create my duplicate. A body might absorb an element released during the storm's electrical surges, which is very subtle and easily missed. I will have to discuss my theory with the Doctor. It could prove useful in the future.
when he's evaluating treatments for other conditions.

Although Father had no time to work with me on the skills while we were on Hanon IV, now that we're back on *Voyager*, my studies in Vulcan mind control techniques have resumed. I'm still unable to meld minds on my own. Father said not to worry if I cannot perform the procedure right away. It always takes time to learn how to do melds. He assures me that since he can reach me, I should be able to communicate with any person who is already of a telepathic species. I'm still concerned, however, because my research has revealed that even some full-blooded Vulcans are unable to learn the mind meld technique. Thanks to the influence of my other heritages, my brain is not structured in exactly the same way as Father's. Talaxian brains have notable differences from that of Vulcans. I cannot dismiss the effects the symbiogenetic orchid's genes might have had on my metabolism, either. I will try to be patient and work hard whenever Father does have time to work with me.

**Supplemental**

I have one more observation to make, of a somewhat ironic nature, which doesn't quite belong alongside the recording of several deaths. It has to do with orchids, of all things, and their importance to the members of my family. Father's hobby is growing orchids. And now both of us, and Dad, too, possess DNA from a very singular species of orchid. I don't know if that will ever have any true significance, but I thought I should mention it here, in case it ever does.

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**Stardate 50126**

Father needed a volunteer to help him with a mind meld because he hasn't been feeling well. He explained he's been experiencing visions of a human girl, hanging from a rocky precipice. When he tries to keep her from falling, he always fails. What he's remembering must have occurred a very long time ago, since he has no conscious recall of this incident. He told me he needs someone to help him sort through his memories to see if it's real. Is he suppressing something that actually happened to him, or is he envisioning a tragedy he observed in the past but which didn't happen to him personally? I told him I'd be happy to help him if I could, especially with a mind meld. I need the practice.

I tried, but I was as unsuccessful an independent observer as I am initiating a mind meld. Father had to enter my mind, as always. While we share many of the same memories, this vision is not one of them. We confirmed that this particular engram is missing from my brain. The Doctor suggested that since I have been forming my own memories apart from Father's and Dad's for the past few months, it is possible this is one of the ones I "lost" because of a lack of reinforcement. The three of us discussed Father's options. I agree with Father. Captain Janeway is a better choice to work with him.
than I am. She knows Father very well, but she can provide perspective, which I could not. What she will see in his mind is either unknown to her, or it will be much different, since what she sees will be from Father's point of view, rather than her own.

Stardate 50128

After mind melds with the captain revealed Father's problem, the EMH came to Dad and me and described what they'd found. Father's symptoms were caused by a very unusual virus lodged inside a false memory. Father was correct. He'd never experienced the girl's fall. The memory virus was hidden inside that memory. Father "caught" the virus when he went to assist a shipmate on the Excelsior, Captain Sulu's ship. This was during Father's first period of Starfleet service, during his third decade of life. The next year he left Starfleet for over fifty years. Had he remained, it is likely he would be an admiral by now. Instead, he's still a lieutenant.

The nebula Voyager encountered looked quite similar to one which figured prominently in the events on the Excelsior which resulted in Ensign Dimitri Valtane's death. The virus may be very old, passed down from one person to another on Earth for millennia, before it jumped from Valtane to Father. The sight of this new nebula stimulated the memory cells containing the virus, causing Father's problems.

The Doctor checked Dad and me to see if we have it, too. The Doctor couldn't find any evidence it's active in either of us. The virus apparently bonded to a receptor from an orchid gene sequence when I was created, rendering it harmless. (I'm not sure what sort of memory engrams an orchid has, but I would be surprised if a visual image would serve as a trigger in any event. I've never heard of an orchid with organs of sight!)

When Neevok was split back into Tuvok and Neelix, the orchid gene sequence went to Dad's brain. Since he didn't receive the orchid DNA which protected Dad and me, the virus was active in Father's brain. To be sure neither of us would be affected by it in the future, however, or "just in case," as the Doctor put it, he treated Dad and me with the same thoron radiation he used to eradicate all traces of the memory virus from Father.

Stardate 50174
Ensign Harry Kim and Lieutenant Tom Paris were held captive by a race called the Akritirians. They were accused of setting off a terrorist bomb. It was a ridiculous charge, and even more ridiculous that they were convicted. They were strangers in the vicinity, and that is apparently reason enough for the Akritirians to put a person in prison for the rest of their lives.

Even though Captain Janeway found out who the real culprits were and presented the evidence to the planetary officials, they had no intentions of freeing our crew members. Eventually, we discovered that the prison was an artificial satellite in space. Dad helped free them. He flew his Talaxian ship, the *Baxial*, to what he told the officials he thought was a "refueling station." In reality, he dropped off the captain, armed with a Very Large Gun, and an away team. Together, they rescued Harry and Tom.

It was lucky the rescue occurred when it did. The prisoners were fitted with an insidious device called "The Clamp," which induced paranoia and insanity. Apparently the "life sentences" weren't very long because the prisoners fought with each other, leading to their deaths shortly after they arrived. Tom was seriously injured when he was attacked by one of them.

I visited with Tom and Harry in Sickbay this evening. The Doctor confirmed that both will be fine once they receive decent nourishment. He'd already treated Tom's injuries. I brought them a nice, tasty stew I prepared. "Leola root-free," I assured them, "and light on the spices." They were very appreciative.

Harry said he was very sorry he was "mean" to Tom after he broke a device Harry had fashioned, which allowed him to climb up the chute in the prison without being damaged by a pulse by a deadly forcefield. He wanted to see if there was a way for them to escape, since they all thought the prison was located deep underground. No one suspected it was hanging in space.

"You want to know what I remember?" Tom said. "Someone who stood over me and said, 'This man is my friend. No one touches him.' I'll remember that for a long time."

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**Stardate 50252.3**

Today we learned something quite upsetting. The Doctor's memory is NOT immune to fading after all. He will need closer supervision of any future additions to his program by Lieutenant Torres to prevent his program from degradation due to overloading.
Tom and B'Elanna were travelling in a shuttle, investigating unusual sensor readings, when aliens transported aboard and fired weapons on them. B'Elanna was able to recover well enough to bring the shuttle back to Voyager, but Tom's motor cortex was severely damaged. When the Doctor began the reconstructive surgery Tom needed, he forgot how to do it! Kes was able to guide the Doctor through the procedures necessary to repair Tom's injuries. Otherwise, he might not have survived. We all praised her, of course. I was tempted to call her "Mom," since she is my Dad Neelix's "significant other" and very close to Father Tuvok. She's only three years old, but she has what I've heard Tom say was an "old soul." I'm not sure I know what that means. I know I am only months old at this stage of my life, but I certainly look a lot older than Kes does. I'm not sure she would take me calling her "Mom" or "Mother" as a compliment. Someday I may ask her how she feels about it. But not today.

Stardate 50314

I've had some difficulty "processing" the event that occurred recently. Amazingly, Voyager returned to Earth! But it was the wrong century! And we've had to return to where we were when we first encountered the temporal anomaly. We're back in the Delta Quadrant, and in the 24th century, instead of orbiting Earth in 1996. Frankly, I'm glad, even though most of the crew wished didn't have to come all the way back to the Delta Quadrant. If this Captain Braxton had allowed us to remain in the Sol System, but in this century, this crew would have made it all the way home in less than three years.

I wasn't permitted to visit the surface. Only seven of the crew did, and for one, that wasn't the plan. The Doctor was abducted by Henry Starling, who was responsible for us being there -- and then -- in the first place. I stayed on board Voyager and joined Dad and Kes in their assignment. We watched the "telly-vision" to see if there were any reports about the missing timeship, which was why we'd come. We were safe on the ship throughout the adventure, I'm happy to say. The people of Earth at this point in their history had never met any extraterrestrial aliens like the three of us. Father did have to go to Southern California, however, and from the way he was treated there, it made me wonder how well I would fit in with the people of Earth even now. Rain Robinson, who became involved with Father and Tom during the mission, called Father a "freakasaurus." It didn't seem to be a compliment. And a group of men who held Commander Chakotay and B'Elanna hostage for some reason I still can't understand were on the verge of killing them. Some sort of "government conspiracy? Like I said, I don't understand what they were so upset about.

Dad assures me that things are different in the 24th century, but I'm not so sure.

One good thing did come out of this adventure, however. Henry Starling had chanced upon the crashed timeship from the 29th century and stole advanced technology from it, which he adapted and sold to the people of Earth in his time. His corporate empire originated from these stolen goods, and
he literally made a fortune. The Doctor was held captive and tortured by Starling and his crony, but when Starling wanted to transport the Doctor to a location that didn't have holoemitters installed, he gave the EMH a device from the 29th century which allows the Doctor to walk around anywhere. It's called, logically enough, a mobile emitter, and it isn't much bigger than one of our communication badges.

When Starling's plans went awry, our Doctor was able to keep the mobile emitter. The Doctor says he's now "footloose and fancy free." I hope he's careful with the device. B'Elanna barely understands the principles behind it and doesn't think she'd be able to fashion a replacement if it's lost or broken.

We learned something else because of this adventure. While many people still claim that time travel is an illusion (despite ample evidence that it is indeed possible), by the 29th century something called the Federation Temporal Police will exist. Temporal Mechanics is a subject taught at Starfleet Academy even now. In this course, the instructor notes that people usually don't know when a temporal incursion has happened. Everyone's memory of the old time stream is wiped out, and only the "new and current" timeline can be perceived. That's not true of this incident, however. We all remember what happened, and the Doctor now has a device from the 29th century he's been allowed to keep. Why? Was it a reward for preventing the destruction of the Sol System, which would have happened if we hadn't destroyed Starling and the timeship before he traveled to the 29th century, as he'd intended? We were never told anything about this by the Captain Braxton who sent us back to our current location in the Delta Quadrant, at the very time we left. He looked like the same Captain Braxton who confronted us, but this man claimed not to know anything at all about that other timesstream.

My family and friends all assume we were allowed to remember what happened because some action or actions by Voyager's crew are necessary to maintain (or perhaps, even create?) the time stream that led to the 29th century as it currently exists -- or maybe I should say, "will exist?" (I understand why Captain Janeway says temporal paradoxes always give her a headache. It's hard to know how to express the concepts, let alone comprehend everything about them!) Or are there aspects of temporal paradoxes which we don't yet understand? Is it possible that those who cause a change in a timeline might remember what happened in both, since they're outside of the change when it happens? Wouldn't it be ironic if the true purpose of this adventure was that it was essential for our Doctor to receive his mobile emitter, for some as yet unknown reason? I guess we'll never know.

At any rate, Tom's friend Rain Robinson proposed the name "Mr. Leisure Suit" for our Doctor, since he was wearing our 24th century version of the Starfleet uniform when she met him. I wasn't sure what a leisure suit was, so I looked up the term in the database. Apparently it was a type of off-duty clothing that obtained a bad reputation back in the late 20th century. I couldn't find out why. I guess it wasn't any more flattering a name for our Doctor than "Freakasaurus" was for Father. I shudder to think what Rain Robinson would have called Dad or me if she'd met us. "Whiskery Freakasaurus" or just "Whiskers," I suspect.
Dad would probably laugh it off -- and would tell me to do the same. I do see the humor, but I guess I'm Vulcan enough to find it difficult to laugh at it myself.

Or to laugh *at* myself, I suppose. That's really the point, isn't it?
Maladies

Chapter Summary

The end of a relationship (Warlord), an invader bringing physical illness (Macrocosm), and unrequited love (Alter Ego) bring pain to individuals on and off Voyager.

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Stardate 50352

Something terrible has happened, and Dad is heartbroken.

Kes's mind and body were taken over by an alien named Tieran. For two hundred years, the alien had traveled from host to host to maintain his mental life. Once he reached his home planet, Ilaria, this Tieran instigated a revolt, while inside Kes' body and mind, by murdering its current rightful ruler. He turned the ruler's sons against each other. Before anyone knew Kes was not controlling her own actions, she ended her romance with Dad. Eventually, the crew overcame Kes, and Tieran's consciousness finally died as completely as his body did two centuries ago.

I was one of the Security officers on duty during these events. As a result, I learned about what was occurring as soon as any of the rest of our crew, including Father, learned of it. He was held prisoner by Tieran for a while on Ilaria. It was difficult for me to maintain my focus on my duties while he was a captive, but I'm glad to say I did well. Once the incident ended and Kes returned to Voyager, I assumed she would apologize to Dad and resume their romantic partnership.

I was wrong. Kes decided she wanted to be free to enter into other relationships, if she chose. Dad, needless to say, was devastated. I commiserated with him and told him that it was likely Kes would recover her sanity eventually. She'd realize she'd made a mistake and would come back to him. He's talked things over with her, however, and he isn't confident they'll get back together again. As he pointed out to me, their relationship began when Kes was barely a year old. Ocampa have an average lifespan of only nine years, so, while she was mature enough for a sexual relationship according to the way the Ocampa live their lives, it's very young for her to be bonded for life to another person. She's already had a "false" elogium. Even though that happened through unique outside influences, Kes believes she may never have a "real" elogium. If she never will have a child now, Kes told Dad, she doesn't really need a mate for life, either.

Dad feels she's a "different" Kes since this horrible experience. Kes has been meditating with Father,
but she hasn't been able to get past her memories of the things she did when she was possessed by Tieran. "She doesn't want an old Talaxian for a mate anymore, even if I am still crazy about her," Dad told me sadly.

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Stardate 50425

While Dad was away with the captain, meeting a species known as the Tak Tak, everyone got sick, including me. Even the bioneural gel packs running the ship became infected by a virus that started out very small, but quickly grew to tremendous size. It was awful when those big things buzzed around us and herded us together. I thought I was hallucinating, but I was not.

Dad was infected when he returned to the ship with the captain. Actually, the captain caught the virus, too, but the Doctor had developed an antigen which he administered to her. He hadn't given it to any of us because he couldn't reach us. The huge viruses viciously attacked him whenever he tried. The antigen cured her, so she was able to set a plan in motion to get rid of the creatures permanently.

The Doctor reported that when these "macroviruses" tried to sting him, all they could do was make his photons flicker a bit. I think he was more worried about damage to his mobile emitter than he was of the creatures' attacks on his own form. Because of the way they went after the Doctor, however, the captain surmised the organisms were attracted to infrared radiation. Dad's holodeck resort program's holocharacters emit a great deal of infrared radiation when their programs are active. The captain opened the doors while the program was running, encouraging all the viruses to congregate there. It must have been very frustrating for these creatures when they were unable to incapacitate the holodeck characters. Once the captain judged all of them were on the holodeck, she released an "antigen bomb." That killed all of the organisms of any size at once. As soon as the environmental control system came back on line, more antigen was released though the vents, which took care of any small viruses which might not have traveled to the holodeck.

The Doctor and the captain administered the antigen to all of our crew, including me. It worked very quickly, I must say. I was feeling much better within a few minutes.

Once the illness was cured and the macrovirus population eliminated, we were actually more in danger from the Tak Tak. They communicate by gestures and can be offended by any offhand movement. Captain Janeway's habit of placing her hands on her hips was apparently some sort of profane comment in their language. The Tak Tak have a terrible fear of any infection (perhaps they've encountered these macroviruses before) and always "cleanse" any area they suspect has been affected by a disease. Voyager and her crew were almost "cleansed" into oblivion. It took a little time, but the captain was finally able to convince them that we'd dealt with the problem and were no
longer carriers of any disease. They finally let us go.

The Delta Quadrant, I must admit, does have some very strange inhabitants.

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Stardate 50461

The captain has halted our progress towards the Alpha Quadrant and changed course so that we may study a unique celestial phenomenon. Inversion nebulas are inherently very unstable. They usually dissipate in a few years after their formation, yet the one we're investigating now appears to have been in place for centuries. Plasma streams in an inversion nebula ignite, which causes much of their surrounding gases to burn up as well. No intact inversion nebula has ever been discovered in the Alpha Quadrant. A couple existed briefly in the Beta Quadrant. What is known about them up to now comes from what was learned before they disappeared. As soon as we discovered this one, the captain changed our course in her eagerness to study it at close quarters. Although the plasma streams ignite fairly frequently here, they never seem to blaze up so much that they completely consume their immediate surroundings. Some sort of natural phenomenon must dampen the reactions before they reach critical stage. We're fortunate to have found this one.

All nebulas, in my experience, are quite beautiful, but this one is spectacular. The swirling gases emit light in various subtle hues, punctuated by bright flashes of intense flames whenever a plasma stream ignites. While the members of our crew have often expressed displeasure when the scientist in our captain causes her to go off on a tangent to study something she's never seen before, I haven't heard any complaints about this particular side trip. Everyone seems happy to have something so beautiful - - and non-lethal -- to investigate!

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Stardate 50465

Dad hosted a luau in his resort tonight, and I must say, I had a very good time. Some of the Polynesian holocharacters are a lot of fun. I went around barefoot as a joke. My feet, fortunately, look more Vulcan than Talaxian. I have a little hair on my toes, but not that much. Dad's feet -- well, the less said, the better! Dad had fun with the hostesses, too. He's trying very hard to get over his breakup with Kes, although I don't think he's been able to fully accept what's happened. As far as he's concerned, she's no longer possessed by Tieran, so there's no reason for them not to be together. I guess it will take time for him to get over it. I've offered to share some of Father's meditation techniques with Dad, but he hasn't been willing to take me up on that as of yet. I'll keep trying. It
won't hurt to tone down some of that Talaxian exuberance, although I don't want him to go "all Vulcan" on us, either.

I don't think my friends Tom and Harry had very great times, either. Harry left early, right after he noticed Father playing Kal-toh with the holodeck windsailing instructor, Marayna. I'm afraid Harry has a big crush on her. He shouldn't worry about them! Father is married! He was simply taking part in an activity he really hadn't wanted to attend, which was forced upon him by Captain Janeway. I thought it was very nice of the Marayna holocharacter to offer Father an opportunity to engage in an activity that's a favorite of his, instead of standing in the corner being annoyed at having to be there. (I know, Father would never admit to being annoyed, but he would have been. Truly!) I suppose Marayna and the other holodeck characters are programmed to provide the resort guests a choice of activities according to their established preferences.

Tom has a crush on someone, too. He's been asking B'Elanna out on dinner dates quite frequently. So far, she's turned him down every time, although she's consented to lunch dates when she isn't too busy in Engineering to take a break. That means they're with Harry, most of the time. Harry and B'Elanna have been friends from the very beginning of Voyager's journey, when they were held captive together in the Ocampa caverns by the Caretaker. They even have cute nicknames for each other. Harry is "Starfleet" and B'Elanna is "Maquis." Since Harry has never followed up on asking B'Elanna for dates, however, Tom has never seen him as a threat.

Unfortunately for Tom, Ensign Vorik had already reserved a table for B'Elanna and himself at the resort. The table had a view of the lake which B'Elanna admired a few days ago -- and it was a table for two. I could see Tom was disappointed. Since Harry wasn't there for him to hang out with, Tom left early, too.

When I went over to say hello to B'Elanna and Vorik, the ensign became, I must say, quite possessive of B'Elanna. He made it very clear to me that he wanted me to go away, so, after a very short conversation, consisting of a variety of social greetings and platitudes, I took my leave. That's when the holodeck hostess Tiana came over to me, threw a second lei around my neck, and drew me to the food and drinks table. After I'd sampled some of the dishes, she pulled me over to where many of the crew and holodeck characters were dancing to Polynesian music. Watching Dad trying to do the hula was priceless. After a while, the musicians started playing Calypso music. I attempted the Limbo, which involves bending backward while dancing under a pole. I fell on my posterior twice before giving up.

I'm glad our drinks were all syntheholic, that's all I'll say about that. I was pretty fuzzy headed by the end of the evening as it was. Distilled spirits would have been overkill!

After I returned to my quarters, I meditated for a while on many subjects, but primarily, about interpersonal relationships in general, and romance, in particular. There's as much pain as pleasure involved, I fear, when people open themselves to romance. It's very difficult for humans, Talaxians,
Vulcans, and half-Klingons to find that one person to love, as I know now from observing Dad's struggles to get over Kes (and, to a lesser extent, because of Father's mourning for the absence of T'Pel). I haven't become close enough with any of our Bolians or Bajorans as of yet to feel comfortable questioning them about the subject, but I suspect they have just as much trouble with romance as the rest of us.

I don't know if I will be subject to the Vulcan pon farr because of my inheritance from Father, or if I will be free to pursue relationships any time I choose, the way Dad and other Talaxians do. It's probably best for me to wait before exploring single-cell sexual reproduction in any case. I still have so much to learn about myself, considering how unique I am, that it wouldn't be fair to involve another person in my life right now. I'm simply not ready for that sort of relationship. As long as I have Dad and Father to help me, I'm sure I'll find my way eventually.

Stardate 50470

Oh, my! We were all so wrong about Marayna. She's not a holodeck character at all. She's an alien scientist who mans a station which maintains the inverse nebula. It remains in existence because Marayna, and other scientists before her, have learned how to stop the plasma flares from reaching a critical level. They preserve the beautiful views so that visitors from her own planet and, of course, passers-by like ourselves, can enjoy them.

We learned all this because Marayna became obsessed with Father. She took over the holodeck controls to force him to visit her. Basically, she kidnapped him. Marayna is all alone on her station. When our ship stopped nearby, she found a way to inhabit one of the holodeck characters, just for a diversion. While there, she fell in love with Father. When he came to her station, she tried to convince him to stay with her. Father pointed out that she's simply lonely. What she really needs is the company "of her own kind." He explained that he has a wife and children in the Alpha Quadrant that he needs to see again, and that it's prudent for him to stay with his son on Voyager, too. He told her about me, saying that while his son may look fully grown, he's only been an independent being for a short time and still requires his Father's guidance. After he finished, she reluctantly allowed him to return to Voyager.

I hope Marayna takes Father's advice to take a vacation from the station. Perhaps she can find a partner who would be willing to share life on the station with her. There must be at least one other scientist who wouldn't mind working in one of the most beautiful places in the galaxy.
The Nekrit Expanse

Chapter Summary

From his inherited memories, Tuvix recognizes an old associate of Neelix's who has been a very bad influence on his Dad in the past.

Stardate 50479

We've arrived at the Nekrit Expanse. It's in the way of Voyager's path towards the Alpha Quadrant, but it's so big, Captain Janeway will want to find a way through it instead of going around it. We're in need of supplies, and there's a space station not far into it were we may be able to secure what we need. The captain will expect Dad's help in these endeavors.

From the memories I inherited from Dad, however, I know that as of my advent, he didn't know much about the Nekrit Expanse or the area of space beyond it. He's been on some missions, such as the recent one to trade with the Tak Tak, where he might have increased his knowledge of this region, but if he has, he hasn't shared that information with me. I suspect he has not, since he's been acting atypically for the past few weeks. He's been training to join Father and me in the Security Department. I've been helping him memorize regulations, and when time permits, Father has completed some run-throughs with him, going over special procedures. He's doing well with the training, but he's not ready to become part of Father's team quite yet.

I know he's still upset about what happened with Kes. She seems to be avoiding him. I spend as much time with him as I can, but it doesn't seem to be enough. He's been talking a lot about cartography lately. I'm not sure why he's so fixated on maps all of a sudden. Maybe he's nervous about not knowing exactly which path to advise the captain to take after we leave the station. It's unnerving when a ship's morale officer suffers from a loss of morale. That's what I'm seeing right now. I hope he gets over it soon.

Stardate 50482
Wixiban is on this station. Now I'm concerned about a lot more than just a loss of morale. Wix is "very bad news," as Tom would put it. He's been in trouble with Dad in the past. One of the reasons Dad was taken aback when I told him I possessed "all his memories" when we first met in Sickbay was that he realized I knew of all the shadier aspects of his history. His life, before he met Kes and they came on Voyager, was full of pain and loss. Some of the pain was of his own making, I'm afraid. I know I don't have all of his memories any more. I've lost many of them, from Father as well as Dad. Unfortunately, I remember Wix all too well. To say he's a bad influence on Dad is the understatement of the year.

I'm worried, but without anything concrete to go on, I don't know what, if anything, I should say to Father. If I don't tell him anything, and something bad happens, I will be derelict in my duty. However, I don't know that Wix is involved in anything illicit now. Dad has turned his life around since he came to Voyager. Maybe Wix has done the same since he came to this station.

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**Stardate 50484**

I didn't hear about Dad's trip with Wix in one of Voyager's shuttle until after they'd left. It's a humanitarian mission, fetching medicine from a supplier, Commander Chakotay told me, so I shouldn't be upset. I wouldn't be upset if it really IS a humanitarian mission, and not a scam engineered by Wix. I'm sure Dad wouldn't get involved with anything illegal if he knew Wix had such plans, but what if he doesn't know? Our first officer gave his permission for them to take one of our shuttles. He trusts them to do the right thing.

I wish I did.

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**Stardate 50485**

There's been a murder on the station. Since the murder weapon had a Voyager phaser signature, Father has been part of the team investigating the crime. I went to Father as soon as I learned this and told him about Dad's past ties with Wix. In detail. Father said he already knew they'd shared a past. They had been quite open with Commander Chakotay about being old friends. The Supply Depot administrator, Bharat, has had his eye on Wix ever since he was forced to impound Wix's vessel some time ago for non-payment of certain fees. While Wix and Dad took a shuttle on their mission to obtain medicine from a trader some distance away, Father said they hadn't had access to the phasers locked away on the shuttle the pair utilized.
I wasn't particularly satisfied by Father's answer, and I told him so. It wouldn't be that difficult for Dad to obtain a phaser. Everyone on board, except for little Naomi, of course, has access to phasers from the weapons lockers in case of emergency. The major weapons the crew calls "Action Kate Specials" (behind the captain's back) can't be obtained without clearance from authorized personnel, but that's not the type of weapon used in this crime. Wix visited Dad on Voyager when he delivered the spindle bearings he found for us. I wouldn't put it past him to lift one of our phasers then, without Dad's knowledge. Dad's been studying security procedures, but I'm afraid he sometimes overlooks the obvious.

Father told me Wix and Dad had already been interviewed about what they knew of the crime. Bharat considered their answers satisfactory. Since I came to Father with more detailed information about exactly how Wixiban and Dad were connected, however, he said he would still consider them "persons of interest" until the actual perpetrators are apprehended.

Supplemental

Bharat, the station administrator, has arrested Commander Chakotay and Tom for the murder! It's ludicrous. I know they weren't involved. The only evidence seems to be from a security camera recording of an encounter they had with the murder victim on the station's main promenade several days ago. The victim was suspected by some on the station of being a dealer in drugs (even though Bharat insists his station is "clean"). I cannot believe either of our senior officers would be involved with him. Chakotay and Tom insist they told him they weren't interested in the goods he was selling when he approached them.

I immediately thought about the "medicine" Wix and Dad went to buy on their "humanitarian mission." I wanted to speak with Dad, but I haven't been able to reach him. If he does know anything about this crime, he needs to speak with Father immediately! I wanted to discuss this further with Father, too, but he's on the station and isn't available for the private talk I'd like to have with him at the moment.

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Stardate 50487

The crimes have been solved, and Tom and the Commander have been released from custody. My fears about Dad and Wix being involved were confirmed, unfortunately, but while they were guilty of transporting illicit "medicine" to the supply depot, they didn't commit a murder. Well, Wix did kill the drug dealer, but the victim opened fire on Wix and Dad first, to murder them rather than pay for the drugs they'd obtained for him at his request. Wix fired in self-defense. Administer Bharat was still
going to sentence them to fifty years in cryostasis for drug trafficking, but Dad suggested a plan that would help Bharat get that clean station he was telling everyone he had at the Supply Depot, as long as Wix and Dad would receive pardons in exchange for their participation.

Wix informed Bharat that many illicit activities have been going on right under his nose. The criminals had gained access to the station security cameras. By substituting old, unremarkable recordings for live feeds, they managed to hide their nefarious deeds from Bharat. The drug cartel which supplied the drugs to Wix wanted payment in the form of Voyager's warp plasma. When Wix wanted Dad to steal some, he refused to go along with Wix's plans any longer. Dad wanted to help put the cartel out of business permanently. Fifty years in cryostasis, at a minimum, would certainly keep them from plaguing Bharat's station for a very long time.

When the criminal gang showed up and demanded the warp plasma payment, Dad announced they were under arrest. He warned them that he'd allowed a little of the warp plasma to leak out of its storage container. If the criminals tried to resist arrest and fired at them, all of them might blow up. One of the gang was stupid enough to think Dad was bluffing. He wasn't. When that gang member shot at Dad, he immolated himself by igniting the plasma in the air. Everyone in the area got a little scorched, including Dad; but Bharat and his team arrested the entire gang.

When I tried to contact Father on the station and couldn't get through, they were concocting this scheme. The matter has now been resolved to Bharat's satisfaction. The criminals are in custody, and he's learned how they were subverting his efforts to keep his station free of any such elements. One of the station staff, who was in position to switch the live feed to a recording, was arrested as an accessory to their crimes. He'll be in cryostasis for decades, too.

Since the murder was proven to be a matter of self-defense (a clear recording of what actually happened when the drug dealer died was recovered when the station employee was arrested), and in view of their assistance with the gang arrests, Wix and Dad received their pardons on drug charges. Wix was given his ship back, and he's already left the station. I suspect Bharat was eager to get rid of him. I know he told Wixiban in no uncertain terms never to show his face on the Nekrit Expanse Supply Depot again.

While Dad acted bravely and helped with the gang's apprehension, which earned him his pardon from Bharat, he was still in deep trouble with Captain Janeway. He finally admitted why he'd been acting so strangely. His interest in maps stemmed from his desire to continue functioning as Voyager's guide. As I thought, he's reached the limits of his knowledge. We're all flying blind now, so to speak, since Bharat confirmed that there really aren't any maps of the Expanse. It shifts constantly. The only safe way to travel through it is by proceeding with caution, scanning all of the time to identify any obstacles or dangers in the way.

The captain sentenced Dad to scrubbing the ship's exhaust manifolds for the next two weeks. (That's a thankless task, as I know from a memory of Father's, when he was forced to do it for a shift years
ago. In his case, it wasn't a punishment. Everyone on that ship had to take a turn.)

I think Dad is the only person who was ever happy to be assigned that task. He wants something to keep him on Voyager. Scrubbing exhaust manifolds will do that for him, to be sure.

Dad wants to be a Security officer, but that may be out of his reach now. I imagine Father will allow him to participate in emergency drills and volunteer for search and rescue operations and such, especially when we're short-handed, but as a regular assignment, I don't expect Father will be able to justify taking him on. Maybe Dad will be a better morale officer, now that he knows the captain has no plans to kick him off Voyager, even though he can't be her guide through the Delta Quadrant anymore.

I went to Father and apologized for not warning him sooner about the specific kinds of activities in which Wix and Dad had been involved. Father accepted my apology, but he admitted he should have taken my warnings about Wix's possible access to Starfleet phasers more seriously when I first mentioned them. However, he also told me I cannot take it upon myself to anticipate what either of my fathers may do in any given situation at this point in time. While I share many of the memories formed by my parents up to the day of my advent, for some time now I've been my own person. They've moved on with their lives, too. They've formed new memories as a consequence of the experiences and decisions they've made since Stardate 49659, the day I first met them. I gave Dad the benefit of the doubt when I didn't reveal what I knew of his past activities as soon as I learned Wix was on the station. He cannot fault me for this, even though my initial misgivings were proven to be all too valid.

Father Tuvok assured me that if I ever want to discuss my concerns in the future, especially if they are related to Security matters, he is here for me. He added that my overall performance in his department has been "more than adequate." From Father, that is high praise, indeed.

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Passions

Chapter Summary

After a side trip to obtain a necessary substance results in some major snafus, Voyager encounters a species they always expected to find in the Delta Quadrant -- just not so soon.

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Stardate 50539

Our scans indicate that there is a large quantity of gallicite to be found in one of the planets in the system we're approaching. The planet is unnamed, according to Dad's information, and it's currently uninhabited. I volunteered to be part of the away team B'Elanna's leading. Dad has had experience working in a mining colony, and I thought my memories of his time there would qualify me, as well. B'Elanna chose Dad to be part of the team, but she named Tom and Ensign Vorik to go along instead of me. When I heard she'd thrown Vorik off the away team, I tried to contact her to offer my services again, but I couldn't get hold of her before the away team transported down to the planet's surface.

As it turned out, my rock climbing skills were called upon a very short time later. The piton on Dad's ropes failed, and when he fell, he carried B'Elanna down with him. Dad's leg was broken. I was tabbed to be part of the team that brought him up to Voyager for treatment. I remained with Dad in Sickbay while the Doctor knitted his femur together with his osteogenic stimulator. After the Doctor finished the procedure, he asked me to remain with Dad while he dealt with another medical crisis. Father had stayed behind in the caverns with Chakotay and Tom to look for B'Elanna, who'd run off before we arrived. Since I wasn't due to go on duty until Gamma shift, I was happy to remain with Dad while he rested from his ordeal.

The Doctor follows medical confidentiality protocols quite stringently, but he sometimes has a tendency to be a little too fond of his own voice. In other words, his volume goes up much higher than it should when he's conversing with someone -- particularly Captain Janeway. Perhaps if I were a human, it wouldn't have mattered. I wouldn't have been able to hear his discussion with the captain about Ensign Vorik's symptoms, but Vulcan ears are shaped the way they are because in ancient times, the fittest often survived if their hearing was sharp enough to avoid becoming a wild sehlat's dinner. My hearing is very sharp.

When I was beneath the planet's surface, while we were getting Dad in the harness to bring him back
to the surface, I heard enough from Father's conversation with Tom to realize Ensign Vorik had lost
his place on the away team due to the fact that he was entering his first pon farr. I know all about
that, of course, because of the memories I share with my Vulcan parent. I realized Vorik's
possessiveness towards B'Elanna at the luau meant he'd already decided she would be an appropriate
mate for him. I overheard the Doctor tell the captain Vorik had made the mistake of trying to initiate
a mind meld with B'Elanna to bond with her -- without her permission. She forcefully rejected him
(breaking his jaw in the process) and tossed him off her team. But enough of the bond must have
been initiated to transfer the pon farr to her, too. She didn't choose Vorik to be her mate, however.
When she bit Tom Paris on the cheek, according to Klingon tradition, she was claiming him for her
own.

What a mess! Vorik managed to get down to the surface after all -- after disabling the transporter, the
communication system, and the other shuttles -- and tried to attack B'Elanna again. A very bad move.
If she's committed herself to Tom, as she surely did with that bite on his cheek, she'd never accept
anyone else for her mate.

B'Elanna fought Vorik for the right to choose her own partner and won. That's not surprising to me
at all. As strong as Vulcan men are, Klingon women have the reputation of being even stronger -- or
so my memories from Father attest.

And, of course, Vorik is now in very hot water with the captain, not only because of his sexual
aggression towards B'Elanna, but also because he disabled so many of Voyager's systems to prevent
anyone from coming down to the surface and interfering with his quest for sexual fulfillment. I
haven't heard what sort of punishment he'll face, but I can't believe he'll get off easily. Captain
Janeway will impose something more severe than the simple embarrassment he's already facing, now
that everyone on the ship seems to know he created all the engineering problems our crew had to
spend hours repairing. I find it quite interesting, however, that what happened between Tom and
B'Elanna when they were alone in the caverns has NOT become the subject of rumor. Father and the
command team seem to have found a way to hide Vorik's pon farr from most of the crew. The ones
who do know, like Father and myself, aren't talking about it. I can't say I'm not thinking about it, though.

I wonder, does this mean Tom and B'Elanna will get married? No one has paired off on Voyager up
to now, but from the way Tom has been mooning over B'Elanna recently, I'm sure he'd jump at the
chance to become her partner in life, whether it's in the Klingon way or the human.

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Stardate 50444

Well, I don't anticipate a wedding on Voyager anytime in the near future. B'Elanna has been
avoiding Tom -- and everyone else, too. After her injuries were healed, she stormed out of Sickbay before the Doctor finished discharging her. I'm not sure where she hides out when she's not in Engineering. Her quarters, I surmise. She must be taking her meals there, too, because I haven't caught a glimpse of her anywhere but in Engineering over the past couple of days.

We're all very busy, of course. The Sakari have been giving us the gallicite we need, in exchange for our assistance hiding their presence from anyone else who might come calling. We've increased their shielding capability by providing them with a supply of magnesite we mined from a nearby moon. Scanners can't penetrate magnesite. Panels of the substance are being used on the ceilings of the caverns in which the mineral is located, whether in its natural form, or over those the Sakari occupy. They utilize gallicite for their power conduits. After we're done, it will be almost impossible to detect this rare, desirable mineral, which might attract attention from other unwanted visitors. They've already been very successful disguising their life signs. Even our scanning devices didn't reveal their presence in the caverns when Voyager was in orbit above their planet.

I don't believe I've mentioned the Sakari by name in my logs before. Their people were attacked some years ago without any warning. The ruins on the surface of their planet are all that remain above the ground of a once thriving civilization. Fortunately, enough of their populace managed to escape down the mines so their race wasn't extinguished. When Father, Chakotay, and Tom were discovered by the Sakari, they tried to make the best of a very unexpected First Contact mission. Unfortunately, B'Elanna was in the throes of a bad case of "blood fever" (a common translation of pon farr into Federation Standard). She became agitated; there was a seismic event; and, to utilize a common cliché, "all Hell broke loose."

Eventually, all of them found their way out of the caverns. Yesterday, Tom admitted that B'Elanna could have resolved her "blood fever" with him. They were cut off from Father and Chakotay and lost in the caverns for a time. He was afraid it would ruin their friendship if they did. From the look on his face when he said this, I could tell it wasn't their friendship he was afraid of ruining. Tom loves B'Elanna! And now he's afraid he's lost her because he didn't take advantage of her when she was just about out of her mind. I understand completely how difficult it must have been for her. I try not to access Father's memories of his pon farrs, but though I seem to have forgotten many of the memories I inherited from him when I was formed, those are still annoyingly clear. Perhaps when I find a spouse of my own, my personal memories will supersede his. I certainly hope so!

Supplemental

Two things have just happened which are important enough for me to add to this entry.

One is that Tom encountered B'Elanna on the turbolift this afternoon. He believes they've "cleared the air" a little, and he thinks their friendship isn't over after all. After he told her he would still like a real relationship with her (he didn't tell me exactly what he said to her, but that's the gist of it), she told him to be "careful what he wished for." That sounded promising to me. I shared that perception
with Tom. He seemed much happier after I said that to him.

Right after Tom and I spoke, however, the captain made an announcement. We know the identity of the raiders who attacked the Sakari and forced them to live underground.

It's the Borg.

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**Stardate 50477**

Last night, Tom invited me to participate in a holodeck program he's visited from time to time. It's set on Earth, during the middle of the 20th century. It's based upon a novel written by the daughter of two of the people who lived through a serious conflict known as the World War II. We played American soldiers named Lieutenant Bobby Davis and Captain Charles Miller. Tom let me be the captain during that chapter. We led an invasion force into the French town of Sainte-Claire. The scenario was quite violent, with all of the shootings, bombings and explosions, etc., but it had a calmer and serious side, too.

One of the French Resistance Fighters fighting alongside us was a pregnant woman named Brigitte. After we left the scenario, I mentioned that she looked a little like B'Elanna Torres, or what she might look like if she wasn't Klingon. Tom stopped suddenly and asked me, "Do you really think so?" I said I did. He grimaced a little, and then he admitted that he'd programmed Brigitte's face to resemble the human B'Elanna's, after the mad Vidiian doctor captured her and split her into two people, one all human, and the other, all Klingon. I knew about that, of course. It was one example of the ways people have been duplicated which encouraged us to try to find a way to duplicate me. We were successful, and we did get Dad and Father back - although it was at the expense of my twin Neevok's life.

I suggested Tom might want to change that face, in case B'Elanna ever tried to access this program -- particularly since their relationship after the Sakari incident is still a little unsettled. I wasn't sure how she'd take it if she recognized herself -- or a form of herself, at any rate -- in a holodeck program. He agreed that might be a good idea.

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**Stardate 50617**
Ensign Marie Kaplan's memorial service was held today. We couldn't hold a funeral, since we were unable to recover her mortal remains. Commander Chakotay and Ensign Kaplan, who were in a shuttle, scouting a path through the Nekrit Expanse, responded to a distress signal from a planet nearby. When they landed, they were immediately attacked. Chakotay was rescued by a competing group, but Marie was killed.

Sometime later, Chakotay learned that the group which saved him were former Borg who had been disconnected from the Hive mind. Their cube had been damaged by an electro-kinetic storm. The group used a mental link with the commander to heal him of his injuries, and he became quite friendly with one of them, an attractive human woman named Riley Frazier. He later learned that Riley had been a Starfleet science officer who was assimilated by the Collective at Wolf 359.

While Chakotay was on the planet, Voyager encountered the disabled Borg cube. The away team brought back one of the drones who had not survived the electro-kinetic power surge, but whose body had been perfectly preserved by the vacuum and frigid conditions of space. While the Doctor was examining the body, he accidentally reactivated it. If this drone, which had been dead for five years, could have its original settings restored and was brought back to life so easily, the possibility that we could face a reactivated Borg cube was all too probable.

I was part of a security detail shadowing Dr. Frazier when she came on board to meet with Captain Janeway. She requested our help, because her group, "the Cooperative," was trying to build a life on this planet for themselves, while other groups were in conflict with them. It was one of the other groups who had killed poor Marie. What she wanted the captain to do, however, was to briefly turn on a neuro-electric field generator on the Borg cube. This would permit her Cooperative to communicate again in a Hive mind. She promised that this time, they would be answerable only to the people on their own planet. Of course, if this was done, the other groups, willing or not, would also become linked with their Cooperative. While the fighting would stop, the others would be unable to refuse this link, any more than they'd been able to refuse to be assimilated.

After the experience the Doctor, Kes, and B'Elanna had with a supposedly dead drone in Sickbay, Captain Janeway was quite understandably unwilling to agree to Dr. Frazier's proposal. She was willing to provide them with medical supplies and with assistance upgrading their security systems. She also offered to bring anyone on board who expressed a desire to travel back to the Alpha Quadrant with us. Turning on the cube's systems, however, even for a few seconds, was out of the question.

Dr. Riley seemed to accept this decision with grace. She chatted quite amiably with me as we walked towards the shuttle bay with the commander, B'Elanna, and Dad. B'Elanna, Dad and I were going along to help with the security upgrades. Because of the volume of supplies the captain was sending with us, we took two of our shuttles. Dad and I were in one, and Dr. Frazier, Commander Chakotay, and B'Elanna, the other.
The former Borg in Dr. Frazier's group were all quite friendly. I enjoyed working with them. They had a great deal of knowledge about their systems; what they lacked were the actual parts or a good way to make them. We replicated quite a bit of what was missing, and they were very appreciative.

Dad and I lifted off from the planet first. We expected to see the commander and B'Elanna's shuttle arrive right after ours did, but when we exited our vehicle, we discovered theirs had changed direction and had headed towards the disabled cube instead. The captain ordered *Voyager* on an intercept course. The commander had already transported over to the cube before we could tractor his shuttle back to *Voyager*. I joined a security team led by Father and Harry that beamed over to the cube to capture the commander. We couldn't reach him until after he'd turned the cube's systems back on. The cube -- and its inhabitants, who had been dead seconds before -- came back to life.

We retrieved the commander and beamed back to *Voyager*, expecting to be engaged immediately in a fight with the Borg. Before the cube made any aggressive moves against us, however, it self-destructed.

The Cooperative sent the captain a message: They'd ordered the cube to self-destruct as soon as they'd determined our ship was far enough away to escape damage and they'd established their link. The 80,000 former drones on the planet are again linked together as one "cooperative" entity. The link Dr. Frazier's group had established with Commander Chakotay to heal him -- and to make use of him without his consent -- has been severed, or so they said. In that eerie collective voice of the Borg, they "thanked us for our help."

Father told me the commander feels humiliated by the way Dr. Frazier and her friends used him to further their own ends. Ensign Marie Kaplan's life was sacrificed so that another hive mind of Borg could be established. The Cooperative says they wish to remain independent of the rest of the Collective. Forgive me if I fail to be comforted. While they treated Commander Chakotay with compassion, they also forced him to do their will when they couldn't get the captain to agree to their plans. It sounds a lot like the Collective itself. I hope they do stay on their planet and concentrate on building their ideal, independently-functioning Borg "Cooperative" -- and leave the rest of the galaxy alone. We shall see.

The one positive aspect of this whole affair has to be the knowledge we've gained about how a Borg cube and its drones actually operate. At this point, our Doctor has dismembered his specimen and is very hard at work investigating its hardware, especially its nanoprobe, to determine how they function, particularly in regards to the assimilation process itself. We've already updated the Starfleet database, adding a wealth of information that the crew of the USS Enterprise, which has been the source of most of what currently is known of the Borg, would undoubtedly envy.

If only we had some way to send it all back to the Federation! Someday, perhaps. In the meantime,
we must be ever vigilant in this area of space. Now that we've confirmed the Borg's presence in this area, from visits to the world of the Sakari and to the "Cooperative" planet as well, we are 100% certain we'll meet up with them again. I hope we'll escape unscathed from any future encounters. Doctor, research away!

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Tethers

Chapter Summary

On a world that's being bombarded with meteorites, Tuvok and Neelix' away mission goes awry.

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Stardate 50674

When Father and Dad's shuttle crashed on the Nezu colony world, I was naturally very concerned. Any shuttle crash is serious, but this was doubly so because of the asteroids which were bombarding the planet.

I was on the planet myself by then, in the shuttle piloted by Lieutenant Rollins. After an asteroid plunged down, endangering all of the people in the Nezu colonies, three shuttles were dispatched to search for a Dr. Vatm. He was a very respected astrophysicist who'd informed Captain Janeway and the Nezu ambassador that he'd examined one of these asteroids and discovered they contained artificial materials, indicating the bombardment was not a natural phenomenon. Before Dr. Vatm could explain further, all communications between \textit{Voyager} and him had been cut off.

Thanks to the huge dust clouds raised by asteroid fragments which had already struck the surface, we were out of touch for a while, too. Mr. Rollins is an excellent pilot, however, and since Tom was piloting the other, our shuttles were able to navigate safely, despite the difficult conditions. The Southern continent of this planet is very sparsely populated. We were able to eliminate vast areas from closer search when we flew fifty meters above the ground and were unable to detect any humanoid lifesigns below us.

When \textit{Voyager} notified us that they'd lost contact with Father's shuttle, we were redirected towards their last known coordinates and ordered to search that area for our missing team, as well as the scientist. Tom's craft arrived first and found the wrecked shuttle, but it was unoccupied. He noted an orbital tether platform was nearby, however.

As soon as I heard about the orbital tether, I realized that could be where my parents had gone. I let Lieutenant Rollins know that Dad had worked with a model of one as it was being built on another planet, and it's likely he'd learned enough to utilize this technology to save his team. Tom confirmed that its carriage was missing, which suggested they were using it to rise above the surface conditions.
Once they were high enough, the captain would be able to beam them aboard Voyager. Mr. Rollins and Tom agreed to continue the search for the missing Dr. Vatm, since we had no assurances he'd been found by my fathers. Our search ended when Captain Janeway recalled our shuttles.

When we returned, we learned the rest of the story. Dr. Vatm had been with them in the carriage of the orbital tether. The Nezu ambassador's sniveling assistant, Sklar, had tried to convince the ambassador to order all of the Nezu colonists to evacuate the planet. He refused.

Sklar was in league with the Etanian Order, who built the "asteroids" that were bombarding the planet. He murdered Dr. Vatm and attacked both of my parents in an attempt to keep everyone from finding out that he was a traitor. The Etanians use artificially created "natural disasters" to remove populations from planets they covet. They then annex them. One of their asteroid-looking spaceships had attacked Voyager while we were down on the planet.

Once the tether carriage exited the atmosphere, Voyager beamed all of its occupants to safety. Father had seen the late Dr. Vatm's research, which contained information about the asteroid weapons and how to counter them. He was able to punch through the Etanian Order's shields. As a result, Voyager won the space battle.

As soon as Father released me from my duties, I rushed to Sickbay to see Dad. He'd sustained a concussion in the attack from Sklar, but the Doctor assured me that, thanks to his superlative medical skills, Dad was well on the way to recovery. Kes was in Sickbay, but she seemed to be keeping well away from Dad. I was quite peeved to see that. Their relationship may have ended, but she was still part of the medical staff. It was her duty to provide care.

When the Doctor agreed to release Dad from Sickbay, I brought him to his quarters despite his protests that he didn't need my assistance. "I can get there just fine on my own."

"I know you can, but after the ordeal you've suffered, let me pamper you just a little. You do it to me all the time, you know." He laughed, which pleased me. I've read that laughter is the best medicine. After some of our recent experiences, a chuckle here and there wouldn't be amiss!

The next day I met a young Nezu woman named Lillias, who was with Dad and Father in the tether carriage. She seemed very pleasant. She was worried about her sister, who'd been missing since the bombardment. While they were in the orbital tether carriage, Dad had shared stories with her about his sister, my late Aunt Alixia. I was surprised. Dad hardly ever spoke about her to anyone, even me. What knowledge I have of her comes primarily from the memories I'd received from him at the time of my advent.
While we were in the mess hall, Father brought word that Lillias’ sister Halla had been located and was fine. She was overjoyed! She gave Dad a hug and a kiss and ran off to the bridge to find out the details of her sister's whereabouts. I was a little sad to see her leave so quickly. I thought she and Dad might be able to . . . well, share some special moments. Dad has certainly needed to be cheered up in a romantic way, especially considering how cold Kes has been to him.

I was very happy -- I might even say ecstatic -- that I was there when Father informed Dad he'd recommended the captain bestow a special commendation for his performance during this incident. Dad simply lit up when Father told him this. I've often wished they could get along better, since they have a son together. They're so different, it will probably never happen. They worked well together this time, though. I hope they do it again someday. I'm certain the need for courageous actions from both of them will crop up again, as it has for our entire crew, ever since Voyager was thrown into this quadrant.

After Father told Dad about the commendation, my parents began to banter about the superiority of logic over intuition, and vice-versa. Dad insisted he would get Father to "trust his gut" someday, while Father told Dad, "Instinct is simply another term for serendipity." Or luck, in other words. Then they traded comments about neither of them ever wanting to lose an argument, as well as the imperative for each of them to have the last word. Neither was willing to concede. It was hilarious (although I knew better than to laugh out loud).

I'm sitting here now in my quarters, and I must say, I've been pondering the question of whether instinct or logic should be considered the superior attribute in a crisis. After evaluating all the arguments logically, my instinct is to say that we need both to be successful.

And then I laughed.

Stardate 50679

Father and Dad seem to be getting along fairly well now, ever since they worked together to save the Nezu colonists from the traitor in their midst. Father still doesn't "get" Talaxians, although he seems much more accepting of their traits in me than he does in Dad. Obviously, Dad's a full-blooded Talaxian, and I'm approximately half that. I do have many Vulcan traits, of course. When I'm around Father, especially when I'm on duty, I do my best to emphasize my Vulcan heritage. It's always a bit of a struggle. I smile a lot, even on the bridge. I just do my best to hide it from Father by turning away from him when it happens.
Another reason he's more lenient with me is undoubtedly because I'm his son, even though Dad's in there, too. However, unlike his totally Vulcan children, whose mother is Father's honored spouse T'Pel, Father's only connection with Dad, apart from the obvious fact they both live on Voyager, is through me. I wasn't created out of love or lust. I was fused into being by a transporter malfunction, with the assistance of a very unique orchid that had symbiogenetic reproduction properties. I'm an accident. I'm happy to say Father does not hold this against me, but he doesn't have the same attachment to Dad that he has to the mother of his children in the Alpha Quadrant. Before I came along, and even now, he barely tolerates Dad's presence.

(I should probably record that Dad isn't really a full-blooded Talaxian, either. In addition to that tiny bit of orchid DNA, one of his great-great-grandfathers was Mylean. That hardly matters in the grand scheme of things, of course, but my Vulcan half demands I mention this fact. I don't feel a need to delineate the exact percentage of Dad's genome to the hundredth or even thousandth percent, however. If Father ever chose to make a similar entry in his personal log, I have little doubt he would. Maybe to the hundred-thousandth.)

To return to my main point, Dad more than tolerates Father. He has great respect for him. He's very grateful for the way he handled Dad's missteps on the Nekrit Expanse Supply Depot. Dad knows that if he'd remained in Wixiban's sphere of influence for too long, he'd slip back into the dubious ways he survived after the Metreon Cascade wiped out our family on Rinax.

Dad loves to tease his "Mr. Vulcan." He's always trying to encourage him to "lighten up" and "enjoy life." Father does enjoy life, but since it's culturally inappropriate for him to show it openly, Dad can't see that he does. Captain Janeway has known Father for a very long time. She can see when Father is pleased by something. I'm getting quite good at it myself. Father works hard at his emotional control. I know the fires that burn within him, which he must suppress every day. His inner Romulan could explode in every direction, and at any time, if he did not rigorously control his temper through Vulcan meditative practices. From the memories he's shared with me during our mind melding training sessions, as well as those I inherited at the time of my advent, I'm very aware of that fact.

Dad can be a little too "Tom Paris" at times. They both like to hide their true feelings behind jokes and a devil-may-care attitude to avoid getting hurt. Tom is a little more successful at this, partially because he will admit this about himself when something happens that requires an honest appraisal of his behavior. His behavioral turn-around after Father helped prove he didn't kill the Banean scientist, Tolan Ren, is a good example of this. He examined what he called his "cherchez la femme" behavior, realized it was getting him into trouble, and toned down the way he came onto the women to whom he was attracted. He backslides sometimes, but the true Tom Paris is the man who helped the human B'Elanna Torres through the hell of the Vidian mines, an organ-processing factory at its heart, when they were captured with Peter Durst. Ah, well, that Banean memory is from Father. It's not one of my own. That look into Tom's mind has always stuck with me, though, unlike many other memories I seem to have lost.

Tom and Dad didn't get along very well in the early days on Voyager because Dad thought Tom was attracted to Kes. Dad was surprised that Tom freely admitted it to him, when they were on what Tom
now calls the "horror house planet." That was when they helped a little reptilian baby survive until its parent could rescue him. That day, Tom also told Dad that despite this attraction, he had no intention of ever acting upon it. He respected the bond Dad had with Kes, and he wasn't about to try to steal her away. They've been friends ever since.

And that brings me to the real reason I'm putting this down in my log tonight. Since half of me was Dad, I was just as attracted to Kes as Tom was, maybe more. I don't share any of Tom's personal memories, the way I do Dad's and Father's, so I can't know for sure. When I was created, and Dad and Father were sharing my body in a way, that love Dad had for Kes drove me, too. I wanted to be with her in all ways. I loved her. Kes kept me at arm's length because I wasn't her Neelix. I was a combination of her lover and her mentor. When she saw me, she saw her losses, not Tuvix.

When Dad and Father returned to their own bodies and I was given the opportunity and privilege to live an independent life as Tuvix, I had to control the feelings I'd had for Kes. After all, Dad was back, and he was one of my parents. It was clearly inappropriate for me to harbor any romantic feelings towards her. She was Dad's girlfriend.

At first it was very difficult. I had Dad's memories of their intimate encounters and couldn't expunge them from my mind. It was fortunate I had Father to guide me. A primary focus of my initial lessons in meditation was to control my romantic feelings towards her, redirecting them into filial terms, since I fully expected her to become my mother. While Father and I have never spoken about this openly in words, when he's training me in mind meld techniques, it all comes out. His emotional control was invaluable as I transformed my love for Kes into that for a mother, rather than a potential mate.

Then Tieran happened, and Kes terminated her relationship with Dad. Once she regained control of her own mind and body, I assumed she would return to Dad's loving arms after she learned to deal with the actions she took when Tieran possessed her body. Once she began to see other males, however, such as the Mikhal Traveler Zahir, I realized there was no real hope of a reconciliation between Dad and Kes. She'd turned some sort of emotional corner. Voyager's "odd couple" of the mature Talaxian and a very young and innocent Ocampa was no more.

It took a few months for me to finally accept this. I would be lying if I claimed the thought of wooing her for myself never crossed my mind. Whenever I did think of that, however, I became very uncomfortable. I heard Harry and Tom laughing over something called the "Ick Factor," and when I looked it up in the database, I realized that's how I felt about romancing Kes. In my quest to see her as a mother figure, I'd lost any attraction I had for her as a woman. She's still lovely, of course, and to most people, she exudes a sweetness that can sometimes become cloying. I never noticed it while she was with Dad, but I can see it now.

Kes almost seems too nice, sometimes, but there's a brutal strain in her, too, which emerged when Voyager discovered Suspiria's space station. After Tanis, the Ocampan leader of the station, tutored her in mental techniques, she lost control of her psychokinetic powers. When she was trying to
increase the rate of growth of the plants in her airponics bay, she destroyed them instead. During a regularly scheduled mental training session with Father, when she was trying to boil water, she boiled his blood instead. Perhaps Tanis' influence had something to do with those incidents, but maybe there's more to it than that. I sometimes wonder if her mental abilities could make her go rogue someday, under another being's influence, or all on their own, which would put everyone on Voyager in jeopardy. Even thinking about that has had a chilling effect on my former attraction towards her.

Since the breakup, she's been distancing herself from Dad. She indicated they would "remain friends" when she told him their affair was over, but when Dad was in Sickbay, after he broke his leg in the fall when his piton broke, I never saw Kes ask him how he was doing. When Dad was being treated for oxygen deprivation, a concussion, and a laceration while we were in orbit over the Nezu colony, Kes interacted with him only in her professional capacity as the Doctor's assistant, and provided barely the minimum of care at that. I confronted the Doctor afterwards, and he admitted he'd given her some leeway because of her "history" with Dad. I was not satisfied with the Doctor's response and told him so. Dispensing medical care was her duty, and from what I saw that day, her performance was deficient.

Where others see sweetness and light, I now see a shadow, a coldness I would never have expected to perceive in her. Dad is willing to make excuses for Kes; I am not. Any feelings I might have had of a romantic nature are quite as dead as those plants she'd killed under Tanis' influence months before my advent.

I have no idea who else might be an appropriate partner for someone like me. I'm very sure I'm the only Talaxian-Vulcan-orchid hybrid in existence in this universe -- or in any others, if they exist. While that doesn't mean I'll never find a person who will become everything to me, as T'Pel is to Father, I very much doubt I will find that person currently dwelling on Voyager. There aren't any established couples on this ship right now. Tabor and Jor, former Maquis who are very close friends, have not admitted to being lovers, although the "rumor mill" asserts that they are. I know Tom would very much like to be more than friends with B'Elanna, but if they've actually become that close, they haven't advertised it to the crew at large. And that's about it.

Everyone knows this trip to the Alpha Quadrant will last for decades, unless some sort of miracle takes place. Right now, I'm content. My Vulcan nature may be keeping my Talaxian physical urges under control. From what I've come to know of myself, a sweet young innocent would not be my first choice for a mate. I'd rather be with someone as vibrant as B'Elanna Torres. From the self-deprecating way B'Elanna talks about herself, I don't think she understands why Tom and Vorik would be attracted to her. I certainly can see why they are. Since I'm pretty sure she'll end up with Tom someday, I'll have to look elsewhere to find someone to please me.

I just need to be patient.
Sacrifices

Chapter Summary

After the Doctor's attempt to sample family life ends in tragedy, Voyager encounters the Voth, a reptilian species which one of their academics believes originated in the Alpha Quadrant. The leadership, wedded to their Doctrine, does not agree.

Stardate 50842

We held a memorial service for the Doctor's holographic daughter Belle today. It was a very sad occasion, even though only B'Elanna and Kes had actually spent any time with her in the Doctor's family program. Dad insisted he needed to support Kes, who was quite upset by what had happened to Belle, even though Kes was not very supportive of Dad when he was in Sickbay after the incident on Nezu. That Dad would still be so solicitous of Kes in this situation just goes to show how wonderful he is. Not that I'm prejudiced, you understand. Well, maybe I am. I may be his son, but I believe I would appreciate his good qualities even if I were not.

I digress. To return to the subject at hand: it may seem strange to hold a memorial service for a holodeck character. Can anyone imagine having a funeral for a fictional character from a favorite book? This was a special case. While holodeck characters may be fictional, we interact with them and perceive them as three-dimensional beings. Whether or not they're sentient, like our Doctor, we give them a life very different from the two-dimensional ones we encounter in most novels. In this case, even though Belle, her mother, and her brother weren't self-aware the way the Doctor is, they occupied a special place in our Voyager community. The Doctor developed his family program to help him relate with the crew's situation. They were all forced to leave their own families behind when the Caretaker abducted them from the Alpha Quadrant. The Doctor thought that by sharing a bit of family life, he would understand them better.

At first, the wife and two children he'd created were so unrealistic, B'Elanna said they reminded her of "lollipops." (That's a candy treat on Earth, I understand. Pure sugar. I've never consumed one, but they do sound rather sickening.) Even Kes, who had a wonderful childhood with her parents Martis and Benaren (not that it lasted very long), thought the Doctor's family was a little too perfect. B'Elanna, whose family life had not been optimal, offered to "tweak" his program by randomizing its events. The Doctor would have to face the same crises families often must overcome in real life. The Doctor, somewhat surprisingly, consented to this change without establishing any limits on what kinds of events B'Elanna could introduce.
When he went back into his program, the Doctor's family life was no longer perfect. His wife was under stress from her job. His son befriended Klingon teenagers with a fetish for razor-sharp blades; and his daughter, while very sweet and loving, tended to take silly risks. When Belle sustained a mortal head injury in a Parrises squares match, the Doctor's first thought was to end the program; and he immediately left it. Tom Paris convinced him to go back to face the pain, to support his wife, son, and, especially, his daughter, as they faced her death. If he didn't, Tom told him, he'd miss the whole point of having a family. When he came out of the program after Belle's death, the EMH was devastated. The captain suggested holding a memorial service. "It's what we do to help each other when we lose someone dear. Why not hold one to help you?"

Father was not there. He assumed command of the ship while the service took place, allowing Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay both to attend. After Father left the bridge, he asked me to come to his quarters to practice mind melding techniques. By accessing my memories of the service, he said he'd be able to "see" it for himself. I tried to initiate the mind meld with him. Once again, I failed. Father had to go into my mind to experience the event. He thanked me for allowing him to share in the solemn service. I accepted his thanks, but I'm very frustrated. I can no longer ignore my deficiencies in Vulcan mental discipline techniques.

Although Father has been working very patiently with me for the past year, I have made no progress in the mind meld technique. Father usually explains that some Vulcans are incapable of learning it, so I should not be upset. On other occasions, he's assured me it's difficult to master the procedure and always takes time for anyone to learn. I know what he isn't saying. I may have his memories; my body may contain his entire genome; but I am not purely Vulcan. Because of my Talaxian genes, as well as those from the orchid which are part of my genetic make-up, my brain is not constructed exactly the way his is.

It's never going to happen. I'm simply not Vulcan enough.

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Stardate 50887

Voyager and its crew are imprisoned inside a Voth city ship. The Voth are a reptilian species and have us under close surveillance. We are not allowed any weapons. We have limited access to our computer and none to ship's systems, other than life support. When any of our crew must work in Engineering or in the Jeffreys tubes to maintain our life support systems, an armed guard of Voth go with us. The captain and Father are confined to their quarters. They're fortunate not to be incarcerated in the brig. Tom tried to fight them when they took over the ship, and he did spend several hours in the brig. They released him after the Doctor's mobile emitter was taken away. With the Doctor confined to Sickbay or the holodecks, our primary field medic -- Tom -- had to be available to take care of those who were seriously injured or too ill to get to Sickbay under their own power.
Commander Chakotay is also in custody, but not with us. The rumor is that he's with a Voth scientist. We have no idea what sort of treatment he's receiving from this scientist.

Dad and I were allowed to visit with Father briefly, while under guard. Father said he is doing well and not to be concerned for him. Dad and I can't help being VERY concerned. I'm afraid my Vulcan side has been unable to overcome my Talaxian side's emotionalism. I'd better cease recording this log now. I don't think I'll be able to speak coherently much longer.

Stardate 50894

*Voyager* was allowed to leave the city ship, thanks to Chakotay and to Professor Gegen, the scientist who had him in custody. The professor had studied the DNA of a member of our crew who died on Hanon IV -- Ensign Hogan -- and noticed many gene markers consistent with that of the Voth. He hypothesized that this could not be accidental. It would mean humans and the Voth would have had a common ancestor, even though it seemed impossible. Earth is so far away, in the Alpha Quadrant. How could humans and the Voth be related?

The Voth's Doctrine, which is codified into their culture and its legal system, is that their race originated in the Delta Quadrant. If Professor Gegen's "Distant Origin" theory is correct, all their treasured beliefs will be undermined. Commander Chakotay and Professor Gegen believe the Voth may have developed on Earth, possibly from the species Hadrosaurus. If they'd developed a culture and managed to achieve space flight prior to the demise of the large dinosaurs, which occurred approximately 65 million years ago, they may have made it to the Delta Quadrant many millions of years later, without retaining any accurate records of their true origin.

Minister Odala, who heard the case, ruled against Professor Gegen. If he held to his theory, he would be transferred to a detention colony, along with the crew of *Voyager*, where we all would spend the rest of our lives. The Voth are quite prejudiced against mammalian species. The only being on *Voyager* who isn't a mammal is our holographic doctor, and he's made in the image of one. Our journey back to the Alpha Quadrant would end here. Our ship would be destroyed. She did not say, but implied, that our lives would be nasty, brutish, and short.

Professor Gegen sacrificed his career so that we would be allowed to proceed homeward. Instead of archaeology, Professor Gegen's profession will be metallurgical analysis. He told Commander Chakotay he doubts he will have a distinguished career as a metallurgist. Perhaps. But he is a very fine being. Someday, I hope his people will realize just how noble -- and right -- he was. Even if human beings and the Voth are not related -- if the gene markers should turn out to be a random
accident (statistically highly unlikely, but still a possibility, I suppose) -- his willingness to keep an open mind and base his theories upon the evidence he's collected and not "doctrine" shows what a brilliant and ethical person he is.

Just before we left the city ship, Commander Chakotay was permitted a last visit with Professor Gegen. He presented him with a glass globe of Earth. The professor was delighted with the gift. The Voth have a phrase they use quite frequently to acknowledge the truth of a statement. They say, "eyes open." Professor Gegen's eyes are very wide open. His noble spirit has been an "eye opener" for us, as well.

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Chapter Summary

The Nyrians take over Voyager and banish the crew before the Captain Janeway turns the tables and sends them to a Habitat not at all to their liking. When a new holodeck program surfaces, Tom and Tuvok discover that Seska would never let a little thing like death stop her from taking revenge on the crew of Voyager.

Stardate 50930

When the funny little man who thought Voyager was too bright and too cold showed up in the middle of Tom and B'Elanna's argument about the Klingon martial arts program Tom had maneuvered her into sampling, their first thought was to find a way to get the man back to his home on Nyria Three. No one suspected he was the advance guard of an invasion by his people, who were bent on stealing our Starship.

Within minutes, we discovered Kes was missing. Harry Kim disappeared shortly afterwards, in the middle of a conversation with B'Elanna. Then it was Father's turn. By the time twenty-two crew members were lost, all at nine minute intervals, while a Nyrian arrived at the same moment, Captain Janeway realized a natural process was unlikely. At this rate, the entire crew would be Nyrian within a matter of hours. That suggested intent.

With Father and Mr. Ayala both among the first to leave, I became the ranking Security officer within the first hour and a half. Two thirds of the crew had been swept away, including Captain Janeway, before it was my turn. After I experienced a few seconds of disorientation, I found myself in a sunny outdoor plaza, with the captain, Father, and Kes looking at me from the other side. The atmosphere was comfortable, and the view over the wall, quite lovely. If I had chosen this place for Shore Leave, I would have been satisfied with my choice. Since I was there against my will, however, my appreciation for these pleasant environs was extremely limited. If I wasn't gazing at Father at the moment of my arrival, I'm afraid I would have thrown a nasty Talaxian hissy fit. As it was, I controlled my temper as I approached the captain.

It was clear by now that it was only a matter of time before the entire crew would join us. We had a very bad moment when little Naomi Wildman appeared on the pavement, screaming for her mother. Fortunately, Ensign Ahni Jetal quickly rushed over and picked up the little tyke to soothe her. Nine minutes later, Ensign Samantha Wildman arrived, frantic with worry about her daughter. Ensign Jetal
was waiting nearby and carried Naomi to Samantha to relieve her of her distress. I think everyone in the plaza gave a big sigh of relief at that moment.

The last to arrive was Commander Chakotay. Fortunately, he had the Doctor's mobile emitter safely stowed in his pocket. Almost as soon as he appeared, a Nyrian woman and her two guards walked into the plaza and informed us that this was our new home. When we greeted this news with a marked lack of enthusiasm, she became rather snooty. She basically told us she didn't care how we felt about it. We'd better get used to it, because we weren't going anywhere.

No sooner had this Taleen and her ruffians disappeared through the exit portal, another aperture opened up between our Habitat and the one "next door." A Voth-like alien named Jarlath poked his head into the plaza. Clearly, there were ways to get out of what we now knew was an artificial environment. A plan was hatched to facilitate our escape.

Since I'm recording this event in my personal log while sitting at my desk, in the comfort of my quarters on Voyager, Taleen the Nasty Nyrian clearly was not a seer. We did get our ship back. The Nyrians had seriously underestimated our crew's resolve. There were rough moments, naturally, before we achieved our independence from the Nyrians.

Tom and B'Elanna had been in the middle of an argument when Dammar, the first Nyrian, arrived on the ship. That night in the plaza, while B'Elanna was working on the Doctor's mobile emitter so that he could commence his "new career as a tricorder," I was nearby, working on building a weapon Father had designed from parts available within our Habitat. When Tom approached them, I was able to hear the entire exchange.

Tom brought a message from the captain to B'Elanna and the Doctor. Once it was delivered, B'Elanna apologized about her overreaction to the Klingon workout program. He accepted her apology, and it seemed their disagreement was a thing of the past -- until the Doctor began to butt in, making comments about "typical defensive reactions." Tom made the mistake of chuckling with the Doctor's comment about B'Elanna. When B'Elanna shot back about Tom's defense mechanisms, the fight started up all over again. The Doctor made things worse with every self-indulgent comment, until B'Elanna shut off his vocal processing program. He was outraged, but as far as I'm concerned, he deserved the "silent treatment."

The next "morning," the Doctor began his new career as a tricorder. He was able to detect the entry portal, and Captain Janeway, Father, Tom, B'Elanna, and Jarlath slipped through to reconnoiter and work on a way to get us back to our ship. Tom and B'Elanna discovered that our habitat was one of many self-contained biospheres, the environment of each tailored to its inhabitants. One was a rainforest, another a desert, and still another, a world of ice. Jarlath was not happy cooperating with them, however. At the first opportunity, he allowed himself to be recaptured by the Nyrians. B'Elanna and Tom managed to escape into the nearest biosphere: the ice world. It must have been very cold, because when they were transported back into our Habitat, they had their arms around
each other. They claimed they were sharing their body heat to keep each other warm. I actually believed them. The rest of the crew obviously didn't, because they all laughed. It's not as if anyone has failed to notice their mutual attraction, but laughing at them was a little -- how does the expression go again? Oh yes -- hitting below the belt.

Captain Janeway and Father had transported Tom and B'Elanna to our Habitat when they recognized the severity of the conditions in the frozen biosphere (which we later discovered was called the Argala Habitat). They'd taken over the main control room and learned that Voyager was coming towards our location, which was actually a big zoo of a ship traveling in space. When our ship was close enough, the captain transported Dammar and his second in command to the ice world. As Dammar had said when he first came on board Voyager, Nyrians like it warm and relatively dark. The icy Argala Habitat is as bright as it is frigid. The captain came in and offered a deal: they could have their ship back, but only after all of its captives were returned to their own planets, and our crew had disabled their sneaky little "translocater" long-distance transporter system, which they'd used to take over our ship. Since Father had released our crew and was already beginning to send the Nyrians on the Habitat ship into the Argala Habitat to join Dammar and his second in command, he quickly saw reason.

While we're back in control of Voyager, the Nyrians don't have their own ship back yet. They're enjoying a pleasant little vacation inside the warm, dark, Nyrian Habitat. Until all of the captives have been returned to their homes, that habitat is where the Nyrians will stay. Voyager and the zoo-ship are traveling in tandem at the moment, and will, until everyone -- including Jarlath -- has gotten back to the place they belong.

Dad saw Tom and B'Elanna relaxing on a love seat in the resort earlier today. He told me it looks like they've resolved their differences. They were lapping up the warm (artificial) sun and were smiling at each other. I was happy to hear it.

One more thing. Kes came over and chatted with me for a while in the Habitat. She must have noticed my annoyance with her behavior and wanted to make amends. Dad is the one she needs to approach. They shouldn't get together again romantically after all this time, but it would be nice if she were to act cordially towards him again.

In my more cynical moments, I wonder if Kes approached me because she thought we would be stuck in that Habitat for the rest of our lives and didn't want to burn all her bridges. Perhaps she now believes a hybrid with the characteristics of the Talaxian she once loved, mixed with the traits of her Vulcan mentor, could be the perfect boyfriend for her. If she does think that, it's too late. It's never going to happen.

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I'm relieved Father and my friend Tom are safe. The situation was very serious for a while. I must thank Mr. McKenzie and Mike Ayala for helping me with my efforts at tactical, even though we were never able to override the lockout. I must credit Harry, too, for his diligence restoring our transporter capability, although the crisis was over by the time he did. The captain and B'Elanna worked the hardest, altering the program in small ways to provide Father and Tom with tools they could use to help protect themselves and stay alive until their rescue; but in the end, it was Father who saved them.

I've been sitting here in my quarters for quite a while now, reviewing the history of the woman we called Seska, although we don't know for certain that was her real name. I can't say I ever knew her myself. I saw her only once, when she abandoned our crew on Hanon IV during her takeover of Voyager. Her Bajoran disguise had broken down well before my advent, when the Doctor discovered she was a Cardassian. Just as Father was a spy for the Federation who joined Chakotay's cell, Seska had infiltrated the Maquis for the Obsidian Order. The Galor-class ship that was chasing them in the Badlands seemed to know every move that Chakotay's group made. In hindsight, it was easy to see why, with Seska feeding them information.

I do wonder about the fate of that Cardassian ship sometimes. Since Voyager and Val Jean were both dragged into the Delta Quadrant by the displacement wave, was the Cardassian vessel brought here, too? I've reviewed the official logs myself, and I can't see any evidence of a Galor-class ship near the Caretaker's Array; but Dreadnought showed up elsewhere. I'd hate to run into a Galor-class warship here. They're much bigger than Voyager. It would be better for us if it was able to get away. It may have been lost in the Badlands, as Starfleet must believe of Voyager.

I'm having trouble concentrating tonight. It was an extremely stressful day, of course, but my current surroundings may be contributing to my tendency to "wool-gather" tonight. (Such a marvelously descriptive expression, now that I know its derivation -- but there I go again. Digressing. I'm being very Talaxian tonight, aren't I? And after such a Tuvokian day, too.)

To get back on track, Seska found and sabotaged the holodeck program before her defection to the Kazon and her premature death. Anyone engaging in the program takes part in a Maquis mutiny on Voyager, either as a mutineer or a member of Voyager's Security staff. B'Elanna found it first, and soon everyone seemed to have played it at least once. By the time I did, once as a Maquis, and once in my usual position as a security officer, the identity of the creator was already known. I didn't realize no one knew Father wrote the program when people first started talking about "Insurrection Alpha." If they'd asked me to guess who the author was, I'm not sure how I would have answered. I knew, since that was one of the memories transferred to me from Father, but the crew had almost as much fun speculating about the author's identity as they did playing it. I'm not sure I would have wanted to spoil their fun.

It wasn't a game, not originally. When the Maquis first came on board Voyager, Father thought they
would try to take over the ship to put Chakotay in command. He designed the holodeck program to train his department staff in countermeasures so they would not succeed. Somewhat to Father's surprise (not that he's willing to admit it), the mutiny he anticipated never came. Despite Seska's efforts to get Chakotay to do exactly that for as long as she was on *Voyager*, the commander always remained loyal to Captain Janeway.

Chakotay had attained the rank of commander before joining the Maquis, shortly after he learned the Cardassians had murdered his father. At the time, he was an instructor at Starfleet Academy's Advanced Tactical Training School. Once the captain placed her trust in him and offered him his former rank, although it had to be provisional under the circumstances, he willingly became again what he'd always expected he'd be: an honorable Starfleet officer. It is notable that while many of the Maquis who had been in Starfleet merely defected, Chakotay officially resigned his commission before joining the resistance organization. Seska should have remembered that when she thought she could convince the man to go against his principles. She used every trick in her arsenal, flattering, cajoling, and scolding him, and even attempted to become his lover again, since they'd been in a relationship for a time after she joined Chakotay's Maquis cell. None of it swayed him to her will.

Seska had sabotaged Father's program so that when he tried to revise it in any way, her changes and additions would supersede whatever Father had already put in place. He couldn't undo her alterations, either. When the crew wanted Father and Tom to extend it beyond its current abrupt ending (Father had abandoned it once he realized a mutiny was unlikely), thanks to Seska's "update," the pair were locked inside the holodeck with the safeties off. If the holodeck characters had succeeded in killing them, they *would* have died. They were in real danger until Father manually reset the controls on an "Action Kate Special." When Seska demanded the holographic weapon and pulled the trigger to execute them, she was the one who died. Well, I should say, Seska's holographic avatar died. The real Seska has been dead for a year.

So much effort, just to get revenge on Father. As Tom said to Father while they were in the middle of the program, "Seska wouldn't let a little thing like death stop her from getting even."

After I first appeared on *Voyager*'s transporter pad, I occupied Father's quarters. Once Neevok sacrificed his life so that Father and Dad could return, the captain moved me to the suite that had been Seska's. After her defection, Father and Mr. Ayala had searched these rooms very carefully. When they finished, no one else wanted to claim these quarters. That was helpful when they had to be searched again, after Father realized someone was spying on *Voyager* for her. (Dad and Tom unmasked Michael Jonas, resulting in the spy's death.)

I remember Seska, of course, thanks to my inherited memories, but I didn't have any qualms about living here. Father had successfully suppressed his feelings towards her. Dad had never cared for her much, but since the spy was dead, he didn't think my living in her former quarters would be problematic. Her possessions had been thrown into storage crates during the searches. The crates were still here when I moved in, but I carried them to a storage area in Cargo Bay Two and didn't think much more about them, or her, after her death -- until now.
Seska continued her spying ways even after she was thrown an estimated 70 years of travel away from where the Cardassians, the Maquis, and Starfleet were fighting their battles. Why continue the struggle out here? It's not as if she could send any useful intelligence back to her handlers in the Obsidian Order. By the time Voyager returns to the Alpha Quadrant, that region of space may have been peaceful for over half a century. For all we know, they may even be at peace now. Seska could have cooperated with our crew instead of fomenting discontent. Instead, she chose to defect to the Kazon and bear a son who will be raised without his mother -- because she's dead.

This program was designed to end with Father's death. Was Seska trying to ingratiate herself with Chakotay, to turn him away from the head of security, by reminding him of Father's past? That may have been it. When we examined the programming history, we determined her revisions were made about one month before she fled Voyager, and so abruptly, she left most of her possessions behind. Perhaps she'd thought she would be able to continue interfering with the ship's operation for considerably longer, but she was forced into flight once her true identity and treasonous links with the Kazon were exposed.

I will meditate for a long time, starting tonight, to attempt to understand Seska's motives. Why did she continue her enmity when she was torn away from her cause? Was it a need to be the one in power? Was she jealous of Captain Janeway's position? Right now, all I see is the string of wasted lives: Hogan, Gaspar, Jonas, the Kazon-Nistri who died when Voyager was retaken by Tom, the EMH, Suder, and their Talaxian allies. Seska herself.

My Vulcan half, the part from Father, is totally unaffected by my residing in these quarters; but I know Dad would never even think of trading with me, even though his suite is smaller than mine. While he does have a little window in his quarters and mine lies in Voyager's interior, that's not why he would choose to stay where he is. My Talaxian half is just a tiny bit superstitious. Dad would perceive an aura of evil lingering here because of Seska's residence. Whenever I invite Dad to visit me in my quarters, he always refuses. He says it's not his kind of place. After this experience, I think I understand why.

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Try to Remember

Chapter Summary

A life and all hope of a relationship end.

Stardate 50979

We lost Ensign Ahni Jetal today. She was on a mission with the Doctor and Harry when an alien ship attacked. Harry and Ahni were both critically injured in the attack. The Doctor managed to get the shuttle back to Voyager. His triage revealed that the energy weapon used by the alien intruder continues damaging the victim's spinal cord even after the attack stops. While the Doctor could save one of his patients, he didn't have enough time to save both, even with Kes' capable assistance. He saved Harry. Since Harry is head of Operations, working on him first was logical, but the Doctor still feels terrible about losing his other patient.

The captain has scheduled the funeral for tomorrow.

Stardate 50983

Kes came to see me in my quarters tonight. I wasn't sure if it was a good idea to let her come in, but she promised she wasn't there for "impure purposes." She smiled very sincerely and explained that something happened that she simply had to share with someone, and she didn't know who else she could approach. The events she wished to discuss occurred a couple of months ago -- or maybe several years in the future. I was intrigued and let her enter.

I invited her to sit down at the table and replicated a pot of herbal tea for us. When we were comfortable, she asked me if I remembered when the Doctor had to treat her for chroniton poisoning in his bio-temporal chamber, several months before. After the procedure was complete, she told several of us that she'd lived her life backwards -- from just prior to her death to . . . well, she wasn't exactly sure, but she thought she'd gone all the way back to the fetal stage before the Doctor's treatment brought her back to us.
I asked her if she thought she'd simply had an hallucination in the chamber. She was sure she hadn't, but whatever she saw, it was only a possible future now. When Harry and Tom asked her about what the future held for them, she didn't want to tell them what she'd seen. How could she? Just by living through it, and by giving advice to the captain to avoid the Krenim, she'd probably altered that future. "Do you think Tom and Harry would really want to know the Krenim killed B'Elanna and Captain Janeway? That afterwards, I married Tom, and we had a daughter Linnis together? And Harry married Linnis and fathered Andrew, my grandson? I can't imagine they'd believe me -- or want to! Tom and B'Elanna are getting so close. It's only a matter of time before they finally admit they love each other."

When she said that, I must say, I was silent for a very long time. Finally, I murmured something about how it was difficult for me to believe it, so they probably would find it hard, too.

Then I asked her if Dad had also died, and she said he hadn't. "That's why I couldn't share this with Neelix. You know how jealous of Tom he used to be. They're such good friends now. I'd hate to stir things up by telling him I may marry Tom in the future. If Tuvok ever gives me another mind meld, he'd probably learn about it, but I'd rather not tell him anything about this. Some of what I experienced in that other time stream would be hard for him to hear, too."

I chuckled a little and asked her why she thought I'd be able to bear the burden of her confession better than either of my fathers. Her delightful light laugh echoed through my quarters. "Since you have a blend of your fathers' strengths and weaknesses, I thought you would be able to tolerate my 'confession' better than either of them. You've inherited Tuvok's stable nature, so I believe you won't get too upset. But you'll be able to tell me how you feel about what you hear, which Neelix would do. I want an honest appraisal. Temporal paradoxes are so confusing, and my bouncing back in my own lifetime was even worse than most!"

I told her she could proceed, and she explained what she meant about "bouncing back" in time. She only saw brief snatches of each stage of her life, so she couldn't say for sure how she got together with Tom, other than the fact that it only occurred after Tom lost B'Elanna. "I am sure that the only reason it happened was because of the Krenim's killing B'Elanna and the captain."

She was happy she saw her parents' faces again, since both had their morelogia before Kes left the caverns to come to the surface of Ocampa. But then, the treatment she'd suggested to the Doctor during one of her "bounces" took hold, and she was back.

By the time she finished her recitation, I had one of Captain Janeway's temporal paradox headaches and told Kes so. She smiled, "I'm glad you said that, because that seems to be happening to me, too. I've been feeling very strange lately. I believe some sort of change must be coming on, although I have no idea what it might be. I hope it isn't MY morelogium! I'm not even four years old! But
something's . . . different."

I asked her if what Dad told me, that she thinks she'll never have another *elogium* and won't ever have a child now, is still true. After all, in this future, she "saw" herself having a daughter with Tom. "No, I don't know why, but I still think it won't happen. Perhaps that's one reason this other time stream doesn't seem likely, even though it felt so real while I was going through it."

"I'm surprised you came to me about this instead of the Doctor. He would have been fascinated by your story."

"A little too fascinated, don't you think?" I laughingly agreed. She became very solemn then and added, "This obsession over not saving Ahni is so sad. He's having a lot of trouble making even the simplest decisions. If he doesn't get over it very soon, I don't know what will happen. And after losing Ahni, I simply had to talk to someone. I've really been feeling the need to for a while, but I wouldn't feel right burdening the Doctor with this right now. I could have gone to Chakotay, but much of what I remember from that other time stream concerns him, too. For some reason, I never caught sight of you, so I didn't have anything specific to say which would upset you. Or at least, I hope not!"

I assured her she didn't have to worry about that. I wasn't upset. I told her that her reasons for not telling anyone else about what she remembered from that experience were sound. Since I don't recall anyone bringing up the subject of "Kes' wild story about living her life backwards" recently, it's likely everyone has already forgotten about it. I was unsure what else to say after that. I wasn't used to being her confidante, or Kes mine.

I wished I hadn't thought that last little bit. I've been more than a little envious that she's telepathic, when I don't believe I am. I think she did catch the gist of it, since she added, "I'm glad I came to you for this talk for another reason, Tuvix. Ever since your Dad and I ended our relationship -- well, since I ended it -- I know you haven't been very happy with me. I can't say I don't deserve any hard feelings you might have. I was beginning to think of you as my son, and that won't happen now. And I don't think you'd want any other type of relationship with me, other than to be my friend. Can we be, Tuvix? Can we be friends again?"

I nodded my head slightly. "I believe we can be friends, Kes. Just friends. Nothing more."

"Yes," she said sadly. "Nothing more." She stood up to go. At the door, she took both of my hands in hers. "Thank you for listening, Tuvix."

"That's what friends do, isn't it? Listen to a friend when she's troubled?" Kes patted my shoulder
very gently, nodded and smiled sweetly, and slipped into the corridor. As my door slid closed behind her, it reminded me of the door to that other possible future, the one which closed several months ago.

Some things are simply not meant to be. And I found I didn't mind at all.

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Stardate 50985

The Doctor has been obsessing so much about making the wrong choice when he saved Harry Kim's life at the expense of Ahni Jetal's, we were afraid we might lose him to a feedback loop. The captain decided her only course of action was to remove all traces of Ahni's presence on Voyager from the Doctor's memory files and from our computer records. The official logs will be "revised." Her likeness will be erased from the Doctor's holoimager memory buffers, too. While this is a radical solution, we need our Doctor. The way he's currently acting, he isn't functional. However, the idea of all records of Ahni's existence being purged was extremely upsetting to me.

When I expressed my horror about changing the logs and the excision of all references to Ensign Jetal, Father assured me a backup copy of all such records are to be saved in a portable storage module. Ahni Jetal still has a place in Voyager's history. It will simply be inaccessible to our EMH until we return to the Alpha Quadrant. Ahni's belongings and any other materials that really shouldn't be erased, such as her blood and DNA samples, will be relabeled and stored with the module. The captain plans to mark them with the name of Voyager's original helmsman, Lieutenant Veronica Stadi, who died in the displacement wave that brought the ship to the Delta Quadrant. A little ^ mark will be used on Ahni's labels to show they're hers, not Stadi's. I'm glad the purge will not be complete. It would be such a disservice to Ahni's memory.

Supplemental

The "scrubbing" is finished. If an inquiry about her is made now, our computer system will reply "no data exists." I know, because I tested it. The entire crew is doing their best to go along with this, although it's very disturbing. Everyone other than the Doctor now knows about the stored items, too. The Doctor is acting normally again, now that the captain and B'Elanna have completely purged our late crew member from the Doctor's memory.

When I meditated before going to bed last night, images of Ahni with little Naomi Wildman in the Federation Habitat kept interfering with what I'd wanted to contemplate that evening. I finally gave in and revisited the incident in detail, or I knew I'd never be able to get to sleep.
Naomi had been switched with a Nyrian nine minutes before her mother Samantha Wildman was. The poor child was very upset by the sudden change in her surroundings and, of course, because she'd landed on some very hard pavement in the center of the plaza. After Ahni rushed over and picked up Naomi, she rocked her very sweetly until the little girl began to calm down. Then she sang to her. It was a very old song that sounded like a lullaby to me. When I asked her about it, after Ensign Wildman arrived and was reunited with her daughter, Ahni said it was a show tune from the middle of the 20th century. By the time of our unplanned visit to Southern California, courtesy of Henry Starling, "Try to Remember" had become part of the standard repertoire. She said she didn't know why that piece came into her mind just then. She'd been in a production of "The Fantasticks" when she was in school, but she didn't sing it in the play -- it was sung by the El Gallo character -- but she's always loved the words and melody. "It's like the lyrics \textit{MAKE} you remember it!" she said to me.

When I finished my meditations, I looked up the song in our database. I found it and played it for myself. It \textit{is} a wonderful one, although I think I preferred Ahni's voice when she sang it to Naomi to the young man's on the recording. I saved it to my personal song list so I can play it again whenever I wish. Even if the Doctor should chance upon it accidentally, I doubt it could trigger any trace memory. Commander Chakotay had the Doctor's mobile emitter in his pocket when he arrived in the habitat, and they didn't get there until long after Ahni's performance quieted Naomi.

The lyrics are even more poignant now, after all that's happened. Hearing that song will always remind me of a very lovely person who didn't deserve to die the way she did. If we'd gone ahead and purged all memory of her from our systems, it would have seemed like she'd died a second time. Rest in peace, dear Ahni.

\text{}
Unholy Alliance

Chapter Summary

A new menace appears, and nothing will be the same on Voyager afterwards.

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Stardate 50986

I'm feeling very unsettled. Father told me that Kes has been troubled for the past few hours by visions of Borg drones piled into biomechanical scrap heaps. Dead. Dismembered. Father has been trying to calm her down. She's very upset. She wasn't dreaming -- she was in Sickbay talking with the Doctor about the Borg when the visions started to bedevil her. Is it simply anxiety? Or is it precognition?

Father doesn't know what is happening yet, but he's advised the captain about her visions. Since a probe we sent out months ago as a scout went dormant recently -- right after running into a Borg cube, where it was presumably assimilated -- the Borg know we're here.

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Stardate 50988

After an analysis of the lost probe's data, sent to us before its capture, along with information from our long range sensor sweeps, we now know there's a Borg-free zone running through the middle of their territory. The command team has dubbed it, "The Northwest Passage," after a legendary route through the Americas on Earth which 17th, 18th, and 19th century navigators tried to map. While it turned out to be real, it was basically impassable -- a ship had to go around the northern part of the continent and through the ice-covered Arctic Ocean to get through. In the 20th century, submarines were able to travel under the ice to the planet's north pole. During a period of global warming in the 21st century, it was technically navigable in the summers, but dangerous. Once the climate returned to more moderate levels in the late-21st century, the route closed up again. This Northwest Passage is a chaotic and dangerous route as well, since it's pockmarked by quantum singularities and subspace anomalies that will make it extremely difficult to traverse. Tom seems up to the challenge, however. I hope we all are.
Supplemental

This Northwest Passage is likely to be unusable, too. We’ve learned the reason the Borg have abandoned this corridor. They have a terrible enemy which travels through quantum singularities from Someplace Else to attack the Borg. A task force of these alien ships just chased fifteen Borg cubes past us, fortunately ignoring *Voyager*.

Were Kes' visions rooted in telepathic reality? I was on call this shift, but Father has ordered me to report for duty. We’re approaching the remains of the Borg cubes. What sort of aliens are these, who can destroy fifteen Borg cubes in such a short a time? I expect we will soon know.

Supplemental #2

We don't have a name for these aliens yet, but we know this: they are malevolent, and they are more powerful than the Borg. I cannot imagine a combination more likely to induce nightmares.

Father, Commander Chakotay, Harry, and I transported over to one of the Borg cubes to investigate. We kept our weapons down, since Captain Picard's crew on the *Enterprise* learned that Borg drones typically do not attack if non-drones moving through their vessels refrain from making any aggressive moves. Some of the drones were alive but motionless, many were lying around dead, and a few were moving aimlessly in repetitive movements, as if they no longer knew their purpose. Since the Borg operate as a Collective and typically act as ordered through the hive mind, I found the disoriented Borg more upsetting than those who were dead.

We approached the section of the cube where our sensors had identified one of the alien ships still clinging to its hull. One Borg drone was repeatedly stabbing the ship with its assimilation tubules, attempting to assimilate it, but without success. This alien ship was biological in construction, not mechanical; our tricorder readings showed that this "bioship's" cells were repairing a damaged part of its hull through a form of regeneration. While its alien crew was not in evidence initially, when Harry and I turned a corner in the cube, we discovered a stack of dismembered Borg body parts that closely resembled the ones in Kes' visions. Our away team decided discretion was the better part of valor, and we moved towards a point in the cube from which we could be transported back to *Voyager*.

We didn't get there quickly enough. One of the aliens jumped out to attack a couple of drones and knocked out Harry before jumping away, in the direction of his ship. We were able to drag Harry the short distance to where *Voyager's* transporters could get a lock on us. Harry is lying in Sickbay right now. The original injury from the alien was a mere scratch, but it's become infected. The Doctor told us that Harry's body is literally being consumed from the inside out.
One more thing: Kes has been getting telepathic messages from the aliens. They're telling her, "The weak will perish." Other messages say they will "decontaminate" this galaxy by exterminating "everything."

Between the enmity of this alien race and the very real chance the Borg will try to assimilate us if they get anywhere close to Voyager, my existence as a living, independently functioning Tuvix my turn out to be distressingly short.

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Stardate 50991

There is much tension on the bridge whenever the captain and the commander are both present. No one knows exactly why, but it seems obvious they are at odds over how to handle the present crisis. Captain Janeway has always made it stunningly clear she means to get this crew home, and as quickly as possible. She wants to plow through this area of space in a direct line, but how she's going to be able to do this without our becoming allied to one side or another is beyond my imagination. The Borg would want to assimilate us. This new threat wants to eradicate all life in this galaxy, if Kes' telepathic communications from them can be trusted.

Commander Chakotay, on the other hand, is not eager for an early return to the Alpha Quadrant. The Maquis would almost certainly land in prison, or worse, if our return comes very quickly. He'd prefer to turn back and search for another route, further away from Borg space. I suspect he'd be willing to stay on a planet for a while, as far out of harm's way as possible, and look for a way home later on. Perhaps, after a few decades, our return would be less problematic. The Maquis cause and the simmering conflict between Cardassia and the Federation could have become ancient history by then. Alternatively, they may destroy each other so completely, no one still alive will care about the return of a ship lost thirty years or so in the Delta Quadrant.

The captain has suggested another scenario, I understand. If we stand by and do nothing now, this new alien threat could destroy everyone and everything in the entire galaxy. There would be no home to go to then. No future, either.

Ah. I should stop recording this entry now. I'm in quite the nihilistic mood at the moment. Being caught between two implacable sets of enemies will do that to one, I understand.

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Supplemental

The captain has decided upon a potential ally. I am not enthused about her choice, but then, I'm not particularly happy with either option.

The Doctor has experimented with nanoprobes removed from the Borg cadaver that we retrieved from the dead Borg cube, before Dr. Frazier ordered Commander Chakotay to reactivate it in order to establish their "Cooperative." The alien cells have so much DNA packed inside them, we now know why the Borg could not assimilate them. The nanoprobes literally could not get enough of a "handle" upon them to borgify the alien cells. The Doctor has modified a supply of nanoprobes which can overcome the alien's cell structure. As a result, poor Harry is finally recovering from his infection. Since the aliens and their ships share the same DNA, the captain realized a large quantity of such nanoprobes, placed inside a delivery system such as a photon torpedo, would be a viable weapon against this Species 8472 (as designated by the Borg). The captain believes she can strike a deal with the Collective for safe passage out of their space by offering them the method to modify their nanoprobes -- after we've escaped Borg space.

Father and Dad were both at the meeting when she proposed this plan to her senior staff. Neither of them are anticipating its success. Dad told me he could see, from the look on Commander Chakotay's face, that he was extremely hostile to her proposal, but no one else's opinion really matters when our captain is convinced she's right about something. We're headed toward a planet inhabited by the Borg right now to begin "negotiations." I'm not looking forward to the prospect of dealing with the Collective and remaining . . . well . . . me.

Supplemental #2

The Borg want to assimilate all of us to obtain the instructions for modifying the nanoprobes into a weapon against Species 8472. The only one who currently possesses this knowledge is the Doctor, and the captain told the Borg she's willing to destroy his program rather than submit her crew to assimilation. The captain is now on board a Borg cube offering . . .

[Red Alert...Red Alert...tap tap tap...running feet, door swish . . . extended silence . . . hhhhh]

I see I failed to shut off the log entry recording function before running to my station. Editing out the silent section must wait for a calmer period, if any should become available -- and if we survive. Bioships attacked the Borg system where the captain was negotiating with the Collective. Voyager was grasped by the Borg cube's tractor beam when it fled the scene, with our captain still inside. The planet and the Borg cubes left behind have been utterly destroyed by the bioships. The captain ordered Father to join her on the Borg cube to work on the weapon there. That was part of the agreement the captain made with the Collective.
I never thought I would see this day. The Borg and the crew of *Voyager* are allies.

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**Stardate 50995**

We have our very own Borg contingent on *Voyager*. How special. (I fear I'm becoming as sarcastic as Tom when it comes to the Borg. I'm still in shock.)

While Father and the captain were working with the "spokesBorg" on the cube, developing a weapon to deliver the modified nanoprobe against the bioships of Species 8472, the aliens attacked. The cube was destroyed, but just before that happened, *Voyager* was released from the tractor beam holding it against the Borg vessel. Father, the captain, the Borg, and their supportive equipment (regeneration alcoves and instrumentation) were transported onto Cargo Bay 2. (I don't know what happened to Kes' airponics garden. It doesn't seem to be there now.)

Father has assigned me to guard duty to keep the Borg inside the cargo bay. The captain is lying in Sickbay in a medically-induced coma while the Doctor works on healing the injuries she sustained from the attack on the cube. Commander Chakotay is in command. He's . . . *extremely* unhappy about having drones on board our ship. Seven of Nine, the "spokesBorg," is rude and abrasive towards everyone, including the commander. If the captain fails to recover quickly, I doubt very much the Borg contingent will be here for very long. The commander would love to find a way to get rid of them. I think I do, too.

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**Stardate 51004**

It's all over. We traveled through a Borg-created quantum singularity and entered Species 8472's space, and then, after a short fight with its native inhabitants, managed to get out again. The only Borg drone left on *Voyager* is Seven of Nine. She's now a de facto member of our crew. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say she's an "unwilling resident." Only time will tell which she will turn out to be. I predict it won't be an easy adjustment for her -- or for us.

When the bridge crew detected an attempt by the Borg drones to create the opening, Commander
Chakotay ordered the decompression of Cargo Bay 2. The drones were sucked outside the ship to perish in space -- all but Seven of Nine, who was apparently at work in one of the Jeffries tubes trying to take control of navigation, and wasn't expelled along with her compatriots.

Unfortunately, despite the commander's efforts, an interdimensional rift was formed through the Borg's actions, and our ship was dragged into the realm of Species 8472. I can't call it "space," because it really isn't. We were moving through matter, an organic fluid of some sort. Our crew couldn't detect any stars or planets there. Almost immediately, four bioships rushed to attack Voyager. Our weapons worked on the bioships as they were designed to do, however, and we were able to travel back through the rift into our own space.

By the time we entered the fluid realm, the captain was back on the bridge. She wasn't happy with the commander's decision to end the alliance with the Borg, even though it was clear the Collective never had any intention of living up to its side of the bargain. When Seven of Nine coldly informed the captain the alliance had ended and the Borg would assimilate everyone on Voyager immediately, however, the command team initiated a pre-arranged backup plan.

When Dr. Frazier and her group healed Commander Chakotay of his injuries months ago, the neural transceiver they'd placed on his brow to control his actions was left in his possession. He used its link to distract Seven of Nine while B'Elanna created a power surge, severing Seven of Nine's connection with the Collective. It's the Borg's turn to lie motionless in Sickbay, while the captain and the commander debate what to do with her.

The only way we could return her to the Borg, which she undoubtedly would prefer, would be to leave her on a planet somewhere so they could retrieve her. However, from statements she's made to the captain and the commander, as well as from the Doctor's examination, we know she's a human being who was assimilated eighteen years ago, when she was just a child. Without the guidance of the Hive mind, how long could she last on the surface of a planet by herself? She may be a technological marvel, but in many ways, she's a child without survival skills.

To add to the conundrum, her implants have begun to fail as her human cells have started to reassert themselves. She will need medical interventions by the Doctor for some time. As long as that's true, we can't simply drop her off somewhere to let her die. Although I suspect the commander would be happy to get rid of her, I don't think even he'd be willing to advocate that radical a solution.

The captain and the commander have been very close ever since their time on New Earth, so much so that some of the crew (well, mainly Tom) speculates they were more than just friendly during the time they were marooned there. This rift in their relationship is serious. If it continues, it could stir up bad feelings between our Maquis and Starfleet crews again. I hope not. While we've slipped into an area of space that is not as thick with Borg as the area near the Northwest Passage, the danger from the Collective is far from over. We can't afford a permanent breach to form between them; we need our command team to be in accord, working together smoothly.
Supplemental

I forgot to record one very important fact in my original entry. Species 8472 did not invade our galaxy without cause. The Borg entered their realm first and attempted to assimilate them. Kes still maintains they wish to destroy all life in our space. I wonder. Are they truly so malevolent, or are they simply . . . seriously . . . pissed off? I know, I know. It's not professional to include that sort of language in a personal log entry, but Dad would put it in here. It fits. So I will, too.

We had the upper hand when Voyager was in their fluidic space. We defended ourselves from their attack, but that's all we did. I hope that will mean something to them if we ever encounter the species again.

It would be better, of course, if we never did.

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Stardate 51008

This was a very sad day. I think I saw it coming. I know Kes herself did, from our talk after Ahni died. Father thought she was unable to control her powers because of her insistence that she could see "beneath the subatomic" and damaged Voyager's structural integrity. He could be right.

Or maybe it really was Kes' time for her morelogium.

When Kes told me about the lifetime she'd lived backwards, from death to gestation, the implications it might have on how much longer she would live never occurred to me. If she did live those years, though, and returned to this timeline with the wear and tear of that other life on her body, she had already lived much longer than the nine years the Ocampa in their caverns accept as their normal lifespan. If the "lost" time stream and her current age of four are added together, Kes would now be thirteen. Perhaps she has simply reached the natural end of her days. I choose to believe that's the case. It will make it easier to accept what's happened. She's gone. We've lost her.

Kes was eager to develop her mental powers because she wanted to prove the stories about her people's psychic abilities were factual, not mythological. In the manner of her passing, as well as the abilities she's displayed during the past few years, I believe she's done just that. Her telepathic link
with Species 8472 was real enough. The Doctor detected changes in her brain indicative of such ability. The way the molecular structure of our ship was affected by her powers was certainly real enough, too. And what can I say about the push she gave our ship during her last few moments of corporeal life? Kes and the shuttle on which she was traveling didn't explode, exactly; but as her matter and the shuttle's were transformed into pure energy, our ship was propelled nine and a half thousand light years closer to the Alpha Quadrant, almost as quickly as the *Cochrane* traveled when Tom took it to Warp 10. It's fortunate all of us weren't transformed into . . .

No, I won't go there. This is not a time for crude jokes. I'm writing a personal memorial for someone I once loved: first, in a romantic way; then, as a son loves the person he believes will become his stepmother; and finally, as a good friend. I'm very glad now that Kes and I had that talk a few weeks ago, when we agreed we could still be friends, but nothing more. From the expression on her face when she left that evening, I think this was a sad acknowledgement for her. We had other chances to associate with each other after that, but not many. So much was happening throughout that time, thanks to the Borg and Species 8472. In fact, we're still working to repair *Voyager* in the aftermath of those crises.

I didn't get to speak with Kes right before she left, although she did get the chance to say goodbye to Captain Janeway, Dad and Father. I'm okay with that. I'll always view our visit after Ahni'i's death as our farewell.

So, in place of Kes, who may or may not have had her *morelogium* pushed forward by all that telepathic contact from Species 8472, we have acquired a replacement. She's blonde, like Kes, but her personality is as different from Kes' as one can possibly imagine. Seven of Nine has a wicked tongue. She's extremely angry -- petulant, even -- because the captain broke her link with the Collective and has refused to let her return to drone-hood. She's acting like a child.

Wait. I should step back and look at this more objectively. From all we've learned about the baby girl who was given the name Annika Hansen by her unconventional parents twenty-four years ago, she spent the last eighteen years as a Borg after only six as a human child. Maybe she's acting exactly like a child of six who has been thwarted in her desire to return to "her people."

I will try to give Seven of Nine the benefit of the doubt. I wish I could believe she will be as positive a force on *Voyager* that Kes was. Right now, I cannot. I can only hope I'm wrong.

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Adaptations.

Stardate 51045

We're still removing the "additions" made by the Borg drones during their occupation of Voyager. The captain is allowing many to remain in place. In some sections of the ship, our Starfleet technology seems to be working more efficiently because of the Borg "improvements." Captain Janeway is very pragmatic. On the day the Maquis were added to Voyager's roster, after the Val Jean was sacrificed to keep the Caretaker's Array away from the Kazon, the captain told us we would look for shortcuts home and would search for new technologies which might help us get to the Alpha Quadrant faster. This Borg equipment certainly qualifies.

While we're removing many Borg parts from the ship, we're not getting rid of them unless they're unsalvageable. We may find a use for them at some point. For example, with only one Borg on the ship now, eight regeneration alcoves are far more than we need. When we examined them closely, we discovered four alcoves were connected as a single unit. Separating one cubicle from the others can be done, but rather than take the time doing that to obtain the single one necessary to keep Seven's remaining implants working properly, the captain decided to leave one bank of four in place. Who knows? Maybe we'll collect a few more former Borg someday! The other unit was broken down, and the pieces were saved. B'Elanna isn't happy about having "that Borg" on the ship, but she's expressed an interest in experimenting with some of the hardware and circuitry. The captain acceded to her chief engineer's wishes. I think the captain would like B'Elanna to become another mentor to Seven. That could happen -- in a decade or two, perhaps.

The captain had hoped Seven would answer to her original name of Annika, but that's not going to happen anytime soon. She's allowing us to truncate her name and call her "Seven," however. I guess that's progress. I must say, thanks to the Doctor's surgical wizardry in returning her to a more human appearance, Seven looks . . . spectacular. She has circuitry on her left arm and hand and a few visible implants on her face, but her new prosthetic eye matches her biological one perfectly. He stimulated her hair follicles so that she has a nice crop of blond hair on her head. The Doctor prescribed a skin-tight therapeutic suit to support her body tissues while she heals from the removal of her implants. Its silvery material makes her look like an android. He's never explained why he gave her such tall spike heels to wear, however. I'm aware she requires a substantial heel on her shoes because implants running along her Achilles tendons can't be removed, which makes wearing flat shoes uncomfortable, but why those skinny spikes? I should think balance would be easier to maintain if
she wore shoes with thicker heels.

Tom was joking around about the Doctor's "reconstruction" of Seven. He thinks the spike heels have more to do with the Doctor's need for . . . stimulation . . . rather than for Seven's comfort. As Tom said immediately afterwards, he's a pilot, not a physician. (But I suspect he's right.)

Now, as long as she refrains from knocking Harry or anyone else over the head, eschews all attempts to contact the Collective, and manages to be less belligerent when anyone asks her a question, perhaps life with Seven will become a little easier for everyone -- maybe even for B'Elanna, although I'm not very confident about that.

Speaking of B'Elanna, Tom is doing his best to court her, although they still seem to be in the "flirting with a friend" stage. He found out about a Klingon holiday, and he suggested she might want to participate in a Day of Honor-themed holodeck program. It's quite a solemn event. On this day, Klingons evaluate how well they've upheld their personal honor over the previous year. Then they challenge themselves to do better in the year to come. Even Tom was surprised when B'Elanna agreed to participate. During the little free time they have available, they've been designing the program together. I wouldn't mind visiting this program sometime -- after B'Elanna has celebrated her big day in the program first, of course.

That will be a few weeks from now, assuming Voyager doesn't run into any more problems. A vain hope, I imagine, but I will hold onto it for as long as I can. We've had more than our share of trouble during the past few months, thanks to a long-dead Cardassian who tried to kill Father and Tom on the Holodeck, the Nyrians displacing our crew in order to steal Voyager, our imprisonment in the Voth city-ship, and getting pulled into a vicious fight between the Borg and Species 8472.

When I put it like that, it doesn't seem likely we'll be enjoying a routine existence anytime soon, does it? But one can hope.

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Stardate 51079

Father assigned me to guard Seven during our first attempt to form a transwarp corridor. Our engineers fashioned a transwarp coil from some leftover Borg parts. B'Elanna was on edge and expressed doubts about how compatible it would be with Federation technology. As Lieutenant Chapman told me afterwards, B'Elanna had already been having a bad day. Her sonic shower malfunctioned, and she "got chippy" with Tom when he came by to ask her if she was "going through with it." Mr. Chapman didn't know what he meant. I'm fairly certain Tom was asking her if
she was going to run the Day of Honor holodeck program they'd developed together.

When Commander Chakotay came to B'Elanna and asked her to take advantage of Seven's expertise in the transwarp experiment, she insisted she didn't want Seven working in Engineering. The commander pulled rank on her. Lieutenant Chapman said, "When the commander ordered her to allow Seven to be part of the experiment, the chief looked like she'd just been slapped." So I was there, guarding Seven, when the experiment turned into a disaster.

If I'd been there earlier, I think I'd have suggested that B'Elanna find an excuse to call the experiment off, citing "technical difficulties which we need to resolve first." Enough was already going wrong that day; a delay would be justified, if only to see why tachyons were getting into the warp core. Thanks to my fathers' memories, I know that isn't a good thing. The captain was eager to try out this technology, however; and what the captain wants, the captain gets. They only planned on initiating a subspace field with a tachyon burst, the first step in forming a transwarp conduit. They initiated the burst, but the conduit never formed. Tachyons flooded the warp core; they couldn't stop it; and finally, B'Elanna had to eject the core. Instead of traveling at transwarp speeds, we'll be lucky if Voyager can reach full impulse speeds until the warp core is retrieved and purged of tachyon contamination.

When all of us were clustered in the corridor outside Engineering, after we were forced to evacuate, she muttered to Tom, "Welcome to the worst day of my life."

Unfortunately, it was about to get worse.

The Caatati is a species that looks vaguely Voth-like. Since their civilization and almost all of their people were wiped out by the Borg, they've been reduced to begging for food, medicine, and the thorium isotopes they need to power their technology. The first ship that came by, before the experiment went awry, was led by a Caatati called Rahmin. He was grateful for what we shared with his people and went on his way. The next group that approached us was led by Lumas, a very pushy and rude individual. When the captain couldn't agree to his demands, which would have stripped us of all of our food and supplies, he threatened to take what he wanted. Normally, Voyager would have been powerful enough to simply leave the Caatati behind in the interstellar dust. However, without a warp core, our vessel was no match for Lumas' fleet.

Tom and B'Elanna had taken the Cochrane to search for the core, right after Lumas issued his threats. By the time they found it, Lumas had, too. When B'Elanna tried to disrupt the Caatati tractor beam without damaging the core, the Caatati's countermeasures blew up the Cochrane. Tom and B'Elanna managed to jump into EV suits and transport out of the shuttle before it exploded, but they were stranded in space, awaiting rescue. (We're severely short of shuttles right now, since we haven't had a chance to replace the one Kes took. If we'd had another that was space-worthy, Tom and B'Elanna wouldn't have been searching for the core on their own.)
The Caatati brought the warp core back to Voyager, leaving Tom and B'Elanna floating in space. They wanted ALL our food, medical supplies, and thorium isotopes in exchange for its return. Fortunately, Seven came up with a solution which hadn't occurred to her when Rahmin came to ask us for help. She was able to construct a small energy matrix that would produce enough thorium isotopes each day to power one of their ships. The device would serve as a template for the Caatati to build one for each of their vessels. Seven also offered them the schematics for the device and components, allowing them to begin constructing more right away. With sufficient power, the Caatati's own replicator technology can meet their needs for food and medicines.

Once we'd stabilized the warp core and reinstalled it, we went after Tom and B'Elanna. Ion turbulence had caused both of their suits to leak oxygen, and they were literally seconds from death. We were lucky to get to them when we did. They've been treated for oxygen deprivation, and the Doctor assures us they'll be fine.

Voyager will be limited to impulse speeds while we complete repairs to the core. The shuttle construction crew has promised the captain that at least two more shuttles will be operational within the next two days. It's obvious we need them!

I never did find out if B'Elanna went through with the Day of Honor program. Dad told me he offered her a traditional meal of Rokeg Blood Pie and encouraged her to go to the holodeck to "celebrate the day." Dad believes it's important for people to honor their traditions. It wouldn't surprise me if she never got the chance, considering everything that happened. Tom might know. When he's released from Sickbay, I'll ask him about it.

Supplemental

According to Tom, B'Elanna started the program, but she didn't finish it. I was sorry to hear that. So, even more went wrong for B'Elanna today than I'd known about. Something else seemed to be bothering Tom, too, but when I asked him about it, he changed the subject and started joking around. Whenever he does that, I know he doesn't want to talk about whatever it is anymore. Tom and B'Elanna worked on that program together. I guess he's disappointed she didn't like it.

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Stardate 51081

B'Elanna has been very busy, cleaning up after the transwarp experiment disaster. The captain has
agreed not to pursue this technology again unless we can obtain a real transwarp coil from a Borg vessel. We could have obtained a coil from the wreckage of one of those fifteen Borg cubes the bioships attacked if we had any idea we'd want one. Of course, we didn't have time for a salvage operation right then. Maybe someday we'll be able to salvage a transwarp coil from another wreck. Captain Janeway will be on the lookout for a working coil, we can be sure of that. She certainly won't forget about the possibility of using one to get home faster.

While I was off duty this morning, I went to Engineering to offer my services to B'Elanna. She accepted gratefully and had me check over the magnetic constrictors, to make sure they were undamaged. When we took a break, I asked her if she'd visited the Day of Honor program as she'd planned. I wasn't sure she'd answer, but she finally admitted she didn't finish it. When the Klingon Master leading her through the program asked her about her "courageous deeds" during the past year, she thought it was silly. She told me she didn't have any "courageous deeds" to announce. I was surprised, and I told her so. "What about the way you boarded Dreadnought to keep it from destroying an entire world? How you made the Enarans face their genocidal past? And when Voyager was in such trouble because of the Borg and Species 8472, didn't you break Seven's link with the Collective? That allowed us to escape assimilation."

She said she was only doing her duty when she broke Seven's link. "Since I was the one who reprogrammed Dreadnought, I was correcting a wrong I'd already committed. I had to stop it from killing all those people -- or everyone on Voyager. You know the captain would have intercepted Dreadnought with this ship to blow it up before it could destroy that planet. And Korenna Mirell was the courageous one. She shared her memories of the Enaran atrocities with me at the cost of her own life, so I could pass them on to her people through Jessen."

I begged to differ. "You didn't have to risk your life by going onto a weapon of mass destruction to keep it from killing millions. And just because you had help from Korenna, or were 'only doing your duty,' that doesn't negate your personal heroism. If you decide to finish that program, remember that. You do have great deeds to tout that even a Klingon Master would accept as heroic." I had to go on duty then, so I couldn't continue our discussion, but at least she hadn't blown up at me. When I left, she seemed to be thinking very seriously about what I'd said.

I find it amazing that someone as accomplished and brave as B'Elanna Torres doesn't see that she is. I hope she does go back to that program, even if the actual Day of Honor has already passed us by. Tom is always saying she shouldn't run away from who she is. And he's right.

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Stolen Lives

Chapter Summary

The Doctor meets another hologram who has rather strange ideas about "organics," and Seven confronts her past life, "before Assimilation."

Stardate 51084

Today the captain granted Father the rank of lieutenant commander. I was so proud. It's just the second promotion she's given out since our ship arrived in the Delta Quadrant. The only other one was to Lieutenant Rollins, who was promoted at the same time Captain Janeway granted Tom Paris, Commander Chakotay, B'Elanna Torres, and the other Maquis provisional appointments to make them part of our crew. Father has earned his new rank. He might have achieved it before this, if Voyager had never come to the Delta Quadrant.

I imagine Captain Janeway may have had another motive, too. The last few months have been extremely difficult, or, to quote Tom, "Brutal!" Everyone's morale needed a bit of a lift. It's ironic that Father would deny it was necessary in his case -- even though I'm sure it was. I know my own morale would be substantially improved if the captain should promote me. And Ensign Harry Kim is constantly reminding us that if he were on a ship in the Alpha Quadrant, by now he'd be a lieutenant j.g. -- at least. In my very humble opinion, both of us have demonstrated the ability to serve at a higher level, but we must be patient. We don't know how long it will be before we're able to communicate with Starfleet Command. Until then, no one's provisional rank will be confirmed. Under these circumstances, I don't feel slighted by remaining at the junior grade level. If the normal pattern of promotions were maintained on Voyager, we would have a ship full of commanders and admirals in twenty years. That's impractical.

When the captain spoke with Dad to arrange a little celebration to mark the occasion, he told her it was the perfect opportunity to hold a formal dinner. The captain thanked him for his thoughtfulness, but she decided buffet service would be more than adequate. She did authorize what is commonly called a "roast," however. Various crew members shared stories about Father, some very complimentary, while some were humorous, or even embarrassing.

Harry and Tom talked about some of the pranks they've pulled on Father. They've altered his holodeck programs, which tend to be exceedingly solemn, by inserting comical elements to surprise him when he goes into them. Once they reprogrammed Father's tactical station to say, "Live long and
prosper," whenever he entered a command. On that same day, whenever he requested a food item from his replicator, it said the same thing.

The captain spoke about an incident during her first command. Father "dressed her down" in front of three admirals for instituting improper tactical procedures. With a smile, she admitted, "He was right." She congratulated Father for his "outstanding service" and pinned a new black-centered pip onto his collar to join the two metallic ones, to a hearty round of applause.

Father was permitted to give a few remarks of his own, starting with the comment that had he known promotion would entail "ritual humiliation," he might have declined the honor. He went on to say he's learned to respect many crew members. Then he looked straight at Tom and Harry and said, "Others, I have learned to tolerate." No one laughed harder than Tom and Harry. He finished with a promise to do his best to secure safe passage for everyone back to the Alpha Quadrant, adding the Vulcan salute, and repeating the admonition to "Live long, and prosper." I must confess, my Talaxian side was showing. I was misty-eyed throughout the event.

As people got up from their seats and began to socialize, as they often do at affairs such as this, I noticed B'Elanna slipping rather hastily out of the Mess Hall. Tom ran after her. I'm not sure exactly what it was they said to each other, but the next thing I saw was Tom "snogging" B'Elanna. (That's a humorous term for the way they were kissing, which Harry shared with me afterwards.) They were certainly . . . enthusiastic. I'm not sure how long it might have gone on like that if they hadn't been interrupted. For some reason, our EMH loves to take any opportunity to annoy Tom. It would bother me if Tom wasn't so adept at needling the Doctor back. Whatever the Doctor said made B'Elanna scuttle away, while Tom, in some distress, replied in a very carrying tone of voice, "You want me to be the new nurse?"

As I learned later, that's exactly what the Doctor ordered -- with the captain's blessing, of course. In fact, Tom is in charge of Sickbay at this moment. The Doctor and B'Elanna have been called away on an away mission. A distress call was received from an isomorphic projection -- another term, apparently, for a holographic being like our Doctor. The crew on the isomorph's ship had all died from a fatal virus. He was alone and sounded frightened. So, right after Tom and B'Elanna ended another extended period of mutual avoidance, they've been separated before they can truly "enjoy" each other's company.

**Supplemental**

I understand Harry will be working with a lovely young woman, too, although his partner in the new Astrometrics laboratory project has proven to be even more difficult to deal with than B'Elanna can be sometimes. Commander Chakotay has assigned Ensign Kim to work with Seven of Nine, to incorporate her knowledge of Borg systems with Federation technology to improve our star-mapping capability. As of its launch less than four years ago, Voyager's systems were state of the art. That's not likely to be the case now; but it will be again once Seven and Harry are finished updating the
Starry-eyed Ensign Harry Kim and the very pragmatic, socially clueless Seven of Nine will be together again, despite Seven's assault on Harry only weeks ago. This promises to be an even more captivating entertainment than observing Tom and B'Elanna "snogging" in the corridor. I hope Tom's field medic skills are up to the task.

**Supplemental #2**

Harry and Seven have already made a trip into Sickbay this afternoon. No head trauma was involved on this occasion, fortunately. While they were working in a Jeffries tube, Seven sustained a hand laceration. As a Borg, she was used to seeing her nanoprobes heal a simple injury like that within minutes. This time the wound bled freely, which upset Seven, who thought she had become "weak." Tom treated her hand, but he had a message for his friend, too. Mr. Kim is often attracted to women who are unattainable, or, as Tom puts it, "out of his league." He could see that starry-eyed look in Harry's eye this time, too. Tom didn't tell me exactly what he told his friend when I spoke with him afterwards, but it isn't hard to figure out. Tom was warning him to take things very slowly. I think even little Naomi Wildman may know by now that Harry has a massive crush on Seven.

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**Stardate 51085**

B'Elanna is back. Tom wasn't sorry to be in Sickbay when they returned, although the injury to her heart from that murderous isomorphic projection was alarming. He assisted the Doctor with B'Elanna's treatment, who then "placed her under observation" for that evening. Tom will be performing this observation in B'Elanna's quarters.

From the wide grins I saw spreading over both of their faces when I passed by their table in the Mess Hall this morning, I thought, "Kes was right." She'd predicted it was only a matter of time before they admitted they loved one another. They finally had an opportunity to say the words to each other last night. When they were floating in space in their EV suits they certainly had more critical issues on their minds -- such as surviving until they were rescued -- to have any heart-to-heart chats about their affection for one another! Although, I must say, it would be just like them to have done something like that, wouldn't it?

Ah, young love. I wouldn't mind having a go at it myself one day. I'll just have to make sure my beloved is not an HD-25 Isomorphic Projection with homicidal tendencies. Dejaren murdered his crew because organics revolted him, shedding their "skin and oily residue" all over the vessel,
making a mess of "his" ship, which he was expected to keep spotlessly clean. He also claimed the crew had treated him very badly, implying some sort of abuse. If true, that's an extremely disturbing allegation. It might explain why his program became so terribly unstable. Since Dejaren attacked B'Elanna when she was simply trying to help him survive, however, his claims could have been a fabrication to justify his snuffing out six organic lives. He was going to kill B'Elanna, too, but she managed to permanently deactivate Dejaren's holomatrix before he could.

I understand the Doctor brought Dejaren's holographic pet fish program home with him. "Spectrum" can serve as a reminder that a photonic being can be a little TOO fastidious when it comes to organics like us. At least the EMH won't have to worry about cleaning the fishbowl.

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Stardate 51087

Harry and Seven have finished the schematics for the upgraded Astrometrics lab.

When Harry handed the plans to Commander Chakotay, the commander asked him to work with Seven again, supervising the team which will actually construct the new lab. According to the rumor mill, Harry wanted to decline the honor. That surprises me. Harry's always hinting about wanting a promotion to lieutenant. Turning down assignments like this won't endear him to the captain and commander. He should willingly take on more responsibility and volunteer his services to provide more justification for a raise in rank.

When I asked Tom if there was any basis to this rumor, he said, "It's a long story, Tuvix. Harry had a slight nervous breakdown the other day, and the only thing I'm authorized to say at this time is that Harry and Seven will not be visiting any holodeck programs together in the immediate future."

I thought that went without saying. The real story must be fascinating. Maybe I'll find out what it is some day. And maybe not.

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Stardate 51120
Seven attacked Dad today. She was sitting down to eat her first meal in eighteen years, and Dad could see how apprehensive she was about making such a major transition in her lifestyle. Suddenly, new Borg implants began to burst through her skin. When Dad came to her assistance, she struck him down and ran out of the Mess Hall. After arming herself with one of our biggest phaser rifles, Seven was running towards the shuttle bay when Father, Andrews, and I tried to stop her. Despite our best efforts to prevent it, she stole a shuttle and fled into B’omar space. She’d enabled her Borg shielding, and our phaser fire didn’t affect her. Although we did have our phasers set on stun, I don’t even think the kill setting could have penetrated that shield.

Dad wasn’t really hurt, but he was puzzled. "My chabre-cab doesn’t usually have that effect on people." I might have thought Dad was joking at another time, but I could tell how disturbed he was. He’d simply said the first thing that came into his head.

While there’s never a good time for something like this to happen, it’s especially bad now. The captain has been trying to negotiate Voyager’s passage through the space of the B’omar, a very prickly people. They've been completely unreasonable, insisting on such severe speed and route restrictions, we might be better off going around their space and forgetting about a shortcut. They view Seven's behavior as a deliberate insult and vow to stop her. They won't listen to our explanations about how new and tentative her adaptation to individuality is. I'm on the team that’s been assigned to search her cargo bay, looking for clues that might indicate where she was going, and, just as importantly, why.

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Stardate 51124

After Captain Janeway read Harry's translation of Seven's personal log entries, which were written in Borg alphanumeric code, she realized where Seven was headed. I was not given any details about this revelation, but Father and Tom were ordered to take a shuttle and drift over the border of B’omar space to search for her. I hope they locate her before the B’omar do. They’ve promised to destroy the "Borg" if they find her before Father and Tom do.

My attitude towards Seven has altered considerably since she first came on Voyager. Now that I know more about what happened to her, I see her as a helpless victim of the Borg. Seven did not become Borg by her own free will. No one does. It's very sad, because everyone hates them -- not without reason, I'm afraid -- but the individual drones have no control over what they do. That's all decided for them by the Hive mind. When they say, "Resistance is futile," it's true of the drones, as well. They have no power to resist.

Seven is an individual now, who supposedly does have control over her actions; but choosing which
option would be best, or even the least damaging, is a skill she's never developed. She has much to learn before she does. Since she was assimilated as a child and grew up in a maturation chamber, she often acts impulsively, like a child -- even when she isn't dealing with implants erupting through her skin. She's strong-willed, true, but the open hostility she displayed when she first came to *Voyager* was prompted by fear of the unknown, not a naturally nasty disposition. She'd never *had* the chance to develop a disposition of her own. Her parents were assimilated at the same time she was, and she's lived without any affection for the past eighteen years. I find that incredibly sad. Pathetic.

Father would suggest I deal with these feelings through meditative techniques. I'm not sure that's the way I would choose to deal with them. It is not a failing to feel pity for those who suffer, especially when they didn't do anything to bring it upon themselves.

Whenever I think of my brave brother Neevok, who willingly gave up his life as an independent being so that Dad, Father, and his twin brother Tuvix could live theirs, I feel sad; but I also feel very grateful to him for his sacrifice. Although Vulcans endeavor to purge all emotion, I would never want the ones I feel for Neevok to be expunged. When I think of Seven's lost childhood, and that so many hate her before she's shown any aggression towards them, I feel great compassion towards her. I don't want to stop having an emotional reaction such as that.

Father frequently becomes annoyed because of Dad's emotional displays. I don't. At times like this, I'm glad I'm also a Talaxian.

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**Stardate 51219**

Seven is back in the fold, and the captain is very glad to have her. I am, too. I hope she'll become more content with her life on *Voyager* from now on. This experience was a sobering one for all of us, but especially for her.

When she saw Harry's translation of Seven's log, which described disturbing visions she'd been experiencing of a large bird, Captain Janeway realized what had called Seven away. Once she made the connection that the bird was a raven, the name of the Hansen family's vessel, Captain Janeway was sure her flight was connected to that ship.

When Tom and Father's shuttle caught up with Seven's, Father transported to her ship and offered to accompany her to where she thought the Borg would be waiting for her to return her to the Collective. They traveled to an M-class moon, where they discovered the ruins of a Federation vessel, *The Raven*, perched precariously at the edge of a cliff. The Borg had stripped it of all the
technology they'd wanted years before. The dedication plate with the ship's name on the wall meant nothing to them, so they'd left it. That plate meant a lot to Seven when she brushed the dust of eighteen years off its face.

The Borg habitually leave a beacon behind, which emits a distinct resonance frequency to guide a drone who is separated from the Collective back to them. When Voyager approached B'omar space, it came close enough to the beacon to reactivate the inert drone-making nanoprobes in Seven's bloodstream. That's what caused those new implants to sprout. Walking through her family's ship with Father caused something else to sprout: the long-buried memories of her family's assimilation. Father admitted it was "moving" to hear Seven speaking in a little child's voice, as she did when she described the six candles on her birthday cake, "with one to grow on" -- and her terror when the "big man" picked her up and carried her away to "someplace else." Where she became Borg.

The B'omar followed them to the moon and began to fire on the wrecked vessel. Father managed to copy a substantial volume of data from the barely operational backup computer before he helped Seven squeeze out of the hull, just before The Raven collapsed and fell down the cliff. Voyager disabled the B'omar weapons arrays (as good as a declaration of war, the B'omar ambassador coldly informed us) and retrieved Father, Seven, Tom, and our shuttles. We've flown out of B'omar space at high warp.

There will be no shortcut through their space, but none of us cares about that now. Why spend any more time dealing with such small-minded people? The Delaney sisters have submitted a course to the captain which circles around B'omar space. It shouldn't take us much more time to travel that way then it would if we took the course through their territory they had demanded. With all its twists and turns, and with the B'omar's restrictions in warp speeds, it only seemed to be a more direct route towards the Alpha quadrant. The "slower" path is the better one.

The Doctor has adjusted Seven's implants to prevent a similar frequency from reactivating her drone-making nanoprobes, and he's surgically removed the implants that grew back. She again looks like the Seven we've grown used to seeing. I wonder how this experience will affect her mental state and her view of herself. Father asked her if she wished him to administer a mind meld, to help her sort out and deal with the memories that are no longer buried deep within her subconscious. She rejected the proposal, but not with the vehemence she often shows.

When Father told me this, I suggested he should exercise the patience he extols as necessary for a Vulcan to live successfully with highly emotional human beings. I reminded him that Seven may be biologically human, but in essence, she's more like B'Elanna Torres, Naomi Wildman -- or me. She's essentially a hybrid, a blending of two races. She's not totally human anymore, but she's no longer all Borg, either. Like us, Seven must learn to balance the disparate, often clashing aspects of a "/
person as she journeys through life.

"An astute observation," he said. From Father, high praise indeed.
Out of Phase

Chapter Summary

The crew comes down with a plethora of ills.

Stardate 51239

Many of the crew have complained of various types of discomfort over the past couple of weeks. The captain has been afflicted with terrible migraine headaches. Ensign Brooks and Mr. Ayala have been, too. Lieutenant Carey has suffered from debilitating back spasms. His back hasn't responded to the Doctor's treatments, although scans have failed to reveal a structural cause for Mr. Carey's pain. Sleep deprivation, muscle aches, vomiting, and abdominal cramps have all been reported by members of our crew. The Doctor has ruled out radiation as a cause for the crew's symptoms, even though the binary pulsar system we've been investigating for the past week is shedding a great deal of it throughout this sector. I've been spared any medical issues thus far. Father has not complained of any, either; but for some reason, Dad's body has begun to change, becoming more like his great-great grandfather's, who was Mylean. No matter how often he bathes, his sweat glands emit a powerful, extremely unpleasant odor, and his vision is deteriorating rapidly.

Commander Chakotay is in even worse shape. Within hours, without any detectable reason, he's aged decades. The half of his tattoo that's usually hidden beneath his hair is now visible, because he's suddenly gone bald. He's losing his hearing. Since we have no way to explain these ills, we're all worried about what might happen to us next.

The captain asked me to take over Dad's mess hall duties for as long as he's incapacitated. Father has been willing to release me from my scheduled shifts in his department, and I agreed to take on the task of feeding the crew full time. The last thing anyone needs is to endure Dad's body odor while they're trying to eat, especially if they're already feeling ill.

I hope that whatever Dad's condition is, it isn't catching. I've inherited Father's Vulcan sense of smell. I don't fancy my own body smelling like Dad's. The stench would make me sick.
Stardate 51241

The situation is getting really serious. The Doctor and B'Elanna were in the medical lab attached to Sickbay, investigating Dad's and the commander's DNA, when B'Elanna suddenly couldn't breathe. We lost the Doctor's program at the same time. Tom's attempts to reactivate the EMH program has failed. We hope B'Elanna can get him back once she recovers. She's on life support, and Seven has yet to receive the training she needs to serve as B'Elanna's backup for servicing the EMH. Sickbay has become so crowded, Dad and Commander Chakotay were asked to go to their own quarters to stay until Tom can come up with something that may help them. Without knowing what's causing their ills, the only treatment Tom can administer is bed rest.

Father and I spoke briefly about what happened in the medical lab. Both the Doctor and B'Elanna were "deactivated" at virtually the same time, while they were investigating DNA samples under our most powerful microscope. I suggested this couldn't be coincidental and speculated an alien invasion of some sort may be imminent.

Father has considered this possibility, but he's discounted it. Nothing has shown up on our security scans to confirm any form of intelligence is operating here. No other ships have been detected in the vicinity. While I have to admit it's not very likely, I'm not willing to reject this hypothesis out of hand. While I'm busy cooking, I'll keep my eyes and ears open.

Stardate 51244

Since the end of the crisis caused by the Srivani, the Doctor and Tom have been very busy, treating the various ills imposed upon our crew by the out-of-phase medical researchers. Their ethics were far beyond merely questionable. If the captain allowed them to proceed, their leader told her, they'd magnanimously share their results with us, and "fatalities would be minimal." If Captain Janeway was unwilling for us to be used as lab rats, they planned to continue their studies anyway, killing all their "test subjects" once they were done.

They didn't get a chance to finish collecting their data. When, as Father told me later, the captain recklessly drove Voyager between the pulsing binary stars in the system, the stresses on our ship's hull should have caused its destruction. We made it through. The Srivani scientists, who panicked and tried to escape in their invisible little vessels, left their departure for too late. Their ships were too fragile to withstand the binary's gravimetric pressures. They were all destroyed.

Father acknowledged he should have been more aggressive in pursuing my insight concerning how
unlikely it was that the Doctor and B'Elanna were both "deactivated" simultaneously. Since many had become incapacitated, he'd concluded B'Elanna's illness was simply another one caused by the mystery plagues. He admitted he was quite disconcerted that he'd missed the obvious sign that a malevolent intelligence was responsible, since so many members of the crew had been afflicted at the time. Compounding his error, after Seven discovered the out-of-phase researchers and was working in Engineering on a plan to expose them, he tried to prevent her from her work without giving her sufficient time to explain herself. Had Seven not grabbed a phaser and fired it at one of the invisible aliens, revealing her presence, our crew might still be suffering from their abusive ministrations.

The researchers had inserted invisible needles into Captain Janeway's skull, which was the true cause of her "migraine" headaches. Her dopamine levels had been raised to such an extent, the Srivani leader commented that they were surprised the captain could function at all. Father now attributes her "reckless behavior on the bridge" to their experiments.

We might have been able to consider this incident a quirky First Contact experience if no one had suffered permanent injury. However, when the researchers insisted we let them finish their experiments "or else," they gave Ensign Craig a cerebral hemorrhage, which killed her.

In general, I can forgive species like the Caatati, even though they almost caused the death of Tom and B'Elanna. They were desperate and trying to survive any way they could, although in an extremely dysfunctional manner. And Tom and B'Elanna didn't die. I cannot forgive the Srivani. Those researchers used us for their experiments without bothering to ask us to volunteer our services. They killed Ensign Craig to intimidate our captain into cooperating with them. Their behavior was outrageous and led to the death of an entire crew -- theirs. As I see it, they got what they deserved.

Stardate 51252

Our new Astrometrics lab became operational today. I was at a secondary bridge station at the time, so I was present when it came online. The views of the galaxy displayed on our viewscreen were impressive, I must say. Everyone was in an expansive mood. Seven didn't show much emotion at the accomplishment, but Harry glowed with pride.

I haven't heard about the pair visiting any romantic holodeck programs while they were working together. Yes, the story of why Harry was so eager to pass on the Astrometrics lab construction job to someone else has become common knowledge. Just about everyone has heard it by now. One night, he tried to push Borg-human cultural relationships a little too enthusiastically by suggesting they take a midnight stroll through the Ktarian moonrise holodeck program. When Seven expressed a willingness to push their relationship a lot farther along, and much more quickly than Harry had in
mind, he became completely unglued.

Many of our crew have teased Harry about his reluctance to take advantage of Seven's naivete. Personally, I applaud his restraint. She's not mature enough for explorations of single-sex reproductive activities just yet. It's possible she never will be. But Harry's actions compare favorably with Tom's in the Sakari caverns, when he didn't take advantage of B'Elanna, at a time she was unable to think clearly because of the pon farr. In the long run, that hasn't harmed their friendship, or their ultimate romantic relationship!

At any rate, right after the lab opened, a ship approached ours. The ship's captain announced they were the Krenim and informed us we should avoid this area of space, since it is in dispute. The captain thanked him and ordered a change in route.

I remember the story Kes told me about the "Year of Hell," and of all the losses sustained during that difficult time. Kes told the captain enough about that experience to warn her to avoid the Krenim at all costs. I'm glad to see the captain has acted on that advice.

What a relief! The Year of Hell will never happen now.

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Death of a Maiden

Chapter Summary

Forbidden fruit leads to murder.

Stardate 51367

We thought our visit to the Mari world would be a pleasant interlude. It wasn't. Lieutenant B'Elanna Torres was convicted of the crime of "aggravated violent thought resulting in grave bodily harm." She was innocent.

One of the Mari roughly shoved B'Elanna while she was in the marketplace. A desire to retaliate briefly crossed her mind, but she suppressed the impulse and proceeded on her way. After one Mari man assaulted another, however, B'Elanna was arrested. Nimira, the Mari's Chief Examiner, claimed the assailant acted in response to an image that came from our chief engineer's mind. Although B'Elanna was still in custody when a lovely young woman named Talli was murdered, B'Elanna was held responsible for that crime, too.

The prescribed sentence for "violent thought" is for the violent images to be purged through the use of an engrammatic probe device. Nimira, admitted there was a "slight" risk of neurological damage to B'Elanna, but she didn't think it would be "significant." B'Elanna is a blend of two races, neither of which the Mari had encountered before. How could Nimira know what the outcome of this procedure would be? B'Elanna's brain structure, like mine, is more complicated than most because of hybridization. They couldn't predict how the probe would affect her.

Dad filed a diplomatic protest, and Father, as Voyager's Senior Tactical and Security Officer, investigated. He discovered her angry reaction to being bumped had been provoked by criminals who intended to steal any thoughts she might have of violent retaliation. Many of the telepathic Mari long to experience such thoughts vicariously. A gang purveyed this sort of titillating imagery right under the noses of their leaders, who claimed they were unaware that "violent image" trafficking existed. Now that Father has exposed it, the authorities must face reality: their supposedly non-violent society is anything but. Nimira had been one of the last security officers of the Mari. Just before Voyager left orbit, we learned the Mari were reestablishing their security force in order to deal with criminals like the ones who had so misused Lieutenant Torres.

Even before the incident with Lieutenant Torres created such an uproar, I didn't consider our visit to the Mari particularly pleasant. Tom and I went down to the planet during one of the first shore leave opportunities. Tom wanted to buy a present for B'Elanna. While he was in the marketplace buying something so personal he didn't want me to see it, I wandered around, taking in the local scene. One man jostled and then glared at me. I apologized to him for the accident, although his body language suggested he expected me to react differently. Later, I realized I must have been the victim of the same sort of attack suffered by Lieutenant Torres; but I didn't respond in the way the assailant hoped. Since I assumed it was just an accident and I had no impulse to throttle the man, no violent thoughts existed for him to steal.

I spoke about this to Father just before making this log entry. He agrees my logic is sound. Then he asked if I had been able to "hear" any of the Mari, who prefer to communicate telepathically. I confessed I never had. His brow furrowed in that way he has when his equilibrium has been
disturbed. I asked him if he had been able to communicate with them without the use of verbal speech. He said he had.

Despite a year and a half of diligent practice, I've been unable to learn the Vulcan mind meld technique. I must now reconcile myself to this lack, and the likelihood it is permanent. I may not have the capacity to be telepathic in any way. I must be more like Dad than Father in this regard. I will continue to practice meditation, however. Telepathy is not required for that discipline, and I find it helps center me when "too much Talaxian" begins to interfere with my ability to function logically. Perhaps I'm worrying needlessly, but if this limitation is real, as I'm now quite certain it is, I must learn to accept it.

I'm very disappointed. I cannot please Father by becoming accomplished in all facets of Vulcan mental life, but it is what it is. That's a very useful human phrase I've learned from Tom and Harry, who say it often when they encounter something they know they'll be unable to change. Not being telepathic isn't so terrible. None of the humans, Bolians, Bajorans, or our half-Klingon are telepathic, any more than Dad and I are. In that respect, I'm just one of the gang. Now that I've seen how troublesome the Mari's telepathic abilities can be, I think I might be glad I don't seem to have the capacity for it.

Stardate 51370

Dad is taking the death of Talli very hard. Until Tom told me they'd made plans to spend time together that afternoon, I had no idea Dad had been on the verge of becoming romantically involved with her. He'd been standing nearby, waiting for her to close up her fruit and vegetable stand so she'd be free for their date. Dad hasn't been involved with anyone in a romantic way since his breakup with Kes; and seeing Talli stabbed to death right in front of him -- by a very elderly woman, no less - - was excruciatingly painful. He denies he's depressed by what happened, but I can see the signs. I can't really blame him for feeling terrible about what he saw. A bright young life has been snuffed out. Because the Mari have turned the very thought of a violent act into forbidden fruit, they've driven those impulses underground.

Examples of this type of prohibition, and its futility, have been documented on many worlds. Forbidding an activity often entices a criminal element to take advantage of those who wish to experience it for its titillation value. Guill and his confederates claimed they never anticipated that their customers might be prodded into thoughtlessly reenacting the violent acts they'd seen in a mere mental image. That's easy thing for them to say after they've been caught, of course. Since Frane knowingly committed an assault on B'Elanna to capture her brief impulse to retaliate, the gang was hardly oblivious to their culpability.

Some acts must be forbidden. Murder, assault, theft: there is a whole list of crimes that have one factor in common: a person is harmed, sometimes fatally, by another's actions.

Perhaps the Mari should learn to mitigate any violent thoughts their telepathic senses pick up and avoid luxuriating in them, rather than assume they've extinguished them entirely from their culture. It's a sad fact that images of violence can be seductive, even addictive. Wouldn't it be better to acknowledge this attraction? Instead, the Mari have deluded themselves into thinking that since they've passed a law banning such thoughts from their citizens' minds, the problem has gone away.

When an act of violence does erupt, it's easier to blame a visitor for "importing" the thoughts, rather than admit they've never gotten rid of them in the first place.

When the Mari use their engramatic purge machine on someone's brain, I very much doubt the violent images have been totally excised, as Nimira claimed. They're only buried deeper, where they
can fester and become even more damaging. Guill had previously been convicted of violent thoughts on several occasions. He'd been treated by the probe after each offense. If he truly had been "cured," why would he be drawn towards participating in such criminal acts again?

Father identified the true culprits and presented them to the Chief Examiner. B'Elanna's procedure was halted only a few minutes after it began. B'Elanna did lose a few violent engrams, as she said with good humor afterwards, but "there's plenty more where they came from." Her brain wasn't damaged, so she's rather philosophical about the experience.

Talli can't be philosophical about it. She's dead.

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In the Arms of Family

Chapter Summary

A medical crisis threatens Tuvix’s immediate family.

Stardate 51445

When I heard about Dad, I immediately went into mourning. One of my fathers was dead.

I was on my way to Sickbay to say a last goodbye to him when Tom and the captain stopped me. They told me that Seven was trying a Borg technique that might revive him, even though Dad had died eighteen hours ago. When I expressed disbelief that such a thing was possible, Tom explained, "Seven told us, 'He may have been dead by our narrow definition, but not by hers.' She claims drones have been returned to life after being dead for up to three days, as long as their neural passageways are intact. Neelix's heart failed when a bolt of protomatter struck him. His head's fine. I'll bet she'll do some Borg magic with those nanoprobes of hers, and Neelix will be OK. He has a good chance, Tuvix. Like your dad always says, just stay positive."

The captain could see I was upset. She ordered me to go to the Mess Hall to wait for the outcome. I stopped there briefly, but I associate this place so closely with Dad, it was too painful for me to stay there long. Reminders of his sunny disposition were everywhere, particularly in his food preparation area. I contacted Father and asked if I could wait with him to hear about the success or failure of Seven's attempt to bring Dad back to life. He asked Michael Ayala to serve at the bridge tactical station while he sat with me in his quarters. Father and Dad are not best friends, but they're both very supportive of me. Father was especially sensitive to my moods on this occasion. He also urged me meditate with him after our shifts were over, "Whatever the outcome for Mr. Neelix might be." I agreed.

Father needed to exercise his Vulcan self-control when the Doctor contacted me, because I became very emotional after he said Dad was awake and asking why he was in Sickbay. "He was shocked when Seven told him she brought him back to life, but he thanked her quite sincerely, Mr. Tuvix," the EMH advised us. "I'm sure he'll be just fine now."

Supplemental
I found Seven in the new Astrometrics lab and expressed my sincere gratitude for restoring Dad to life. She acknowledged my thanks and observed, "He serves many diverse functions on this ship. If he were no longer with us, he would be missed."

Seven explained she will need to inject him with more of the modified nanoprobes she used to bring him back to life until his tissues have completely healed. She believes the treatments can be discontinued "eventually." She's also assured Dad he will be able to complete his preparations for Prixin, our happiest Talaxian holiday. Dad introduced it to the crew during their first year in this quadrant. They enjoyed it so much, we've continued to hold the celebration every year. It will be especially joyous for me this time. I will be able to celebrate being "in the arms of family" with more fervor than ever. My family will still be whole.

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Stardate 51450

The first night of Prixin went very smoothly. The nanoprobe therapy hasn't slowed Dad down at all. He'd prepared all the traditional trappings of the holiday: the foods, the decorations, the drinks, the compote... well, the compote isn't quite like the ones Dad remembers from his childhood. Since the captain got a little tipsy from it at last year's celebration, she asked him to make sure it didn't get so strong this time. He didn't ferment it for quite as long as he'd have preferred, but the entire crew raved about it tonight. I think he's happy he was willing to compromise. (I have to admit, I prefer the new recipe myself. The fruity flavor comes through much better now that the alcoholic content isn't so overwhelming. It was either that or a replicated syntheholic version. I don't think anyone wanted to try that.)

I was sorry Naomi could only stay for the early buffet. She's still very little, and she got a little "rammy," as Samantha explained. One of the Delaney sisters volunteered to sit with her so her mother could stay a little longer -- Jenny, I think (I get them mixed up at times, but it was the one without a dimple). Since Dad is the "only one who can scare away all the monsters," he went to the Wildman quarters in the middle of the party to reassure Naomi none were hiding in her bedroom or the replicator (a favorite place for monsters to hide, I understand). He stayed long enough to recite her favorite bedtime story, about the Great Forest and the Guiding Tree.

This is Seven's first Prixin, and she was having a little trouble with the social niceties. Perfectly understandable, since Seven hasn't celebrated any holidays for eighteen years; and light, pleasant conversation wasn't something included in her Becoming-a-Borg studies while she was in her maturation chamber. Seven drove Samantha Wildman away when she informed her that assimilated children remain in their maturation chambers for seventeen cycles. I think the last thing Samantha wanted to talk about tonight was anything to do with assimilation, particularly of children. I
approached Seven afterwards and asked her to explain the finer techniques of searching for gasses in various types of nebulae. I know most of them, of course, but it's a subject I was sure would be more interesting to Seven than chatting about the latest gossip, like the ruckus Tom and B'Elanna make when they're "enjoying themselves." She'd view all that as irrelevant, I'm sure. And I might have learned something I didn't know (although I didn't).

Father called everyone to attention for the formal part of the celebration when he declared, "We are all in the arms of family." He truncated the family relationship listing considerably tonight. It does go on and on for a long time when it's given in its entirety. Everyone at the party (other than Seven) had heard the complete list read out previously, so I couldn't really object. The captain gave us her usual toast to our families, both the ones waiting for us in the Alpha Quadrant as well as our current one on Voyager. I'm very grateful to have been welcomed as part of the group. I mentioned this to Seven after the toast was done. She said she'd like to hear more about how I came to be, the process by which I was duplicated, and how I learned to fit into this group. Her final question had personal relevance, I thought, even though she didn't identify it as such. I was glad to answer her questions.

When the party broke up for the night, I told Captain Janeway about my conversation with Seven. She was very pleased I'd spent time with her protégée. Actually, I enjoyed my conversation with Seven. It was a wonderful party. I had a great time!

Supplemental

I've just gotten back from Sickbay. Dad had a relapse while he was cleaning up after the party. I feel responsible. I should have stayed to help him. I offered, but he urged me to get some rest because I report early in the morning for my shift on the bridge. Apparently, the nanoprobes lost the ability to counteract the necrotization of his cells. Fortunately, Seven was with him when he collapsed. She'd come to evaluate the nanoprobe levels in his blood and was prepared to give him another dose if necessary, so she was able to get him to Sickbay promptly. Seven and the Doctor made a slight modification to the nanoprobes, and the therapy began to work again.

After the Doctor assured me he would call me immediately if Dad had any more setbacks, I returned to my quarters. Since the captain, Commander Chakotay, and Seven were still there with Dad and the EMH when I left, I'm certain he's in good hands. However, there was one sobering bit of news: if it happens again, Seven may need to supply new modifications to the nanoprobes on a regular basis - perhaps indefinitely. That won't be good for Dad's peace of mind. I don't think he's completely gotten over watching Talli die, and now he must cope with this new and possibly chronic condition. I'll offer him all the support I can, just as he's always done for me. He's suffered enough already.

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I can barely believe it! I almost lost Dad again. This time, it wasn't because of any problems with nanoprobe. He almost committed suicide! If Sam hadn't come into the transporter room to ask him to come to Naomi's room for a bedtime "monster check," Dad might have succeeded. He was about to beam himself off the ship without an EV suit, into the nebula where the protomatter had almost killed him. Dad wouldn't listen to Commander Chakotay's pleas to stop, but when Sam told him his goddaughter needed him, it dragged him back from the brink -- temporarily. We'll have to help him find more reasons to live. That might not be easy.

When Dad woke up after Seven resuscitated him, after his death in the nebula, Dad was dismayed when he realized he hadn't experienced the afterlife he'd expected to see. After his crisis in the Mess Hall, when the nanoprobe stopped working, Dad went to Commander Chakotay and asked to go on a vision quest with him, to help him put everything in perspective. The commander agreed.

Dad's visions in the quest depressed him even more. He saw everyone on *Voyager* enjoying a Prixin celebration. His favorite sister Alixia was even there, but she left. He followed her to the Great Forest. Dad asked her why she hadn't been there to greet him when he died. She turned on him and sneered, saying all of his beliefs were wrong. He hadn't seen the Guiding Tree and his family when he was killed because the afterlife didn't exist. It was all a lie.

Although the commander had warned Dad what he saw during his vision quest would need to be explored in depth afterwards, since symbolic meaning and literal meaning are not necessarily the same thing, Dad accepted that Alixia's image had told him the absolute truth. When the list of ancestors is read at Prixin, Dad has always believed it's literally a roster of those he'd see again when he died. He'd wake up in the Great Forest beneath the Guiding Tree, and they'd all be together again. Now he was sure his people had lied to him all his life. He never *would* see his destroyed family again. He felt he had nothing to live for.

The traditional burial service takes over a week on Talax. Dad wasn't dead for even a full day. Would that vision of the Guiding Tree and his family have greeted him days later, after all of the ceremonies had been completed? How could he know for sure all of his beliefs are wrong? The vision quest certainly personified his fears, but was "Alixia" telling him the truth?

Of course, traditional burial rites were never held for those who died on Rinax after the Metreon Cascade. There were just a handful of survivors, and Dad was the only one left from his family. The atoms of the dead were dispersed in the poisoned atmosphere, and it was impossible to perform the prescribed rituals for the victims. Might that have had an effect on who would greet him in the afterlife?

I'm familiar with traditional Talaxian beliefs. Everyone in your family who has gone before you is
there in the Great Forest under the Guiding Tree, watching over you and keeping you safe while you 
sleep. I know Dad has always thought that's exactly what he'd see when it was his turn to join his 
family there. It's one of the memories I inherited from him that's still vivid and easily recalled. Vulcan 
beliefs are different. Father expects his family to place his katra on Mount Seleya, where it will 
remain for all eternity. I know this from his memories.

I'm a blend, an accident, created by a transporter through the influence of a symbiogenic orchid. And 
I'm still here because my friends Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry were willing to research a way to 
duplicate me; the captain agreed to divert Voyager's course to a world that might allow us to be 
successful with a technique they discovered; and my twin brother Neevok sacrificed his life so that 
our fathers could return to theirs.

Which afterlife might I have? I guess it's possible Neevok attained one, and I will have the other; but 
while I'm aware of both sets of beliefs, I suspect neither will be true for me. I've often meditated upon 
this topic, and I believe I've come to terms with whatever will happen after my death. If there is no 
afterlife I will be content, as long as I've lived my life to its fullest, honoring Neevok's willingness to 
leave it for me to live, as much as to satisfy myself.

One reason I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to keep this personal log is that I devoutly hope -- 
even expect -- that it will remain in existence long after I'm gone. Others will be able to obtain a 
glimpse of the life Tuvix lived and learn about his twin, who sacrificed his own life to allow his 
fathers to live. Such a log confers as much immortality as one can reasonably expect in this galaxy -- 
even this universe -- since neither of them are thought to be immortal, either.

Supplemental

I spoke with Dad after I finished the previous entry. I asked him why he never came to me to talk 
about what was bothering him. "I would have listened and tried to help you." When he told me he 
hadn't wanted to "burden" me, I told him, "Your loss would have been a much greater burden for me 
to bear."

"You'd still have your Father Tuvok," he said, as if losing one parent didn't matter as long as I had 
another.

I replied that losing him would still be completely devastating, especially in the manner of its ending. 
"I'd never be able to get over it." Dad began to cry then, and I held him to comfort him, almost as if 
he were a young child like Naomi, and I the parent.

For the first time, we spoke openly about Jetrel, the Haakonian scientist who came on Voyager at
one point, seeking absolution. He'd developed the Cascade as an investigation into pure science, never anticipating it would be used as a weapon. After his discovery killed hundreds of thousands on Rinax, the knowledge he'd been responsible for so many deaths had become unbearable. Jetrel thought he'd found a way to resurrect the lost, but his method failed. Shortly afterwards, the scientist collapsed because of a terminal medical condition caused by the Cascade. Dad forgave him before he died. That may have brought a measure of peace to the scientist; but to the end, he suffered from an overwhelming sense of guilt over so many lost lives. He wished he'd ever conceived of the Metreon Cascade.

Since he was finally talking to me about our family, I asked him about Alixia. I know her only through his memories. He shared a host of anecdotes with me then, not just about her, but also about his parents and his other siblings. As he spoke, I realized I'd forgotten much. I was very glad to hear the stories now. Some of the faded memories came back, just from being reinforced by hearing him tell me about them. I shared that perception with him, and he agreed we should talk about our family sometimes, even though he might find it painful. I suggested that Prijin is the perfect time to reminisce about those who have died. It is, after all the festival that celebrates our allegiance to family. I can't think of a better way to do that than by bringing our ancestors to life again by sharing their stories with each other.

I asked him if he thought I would ever see the Guiding Tree, since I'm only 49.47% Talaxian. "Would you only see half of me?" I teased. (To be precise, my genotype is also 49.46% Vulcan, and .07% orchid -- although I'm not sure how much of an effect the orchid part of me would have on an afterlife.) He laughed at that and assured me I'd be whole there.

I had one more thing I needed to say. "Dad, it doesn't matter if we can't see our family members after we die. They've always been here, holding us in their arms. It may be a metaphor, but I like to think our memories of them -- even those who died long before we were born -- form us into the people we've become, and who we'll be in the future -- just as our Voyager family is doing for us now. We wouldn't expect to see Captain Janeway, or Chakotay, or Tom and B'Elanna, or even Father, in the Great Forest, yet they're our family too."

He admitted he'd never really thought about it that way before. I suggested that was something he could discuss with Commander Chakotay during their counselling sessions. He promised he would follow up this time, to help him understand what he'd seen in those visions. I told him I knew he would, "Because I'll make sure you do!" And I will. Many sad events have occurred during Dad's life, and this isn't the first time he's become depressed. Dad's death and resurrection, coming so soon after Talli's murder, made him vulnerable to a recurrence. It's a lesson for me to keep in mind, too. Balancing my very different heritages is a constant task. At least this time, by helping Dad, I'm helping myself as well.

I went to Samantha Wildman after I left Dad and thanked her, very sincerely, for bringing Dad back from the brink of death. "You don't have to thank me, Tuvix. No one would miss Neelix more than me -- except for Naomi. We're all family, aren't we?" I had to agree.
Thanks to our EMH, Starfleet knows that Voyager survives.

Stardate 51479

The new Astrometrics lab paid dividends today. Seven was able to show the captain and the commander a Starfleet vessel in the outer reaches of the Alpha Quadrant, through the use of an alien relay station system. It's vast, but the ship was flying in range of one end of the array. It's the first time we've had a realistic chance of letting Starfleet know we're alive. When the captain tried to send a message to this ship, however, the signal degraded so quickly on its way through the relay stations, it bounced back to us as undeliverable. Seven mentioned that a holographic data stream might work better than our usual carrier wave. Fortunately, we have a sophisticated, interactive holographic program available to send through the relay network. Our Doctor.

Preparations were quickly made, and the EMH disappeared into the relay network. Once he arrived (as long as he did arrive in one piece), he was to let Starfleet know our location, answer any questions they had for him, and then have the personnel on the receiving ship send him back to Voyager via the network.

If his program was lost in the network or couldn't be sent back to Voyager for some reason, Tom Paris would now be our chief medical officer. Tom was not happy about this possibility, but he made the best of it. He had no choice. When he tried to enlist Harry into creating a replacement EMH program, Harry was unsuccessful, although Harry gave him a gift. He downloaded Grey's Anatomy on a PADD -- for Tom's use. Tom was not amused.

For a while, it looked like we might not be able to get the Doctor's program back. Since no messages were traveling along the network when she first discovered it, Seven believed it was abandoned. While B'Elanna and Seven were working in Astrometrics together, however, an alien sent a transmission through the relay station, demanding we stop using the network. When Seven and B'Elanna didn't immediately comply, he broke our link.

The captain came to Astrometrics and contacted the alien, who identified himself as Hirogen, and asked him if we could use the network for a little while longer. When he was uncooperative, Seven
took it upon herself to send a feedback surge along the sensor link, rendering the Hirogen temporarily out of order. The captain was stunned. B'Elanna later admitted she was impressed. (I believe their frequent bouts of animosity stem from how much the two are like each other. If they ever learn to work together, they would be a formidable pair.)

Eventually, we retrieved the Doctor from the array. He had quite a story to tell about his heroic actions in the Alpha Quadrant, when he and a companion holographic doctor, the "Mark 2", kept the Romulans from stealing a prototype ship, the *Prometheus*. While everyone wanted to hear that story (and did, repeatedly, in Sandrines that evening), what everyone really needed to know was if he'd been able to contact Starfleet Command. Once the Romulans had been taken prisoner, and the *Prometheus* had been secured by Starfleet personnel who were better qualified to fly the experimental vessel than two Emergency Medical Holograms, the Doctor spoke directly with Starfleet Command. He confirmed *Voyager's* current position in the Delta Quadrant. He said he was able to tell them "everything that had happened" (not *absolutely* everything, surely, but the essential details, I surmise) and provided Starfleet Command with the ship's roster. He made a point of telling me that I am now a known quantity in the Alpha Quadrant.

I thanked him sincerely for that information. Perhaps the captain will be able to contact the Hirogen leaders and negotiate with them diplomatically. Seven's actions, while they may have been necessary for us to retrieve our EMH, were regrettable. I hope we can repair the damage to our relationship so that we can reach an agreement to continue to use their network. It will be wonderful if we're able to maintain regular contact with the Alpha Quadrant. There must be some commodity the Hirogen will value that we can supply them in exchange for its use.

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**Stardate 51497**

A message has come to *Voyager* through the communications relay system we used to send the Doctor to the Alpha Quadrant. It was truncated. Seven believes the rest of it is stuck in one of the Hirogen relay stations. We know it originated with Starfleet Command, and that they were sending Captain Janeway information of some sort. We hope it will help us travel more quickly to Federation space. The captain ordered a change in course, on a heading that will bring us close to the nearest relay station, in hopes that we will be able to retrieve the rest of the message.

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**Stardate 51502**
We've approached the relay station. It looks very ancient. Harry estimates it was built 100,000 years ago. The captain went to Astrometrics to see if Seven was having any success retrieving the rest of the message from Starfleet. This datastream had degraded, too. When Seven began to decompress and unscramble the transmission, she discovered other messages that were mixed in with Starfleet Command's. After hearing a little bit of one, Captain Janeway realized the others were letters from the crew's families. Letters from home.

The captain assigned Dad the task of delivering the letters to our crew. Harry is desperate to receive a message from his parents. Many others are also eager to hear from loved ones for the first time in four years, who only now have learned of Voyager's survival. While Dad has no one to send him a letter, he's extremely pleased to be the bearer of good tidings to our friends. For the past several weeks, his natural ebullience has not been much in evidence. He's still struggling to overcome his depression from Talli's death, not to mention his disappointing visit to the afterlife. It's good to see that spring return to his step and a smile gracing his face once again.

One of the first letters was directed to Father, from his wife T'Pel. He's now a grandfather! She also congratulated him upon his "unorthodox" acquisition of a son (confirming how thorough the EMH was in listing the entire crew when he visited the Prometheus). She said she "looks forward to welcoming your new son into our family." I hope she knows I'm physically mature and not a young child. I'll ask the Doctor what he conveyed to Starfleet about me the next time I see him. Although Father did not want any fuss made about his grandfatherhood, everyone knows, thanks to Dad's spreading the word -- and everyone is very happy for him.

Not every letter contained good news. The captain was subdued after she received one from her fiancée. She hasn't shared its contents. Commander Chakotay's from his friend Sveta dismayed our Maquis crew members. The Maquis movement is dead, as are most of those who fought for that cause. A few, like Sveta herself, are in prison. Some family members still live, since several of our Maquis crew received letters; but for most, Sveta's news is crushing. I hope others are alive and hiding out somewhere than this Sveta knows about.

Because of the difficulty Seven has been having extracting any more letters from the datastream, she asked the captain for permission to travel closer to the relay station to see if she could get more messages released. The captain has sent Father with her in a shuttle, to investigate the possibility. Meanwhile, B'Elanna is piecing the bits of data we've already received into order.

Supplemental

What started out as a glorious day, filled with hope, has been tarnished. The communications network is in ruins. While some of the crew received messages from the Alpha Quadrant that buoyed their spirits, others were crushed by terrible news. Father and Seven were captured by two Hirogen, who wanted them as "trophies." I'm almost afraid to learn what they meant by that. Father and Seven wouldn't tell me what they knew.
We were able to save Father and Seven, but when other Hirogen ships arrived and fired on us, Captain Janeway told them they might damage the relay network if they continued their reckless behavior. They refused to listen, and now the system has been utterly destroyed. I fear the Hirogen will blame us for the destruction of their relay network, even though they did the damage themselves. It's quite puzzling. They claim their people invented this system, which required the taming of a small quantum singularity as a power source; but when Captain Janeway warned them they would ruin it if they destabilized the containment field holding the singularity in place, they didn't appreciate their danger. When the field failed, it sucked in all of their ships. Their civilization must have deteriorated very badly since the system was built if what they told us is true. That doesn't mean they aren't very dangerous.

B'Elanna was able to piece together several more letters before the system was destroyed. She hand-delivered one special letter to her friend Harry Kim. He was overjoyed to hear from his parents. When B'Elanna told Tom a letter from an Admiral Owen Paris was coming through, Tom had been apprehensive about what his father might have written. When the relay network collapsed without anything other than the delivery header comprehensible, and Tom learned he'd never know what was in the entire message, he was disappointed.

So for a little while we had hope that we'd be able to communicate with the Alpha Quadrant, but ultimately we were disappointed when our means to do so was lost. We'll have to find another way to communicate with the Alpha Quadrant -- if we can. And now we must be vigilant to protect ourselves from a new, possibly erratic enemy. The Hirogen are not likely to forgive us.

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Hirogen Histrionics

Chapter Summary

Voyager's dramatic encounters with the Hirogen end, too often, with death.

Stardate 51563

Harry and Ensign Lyndsay Ballard were traveling to a class-M planet in the Vyntadi expanse today. Long range sensors had picked up signs of a dilithium ore deposit. Our crew is always looking to obtain dilithium. We need it for our own use, but it's also one of the more valuable commodities for trading. We're in constant need of materials for repairs and to replace our shuttles. The shuttle construction crew always has one under construction. We lose so many!

We didn't lose the shuttle today, but Ensign Ballard was mortally wounded by a neural disruptor blast. There was no dilithium; it was a trap. A Hirogen hunting party had reconfigured power cells to give off the false readings which drew Harry and Ensign Ballard to the planet. Harry managed to get her to the shuttle and they escaped, but she died in Harry's arms on the way back to Voyager.

The captain has scheduled the ensign's funeral for tomorrow afternoon. Since I'm off duty tomorrow until Beta shift, I will attend. I didn't have an opportunity to know Ensign Ballard well, but whenever we spoke, I found her to be a very pleasant, good-humored young woman. She was in the same class at Starfleet Academy as Harry, and they were close friends. The captain is taking this loss hard, as she always does. So is Harry. He says he's beginning to feel like he's a jinx on away missions. First Ahni Jetal, now Lyndsay. I wish I knew what to say. It's not really him. It's the Delta Quadrant.

Stardate 51652

Today was a very difficult day. A member of Species 8472 was trying to go home to die, and Seven sent him to the Hirogen instead. The captain is furious, and I cannot blame her. Seven justified what she did with the rationale that she was saving the ship from the Hirogen, but I seriously doubt they will ignore us from now on anyway. Judging from their actions so far, including their involvement in
Ensign Ballard's death, their entire civilization, if one can call it that, is based on hunting other species to death and taking body parts for trophies.

I understand Father's philosophy of "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations," but I'm not sure I will ever be able to tolerate the Hirogen's embodiment of the doctrine. Leaving their space quickly would help, but unfortunately, that may be easier said than done. Judging by the extent of the now-useless Hirogen relay station network, they may be a factor for years of our journey.

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Stardate 51717

This is the first time I've been able to make an entry in my personal log for some weeks, and it's the same reason I was unable to make entries in my log for an extended period two years ago. Our crew lost control of Voyager, and we had to fight to regain possession. This time, the enemy was not the Kazon, but the far more formidable Hirogen. I feel no pleasure in being proven right that the Hirogen would not leave Voyager alone.

Our crew wasn't exiled this time. We were prisoners on our own ship. Some of our operations people, including Harry, were forced to take on the role of maintenance workers, keeping the ship's vital systems such as life support operational. The Hirogen weren't interested in most of our systems. Several of their ships traveled at a very pedestrian pace alongside with Voyager. They were interested in producing enough power to run one of our systems, however. In addition to Holodeck 1 and 2, many of the corridors and other ship locations -- even Engineering -- were fitted with holoemitters so that the Hirogen could practice their favorite activity: hunting other sentient beings. In the process, the formerly separate holodeck power resources were integrated into Voyager's main power system. If we ever run into serious power difficulties in the future, we will no longer be able to seek escape on the holodecks to divert us from our troubles.

The Hirogen indulged in cruel cat-and-mouse holodeck games with the majority of our crew, usually resulting in the death of the character we inhabited in the scenario at the time. We were always resurrected -- that is, all of us were besides Crewman Jason Everly, who died of his injuries when the Doctor's program was deactivated by the Hirogen. The Alpha-Hirogen documented each scenario in which we participated, so we know that Father and I each died three times, and Dad died twice. I take no comfort in the fact that many of the Hirogen, including the Alpha and his Beta Turanj, ended up dead when the St. Claire simulation blew up after Klingon warriors from another simulation (including Dad and I) attacked those who were still within the "town." With the safeties off, the way the Hirogen liked it, the holodeck programs were all too real.

I guess we should be happy they didn't take any body parts as trophies when they hunted us. The two Hirogen who held Father and Seven captive had planned to slice out their long, twisty intestines
as trophies before we rescued them. Father saw Captain Janeway's ready room when it was still
decorated with nets slung along the walls which were laden with the remains of earlier victims. Our
captain was taken there to speak with Caahr, the Alpha-Hirogen, who explained he wanted to use
our holodeck technology to create scenarios so that his people could pursue the Hunt without
endangering any lives. The Hirogen have been scattered so widely while hunting other sentient
species, they risk dying out as a civilization. He believed that if they hunted on holodecks, they could
stay together in one place to rebuild and revitalize their culture.

In the end, the surviving Hirogen were unable to completely defeat us, but we couldn't overcome
them, either. Caahr was killed by his Beta Turanj, who didn't agree with his Alpha's concept. Turanj
fell to his death through a hole in the deck floor when the captain outsmarted him. By the time this
happened, our ship was in desperate need of repair. Captain Janeway asked for, and established, a
truce with the Alpha from another Hirogen ship and negotiated a settlement. Captain Janeway traded
holographic technology to the Hirogen in return for safe passage out of the sector (once Voyager had
been restored to a condition which allowed us to travel anywhere at all). The Alpha she gave the
technology to was unsure what to do with it, so I'm not confident the Hirogen will use it the way the
dead Alpha intended. However, the captain suggested that if he didn't wish to use it the way Caahr
wished, he could always mount it on a wall as a trophy.

I wonder if any of the surviving hunters have the intelligence of the one who spoke with the captain?
Caahr had vision, according to Captain Janeway. "I wouldn't have believed the Hirogen could ever
have been capable of building that marvelous communication network a hundred thousand years ago
until I met him. If Turanj hadn't murdered Caahr, we might have found a way to work with him and
help him develop his idea for salvaging his people. Now, I just don't know what will happen. We'll
need to stay vigilant, I know that. We established a truce, not a treaty."

Supplemental

We're still cleaning up the holodecks, since so much damage was done to the basic structure of the
ship when the Sainte Claire simulations blew up. Tom has been working on the holodeck
programming technology, since it was seriously damaged by the explosion, too, and I asked him
about his Brigitte character. Since B'Elanna filled the role or Brigitte herself, she never saw the
holodeck character's face. Tom told me he volunteered to scrub the entire scenario from the holodeck
library. When I complimented him on his "good deed," Tom laughed with me and said, "That
program is already history -- in more ways than one. Who will ever want to visit it again, after
everything that happened? Too many bad memories."

And, of course, by excising the entire program, Tom's faux pas of using his girlfriend's former face
without her permission has been permanently wiped out as well.
Stardate 51765

Since our cleanup after the Hirogen occupation, Tom has been spending as much time in his "Grease Monkey" holodeck program as he has wining and dining his girlfriend B'Elanna. He's also been visiting a golf program with Harry, when B'Elanna's and Tom's schedules have been out of sync. That's happened a lot lately. I thought Commander Chakotay was going to try to avoid doing that to the couple. Maybe he's just forgotten.

Now Tom has a new interest. Since this pilot Steth showed up with his fancy folding-space shuttle with mechanical issues our pilot helped fix, Tom's behavior has been very erratic. He's displayed quite a nasty edge when speaking to others, including me. I may have to sit that young man down and talk to him about what he's doing to himself. Up until Steth's arrival, he's been almost a model officer. I'd hate to see him slip back into his old self-destructive habits.

Supplemental

Oh, my! That wasn't Tom at all! Steth was a shape shifter and a criminal who stole that fancy shuttle. No wonder he had issues piloting it. He didn't understand how the technology worked, certainly not as well as he thought he did. After stealing Tom's body and totally confusing B'Elanna, he stole Captain Janeway's body, leaving Tom in "Steth's." An officer who'd lost her (his?) body to Steth arrested Tom. While some of the crew thought it was hilarious that our captain inhabited the body of the "playboy," I didn't find it at all humorous. Tom finally convinced the officer he wasn't the criminal, and the "Steth" shape shifter was taken into custody. Apparently there's a chain of unhappy people who want their own bodies back.

There were a few positive developments. We've obtained the schematics to Steth's ship, which utilizes a faster-than-warp technology we may be able to pursue to get home faster. And Tom has decided to invite B'Elanna to work on his muscle car in the "Grease Monkey" program. Since Tom also has a program for "parking on Mars," which involves activities much more personal than simply looking at the scenery, the muscle car might provide an opportunity for a little after-hours romance. B'Elanna has been walking around the ship and looking a little grim ever since the Hirogen takeover ended. Actually, she's been a bit off since the first time we encountered the Hirogen. She needs cheering up. Tom is just the man to do that for her.

I hope it also means Tom won't be playing golf with Harry for a while. I've looked into the game, and it seems like something I'd like to try myself. I've been pretty successful using a stick to knock balls into the pockets of the billiards table in Sandrines. Golf is similar, but on a big course, not a table. You use a "club" to hit a golf ball into the holes. I'd love to try it.

Stardate 51781

The crew has been cautioned to omit certain details concerning the previous few days' events in their
personal logs. I don't know many of the pertinent details anyway. However, I do know the captain
and the senior officers (of which I am not one) invoked a Starfleet directive which orders us to
destroy a certain substance completely whenever we run across it. The facility in which experiments
on this substance were taking place had already been destroyed due to the instability of the substance
itself.

As soon as the explosion was detected, Voyager raced to the plant to rescue the scientists and
workers who were still alive. We beamed them up to our ship so the Doctor could treat them for
severe theta-radiation sickness. While the facility itself was ruined in the explosion, remnants of the
substance which had caused it did survive. Voyager took these remnants away and destroyed them
before any further damage to space and subspace could occur.

Allos, the project's lead scientist, was inconsolable. His people are desperate to find a new source of
energy, and he thought this substance was the answer. He was extremely angry with the captain for
destroying his life's work. Seven of Nine came to the rescue. She'd provided the Caatati with a
prototype device and materials to enable them to create sufficient thorium isotopes to power their
technology. Since Allos' people had known thorium could be used this way, even though they hadn't
pursued this avenue on a large scale, the captain authorized Seven to give them the same prototype
device and schematics she provided to the Caatati.

Allos accepted the offer. He worked with Seven and B'Elanna, drawing up plans for large-capacity
power plants using thorium technology, while Voyager transferred the surviving scientists to their
home planet. He finally admitted that, if the substance he was researching was as volatile as the
captain told him it was, thorium powered technology "might be" a better solution for his people. One
would think the total destruction of his testing facility, which caused multiple fatalities and severe
radiation poisoning in the survivors, would already have served as an object lesson, proving
definitively that the other substance, no matter how powerful, was impractical for use as a safe power
source.

Supplemental

Seven had invited me to become a member of her research group. We constructed a harmonic
resonance chamber to contain and stabilize this dangerous and mysterious substance until it could be
transported to a place where it could be safely destroyed. Seven designated me as "Five of Ten,"
which was greatly amusing to me. Organizing the group as a mini Collective shows that Seven of
Nine still has quite a way to go before breaking herself of the "Borgifying habit." She asked Harry to
participate as well. He was highly insulted when she assigned a Borg designation to him. When he
 balked at some of her rules, she reduced his designation from Six of Ten to Two of Ten. After Harry
was demoted, I became Six of Ten.

While I never did learn the actual name of this substance, I know it's a molecule. Seven believed that,
if it could be stabilized, she would observe "perfection" -- the Borg's personal Holy Grail. Before the
chamber with the molecules inside was transported out of Voyager and obliterated by a photon
torpedo, Seven thought she'd glimpsed such perfection for just a split second. She's been very
subdued all evening, mourning the molecules' destruction.

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Stardate 51844

I'd suspended dictating my personal log entries for several weeks because our fuel supplies were
critically and surprisingly low. Our estimates must have been off, although Lieutenant Torres insists
her figures about how far Voyager could travel on what we had available to us had been accurate.
Commander Chakotay supports her in this. He claims the official records of our course do not
accurately reflect Voyager's actual path or the distance the traveled during the past several weeks. He hasn't explained how he knows this, but that isn't really important now. We've used more fuel-grade deuterium than anticipated, and we haven't found an accessible source to replenish our supplies. The amount contained in Voyager's tanks as of its launch was projected to last for three years; we're well into our fourth year in the Delta Quadrant. Although dictating a personal log doesn't expend very much energy, it was an easy way to conserve power. I simply wrote in a paper diary for the duration. I'll enter anything that I feel I need to place in the permanent record eventually. Since most entries can be summarized by, "no source of deuterium discovered today," I don't know if I'll bother.

In the view of most of my crewmates, our inability to use the holodeck for amusement was far more of a problem. The Hirogen consolidated our power resources into one system, and taking the time to change it back didn't feel appropriate to the captain. So the holodecks were off limits.

We were just about to go to Gray Mode, closing down multiple decks to conserve power, when Seven discovered a Y-class planet, more commonly known as "Demon Class." The conditions on these worlds are antithetical to life as we know it. Seven's sensors indicated it was awash in deuterium, however; and when that turned out to be the case, we went there to fill our tanks. Harry and Tom, our away team, noticed a gooey silver substance on the surface of the planet. They didn't pay much attention to it at first.

When we lost contact with Tom and Harry, the captain decided to land Voyager on the planet to facilitate a search. Commander Chakotay has a reputation for being a little rough on shuttles. (He's crashed as many as Father -- maybe more -- I haven't kept an accurate count recently.) The landing was a bit bumpy, but the ship survived. The captain sent out a second away team, consisting of Commander Chakotay and Seven, to search for the first one. The commander and Seven were shocked when they found Tom and Harry wandering around without their EV suits, apparently in perfect health, and the group beamed back to Voyager.

One would think that finding Harry and Tom breathing the unbreathable air on a Class Y/Demon planet would be the strangest part of this story, but it isn't. When Harry and Tom came back, they couldn't breathe the ship's air. The Doctor had to transport a supply of the planetary atmosphere inside a containment field for them, or they would have died of asphyxiation. We were all upset, but no one more than B'Elanna, who was told we might have to leave her boyfriend and their best friend behind if the Doctor was unable to find a cure. In a way, we did -- except it wasn't B'Elanna's Tom who stayed on the planet. It was his clone. In fact, our entire crew agreed to be cloned, even Naomi. Sam Wildman couldn't allow her clone to stay there without her daughter.

The silver substance was dubbed "Silver Blood." If any of it touched one of us, an exact duplicate of that person grew out of the substance. When we realized all that was really needed was a DNA sample, we were even able to use samples from some of our deceased crewmates, such as Kurt Bendera, Ahni Jetal, Lyndsay Ballard, Michael Hogan, and Marie Kaplan. Even some of the Voyager crew that had died in the crossing to the Delta Quadrant, such as the ship's original chief engineer Lieutenant Commander Ziegler and Lieutenant Veronica Stadi, the helmsman Tom replaced, were given the chance to be duplicated. Their memories were understandably very hazy, but when they were told about what had happened, they were pleased they'd have a chance to live again on Demon, as we've called this planet. No one can explain how the original personalities and memories of our deceased crew were accessible through just a DNA sample -- actually, we don't know how our own clones managed that -- but since Tom's and Harry's duplicates were okay, we thought the rest of the crews' would be, too.

By unanimous decision, the samples of Seska, Michael Jonas, and Lon Suder were not used. It was considered too great a risk for any of them to become part of the Demon community. I was sorry when I heard about Suder, but Father couldn't guarantee the mind melding therapy he'd given him to
overcome his murderous tendencies would carry over to a duplicate.

A lot of our equipment and samples of many foods were dipped in the liquid and duplicated, too. The Silver Blood must transform itself into these items at the molecular level. DNA apparently isn't a requirement. The Doctor very gingerly slipped a corner of his mobile emitter in the sample of Silver Blood with which the captain and B'Elanna had experimented. His image didn't appear in our Sickbay when he turned on the cloned version on Voyager, but the captain's avatar told us he did when they used the equipment on Demon. Their Doctor was already coming up with theories about breakthroughs in medical procedures he'll discover going forward (and was lamenting that no one in the Alpha Quadrant would have learn about them).

Once our ship's fuel storage tanks were filled to bursting with deuterium, Voyager lifted off (with Tom at the helm, this time) and resumed its journey. Our doubles were milling around on the surface, waving goodbye as we left. I was on the bridge during lift-off, and I noticed something peculiar on my sensors. I checked the life sign readings of the people we left behind, and there were a lot more of them -- three times more -- than there should have been. After completing a diagnostic on my own, I called Harry over to check on my instrument panel. He couldn't find anything wrong with it. So, either there was some sort of echo or phase distortion that made my readings inaccurate -- or the Silver Blood went ahead and made two more sets of clones while we weren't looking. Actually, that would be a logical response to a limited DNA pool. Less than two hundred genomes are available for reproductive purposes. Perhaps the "intelligence" which the Tom and Harry clones sensed would like to establish more than one settlement. The entire situation is so unorthodox, why not create multiple sets of duplicates?

My own advent from Dad, Father, and the orchid, almost seems prosaic in comparison. Duplication does not appear to be as uncommon as people generally believe -- at least, it isn't in the Delta Quadrant.

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Stardate 51874

We have another nebula problem. This time, we've encountered a Mutara class nebula. Everyone began to get radiation sickness when we'd barely nudged into it. Ensign Hadley collapsed and died, which let us know how serious the situation was. Seven was going to attempt her nanoprobe resurrection therapy on Hadley; but when the Doctor checked his neural passageways, he discovered they were badly damaged by the radiation. Seven's therapy wouldn't work.

This nebula covers a vast area. The captain wants to cut straight through, since it would take a year if we tried to go around it, but only a month or so to take a straight course from one side to the other. (Circling B'omar space, in comparison, added only six weeks to our journey.)

Two members of the crew did not get sick: the Doctor, who is a hologram, and Seven of Nine. The captain has decreed that with the exception of Seven and the Doctor, our entire crew must go into stasis tubes and during our month-long trip through the nebula. Tom is very unhappy about this. He hates being in small enclosures like stasis tubes, but he doesn't have much choice. We don't want our chief helmsman to get sick and die on us. Actually, all of us are quite unnerved by the prospect of being confined to a space that isn't any bigger than a photon torpedo tube. That has very unpleasant connotations, since we used one when we shot Ensign Hadley's body into space during his funeral. With Seven and the Doctor supervising the ship and our sleep accommodations during this part of our journey, we'll manage.

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Stardate 51936

We're through the nebula. We survived. Seven is recovering in Sickbay, however. She began to suffer from hallucinations towards the end of the trip. Her body absorbed massive amounts of radiation during the month she was basically alone on Voyager. The radiation affected the EMH's mobile emitter, and he had to remain in Sickbay for a good part of the trip. The regular holoemitters worked fine. Seven thought the Doctor's program was entirely off-line for a while, but the EMH says it never was. That was one of her hallucinations. He's been giving her medication to counter the radiation's effects for the past week, ever since he noticed the levels in her blood rising. Her nanoprobes were able to repair much of the cellular damage she sustained from the radiation, but at higher levels of exposure, they couldn't do it as efficiently.

Tom's aversion to small enclosures affected him even while he was unconscious. Seven claims she discovered him walking in his sleep and had to tuck him back into his stasis tube five times.

It's a relief to be awake and capable of functioning normally again. I don't recall any bad dreams I may have had; but if I'm honest with myself, I'd rather not do this ever again.

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Stardate 51978

An alien named Arturis, an amazingly gifted linguist, has come to Voyager. He can decrypt messages by discerning patterns others do not recognize, even those in the garbled one we received several months ago from Starfleet Command. The captain, Seven, and Harry could see there were maps and charts included, but the text was so scrambled, they despaired of ever being able to read any of it. Arturis developed a decryption logarithm that allowed us to find out what it said. Buried in the data were the coordinates of a spot where an experimental vessel, which utilizes slipstream technology, has been sent for our use. The Dauntless will bring us home to the Alpha Quadrant in just a few months! We're on course to those coordinates now.

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Stardate 51994

No experimental Starfleet ship was awaiting us at those coordinates, only Arturis' own ship, disguised through the use of particle synthesis. The captain had a hunch something "just wasn't right." It was too convenient for Starfleet to have sent us a vessel, and then a gifted cryptologist like Arturus would suddenly appear to provide us with all we'd need to know to reach it.

When the Borg assimilated their planets, Arturis's people had been virtually exterminated. Arturis escaped because he was traveling elsewhere when the attacks occurred. Only a few thousand survived, who are now refugees. Arturis blamed Captain Janeway for stopping Species 8472 from attacking and overcoming the Borg. In revenge, he wanted everyone on Voyager, but especially Captain Janeway, to be assimilated.

Arturis had set his ship's controls to bring it into Borg space without any possibility it could deviate from the course he'd laid. He had no idea the slipstream corridor formed behind Dauntless would allow Voyager to travel in his ship's wake. Our crew saved the captain and Seven, who were being held on Dauntless. Arturis's sabotage of his own ship meant he had no way of avoiding his own assimilation when it was tractored inside a huge Borg cube.

I understand Arturis' bitterness over the destruction of his people's civilization, but I think what happened must have been driven him insane. The Borg lied to Captain Janeway about the motives of Species 8472, which convinced her to work with the Collective against them; but who knows what
the people from Fluidic Space might have done if they were successful in eradicating the Borg? Kes had relayed telepathic messages they'd sent her, indicating they wished to destroy "all life" in Dry Space. If those telepathic images were accurate, Species 8472 may have turned on Arturis's people and annihilated them, just as surely as the Borg did.

The slipstream drive was fascinating. B'Elanna and her engineers studied it and learned a lot about the technology before we discovered Arturis' true motives. As a result, B'Elanna and Seven would like to experiment and try to adapt the drive to Voyager. Using a version of Arturis' ship's advanced drive could return us home sooner than we'd ever anticipated, turning his lie into triumphant truth. If he'd worked with B'Elanna and Seven on the project, we'd have had a much better chance of succeeding. Judging from the speeds we were traveling when Voyager followed Dauntless' slipstream corridor, decades could be taken off the time needed to get home.

No one denies that what happened to Arturis' people was a tragedy, especially Captain Janeway. If he'd only listened to reason and realized that the Borg were the cause of his people's demise, not Captain Janeway, he could have joined the crew of our ship. He could have had a good life with us, I'm sure of it. I'm here, am I not?

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Chapter End Notes

The "extra fuel use" is attributable to the events of "Unforgettable," which Chakotay might know about from written notes he made before he lost his memories of those events.
Darkness, Darkness

Chapter Summary

Darkness of the soul, as well as a literal lack of light haunts the crew.

Stardate 52052

Darkness, darkness, everywhere, nor a glimmer to lead the way . . .

I'm not much of a poet. Samuel Taylor Coleridge would have worded it far more elegantly. His words and images are so evocative: "Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink . . ." And of course, the albatross, murdered by the Mariner, its carcass slung around his neck . . .

Evocative, but grim, just like this Great Dark of Night we're traveling through. I've turned to reading to fill many of the empty hours when I'm off duty. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" has become something of a favorite. Our current situation seems to relate to what the Ancient Mariner had to endure. Hopefully, we won't kill any innocent creatures along the way.

At the beginning of our journey through what we've chosen to call the Void, Naomi and I wrote a picture book we "self-published," a birthday present for her mother Samantha. She was, naturally, delighted. It's about how Flotter found a tiny little Trevis, watered him when it hadn't rained for a while, and protected him from the Ogre of Fire. Once Trevis grew up, he became Flotter's "best friend forever." I've visited the educational holoprograms with Naomi occasionally, so I know what the characters look like. I'm not a skilled draughtsman, but then, Flotter and Trevis aren't exceptionally difficult to draw. Naomi painted the forest and river backgrounds. She rendered them better than I did the characters, I think; but we did a pretty nice job overall.

We're constantly looking for ways to spend off-duty time. We have to do something or go crazy. With so little to focus upon the outside of the ship, our minds wander. Writing that book with Naomi was the most ambitious project I've undertaken in weeks.

It's an odd feeling to have so much free time and so little desire to do anything with it. We can go on the holodecks, of course. While we're only supposed to visit the very complicated programs unless
they're the type many people can visit at the same time, like Sandrines or Dad's resort, the exercise programs are allowed. When only one or two of us are using the holodeck, we're expected to use the simpler, low-power-usage ones. We must conserve our energy supplies.

We're not in Gray Mode, fortunately. We don't need to be at the moment. Our tanks are fully of deuterium; B'Elanna has a sufficient store of dilithium crystals to last for at least three years; and the ship is crammed full of storage units filled with all sorts of important commodities, as well as extra power cells. Our journey through this seemingly endless darkness is projected to last for two years. After how close we came to losing *Voyager* just before we discovered Demon, we've planned ahead, in case the trip through this wasteland takes longer than anticipated.

We don't even know how to classify this place. It's not a nebula of any known type, but something is obscuring our sensors so completely, we can't see anything on our viewscreen. Even before we entered the Void, we were unable to see to the other side. The people who lived in that region of space nearby didn't have any idea what it might be, either, although they warned us we had to protect ourselves from massive amounts of theta radiation once we were inside. The Delaney sisters and Seven share the opinion that high levels of theta radiation obscure light frequencies in the visible range. There isn't a trace of light wherever we look. We have yet to identify any stars, planets, or other celestial bodies that might be hiding in this thick darkness.

Since there's so little we need to do, most shifts we've been running *Voyager* with a skeleton crew. Other than measuring the levels of theta radiation and recommending adjustments to our shields to compensate, the science divisions have little to do. Commander Chakotay is not willing to authorize any away missions. There isn't anything to investigate!

When he's not meditating or in command of the bridge, Father has scheduled periodic tactical and security exercises to maintain our skills. Commander Chakotay approves. I must say, the drills do help to break the monotony. Captain Janeway hasn't expressed an opinion about this to anyone, as far as we know. She only sees the commander and, occasionally, Dad, when he delivers a meal tray to her quarters. She hasn't appeared on the bridge for weeks. While the commander is capable of handling everything on his own -- he certainly has the experience -- many of us question why the captain hasn't been more involved. Father is very concerned about the captain. He's seen her like this before (while the details were "beyond your need to know," from his memories, I know she suffered from depression after her first fiancé's death).

Tom and Harry have developed a "Captain Proton, Protector of Earth" holodeck program, based upon science fiction serials that were popular in the early 20th century, during the infancy of 2D cinema. The sets, etc., aren't very sophisticated. The scenarios are in black and white, like those old movies, so the chapters fit into the guidelines for low power use. I'm very curious about this program. If they ask me if to take on a role, I'll accept in a nanosecond. I understand the Delaney sisters are involved as "Malicia and Demonica," the twin mistresses of evil, but B'Elanna and Seven have not deigned to participate. That's a shame. They both could use a little fun.
Tom and B'Elanna aren't handling this "Void" situation as a couple well at all. Dad heard them arguing about pain sticks a few nights ago. I thought Harry had gotten over his crush when Seven "demoted" him during the "molecule" containment problem, but apparently, he's still attached to her. If she continues to push him away, perhaps he'll finally give up. Harry's composed a concerto for solo clarinet, "Echoes of the Void." When he played it for me, I told him it was the "aural equivalent" of our current location. Harry was pleased, thinking it was a positive review, although I wasn't actually being that complimentary. The piece sounds like a Vulcan funeral dirge. I didn't see the point in correcting his impression, however. He is my friend, after all.

I don't know how we'll survive another two years of this. What our situation will be a year from now, if we're still entombed in all of this darkness, is anyone's guess.

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Stardate 52081

There are people living in this Void! These aliens are perfectly adapted to the normal conditions here, but they can't adapt to poisoning by theta radiation. And it's not a natural phenomenon. We've learned that a waste disposal person named Emck, who is Malon, has a secret way of getting into the Void to dump antimatter waste here. Captain Janeway was finally stirred into action after the aliens asked for our help. We found Emck, and the captain told him what he was doing was killing the native inhabitants of the Void. She even offered him Federation technology that converts antimatter waste into harmless by products. He rejected the offer. Dumping the antimatter waste in here is a cheap way to dispose of what Malon technology produces profligately. Changing over to Federation technology would cut into his profit margin!

The captain has a plan to stop him. Father is not very happy with what she wants to do, however. None of the senior staff is, since her plan would probably result in her death. While Father is usually very closed-mouthed about the staff's deliberations, he let something slip when we were meditating and working on Vulcan mental techniques and he thought I wasn't listening. I heard him murmur, "She's depressed again and would take this way out."

I spoke to Dad afterwards. Since he's succumbed to depression himself, and so recently, too, he confirmed that he shares Father's diagnosis. "That's why the captain refused to come out of her quarters for weeks." Withdrawing from life is a common symptom of depression. Dad has come a long way and isn't interested in dying anytime soon. He hopes we'll find another way to implement the plan, which involves "riding the wave" to the other side of the Void, after we destroy the vortex Emck travels through to get to this space. It sounds risky to me, too, but the captain is determined. If Commander Chakotay and Father don't any say, I certainly don't. And they don't.

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Stardate 52082

We did it. After Voyager slipped into the vortex, Father deployed torpedoes to seal its entrance, and Tom rode the shockwave from the explosions all the way through to the other end. We emerged into a lovely, star-spangled area of space. When we needed our captain, she came back to us -- and fortunately, she's still with us. Emck's freighter was inside the vortex and firing on Voyager, trying to destroy us. He must have been killed. Have we made another enemy? Unfortunately, I suspect so. I'm sure we haven't heard the last of the Malon.

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Stardate 52092

This ship has quite an affinity for nebulae. Perhaps I should phrase this another way: the captain has never met a nebula -- or a proto-nebula -- she didn't like. It's too bad they don't seem to like us back very much.

This time, the captain wanted to study a proto-nebula and sent Tom, B'Elanna, Seven, and the Doctor out one of our Class-2 shuttles. The shuttle got caught in a gravimetric shear, and to save our team, we had to transport them back to Voyager. The members of the away team are fine. The shuttle isn't. Tom and B'Elanna have mentioned we need to construct a stronger shuttle that can hold up a little better under Delta Quadrant conditions. I'm sure the shuttle building and repair crew would prefer working on more resilient model. Less work for them.

The proto-nebula didn't like the Doctor's mobile emitter, either. Some of its parts fused, since the transporter beam had trouble separating the team's patterns. Much to the Doctor's displeasure, B'Elanna has taken it to the science lab on Deck 8. She plans to work on it tomorrow. Until she returns it, the EMH is back to living exclusively in Sickbay or one of the holodecks.

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Stardate 52094

We have a new crew member! And he's just as fully grown as I am, even though he was literally born yesterday! Naomi and I are no longer the only "children of Voyager"!
We have the Doctor's 29th century mobile emitter to thank for his creation, although he's an organic being, not a hologram. According to Seven, Borg nanoprobes are designed to assimilate any new technology they encounter. Some of Seven's must have contaminated the emitter during the problematic transport. The nanoprobes took advantage of its advanced features when they assimilated it. When Ensign Mulcahey walked into the science lab, the mobile emitter sprouted extraction tubules and attacked him to obtain his DNA and mixed it with Seven's. That was also a very advanced maturation chamber grew in a day, and that's about all the time that was necessary for a new drone to develop from the combined genomes of his human parents. He has the appearance of an adult, although I suspect Naomi is more mature than he is.

There is one problem. The Doctor's mobile emitter is now embedded inside our young Borgling's cerebral cortex, an integral part of his central nervous system. Our EMH can't get it back without killing him. The Doctor isn't happy, but he's not going to sacrifice a life to give him back his freedom of movement. He's nagging B'Elanna and Harry to work on developing a mobile emitter using current technology. B'Elanna's already proclaimed it's not doable. Harry offered a little hope, but he says he doubts they could produce anything much smaller than a backpack at this stage of technological expertise. If Seven was available to help them, they might have more luck, but right now she's busy raising up her "son." Seven does have help of a sort in this endeavor. Father has assigned at least two security personnel to guard our "youngster" at all times.

He's charming in his naiveté. I hope he remains an innocent. He is Borg, after all.

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**Stardate 52102**

Our young Borg's ability to absorb knowledge is so fantastically efficient, Seven cannot use a neural interface to teach him what he needs to know. When she tried to provide information to him through such a link, he was assimilating her knowledge at such a rate, she had to break their connection as too dangerous for her. She's utilizing Borg data nodes instead, which can be replaced if he breaks one due to his over-eager absorption of its contents.

He's already helping out around the ship. During a visit to Engineering, he showed B'Elanna how to apply a multi-spatial algorithm to predict the rate of expansion of the proto-nebula we've been studying. It was quite remarkable. I was one of his guards at the time and saw him do it. He also helped B'Elanna increase the efficiency of the Bussard Collectors, which we're using to obtain samples of gasses at the outskirts of the newly forming nebula. A "quick dip" of our ship there was all Voyager's structural integrity could withstand, so what our young One did was quite necessary. Harry predicted that even a Borg cube wouldn't last long inside that proto-nebula.
One is actually the name we're using for our young Borg. When he met the captain for the first time, he told her that was his designation, since he's the only one of his kind. We hope we can keep it that way. The last thing this quadrant -- no, this galaxy -- needs is for the Collective to obtain a drone infused with 29th century technology. And that's who One is.

We need our present-day Borg to remain oblivious to his presence on Voyager. If they do find out about him, the freedom, not to mention the individuality, of everyone on Voyager would be sacrificed. One is a prize that the Borg could not resist bringing into their Collective.

**Supplemental**

Perhaps it was inevitable. One is innately curious. He has a burning need to know all about what it is to be Borg. Seven and the captain tried to shield him from learning how destructive they are, but that's no longer an option. Although Seven dampened the transceiver that should have connected him to the Hive as soon as he emerged from his maturation chamber, and the Doctor removed the actual device, One's cranial implants created a replacement part, which sent a signal to the Borg. A long-range tactical sphere is heading towards Voyager at this very moment. The captain and Seven will have to tell One the truth. I hope he understands. When I was with him, I saw how proud he was to be Borg. Learning what they're really like will be devastating for him.

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**Stardate 52104**

I've been meditating for hours now, contemplating a remarkable life -- and a painfully brief one. Our "Borgling" is dead. In a sense, he committed suicide, but his situation was so very different from what happened with Dad, I don't know how I feel about what he did. Can someone who is only days old, but who's already aware enough about making choices that he can make them for himself, understand all the ramifications of his actions? Despite being Borg, he was an individual from birth. And with that marvelous mind of his -- well, I guess he did understand what he was doing. He believed it was the only way to save everyone else on Voyager. And I'm not sure I don't agree with him, as terrible as it is to have lost One this way.

He certainly knew what he was doing when he transported himself to the Borg sphere that was just about to attack us. He accessed its navigation system and steered it into the proto-nebula that was responsible for his birth. The sphere and its Borg crew were destroyed. Thanks to his almost
indestructible body, One survived the sphere's explosion, and we transported him to Sickbay. When the Doctor tried to heal his injuries, however, One erected a force field to prevent all attempts to save his life. Despite his mother's pleas, One insisted he must die. As long as he lived, he would be a danger to everyone on Voyager. The Collective would never stop trying to acquire him. Seven had to stand by helplessly and watch while One sacrificed his life for us.

Rather than risk his reanimation through the use of the technique Seven utilized to revive Dad, after the Doctor removed his mobile emitter from One's nervous system, the rest of that wonderful young person's body was effectively cremated. His physical remains were placed inside a photon torpedo and shot into space, with all due ceremony. A second torpedo was sent to obliterate One's, the same way we destroyed the "molecules not to be named" in compliance with a Starfleet Directive. Only scattered atoms floating in space remain of a most remarkable being.

We've suffered many deaths since this ship arrived in the Delta Quadrant. I must say, this was the saddest for me yet. I will always honor the memory of the third child to be "born" on Voyager. His name, his "designation," was perfect. One was truly was unique.

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Stardate 52109

The captain wants to explore a planet in a nearby system, using a technique developed during the earliest days of space exploration. We're shooting an unmanned probe into the gas giant's atmosphere, sampling its composition and taking gravimetric readings as the probe sinks towards the core of the planet.

Father already possessed the schematics for a particularly robust multispatial probe, and he allowed Dad and I to work with him on its construction. I enjoyed the project immensely. Father and Dad don't spend very much time with one another unless we're in the middle of some sort of crisis and they must interact. I spend as much time as I can with my parents; but it's almost always with just one or the other. This experience was especially rewarding for me, simply because it was with both for a change. I must say, they worked very well together on this project. Once Dad expressed his pleasure that "Mr. Vulcan" desired his services, for the most part he kept his effusiveness under control. Father didn't grimace nearly as often as he usually does when Dad says something in his presence. While Father would never say it to Dad directly, he has, upon occasion, mentioned that the store of knowledge he acquired while traveling in the Baxial, before he came to Voyager, was of benefit to us. Dad has picked up many skills, most of them perfectly legal, which we were able to utilize during the probe's construction.

We shot the probe into the planet a few hours ago. It's sending us the telemetry it was designed to procure quite successfully. The captain is very pleased. I'm sure she's also pleased because she had
an ulterior motive for proposing this activity. Since One's funeral, the mood on this ship has been, well, funereal. I wasn't the only one who thought One's was the saddest of all the services we've attended. Seven is quietly grieving her son. Captain Janeway's own recovery from the depression she suffered while we traipsed through the Void is still rather tenuous. Perhaps she needed this new venture to distract herself, as much, or more, than the rest of us did.

Supplemental

The probe was doing so well, but the conditions in the planet's atmosphere are such that the probe has become stuck in one of its lower layers. To compound our problems, the Malon are here, too, and they're causing trouble. Actually, they've already caused trouble -- for themselves. One of their ships went down to steal our probe, and it disintegrated. A second ship has arrived. Its commander is demanding we abandon our efforts to retrieve our own property.

That the Malon might be obstinate isn't a surprise. I don't believe Emck survived the destruction of his vortex, but even if he did, he couldn't have returned to this side of the Void by now. When last seen, his ship was more than a year and a half's journey away from the borders of the Void; and according to our sensor data, the vortex he used has been destroyed. While he may have had some method of communicating his initial meeting with Voyager before he met with disaster, a more likely explanation is that Emck's self-centered nature was not unique for his species. The fact that the Malon utilize technology which produces antimatter waste in vast quantities suggests this conclusion. At any rate, they're here and demanding we stay away from our own probe. Captain Janeway is not prepared to let them have it.

Tom has been working secretly for some time on plans for a stronger shuttle, which he's designated the Delta Flyer. Harry and B'Elanna have been helping him. A frequent topic of conversation has been our crew's critical need for a new type of shuttle. The Class-2's, with which Voyager was equipped when it was first launched, may be adequate for ferrying people around within the borders of the Federation, but they simply aren't strong enough for the conditions we've encountered in the Delta Quadrant. None of our existing shuttles can withstand this gas giant's atmosphere, so we can't get close enough to our probe transport it onto our ship. Besides, we're already down a shuttle. We haven't replaced the one lost in the proto-nebula.

Tom is confident the Delta Flyer will be able to handle the job. Greatly enhancing its structural integrity has been one of the design team's top goals. Once she knew we would have to send a shuttle into the gas giant's atmosphere, the captain authorized Tom and the shuttle construction team to build it. Tom asked me to work with them. Naturally, I agreed.

After Vrelk, the Malon ship's captain, demanded we leave our probe alone, Seven scanned his vessel and found evidence that the Malon are building a strong shuttle themselves. When she noted theirs may be farther along than ours, the captain ordered us to pick up our pace.
That would be easier to do if B'Elanna was pulling her weight. She isn't. I expected her to be extremely angry (as Tom put it, "spitting bullets") at Vrelk's audacity, ordering us to abandon our own probe to the Malon's tender mercies. Normally, she would be pushing us to work harder and faster. Instead, she's strangely disconnected from this project.

I don't think she's been herself for a while now. While we were stuck in the Void, she was at odds with Tom just about all of the time. No one on Deck 9, Section 12 has complained about the "ruckus" created while making love in quite some time. After we escaped from the Void, she seemed a little more like herself again.

Then we suffered the tragedy of One's brief life and death. And now she's disappearing into the holodeck when she's scheduled to work with us. I hope she isn't getting like Captain Janeway was in the Void, before the crisis with Emck drew her back to the bridge. I know our entire crew has had to deal with a degree of depression since arriving in the Delta Quadrant, simply because of the sudden way everyone was ripped away from all they knew and loved.

If B'Elanna is experiencing that condition now, the timing couldn't be much worse. We need her expertise to solve the problem we're having with the Flyer's shields. They must be strong enough to withstand the crushing pressures of the gas giant, and we're not there yet. Our simulations to date suggest that, like our Type-2 shuttles, the Delta Flyer won't be able to go deep enough into the atmosphere to reach our multispatial probe without imploding. If we can't, this exercise in shuttle building may turn out to be an exercise in futility instead.

Stardate 52117

Success! The probe was retrieved with help of our newly-built Delta Flyer. Everyone is ecstatic. Father, of course, won't say anything out loud, but I see the signs. He's exuding that air of satisfaction he displays whenever he's very pleased about something.

We couldn't have done it without B'Elanna. She came through for us in the end. She'd identified the problem was with the structure of the Flyer's rear wall. She'd run holodeck simulations, and the gas giant's atmospheric pressure caused microfractures to form when her simulated shuttle reached a certain depth. We thought we'd solved the problem, but B'Elanna saw we hadn't. The entire team could have died, including me. I was going to be on the Delta Flyer until B'Elanna insisted on coming on the mission, bumping me off the crew. It was lucky she stood her ground. Her ability to jury-rig solutions to such problems is well-established. I'm certainly not in her league when it comes to under-the-gun improvisation.
As predicted, the microfractures appeared, but using an EPS relay and a phaser to create a containment field inside the shuttle's back wall, she constructed a temporary "brace" to add strength to the shuttle's structural integrity. I would never have thought to use such simple tools the way she did to prevent a hull breach. Tom, Harry, Seven, and B'Elanna retrieved the probe. While we still must solve the microfracture problem with the back wall before the Flyer is ready for regular use, we can now devise a better solution while working at more reasonable and less frantic pace.

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Stardate 52119

Rumors have been sweeping through ship that B'Elanna has been injuring herself deliberately. I'd like to say they're baseless; but I spoke with Tom, and it's clear they're not. He's very worried about her and kicking himself that he didn't recognize the true reason they hadn't been getting along ever since Voyager entered the Void, and even after we left. B'Elanna is depressed.

She told Tom she's been feeling awful ever since Chakotay received the letter from his friend Sveta which informed him of the demise of the Maquis. She admitted that to him at the time, and he tried to console her. When he asked her about it afterwards, she insisted she was fine, so Tom believed B'Elanna had been overcome with her grief. Then the Hirogen took over the ship. That was bad enough. Then the alien called Steth seduced her while he was inhabiting Tom's body, but spoke cruelly to her afterwards and shattered her confidence. Even though she knew it wasn't really Tom, her trust in him was shaken. Before we entered the Mutara-class Nebula, she'd already started injuring herself, which she hid from Tom by using medical instruments she'd "borrowed" from the Doctor while completing his check-ups. While she was in the stasis tube, her body had a chance to heal, but she had terrible dreams which she never shared with Tom. By the time we entered the terrible nothingness of the Void, she was torturing herself regularly.

Tom had assumed her desire to use pain sticks sexually was a "Klingon thing." He'd gone along with her requests (really, demands) a couple of times, but it bothered him so much, he refused afterwards, despite her pleading. When the captain and the commander discovered evidence she'd sustained tissue damage and badly healed broken bones over a period of months, their first thought was that Tom might be abusing B'Elanna. After Commander Chakotay checked the holodeck records and saw she was running dangerous programs with the safeties turned off, they realized that was the source of her injuries. They apologized to him, but between their assumption he was to blame, coupled with B'Elanna's recent behavior towards him, AND his worry over what she's been doing to herself -- well, Tom is feeling pretty down right now.

If anyone still has doubts about whether or not Tom truly loves B'Elanna, this should put them to rest. He's pledged to help her overcome this. Despite her habit of pushing people away to avoid
getting hurt, she's not pushing Tom away this time. B'Elanna is very unhappy everyone knows all about what happened. I'm not sure how it came out. Tom wouldn't talk to me about it at first, but when he realized how much misinformation has been spreading around, he confided in me once I assured him I wouldn't share what he said with anyone else -- even Harry.

He admitted they're both hurting right now. He hopes he can help her through this. I replied there's too much hurt going around right now for just about everyone. If ever a ship needed an experienced psychological counselor, this one does. But whoever would have thought Voyager would need one? This is an Intrepid-class science vessel, with a maximum crew of 200. Ships of this type are never assigned missions out of range of Starfleet space stations unless they're part of a convoy. Their missions seldom last more than six months. Our experience shows that policy may need to be reviewed. The unexpected is the rule, not the exception, in Starfleet.
Chapter Summary

After a disastrous First Contact with an alien species, the crew of Voyager hopes to create a more favorable impression during their "Second Contact" mission.

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Stardate 52136

I was afraid we'd meet them again someday, although I hoped we wouldn't. It may not be the end of the galaxy after all, even though Kes told us that's what they intended.

We'd picked up strange energy readings on long-range sensors, consistent with those found on Earth. As we grew closer, we saw a space station in orbit around a yellow star. What looked like Starfleet Headquarters and Starfleet Academy was plopped on a satellite's surface. The chemical composition of the environment, as well as the topography, were astonishingly detailed and true to life. The captain asked for volunteers to infiltrate the station in order to investigate. While our ship hung in space outside the system, Commander Chakotay and Father traveled to the station in the Delta Flyer with Tom and Harry. After they'd transported down to the station's surface, Tom pulled the shuttle behind a moon to wait for the call to pick up Father and the commander, once they'd obtained enough data to satisfy our captain's -- and our crew's -- curiosity. When they'd done that and wanted to leave, however, a young ensign tried to stop them. Tom and Harry transported all three up to the Flyer in order to avoid breaking Father's and Commander Chakotay's cover. Once Captain Janeway started to question the ensign, he suddenly collapsed. In Sickbay, his corpse reverted to its natural form: Species 8472.

Commander Chakotay went back to the station for a prearranged date with a Valerie Archer. While there, she obtained a sample of his DNA and discovered he really was a human. The beings took the commander into custody, and Captain Janeway demanded they return him. She had to threaten the species with nanoprobeS before they would consent to a meeting.

I accompanied the replicants of Boothby, Admiral Bullock, and Valerie Archer when they traveled from the transporter room to the conference room on Voyager. Father stationed me just inside the door while they met with our senior officers. The Admiral Bullock replicant was just as pugnacious as the "real" Admiral Bullock. Father had never met the human Valerie Archer, so other than the fact that she was a descendant of Jonathan Archer, the captain of the first starship called Enterprise, I had no basis for comparison with her replicant. The Boothby was so much like the Academy gardener,
however, I was shocked. According to Commander Chakotay, the station's recreation of Starfleet Command and the Academy campus was also eerily accurate. Where did Species 8472 obtain the detailed knowledge about Earth and Starfleet to enable them to recreate buildings, places, books, and actual people from Earth so perfectly, so far out here? It's very upsetting to contemplate how they may have come by it.

The Boothby replicant told the senior staff they'd presumed we were just like the Borg, and that the "people of Dry Space" were planning to invade their Fluidic Space. They built this station in preparation for such an eventuality, to develop ways to defend themselves. They've been observing us for some time. By shape-shifting into the images of people who actually live in the Alpha Quadrant and living like we do, they've been learning about our capabilities. As Valerie Archer explained, their motto on the station was, "Speak human, think human, be human." Boothby claimed they have twelve "training facilities," some in other quadrants.

Captain Janeway was quite open about why we were in the Delta Quadrant: that we're just trying to get home. She explained that Voyager's short-term and "misguided alliance with the Borg" came about because of the Collective's lies about an invasion by their species. We didn't know the Borg had invaded Fluidic Space first. The captain shared log entries she'd kept at the time of the alliance, so they could understand what we were told -- and not told -- about them.

The Boothby replicant admitted their observations had yet to reveal any Starfleet intentions of invading their realm. They've discovered that most people in "Dry Space" don't even know Fluidic Space exists. The only ones who do are a few upper-level Starfleet commanding officers (and how they may have learned that is also quite upsetting to consider). The captain reassured them that other than a brief contact we made with the Alpha Quadrant when our Doctor traveled to the Prometheus, through a means that no longer exists, we haven't had any contact with Starfleet Command. While the Doctor was in the Alpha Quadrant, reporting Voyager's survival in the Delta Quadrant, he'd mentioned contact with their people as part of our history. Since they'd already withdrawn into their own space by that time, he hadn't gone into great detail about them. The Doctor spent most of his limited time there reporting the names of the surviving Starfleet officers, the names and home origins of our Maquis crew members, and its Delta Quadrant natives Neelix, Tuvix, and Naomi Wildman, who was born here, too.

After the meeting, the captain took our visitors on a tour of our vessel. I was included in the party, and not only as a guard. Valerie Archer was very interested in meeting me and discussing the circumstances of my hybridization. Their species is the only sentient one they've ever discovered in Fluidic Space. They "grow" their bioships using particle synthesis. I was very interested in how they did this, and about the physics of their realm, which is so different from ours. Unfortunately, we didn't have the time to go into as much detail as I'd have liked.

In Astrometrics, they met Seven, who seemed to be as uneasy as they were until she explained she was no longer linked with the Collective and that she sincerely regretted her role in the Borg's deceptions. She admitted she was to blame for Voyager's entry into their realm and apologized for that, too. She told them the captain would not have fired the nanoprobe weapon on their bioships if
their ships had not attacked Voyager first, and that the captain discovered the truth about which species was the first to invade the other's space only after that incident was over. She gave them a quick view of our galaxy, which didn't seem to surprise them. They've obviously gained a lot of data about "Dry Space" through their "training facility" observations.

When we arrived in Sickbay, the Doctor provided them with descriptions of the multitude of species which live in "Dry Space." They returned the favor by providing data about their own species' biology. The Doctor expressed his regret over his inability to save "Ensign Gentry’s" life. The Boothby replicant said they were under the impression that our people, when captured, would use a similar toxin to prevent being held prisoner. The captain explained that was not our custom. When the group returned to their station, they brought the body of their young colleague with them, to perform the customs they have for their dead after they brought him "home." That will be very soon. They plan to return to Fluidic Space in the next day or so.

Captain Janeway visited their station before Voyager left the area. Boothby said he would go to their leaders to suggest continuing their observations for a while longer, while still practicing to "be us." He said they were "reconsidering" how dangerous we really were. Before she returned to Voyager, he surprised our captain with a gift, displaying just how well they'd done their research. Just as the "real" Boothby did when she was Cadet Kathryn Janeway at Starfleet Academy, the Boothby replicant handed her a lovely rose.

It appears we've 'redone' our First Contact with Species 8472. I hope this "Second Contact" will be the charm. By the end of our encounter, I found a rather liked them.

**Supplemental**

The Doctor was thrilled to discover that Species 8472 may have as many as five genders. He loves exploring the reproductive habits of various species, and this little tidbit fascinated him. While I understand the appeal, I was much happier to discover they seem to be quite nice. If and when we meet with them again, I have many other topics I'd prefer to discuss with them other than sex. The Doctor, now . . .

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Near Misses

Chapter Summary

Dangerous situations threaten the crew.

Stardate 52143

I wish Arturis hadn't been so vengeful and self-destructive. If he'd still been here, our adaptation of the slipstream drive to Voyager might have been successful. When we tried to use our version, Voyager slipped out of the slipstream corridor, and we almost crashed into an ice planet! If Tom hadn't discovered evidence of a phase variance which could cause the slipstream corridor to become unstable, who knows what could have happened? After Tom told the captain we needed more precise telemetry to steer our ship during the experiment, Commander Chakotay and Harry volunteered to take the more maneuverable Delta Flyer a few seconds ahead, to send the phase variations back to the ship and keep us on course. The slipstream dispersed instead -- but not until we'd traveled so far in those few minutes, our projected journey has been cut by ten years!

We won't be able to try using the quantum slipstream drive again anytime soon. We don't have enough benamite, a necessary component of the engine, for one thing. B'Elanna and Seven now believe the shape of Voyager's hull will make it difficult to create a stable corridor wide enough to allow for adjustments to our course when needed. We were able to use the corridor Dauntless made to rescue the captain and Seven because it actually expanded as Dauntless flew through it, and Tom flew Voyager in its wake. Once the slipstream corridor dissipated, we fell into normal space in an area between star systems, so there wasn't anything in our way our shields couldn't handle. We did get quite a jolt when Voyager slipped sideways in the one we created. Thanks to the course correction Commander Chakotay and Harry sent us from the Delta Flyer, however, we were able to get out of the corridor before losing control of the helm.

Supplemental

Tom, Harry, B'Elanna, and I talked over what happened in the Mess Hall this evening. When Tom complimented him on "saving our bacon" with the course correction he sent us, Harry looked very apologetic and insisted he never got around to sending his correction. He was glad he hadn't, because he's been looking over his calculations, and he isn't sure things would have worked out so well for us if he had. Tom and B'Elanna insisted he was being too modest.
Tom, Harry, B'Elanna, and I talked over what happened in the Mess Hall this evening. When Tom complimented him on "saving our bacon" with the course correction he sent us, Harry looked very apologetic and insisted he never got around to sending his to us. He was glad he hadn't, because he's looked over his calculations, and now he isn't sure things would have worked out so well for us if he had. Tom and B'Elanna insisted he was being too modest.

While Harry was saying this to us, Seven came into the Mess Hall to obtain one of her Nutritional Supplement shakes (which look like, and apparently taste, just like an ordinary chocolate milkshake). I watched her hesitate when her drink was ready. I'm quite certain she was listening to us. A very strange expression crossed her face, but she left too quickly for me to ask her about it. When Tom, B'Elanna and I left Harry to go to our quarters an hour later, we passed the captain just outside the Mess Hall door, just as she was going through. The captain greeted us perfunctorily, as she looked somewhat distracted. The only person still in the Mess Hall at that time was Harry, and I saw her approach him. I was curious, but Tom and B'Elanna called me to the turbolift. I didn't want to make them wait, so I left. I'll ask Harry about it in the morning.

In the turbolift on the way to our quarters, the three of us discussed Steth's folding space vehicle. What we've learned about it suggests it might be a better option for faster-than-warp travel. Tom was enthusiastic about trying to develop it, although B'Elanna thinks that drive would be easier to install on a smaller vehicle, like the Delta Flyer, instead of a ship the size of Voyager. We agreed that more research is needed before we try any other exotic drives. The Warp-10 experiment had unfortunate consequences for Tom and the captain. No one wants to try that again, even if we should find more of those ultra-high-grade dilithium crystals used to power the late, lamented Cochrane. Our transwarp experiment failed when the warp core became contaminated. Thanks to the Caatati's involvement, Tom and B'Elanna almost died. Now the slipstream drive has failed, and everyone on Voyager could have been killed.

What we need is a nice, safe, stable wormhole to fly through! Too bad they're so hard to find.

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Stardate 52162

Father left on an away team mission several days ago. Tom was piloting the Delta Flyer, and Samantha Wildman was with them. They haven't checked in with the bridge for over 48 hours. Per standard procedure, they should have reported to us at least twice during that length of time. The last time the Flyer checked in, they told us a series of severe ion storms have been crossing their projected flight path, which will delay their arrival. Shortly after that, we received a static-filled mayday from Father, and now, nothing. The captain is very concerned, and so am I. Father would never allow a lapse in reporting their current status to last this long unless they were unable to
communicate with us. Harry was able to track the *Flyer* to a star system in the area. We haven't been able to make as detailed a search as we'd like because we've had to deal with those same ion storms. They're in trouble. We just don't know how bad it is.

Dad always stays with Naomi while Sam is off the ship on an away mission. Naomi knows her mother should have been back by now, but Dad has put off telling her about the problems the away team have had. I advised Dad he shouldn't hide what's happened from Naomi.

Captain Janeway called me into her ready room at the end of my shift. She heard me ask Mr. Ayala if I could remain on the bridge to do anything necessary to assist in the search, and she wanted to know how I was doing. I told her I trust things will work out well. She's urged Dad to tell Naomi about her mother and asked me to suggest it, too. I explained I already had. "He has very strong feelings about losing his family on Rinax, Captain. I think that's why he's hoping everything will turn out okay, and he won't have to disturb Naomi's peace of mind."

The captain sighed. "Your dad is certainly a very strong-willed individual!"

I smiled at that, because he definitely is. "Yes," I replied. "He's had to be. He had to survive on his own for a long time. I'm not sure what might have happened to him if you hadn't accepted him on your ship, Captain. I'm in a very good position to know, thanks to the memories he bequeathed me. He was drifting from place to place, turning his hand to whatever came up -- and, as you know, some of it wasn't exactly legal. Coming on board this ship saved his life. I'm certain of it."

"I'm happy to have him here. He's earned his place, just as you have since your . . . what do you and your fathers call it? Your 'advent'?"

"Yes. To call it a birth seems inappropriate. I've always been an adult in form, even if I've had to struggle to understand myself and how to act. My fathers have presented me with examples from the way they've lived their lives, but I'm the one who must do that in my own skin."

She smiled at my comment and said, "You're doing fine, Mr. Tuvix. Your Father is an excellent role model. He's been my mentor for many years. Your Dad has become a good friend, although sometimes he needs a . . . well, a kick in the pants, if you know what I mean."

"I do, Captain. He doesn't want to scare Naomi, but it will only upset her more when she finds out her mother has been missing, especially if . . . well, I don't want to think about that. I'll keep trying to convince him to let her know the truth. I just can't promise I'll be successful."
"That's all I can ask, Lieutenant. I'll order Neelix to tell Naomi if I must, but I'd prefer it if he'd listen to reason and tell her before I have to go to that extreme. Now, as to staying on the bridge beyond your shift . . . Mr. Ayala told me about your request. If you wish to remain there for another couple of hours, you may. Don't stay too long. I'm afraid we'll need your expertise tomorrow, too, and you need your rest. You could spend a little time with Naomi tonight, too. Sam showed me the lovely book the two of you made while we were in the Void. It's nice to see our two 'children' getting along with each other, especially during times like this."

I thanked the captain and went back to the bridge for two hours before taking her advice about visiting Naomi and Dad in the Wildman quarters. I only stayed for about an hour, though, before returning to my own quarters to meditate. I needed to center myself, because I am so very worried about Father.

I would carry on without him if need be. Dad thought I'd be able to deal with losing him when he had his crisis of faith several months ago. That would have been devastating, because the loss would have been so preventable. This is different. I would lose Father due to the risks one accepts when one becomes a member of a Starfleet vessel's crew. I'm an adult, with lots of experience in coming of age -- in a sense, I did it twice, although only vicariously, through the memories I inherited from my fathers. While I'd find it exceedingly difficult, I'd cope.

But Naomi's situation is different. If we can't get them back, Dad, as her godfather, would take physical custody of her. Everyone on this ship would help out. Naomi fools us into thinking she's older than she is much of the time. She grew out of toddlerhood quickly; she's articulate; and she's quite mature for her age. But she's also very little and needs her mother, the more so because her father is far away in the Alpha Quadrant. The captain doesn't believe children belong on a starship, especially one in the situation ours is in, and hopes no one else on this ship will reproduce. As charming as Naomi is, I guess I can see the captain's point.

If we lose Tom, B'Elanna would have a very hard time, too. Commander Chakotay is still counseling her after her recent bout of depression. For her to have to adjust to living without him, now that they've grown so close again, would be terrible. Actually, everyone on Voyager would be devastated to lose Tom. None of the other pilots can compare with his skills as a pilot. During a fight, or whenever we're trying to escape one, we all want Tom at the helm.

I went them back. All of them, safe and sound.

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Stardate 52164
Of course, just as the captain and I warned Dad, Naomi found out about her mother accidentally. She came to the bridge unexpectedly during the night shift and heard the crew's desperate efforts to reach the buried *Delta Flyer*. A very intelligent little girl, Naomi understood the ramifications immediately. In great distress, she ran to her sanctuary, the Flotter and Trevis holodeck program. Dad found her and finally was honest with her about the accident. He assured Naomi everyone was doing all they could to rescue her mother, Father, and Tom. Then he confessed how terrible he felt when he lost his family, and assured her he hadn't told her about what was happening only because he wanted to protect her from being hurt.

(Dad told me later that Flotter and Trevis both chastised him severely for upsetting their Naomi, and he promised he'd do better in the future. Out of the mouths of holodeck characters . . . he was willing to accept advice from them when he wouldn't listen to the captain or me!)

Fortunately, we were able to rescue Sam, Father, and Tom just before their air gave out. It's a good thing the *Delta Flyer* is stronger than the shuttle designs we brought from the Alpha Quadrant. A Class-2 would have been completely crushed in the crash, but B'Elanna says the *Delta Flyer* will be up and running again in just a few days.

Samantha will be on medical leave for several shifts, so she'll be able to spend time with her daughter. She'd suffered serious internal injuries in the accident and needed an operation, but Tom didn't have the medical equipment he needed to do more than give her first aid. The Doctor performed the surgery as soon as Sam was transported to Sickbay. Naomi was allowed to visit her mother there, and she refused to leave her until the Doctor was willing to release Samantha to their quarters.

Now that her mother is back, Naomi's doing much better, but she was so very afraid. I hope Dad has learned his lesson. Trying to deceive a child is dangerous. I'm glad the worst didn't happen. I'm not sure Naomi would ever have forgiven Dad if it did.

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Brine in the Veins

Chapter Summary

Tom takes a costly stand in an attempt to protect a unique environment its own people seem too short-sided to save.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Stardate 52176

Monea is an ocean world, a truly wondrous place. Not merely an ocean-covered world: the globe consists entirely of ocean. Where it originally came from and how it went into orbit around its sun are mysteries, but just looking at the light of its star reflected over the planet's rippling waters is pure pleasure! The captain doesn't recall ever hearing about its like in the Alpha or Beta Quadrants. Dad said he's never heard of another planet made totally from water anywhere else in the Delta Quadrant, either. In the sector of space where Dad met the captain and crew of Voyager, water was a precious commodity. There was never enough of it to go around in that region. This planet would have attracted "everyone," according to Dad.

Several representatives of its people, who live in underwater settlements, visited us on Voyager three days ago. During the meeting, problems with the water's containment field were mentioned. The captain allowed Tom, Harry, and Seven to refit the Delta Flyer for travelling underwater to investigate. Their undersea voyage was quite successful. They discovered an ancient field reactor deep in the Monean water planet's ocean which maintains the ocean's integrity. It needed some repair, and they fixed it. Riga, the Monean who accompanied them in the Flyer, was delighted to learn how the planet was staying together. The existence of some of the creatures living in the deep they saw during their voyage had been unknown to his people this trip deep into the waters.

Unfortunately, the repair to the device may not last very long. While beneath the ocean, Tom and the rest of the team downloaded information from the computer core which controls the reactor and discovered the real problem. By removing oxygen from the water, the Moneans' refineries increase their ocean's density. Eventually, the denser waters will crush the device holding the planet together. All the water will fly into space. The Monean people may survive by escaping the disaster in their undersea ships, which are adapted for flight in space, too. But what about the sea creatures living within the ocean? They'd have nowhere to go. They would all become extinct. Riga was appalled when Tom showed him the data proving what was going to happen.
Despite the bad news the team had to deliver along with the good, Burkus, the Monean Maritime Sovereignty deputy consul, presented the team with the Monean Emblem of Maritime Distinction, thanking them for their services. While Tom was happy to be recognized for the good deed, he's very unhappy about the cavalier way Burkus planned to deal with the bad news. He'll hold "committee hearings." Riga predicts the government won't do anything to save it until it's already too late. In five of their years, when the containment field around the field reactor can no longer hold the planet together, this lovely world of water will disappear.

Stardate 52180

I asked Father to assign me to the security team for the disciplinary hearing in Captain Janeway's ready room. He's assigned Timothy Lang and Lydia Anderson instead. He stationed me outside the entrance to the brig, however, allowing me to see Tom before his incarceration.

Tom and the Monean scientist Riga took the Delta Flyer without permission and tried to blow up the refineries which are destroying the ocean. Captain Janeway was forced to fire upon them to prevent a Prime Directive violation. She's demoted Tom to ensign, and he's been sentenced to Thirty Days solitary confinement in the brig. Dad says Tom will be all right. "He's very resilient. He's had to be, thanks to all the things that have happened to him in his life." (I suspect Dad identifies with Tom more than most of the people on this vessel do.)

Poor Riga was trying to help his people. I wonder what they'll do to him for his part in this event? We'll never know. As soon as the captain meted out Tom's sentence, which satisfied the Monean government official Burkus, Voyager was permitted to leave orbit. It might be more accurate to say we were forced to leave. Without Tom's steady hand at the helm, I worry. The other pilots are competent, but when there's trouble, we need Tom at the helm.

Supplemental

Lieutenant Carey contacted me tonight and asked me to speak with B'Elanna. She's been tearing around Engineering in a "snit." She won't tell him or any of her other staff what's wrong (not that anyone is truly unaware of the reason for her anger). Harry's already tried to talk to her, but she refused to even speak with him. I promised to see what I could do.

I invited her to my quarters, but, quite properly, I'd have to say, she refused to meet me there. I then
suggested we go elsewhere, such as the Mess Hall, Holodeck One, or perhaps one of the airponics bays. She said no to every one until I suggested we meet in front of Seven's alcoves. "Cargo Bay 2 is a neutral place. People come in and out of it day and night. Seven should be present, too. The proprieties would certainly be observed there, don't you think?"

I thought she was going to blow up at me, but then she said she had some holodeck time coming to her, and meeting there would "probably" be okay. She told me to meet her at Holodeck One at 2300 -- and not to be late.

When we arrived, she opened a holodeck program. I was stunned when I walked through the arch and into the glorious black and white setting of the Captain Proton program. I didn't know what to say. According to Tom, B'Elanna has never agreed to join him in this scenario. He'd asked her many times to have "fun" in it. And now, there we were.

I must have looked as confused as I felt, because B'Elanna directed me to a platform and ordered me to take a seat. "This is where I talked him into it," she said brusquely. "It's my fault. I should be in the brig, too."

I said, as gently as I could, "I think we both know Tom wouldn't have done what he did unless he really wanted to do it."

She leaned against a very archaic-looking prop and agreed he'd wanted to do it, but he was unsure if he should. "He was very upset Monea was going to boil off into space if no one did anything to stop them from what they were doing to the planet. To themselves. He told me Captain Proton wasn't going to be able save the day this time. And I said, 'What about Tom Paris?' He turned to me and got that look on his face, like he was opening a present. And then he went off and almost got himself killed!"

I patted the platform next to me and she took a seat. We sat quietly for a long minute -- not a particularly comfortable silence on my part, or, I guess, hers, either. Finally I noted, "You didn't tell him to act the way he did. He did that on his own. I understand you're feeling angry at the captain. Maybe at yourself, too, because you would have gone with him if he'd asked you to, and he didn't. Am I right?"

"He didn't want me with them." Exactly as I'd thought.

"B'Elanna, Tom will get through this. And I don't think the captain is going to hold it against him forever, either. She must uphold the standards of Starfleet. It's her job. He took the Delta Flyer without permission and refused to follow a direct order when she ordered him to stop what he was
doing. He knew very well he was violating the Prime Directive. I know, because I was on the bridge at the backup security station throughout the incident. She ordered him to cease and desist, and he didn't. Captain Janeway can let some things go. This time, she couldn't.

"Personally, even if you hadn't come in here to speak with him, I think Tom would have gone to Riga, and they would have acted exactly as they did. They knew the government wouldn't change their policies, even though they'd warned Deputy Consul Burkus in very clear terms what was bound to happen. Weren't you there when the captain offered them alternate technologies to deal with this problem, and Burkus as good as ignored her offer?"

Reluctantly, she nodded. I was on the bridge that time, too, on duty at the Tactical station, and saw her storm out of the conference room in a rage because of the rude way Burkus had shut down Tom and Riga when they'd pleaded for him to take stronger action to prevent a disaster.

"I still feel guilty," she said. "I couldn't tell Harry about it. He would have been upset, and I'd have deserved whatever he said. Maybe I should have gone to the captain and told her I goaded Tom into it, and she should put me in the brig, too."

"Ah. I understand why you wouldn't speak to Harry now, but then, why were you willing to speak with me?"

She looked at me, and a little smile, mixed with a grimace, showed on her lips. "With your logical Vulcan half and your compassionate Talaxian side, I thought you'd give me good advice."

I chuckled, quite deliberately, I must admit. I wanted to lighten the mood a little, because despite that shadow of a smile, B'Elanna was still very upset. "Well," I said, "I don't think the captain would sentence you to spending thirty days in the brig in the same cell with Tom, so you can get that out of your head. It's bad enough we won't have Tom's services at the helm for a month. We can't be without our chief engineer, too. My advice is to wait as patiently as you can until Tom is released. He'll need your support once he's free. My Dad told me Tom will be okay. You will be, too. I'm not going to tell you *NOT* to feel guilty. Your feelings are your feelings, but my Vulcan half tells me you need to keep strong emotions under control. When our Ensign Tom gets out of the brig, be there for him. You know he loves you."

"He never says it to me!"

"Maybe not in those words, but doesn't he show you he does? All the time?"
She nodded. Her smile was genuine this time. "Yes, he does."

"Then show him you love him, too, by being the very best chief engineer in Starfleet for the next thirty days. Maybe you can arrange your schedule with Commander Chakotay so that you'll have lots of time to be with him when he is free. He'd like you to spend a few hours with him in this program. If you agree, ask him if he's got a character for me to play. This looks like fun."

I put my arm around her and gave her a little hug, and then we got up to leave. Just before we did, she looked around the setting and mused, "This must be the silliest program he's ever come up with."

"I think that's why he comes here so often. Silly can be lots of fun."

She actually laughed a little then. We closed down the program. As we walked out into the corridor, B'Elanna admitted, "I'm glad we talked." I told her I was glad, too. And we went on our separate ways. I hope she takes my advice. I meant every word.

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Stardate 52230

I finally had a chance to speak with Tom at dinner in the Mess Hall this evening. He was a little subdued after spending thirty days in the brig, but he didn't seem too deeply affected by the experience. He said it gave him a chance to reflect upon his life. He also said he wrote a letter, but he wouldn't say to whom. I hope it was to B'Elanna.

He's not sorry he tried to help the Moneans, whose leaders were too short-sighted to see they needed to make changes, but he knows he needs to make better choices in the future. I hope he holds to that resolve. I know B'Elanna was simply beaming at him when he told me that. He was smiling when he said this, so his sense of humor does seem to have survived intact.

It was good to see him at the helm again when I came on duty at Tactical this afternoon. He's going to be serving shifts at odd times for a while, to reinforce his need to follow proper procedures, but that's only when things are going well. When we're under attack, you may be sure that Tom will be in the pilot's seat. After our scary experience two weeks ago with Mr. Culhane at the helm (his defensive maneuvers were, to quote Dad, "puerile" -- and Father did not contradict him), it's good to know he'll be available again when we need him.
Almost 20 years have passed since this episode first aired, and many people still need reminders about the importance of taking care of the environment. This seemed to be the perfect episode to post, now that Earth Day is just about here.
Voices of the Lost

Chapter Summary

People who no longer exist call out when B'Elanna and Seven are subjected to alien attacks.

Stardate 52246

B'Elanna was attacked by an alien yesterday. It secreted a paralyzing venom and fastened itself onto her body. In an attempt to separate the creature from B'Elanna, the Doctor consulted his medical database and created a holographic character based upon Crell Moset, a Cardassian expert in exobiology. When Tabor learned of this, he accused Moset of murder and insisted the hologram and all of Moset's work should be deleted from the database. Tabor claimed Moset's experiments during the Occupation caused terrible suffering. He poured acid on people's skin to see how long it took to heal. Moset gave healthy people the deadly fostossa virus to discover the cure upon which is reputation rests. Tabor is sure of his facts, since some of his own relatives were subjected to Moset's experiments. His grandfather's internal organs were exposed to nadion radiation, and it took him six agonizing days to die.

When B'Elanna heard of this, she ordered the Doctor not to use any of Moset's work to treat her. Tom pleaded with the captain to permit the Doctor to use the hologram's expertise. The captain sided with Tom. B'Elanna was furious with them both, but she's forgiven Tom. I think she still feels guilty that she encouraged him to save the Moneans from themselves. While she isn't so forgiving about the captain's actions, I understand why Captain Janeway left the decision to the Doctor. She didn't want to lose our chief engineer if there was any way to save her. The EMH followed the procedure recommended by the Moset hologram to remove the parasite from B'Elanna, but with a crucial modification. He used a milder neural shock to weaken its motor control without killing it. Moset had recommended one strong enough to kill him. He was still alive when a vessel arrived a little while later to bring the alien home.

The captain also gave the Doctor the right to decide whether or not to remove all of Crell Moset's research from his medical database. Since the Doctor's own matrix isn't large enough to hold everything he needs to know, a large portion of the data is kept for him to consult when necessary. All the Bajorans have very strong negative feelings about Crell Moset. From what Tabor and Tal Celes told us about the way Moset conducted his research, he's not someone I'd wish to get to know, yet he's a noted scientist, the chairman of the exobiology department at the University of Culat, on Cardassia Prime. It wasn't an easy choice for the EMH.
I sympathize with Tabor. I know how Dad feels about the Haakonian Order because of the way they destroyed his people on Rinax. But when Jetrel came to Voyager, hoping (but failing) to resurrect the people who died after his research was used to create the Metreon Cascade, Dad was able to forgive the man before he died of a condition caused by the Cascade. Deleting all of Moset's findings won't bring back the Bajorans he killed. Perhaps the fact that Moset was still alive when we left the Alpha Quadrant and was apparently thriving is a factor in Tabor's and Celes's inability to tolerate his hologram.

Is pure research ever good or bad? The methods used to obtain this data were certainly evil, if even a small part of what our Bajoran crew members attest is true -- and I believe everything Tabor and Celes told us. But the data exists. The deciding factor for the Doctor may have been how perturbed he felt when the Moset hologram was so willing to shock the alien to death in order to detach it from B'Elanna. The EMH decided he would prefer not to consult this particular set of files in the future. He deleted them all.

This must have been as difficult a decision for the EMH as the one the captain had to make when I replaced Father and Dad for those two weeks. If we hadn't discovered a way to duplicate me, this log would not exist.

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Stardate 52343

Dad is very upset. A "mystery snacker" has been raiding his food supplies. There's no pattern to the raids he can discern. Different foods are taken almost every night, so he can't tell what the snacker's ethnicity might be based upon food preferences. He or she could always use the replicator instead of stealing food Dad's set aside for a reason, such as a treat for someone's birthday. Dad always leaves non-perishable foods like fruit out for those working Gamma shift who need a "middle-of-the-night pick-me up." He also can't understand why other foods are shoved onto the floor. Dad's tried to stay up to catch whoever's responsible, but how can he? He has so many duties to fulfill during the day, he hasn't been able to stay awake long enough to discover the snacker's identity. He's very annoyed.

Since Father has not seen fit to station anyone in the kitchen overnight, Dad has requested permission to replicate stronger locks for the food storage lockers. If that doesn't stop the person who's doing this, I may volunteer to post my own vigil. I'll be free tomorrow night.

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I didn't have to spend a night in the Mess Hall. We've discovered who the "snacker" is. It's Seven! If the reason wasn't so serious, everyone would be joking about it; but it isn't funny.

B'Elanna detected a subspace frequency which appeared to have Borg characteristics. She asked Seven to come to Engineering to look at it. Seven confirmed it to be a Borg neural interlink frequency, which connects the minds of drones with all the others. Suddenly, Seven's entire demeanor changed. Our icy cool former Borg began to enact a Klingon mating ritual. At first, B'Elanna thought this was a joke Tom had convinced Seven to play on her, but when "the son of K'vok" suddenly grabbed B'Elanna and bit her on the cheek, B'Elanna knocked Seven across the deck and into a wall before calling Security. Seven ran away before the team arrived.

Father and I found her curled into a ball in a corridor, confined between two force fields. Ensign Larsson was lying on the floor near her, unconscious. Seven had his phaser dangling in her hand. When she answered Father, said her name was Maryl, and she was frightened. Her voice was plaintive, like a young child's. Father put down his phaser (although, since he didn't signal me to do likewise, mine was still pointed in her direction). Seven stood up, and her voice and posture changed. She told us she was Sabaltern Lorot of the Vulcan High Command and was willing to "assist" us. She ordered us to take Larsson to Sickbay. At first she was cooperative, but suddenly, Seven turned and snarled in Klingon at Father. Presumably, she thought she was "the son of K'vok" again. We were forced to stun Seven in order to bring her with Larsson to Sickbay.

When the Doctor examined her, he discovered many other neural patterns, from many different species, were entangled with her own. Some are known species, such as the Vulcan and the Klingon, but others belong to those we've never have encountered to date. It soon became clear the interlink frequency discovered by B'Elanna was prompting the personalities of people who had been assimilated to take over Seven's mind. The Doctor is utilizing a cortical inhibitor to suppress the "voices" that are coming out of dormancy and controlling her, one after another, as they become active. That's working, for now, but the source of this signal is still a mystery.

Supplemental

Voyager is passing close to a field of debris from a Borg cube. Father has identified the source of the interlink frequency: a Borg vinculum, a device which connects drones via the interlink frequency. We transported the device to Deck 12. B'Elanna and Father are trying to find a way to shut it off so that the voices clamoring within Seven's mind can be silenced.
Seven has been unable to focus on any tasks, even though the Doctor has increased the cortical inhibitor to its maximum power setting. The voices are breaking through. Successively, she's been taken over by the Klingon warrior looking for a mate; a Ferengi; a woman searching for her son at Wolf 359; an Ensign Stone of the USS Tombaugh, a Bolian manicurist; and a Krenim temporal scientist; and many others. Naomi told Dad that she played Kadi-kot the other day with Seven, and she was "acting odd" then, almost as if she was as young as Naomi. I surmise Naomi was playing with the little girl Maryl, whom Father and I encountered in the corridor. Currently, Seven is lying on a biobed in Sickbay, writhing in torment. She can barely finish a sentence in one person's voice before a totally different one takes over. Although the Doctor has made several attempts to bring her out of this state, he can no longer identify Seven's own neural pattern when he scans her brain. He believes she may be lost to us.

Father believes there may be a way to return her to sanity. He's been working with B'Elanna to turn off the power of the vinculum, to avoid activating the dormant personalities in Seven's brain. The device is continuously emitting a damaged signal, which affected Seven when Voyager passed near the debris field. The vinculum was deliberately infected with an artificial pathogen, designed to cause this mental deterioration in Borg, or, as Father put it, "to bring chaos to order" through the drones' link with the Hive. We believe we've identified those who are responsible.

Before her condition worsened, Seven identified the last shuttle assimilated by the Borg cube as one belonging to Species 6339. The pathogen originated with them. We located and approached one of their ships to ask them if they had a cure for the ailment. Their spokesperson Ven told us the Borg had assimilated billions of their people. Since their purpose was to destroy as many Borg as possible in revenge for those losses, they never developed an antidote. Ven insisted we return the vinculum to the debris field so that more Borg will be infected by this pathogen if the Borg follow their usual practice of sending drones to their destroyed vessels to salvage anything of value. This vinculum, which up to now is working exactly as they planned, will attract their attention. Captain Janeway told Ven we won't return it to the debris field until we find a way to block its effects on Seven. Ven warned the captain that if we do not return it immediately, they will take it from us by force.

Father believes he will be able to locate her personal brainwave pattern and pull it up to the surface of her consciousness with a mind meld. If the vinculum is powered down at the same time, he believes "order will replace the chaos" which currently rules Seven's mind. While the Doctor is very unhappy about this proposal, since it may be dangerous for Father, he has no viable alternative to offer. The captain has authorized the mind meld.

Father is meditating in his quarters right now to prepare for a procedure that promises to be an ordeal for both of them. I'm about to return to the bridge. Since Father is not available, I will be at Tactical if Species 6339 attacks while the mind meld with Seven is taking place.
Supplemental

Species 6339 (whose actual name for themselves they've yet to reveal) began to fire on Voyager while Father was performing the mind meld. At the same time, B'Elanna was working to remodulate the dampening field around the vinculum. Voyager sustained significant damage during the battle. Main power was interrupted several times while they worked. After B'Elanna successfully disabled the vinculum, Father was able to locate Seven in the chaos of her mind.

Although the captain contacted Ven to tell him we were returning the vinculum, his ship wouldn't stop firing at us. Finally, a very frustrated Captain Janeway ordered us to "Lock onto the damn thing and beam it into space." Once that was done, the captain ordered us to speed away at high warp. We don't want the damaged signal affecting Seven after the dampening field around the vinculum dissipates.

Father is in his quarters now, resting from his ordeal. I wish I could have helped him with the meld, but if I had been linked with them, I know I would only have impeded his efforts. Tom and the Doctor had to prop Seven up in her alcove until her regeneration cycle initiated to help her recover. Tom told me she'll probably need to remain in regeneration mode for several days, perhaps as long as a week.

We left the vinculum floating in space for Ven and his people to find, assuming they didn't destroy it with their own weapons fire. If they're able to power it back up -- and I presume they will, since B'Elanna had so much trouble shutting it down (it kept regenerating itself while she was working on it) -- they'll have to return it to the debris field themselves. And if they should happen to encounter any Borg while they're there, well, that will be their problem.

I'm getting quite sarcastic in my "old age." Perhaps that's inevitable, given the number of aggressive species we've encountered during the three years I've been Tuvix. I should keep my cynicism under better control. After all, these species have been dealing with the depredations of the Borg for a lot longer than the people of the Alpha Quadrant have. The Borg provoke all sorts of negative responses in people. I must include myself in their number.

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Stardate 52357

Seven is finally up and about. As Tom predicted, she regenerated for more than six days before the magic words "regeneration cycle complete" were pronounced by her cubicle. The Doctor was monitoring her remotely from Sickbay and rushed to greet "Sleeping Beauty" when her eyes finally
fluttered open. According to Tom, Seven was not particularly amused by the Doctor's allusion to a fairy tale. I'd have to agree. If anything, this experience was a horror story. It was good to see Seven walking down the corridor with Naomi this morning, however.

Naomi was balancing a stack of PADDs in her arms when the pair entered the turbolift. I saw Naomi in the Mess Hall later on and asked her about them, since several were scattered around the table while Naomi was consuming her lunch. Naomi explained that Seven had given her subjects to study so that the captain would designate Naomi as the Captain's Bridge Assistant. Our Delta-born child is quite ambitious. She told me, in confidence, of course, that after a while, she'll be promoted to ensign, then lieutenant, and finally, by the time Voyager reaches the Alpha Quadrant, she'll be a captain.

I don't wish to disillusion her, but at the rate promotions have been given out on this ship, Naomi will be lucky to make ensign by the time we arrive home. I chose not to correct her. She's a very bright young girl. If anyone can do it, I suspect she can.

Naomi had another bit of news for me, too. After Seven gave her the PADDs to study, she asked Naomi to teach her something. "Seven wishes to 'participate in recreational activities.' She wants me to teach her how to play Kadis-kot!"

I was very pleased to hear that. Her recovery from "multiple personality disorder," as the Doctor diagnosed her, is going very well.

**Supplemental**

My meditations for this evening are complete, but I'm not quite ready to go to sleep yet. My warm feelings about Seven's "recovery" from her illness have faded. This is due, in part, to observations made this evening during dinner. I was enjoying a better-than-average meal from Dad with Tom and B'Elanna. He was trying to get her to decide on a character to play in the Captain Proton program, and she was shooting down every concept he came up with. She did it with humor, however, leading me to believe she'll agree to one eventually.

While we were chatting, Seven came into the Mess Hall and chose Dad's least-spicy entrée, along with one of her Nutritional Supplement shakes. I didn't pay much attention to where she went afterwards. She usually brings her meals to Astrometrics or her cargo bay, eating while she works. Dad says that's very bad for the digestion, but above all things, Seven prizes efficiency. Combining tasks is a way to achieve that goal, if someone is capable of multi-tasking.
After a while I glanced at Tom. He hadn't said much for a while. I noticed his attention was fixed on something, or someone, in the corner. Seven had taken a seat at a table there, but when I looked over at her, she was holding a forkful of food in the air and staring into space.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Tom begin to get to his feet, but he stopped when Seven placed the food into her mouth and began to slowly chew her casserole. I would like to say she seemed to be enjoying her meal; but, as I murmured to Tom, "I don't think she even knows she's eating. Are the voices coming back?"

Tom didn't say anything for a few minutes. B'Elanna snorted in disgust a few times, but after she looked over her shoulder at Seven, a quizzical look crossed her face. She said, "Earth to Tom? Come in, Tom?" but without any trace of the anger I expected to see.

"Sorry, B'Elanna. To answer your question, Tuvix, I don't think the voices are back, exactly; but even if you slept for a week after an experience like that, would the memory of what happened leave you right away? I don't think I'd get over it that quickly."

"I wouldn't, either," B'Elanna agreed, observing, "You know, we completed a diagnostic on an out-of-phase viewscreen this afternoon, and she wasn't as abrasive as usual. I thought it was a good sign. Maybe it wasn't. Tom, are you going to call the Doctor?"

"Not right now. She's taken a sip of her shake, so maybe she was just distracted for a moment. I'll keep an eye on her, though. If she shows any other symptoms, I will contact him."

For the rest of the meal, the three of us paid more attention to the solitary figure in the corner than we did our own food. As far as I could see, Seven had eaten her entire meal by the time she left the Mess Hall, but I wonder if she had any idea about what she'd actually consumed.

Memories are precious things, but some can bedevil a person. There are many things I wish I'd said or done, and didn't. I wish I'd reached out a little sooner to Kes to restore our friendship, for example, since she was gone from our lives so soon afterwards. And there are other things I wished I hadn't done but did, and it's too late to do anything about them now.

And I never helped assimilate thousands, maybe even millions of people, whose personalities are still buried deep in my memory. Their voices may be stilled, in more ways than one; but what would it be like to know they're still lurking in the recesses of my mind, in a dormant state, ready to haunt me again if another race decides to get back at the Borg the way Species 6339 did?
Seven is beautiful -- spectacularly gifted in so many ways -- and I'm glad I'm not her.

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Gamesmanship

Chapter Summary

Tuvix goes into hiding with the telepaths, since Captain Janeway doesn't trust their tricky Devore visitors.

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Stardate 52397

I've never met Kashyk. I'm always in suspension, inside of the transporter buffer, whenever the Devore come calling to Voyager.

I've heard about him, of course. Every time Jurot, Vorik, Father, and I come out of transporter suspension, after the Devore inspection ship has departed, satisfied (more or less) that there aren't any telepaths aboard, the crew speaks of little else. Most of the Devore are rude and boorish. Everyone agrees that Inspector Kashyk is different, however. A smooth operator, Tom said. Full of himself, B'Elanna told me. Arrogant, declared Dad. A Svengali, according to Harry. I had to look up that reference; it suggests he's "spellbinding." The Delaney sisters agree Kashyk is very handsome; but Jenny considers him conceited, and Megan says he's untrustworthy. When she said this to me, she added, "I don't like the way he looks at the captain. He's on the make. I'm sure of it." Megan had to define "on the make" for me. "He wants to bed her," she explained.

I understood her then. Maybe if I really was telepathic, she wouldn't have had to spell it out so bluntly for me. I'm not, of course, but I am half Vulcan. That's enough of a reason for me to have been reported as deceased in the doctored logs, along with my twin Neevok (who, of course, actually is dead, as is Lon Suder, Veronica Stadi, and T'Prena, the nurse who did not survive the crossing into the Delta Quadrant). Father, Vorik, and Jurot supposedly died two months ago, in the same shuttle accident that claimed my life. Captain Janeway told me she gave serious consideration to claiming I was totally Talaxian, like Dad, but she ultimately decided the database contained too many references to my joint heritage to risk it. I've been plunged into the nothingness of transporter suspension with Father, Vorik, and Julie Jurot whenever the Devore come to poke, prod, and probe every corner of the ship, determined to find the telepaths they're sure we have hidden away somewhere on our ship.

And we do. We're ferrying twelve members of two Brenari families to safety. The Devore send any telepathic individuals they find to "relocation centers." B'Elanna calls them extermination camps. She remembers the revelations transmitted to her by Korenna Mirell, who traveled with us on Voyager
three years ago. B'Elanna is certain the Devore are doing the same thing to telepaths that the Enarans did to the "Regressives" on Korenna's home planet. Their "colony" never existed. Ironically, if any Enarans wandered into the Devore Imperium, they'd suffer the same fate the Brenari do who try to travel through this space. The Enarans are also telepathic.

What I haven't been able to understand is why the Devore capture any telepaths they find, even if they're trying desperately to escape from the Imperium. Why not just exile them, since the Devore can't accept living among telepaths? You'd think they'd be willing to "encourage" the telepaths to hurry through the wormhole. The people we're helping have absolutely no desire to stay here. It is totally illogical to capture and keep, even for a short time, people you feel are going to "steal" your thoughts without your permission. Are Devore minds full of such dark and terrible thoughts, they can't stand that anyone might catch even a brief glimpse?

After today's inspection, once we were released from our transporter-buffer haven, the Doctor took Father and several of the Brenari refugees to Sickbay. He needed to treat them for acute cellular degradation, a condition which occurs when someone is held for a prolonged period in transporter suspension. The effect is cumulative, and if unchecked, terminal. The Doctor scanned me and found only a small amount of damage to my cells as of now, but "to be safe," he scheduled me to come to Sickbay tomorrow morning for a treatment.

It's quite interesting that my body is holding up better than Father's. If one averages Dad's chronological age with Father's to estimate mine, I would be somewhat younger than my Vulcan parent, but another factor may be that my Talaxian genes are resistant to the condition. I told Dad he should go into suspension to see how it affects him. He chuckled slightly and told me, in no uncertain terms, he had no intentions of doing so. The Doctor was extremely disappointed when I relayed Dad's response to him. Our EMH is very concerned about the dangers to our crew from this effect, but he'd love to oversee a controlled experiment if Dad were willing. But he isn't.

**Supplemental**

"I've never met Kashyk." Famous last words, as the saying goes.

I'd just finished my previous log entry when who should appear but the man himself? He arrived in a one-man shuttle, seeking asylum -- or so he said. He told the captain he hates what he's been doing, so he's defecting. He knows about the twelve Brenari we rescued from the freighter, and he knows we're heading towards a wormhole that telepaths use to escape the Devore Imperium. He wants them to get away. He claims the Imperium knows the wormhole's approximate location and has the area staked out. Our ship will never get through without his aid. Kashyk wants to help because that way, he'll escape the Imperium, too.

Captain Janeway has granted Kashyk asylum, as he expected she would. He's noticed from reading
our logs that "that's what you do." He's been assigned living quarters, but our captain hasn't trusted him with the "keys to the ship" (wonderful expression) just yet. He has limited access to our ship's systems, such as the computer and replicators (since he might decide to replicate a weapon for himself). Whenever he steps out of his quarters, he will be accompanied by security staff. I know, because Andrews and I have been assigned to guard him tomorrow morning. My appointment with the Doctor has been postponed until tomorrow afternoon.

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Father has been Captain Janeway's mentor for many years, as she's mentioned to me on several occasions. He's also much older than she is; devoted to his spouse T'Pel; and Vulcan. No danger to her virtue exists from his quarter. Actually, since a relationship is forbidden with anyone who is under the captain's direct chain of command -- and that's everyone on this ship -- no one qualifies as a potential romantic partner (other than Dad, possibly, and I don't see them as a very good match). The only other choices available would be an alien during a Shore Leave, a fully functional hologram, or a visitor. Like Kashyk.

*Captain Janeway could succumb to the oh-so-sure-of-himself charms of Mr. Kashyk, I suppose. But I hope she doesn't.*

I would love to find out Kashyk's defection was real; that he loathed what he was doing and asked for asylum because he truly meant what he said about needing to escape the paranoia of the Devore Imperium.

*I wish I believed him. I don't.*

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**Stardate 52404**

Kashyk usually pays little attention to his guards. Today, however, he looked me full in the face and told me I looked a lot like my father. "How much like him are you?" he asked.

I replied, "Which one?"

That set him back on his heels, but he recovered quickly. "You're playing me. The Vulcan, of course. You're telepathic. That's why he's assigned you to guard me so often."

I told him Commander Tuvok assigned me to this duty because he trusts me to handle it competently. "And, by the way, I'm not a bit telepathic." I explained I'd tried to develop that ability for years, through diligent practice, but without success. All attempts have now ceased. "I'm too much like my Dad Neelix."
That startled him a little, too, but then he asked, "How . . ."

I told him it was a long story which I could relate to him if he wished, but I assumed he'd already read about it in our logs. He shook his head. Apparently, he hadn't read that part. He answered, "Some other time." I have a feeling he won't bother to ask me about it again.

Stardate 52407

We're out of Devore Imperium territory. Kashyk is no longer with us. As I anticipated, his defection was just like his charming façade. A lie.

When we approached the location where the wormhole was expected to appear, he told the captain he needed to return to his people temporarily, "to guarantee the safety of the crew and the Brenari refugees." The captain accompanied him to his shuttle and dismissed me so they could say goodbye. Once he was gone, she walked past me in the corridor. Her mussed hair and smeared lip coloring told me how they spent their last minute in the shuttle bay.

Kashyk came back with his inspection team, including his noxious underling Prax, and revealed his "defection" was just an act. He ordered Prax to go to Cargo Bay One to apprehend the Brenari in transporter suspension, while Kashyk went to the bridge with his own team, dragging the captain along with them. He ordered a photon torpedo fired at the projected location of the wormhole. According to the scientist with whom they'd consulted a few days ago, this would open the wormhole very briefly. Shooting a second torpedo at it immediately would completely destroy it. That was Kashyk's intention.

The first torpedo was fired, but nothing happened. No wormhole appeared. The "neutrino emission readings" were from antimatter residue signatures we'd planted there, after Kashyk left our ship. When Kashyk contacted Prax, he learned his subordinate hadn't found any Brenari refugees in transporter suspension, either. "Just cargo containers . . . filled with vegetables."

Kashyk's inspection team reported that two of our Class-2 shuttles were missing. He ordered scans and finally located them at quite a distance, hidden by the refractive shielding Kashyk had helpfully provided to Captain Janeway. A torpedo flared on its way, lighting up the opening of a wormhole as it expanded briefly into a brilliant flower of energy. Two Class-2 shuttles disappeared inside it, just before the wormhole closed up without a trace.
It could still have ended badly for us, of course. Prax told Kaskyk they should impound Voyager and send our crew to a relocation center, the prescribed punishment for harboring telepaths and deviating from an approved flight plan under Devore Imperium law. Kashyk squashed that idea quickly. Kashyk had lusted after the glory that would be his if he destroyed this troublesome wormhole telepaths have been using to escape from the Imperium. His failure to do so would reflect very poorly upon him. It would do no favors for his career -- or Prax's. He advised Prax, "This incident never occurred. And make sure everyone shares that understanding."

Father, Vorik, and Jurot could not be taken into custody, or the specifics of the incident would become known. Kashyk ordered us to leave Imperium space immediately. We were only too glad to follow that order. The elaborate chess game of wits was over.

Just before he left the bridge, I heard Kashyk say to Captain Janeway, "Well played."

She replied, "I never lied to you." Her offer of asylum had been genuine -- if that's what he'd really wanted. But, of course, it wasn't.

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Father, Tom, and our EMH were almost lost.

Stardate 52439

Father Tuvok went with Tom and the Doctor on an away mission two days ago. Their shuttle disappeared suddenly from our sensors shortly after they left. Not long after their departure, Voyager became stuck in a gravimetric shear momentarily. Our shuttle must have been sucked into the same phenomenon. When we analyzed this "subspace sinkhole" more closely, we realized a temporal differential of 0.4744 seconds per minute existed. Although they'd been missing for mere hours, from the point of view of everyone on Voyager, from the perspective of our missing away team, months had already passed without any attempt to rescue them.

Sending a multi-spatial probe into the vortex could allow us to communicate with the away team. When we did so, we detected their distress beacon on a planet inside the subspace layer. It was a great relief, if still a little unnerving. Our away team (or at least one of them) had survived. We needed to move quickly to extricate them from the sinkhole, however. The telemetry from the probe indicated gravitational stresses in the rift were increasing. The planetary system inside the sinkhole would be crushed when it collapsed upon itself. To complicate matters further, a Supervisor Yost contacted Voyager. He reported his people had lost eleven ships to this sinkhole, and rather than wait for its imminent collapse, he planned to fire on the rift and seal it immediately. He strongly suggested we leave the area. Captain Janeway informed him we'd lost an away team of our own and pleaded with him to give us time to mount a rescue. He was quite dismissive and claimed no one had ever escaped from this anomaly. Finally, he reluctantly agreed to a delay of one day.

Either his idea of a single day differs radically from ours or he was too impatient to honor our agreement. He began to fire on the rift only a few hours after speaking with the captain. Using the multi-spatial probe as a relay, we notified our away team of the timetable and the parameters they would need to follow to be rescued before it was too late.

Thankfully, we succeeded. Father and Tom converted the message to their time frame. When we were ready to beam them through the rapidly-closing rift, they were where they had to be for us to transport them to Voyager. I'd convinced the captain to allow me to be in the transporter room to greet Father during the rescue attempt. I was shocked when I saw four figures materialize on the
transporter pad instead of three. A young woman named Noss had been stranded on the planet for "fourteen seasons." Since her people's years correspond quite closely to ours, we calculated she'd been there for 44. We're on our way to her planet now to bring her home.

Father seems older somehow, or perhaps the stresses of surviving on a planet where water was sparse, and they had little more than spiders to eat, accounts for this sense of . . . unease. It's hardly unexpected. The team perceived they'd been stranded for months and thought Voyager had considered them lost and left without them. Tom admitted he'd given up hope of ever seeing B'Elanna again. I think he was a little disappointed that while she was glad to see Tom safe and back on Voyager, she wasn't as overwhelmed emotionally as he was at their reunion. He said he's had to remind himself that as far as B'Elanna is concerned, he was only gone for two days. That's nothing, compared to the length of time he was missing when he was buried in the Delta Flyer with Father and Samantha Wildman. It's a good thing they didn't take the Flyer on this trip. Tom said our last Type-6 shuttle was a total loss when it crashed, and the wreckage must be crushed into atoms by now, along with all the aliens who had been attacking them who were still on the planet. Father believes they were Supervisor Yost's missing people. Yost's barrage obliterated the vortex, removing a serious navigational hazard, but I'm sure the captain would have offered to rescue some of his people who were stranded, if he'd been willing to cooperate.

The presence of this young woman Noss concerns me somewhat. Father, from his perspective, was lost on the planet with her for a long time. Did he form an attachment with her? From the way she looks at Father, I suspect she's fallen in love with him.

Since Father is deeply devoted to T'Pel, I wouldn't expect him to reciprocate; but I'd prefer not examine his memories of his spouse on Vulcan too closely. I've suppressed Father's memories of T'Pel to the best of my ability, just as I've done with Dad's memories of being with Kes. Since many inherited memories seem to have slipped away over time, that's a little easier to do now. Losing these would be a relief. The intimacies of life partners should be known only to them. I had no choice in the acquisition of these images, but there they are. I'm afraid meditation will only reinforce them, which is the last thing I want. While Father might know of ways to "lose" unwanted memories, for obvious reasons, I'd prefer not to discuss the subject with him.

Stardate 52441

Noss is home. Her family was delighted to hear she was safe. While she hasn't been out of touch for more than a couple of their months, they were worried about her. Her ship was expected back twenty of their days ago, and her ship's captain was always good about sending word if they'd encountered problems that might cause a delay. His silence was ominous. I hadn't realized Noss had had shipmates. The other five were killed when the freighter crashed. She was the sole survivor. If Father, Tom, or the Doctor knew, they never mentioned them to me.
We entered orbit around her planet this afternoon. I was planning to accompany Father when he bid her farewell, but Dad advised me not to. I saw Tom later, and I asked him if she'd become emotional when they said goodbye. He told me he gave Noss a big hug and wished her well, but he never said a word about Father. I spoke to Mulcahy, who was manning the transporter room station at the time. He said he had no idea what had transpired because Tom told him to leave, to allow Father and Noss privacy as they parted. Father was the one who operated the transporter, sending Noss down to her home planet's surface.

I thought about asking Tom why he sent Mulcahy away. I've decided I don't want to know.
Queen Arachnia and the Fortress of DOOM

Chapter Summary

Queen Arachnia and her cohorts Captain Proton, Buster Kincaid, and the President of Earth end a war between Doctor Chaotica and a race of photonic aliens.

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Stardate 52463

Harry was very upset after it was all over. "Tom says he wants to end the program! And I've never had the chance to be Captain Proton even once! He promised me I could have a turn!"

When I told him to relax, that Tom had simply overreacted because of all the trouble Doctor Chaotica had caused, Harry calmed down. I was quite certain that once he'd had an opportunity to put everything in perspective, Tom would return to the program. And even if he really doesn't want to go back himself, as long as Tom doesn't delete it, Harry and any other members of the crew will still be able to visit it. "And then you can have your turn playing 'Captain Proton, Spaceman First Class, Protector of Earth, Scourge of Intergalactic Evil.' Doubtless the Delaney sisters will want to portray Demonica and Malicia again." I deliberately lowered my voice register to mimic the sonorous tones of the serial's announcer. While I've never actually played a character in the program, I did preview the first few chapters to see if I could find someone I could portray. Unfortunately, the announcer seems to be the best fit for me so far.

While there were humorous aspects to the incident, our ship had been in serious danger. We were "stuck" in one place. If we hadn't been able to break free of whatever force had locked us down, unable to move a millimeter in any direction, our real-life drama could have ended very badly. Voyager's journey back to the Alpha Quadrant would have ended here, with our power dwindling until the ship, and everyone inside it, expired.

The problem first manifested itself when Tom and Harry were off duty, enjoying Chapter 18, "Bride of Chaotica!" in Holodeck One. As they were walking towards Dr. Chaotica's Fortress of Doom, the deck beneath their feet rumbled, as if from an earthquake. Tom and Harry were surprised, since seismic activity wasn't in this chapter's script. When they looked up, they were startled to see a colorful vortex shining in Planet X's sky. Normally, everything in the program is in pristine black and white, just like the 1930's science fiction cinema serials which served as the model for Captain
Proton. The vortex itself was uncomfortably reminiscent of the one that pulled Tom, the Doctor, and Father into a subspace sinkhole not so very long ago.

When Tom and Harry ordered the computer to shut down the scenario, the computer voice informed them the controls were off line. Attempts to close down the scenario using the manual overrides failed, too. By this time, three colorful vortices were whirling over Planet X. Tom and Harry were too busy trying to escape from the holodeck to pay them the attention we later discovered they'd merited. Since the communications system also proved to be unavailable, they couldn't inform the captain of their dilemma. A request for a site-to-site transport from the holodeck to the corridor outside, however, finally was successful. Tom and Harry immediately reported to the bridge to tell the captain about the problems they'd had with the program. The captain, in turn, informed Tom and Harry that Voyager's forward momentum had ceased. The "earthquake" Captain Proton and his sidekick Buster Kincaid had experienced was, in reality, Voyager getting stuck. Tom likened it to being caught on a sandbar (a maritime reference, I learned later). An unusual layer of subspace had disrupted our warp field. When the captain ordered us to move off under impulse power, however, the ship still wouldn't budge. Since, as Tom caustically commented, getting out and pushing the ship wasn't an option, we had to search for another means of escape.

For three days, B'Elanna and the captain explored every avenue they could think of, even the wildest ideas the crew suggested (short of getting out and pushing) to get Voyager moving again. On the third day, Harry detected weapons fire on Holodeck One, which created power surges throughout the ship. Captain Janeway sent Father and Tom to investigate.

When they arrived in the scenario, they discovered the Constance Goodheart character lying dead on the ground. Since Captain Proton's lovely secretary, according to the parameters of the program, was always going to survive any event that occurred, they knew something was very wrong. They also found Doctor Chaotica's Satan's Robot prone on the holodeck floor. Tom was able to repair the mechanical being, and Satan's Robot informed them that invaders from the 5th Dimension had started a war with Chaotica. The glowing vortices Tom and Harry had put off investigating until after the crisis was resolved were, in fact, the portals through which the invaders were entering the scenario.

Father and Tom encountered one of them. He was dressed like a character in a 1930's movie from another genre: the gangster saga. He was a photonic being from another universe. As far as the alien was concerned, Chaotica and the other holodeck characters were the real people, because they were like his species. Since his instrument, the equivalent of our tricorders, couldn't "read" biochemical life forms, the alien thought Father and Tom were the simulations. No matter how hard they tried, they couldn't convince him we meant his people no harm.

We quickly realized we did have one member of our crew the aliens would recognize as "real." The Doctor, a photonic being himself, was enlisted to portray the "President of Earth" to negotiate a treaty with the photonic aliens. He was quite pleased to be asked to participate and took an active part in designing the "costume" B'Elanna provided him, through a few alterations to his program. In order for the treaty to succeed, however, Tom had to figure out a way to stop Doctor Chaotica's attacks on the aliens. Fortunately, courtesy of one of the other chapters of Captain Proton's
adventures, Tom knew exactly how that could be accomplished.

Captain Janeway wasn't exactly thrilled to be drafted into the program as Arachnia, Queen of the Spider People -- at first. After Tom told her she could "ham it up" to her heart's content, and she saw the costume she was to wear (a slinky black lace gown glittering with spider pins scattered around the fan-shaped collar and hairpiece), she became noticeably more enthusiastic.

Sashaying into Doctor Chaotica's infamous Fortress of Doom, and utilizing her powerful pheromones to distract Lonzak, Chaotica's right-hand henchman, "Queen Arachnia" snatched a photonic ray-gun from the henchman and foiled her dastardly prospective bridegroom's plans for domination of the universe. Once the Queen forced Chaotica to lower his lightning shield, Captain Proton destroyed the evil doctor's Death Ray, which was killing the photonic aliens. Per the alien's agreement with the "President of Earth," the photonic beings withdrew to their own realm and closed their portals to ours, realigning Voyager with normal space. Although a little battered by power surges, our ship could finally move again.

In describing this incident, I find myself resorting to the same sort of purple prose which graces "The Adventures of Captain Proton." I don't mean to trivialize what happened here. Actual lives were lost as a result of our fictional holodeck characters' actions. Once a program like this is set in motion, the unexpected, the unprogrammed, can take place whenever the randomizing elements of the scenarios come into play -- in this case, with tragic consequences. Tom could not have foreseen any of this when he entered the outlines of each chapter. Holodeck programming doesn't require the writing of every single line of dialog for the characters, as in a play. There's always room for improvisation by the participants and the holocharacters in response. This Captain Proton program can be a bit hypnotic, too. It draws its players into its world. It's so far from reality as we know it, taking it all with a "grain of salt," as the saying goes, helps the players distance themselves from it attractive, and often addictive, fantasy elements.

Tom's declaration that it was time to end the program arose from his recognition that individual lives had been put at risk. Unlike the Constance Goodheart character, who reappeared alive and well when Tom activated Chapter 19, the photonic beings were gone forever.

Yesterday, after most of the damage to the ship had been cleaned up, Tom went to Captain Janeway to speak with her about how badly he felt about what had happened. This morning, Captain Janeway requested a minute of silence throughout Voyager, to honor the 53 photonic beings who had been killed by Doctor Chaotica. "We never meant for them to come to harm," she said. "Unlike a holonovel character, who can be resurrected through the efforts of anyone with sufficient programming skills, these sentient photonic beings won't ever return to life. We never had the opportunity to explore how these individuals live in their universe, or how they express their unique personalities there. In a sense, they did come from something like a 'Fifth Dimension.' We mourn their passing as we would any beings who are senselessly killed, especially since it came about through a tragic misunderstanding."
When the minute of silence was over, the Doctor thanked the captain, quite sincerely, for her thoughtfulness. In the giddiness we all felt once our ship began to move again, freed from its subspace imprisonment, I think almost all of us lost sight, temporarily, that these beings had perished. Tom had not. Neither had our photonic Doctor.

Supplemental

After "sleeping on it" last night, Tom decided this wasn't going to be the end of Captain Proton after all. After the captain made her speech, he decided he wasn't going to give it up, but he does plan to cut back on how frequently he plays the role. When Tom, the Doctor, and Harry told us about the captain's "brilliant performance" in the scenario, I finally said something about wanting to join in the fun at some point. The Doctor decided, most magnanimously, that I could play either the vice president of Earth or the president's chief of staff. I was quite cool to both proposals. Tom noticed. "You can always take on the role of Lonzak," he said. "You'll just have to remember to overact mercilessly." I told him I might try that, as long as B'Elanna will portray the wonderful Queen Arachnia when I do.

"Oh, no. Now that the captain's played her, she owns that role," B'Elanna demurred. Tom said he'd try to come up with another role for her. He breathed into B'Elanna's ear, "She has to be a bad girl Proton turns away from the ways of evil." The way she was purr/growling back at Tom, I have a feeling writing that chapter's outline will be very entertaining. I wonder if I should warn the residents of the quarters on Deck 9, Sections 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14? Perhaps not. They'll hear soon enough.

Since Harry will be free to embody Spaceman First Class Captain Proton, "Scourge of Intergalactic Evil" every now and then, I think I'll ask him to let me play Buster Kincaid when he does. I wouldn't mind being manacled to the wall if the Delaney sisters play Malicia and Demonica when I am. That would amuse me much more than being the vice president of Earth, or the president's chief of staff. I have no desire to be anyone's lackey, particularly the Doctor's!

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Recovery

Chapter Summary

The Doctor uncovers a secret the crew has been keeping from him.

Stardate 52480

When he performed a whole-body deep-scan of Harry with his holo-imager as part of Mr. Kim's annual checkup, the Doctor noticed scarring in his cranium, consistent with an operation the EMH himself must have performed, since he'd developed the technique. The Doctor didn't recall the operation, and Harry claimed he's never had any neurosurgery. Harry admitted to me afterwards that he was a little fidgety when he told this fib to the EMH. I know why, of course. We're not supposed to talk about her around him.

The EMH, concerned that something was wrong with his program, went to Seven for assistance in running a self-diagnostic. When Seven came back to the Doctor to tell him his suspicions were correct, that his program has been tampered with, the Doctor didn't recall asking her for help. They decided to check into the medical imaging files for the previous day's annual physicals. Harry's image, along with many other files, had been deleted from the EMH's short-term memory buffer. That sent them to the EMH's archives. Since files usually leave a "shadow" behind once they've been deleted, Seven was able to reconstruct several from residual data bits. One was an image of a surprise birthday party for a female ensign neither the Doctor nor Seven could remember. Another was taken in the cockpit of a shuttle. The Doctor, the unknown ensign, and Harry were posing for a group shot, suggesting they'd gone on a mission together.

Seven uncovered other files in the database, all from Stardate 50979, which had been rewritten to deny the EMH access. Since Seven could access them, she shared them with him. One image, taken in the shuttle, showed the EMH interfering with the two ensigns' work. Another was of an alien craft flying over the shuttle. From an angle consistent with the holo-imager lying on the floor, they saw images of a mysterious alien inside the shuttle, wielding an evil-looking weapon; of both ensigns lying on the deck, covered with burns; of the unknown ensign lying in a pool of her own blood; and then one more. The unknown ensign was lying in Sickbay on a biobed. Dead.

Disturbed by what Seven and the Doctor both considered evidence of a possible intrusion by invisible aliens, like the Srivani medical researchers had done the previous year, they went to the captain. The Doctor speculated that the unknown ensign was actually a spy, and the invaders had
tampered with the files to remove all evidence of her presence. The captain and Father said they would implement stringent security measures, but the EMH was instructed to deactivate himself immediately, to protect his program from further harm.

The Doctor returned to Sickbay to take himself off-line, but first, he took several precautions. He ordered the computer to duplicate all the memory files recorded in his program during the last 48 hours and store them in his mobile emitter. If his program should be altered without his express authorization while he was offline, the computer was to reactivate him and restore the duplicate memory files. His final act was to place his holoimager on a piece of equipment, set to record images at five second intervals, if anyone entered Sickbay. The holoimager diligently followed the EMH's orders.

Once he was reactivated, the EMH learned who must be responsible for the deletions to his program: the holoimager captured a clear view of Captain Kathryn Janeway as she reached for his camera.

Incensed, the EMH confronted the captain with the evidence. He accused her of conspiring against him. The captain freely admitted she'd tampered with his program, but she claimed she'd only done it for his own good. She planned to delete the EMH's memories regarding this "conspiracy" as well. She said she was doing him a favor.

Late last evening, Seven went to the captain and challenged her decision to rewrite the Doctor's program. The captain argued that the Doctor, a computer program, is like a replicator that can be programmed to produce whatever a person desires. Seven countered that the Doctor would doubtless disagree. Since Seven, a former Borg, is also partly mechanical, would the captain treat her the same way? Perhaps the captain, Seven's chosen mentor for becoming human, might not have been the best choice for a guide.

How do I know all this? Seven told me. She's upset (or as upset as I've ever seen her) about this situation. She said that the captain has "feet of clay," which is a shock to Seven, since she's looked up to Captain Janeway ever since she adjusted to the breaking of her link with the Collective. I must say, this situation bothers me as well. I know the circumstances and why the captain acted as she did, but I hope she changes her mind about scrubbing the Doctor's memories again. While I don't want to see him tortured by indecision like he was eighteen months ago, we were forced into silence about Ahni. This method we used to "cure" the Doctor was never sound. The truth was always bound to come out eventually. And Judgment Day has now arrived.

Stardate 52482
Yesterday, after Seven chastised her for treating the Doctor like a piece of machinery, the captain put the procedure on hold and agreed to reveal the facts about Ahni to him -- if he wished. She warned him that she'd denied him access to these memories only after they'd impaired his program so severely, she'd believed the EMH program might have been lost unless she took drastic action to prevent it. Despite her warnings, the EMH chose to have the memories restored. Once they were shown to him from the stored backups, the Doctor's feedback loop started up again. He repeatedly questioned his decision making skills.

This time, Captain Janeway has decided to treat the Doctor without removing his memories. He's receiving a very traditional form of treatment: psychotherapy, as practiced by the followers of Dr. Sigmund Freud. Someone is staying with him at all times on the holodeck, listening to him as he argues with himself whether it was right for him to save one person's life when he couldn't save both, and how could he possibly make the decision about who would live and who would die? I hope this works. It's the best chance we have to help him recover -- but it is risky.

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Stardate 52497

Although our Doctor has a long way to go before he's declared "cured," he is making progress. The captain just issued a popular command. All the references to Ensign Ahni Jetal which had been deleted or modified to disguise her identity have been restored to our database and the official logs from the backups created by Father before the changes were made. We'll be able to utter Ahni's name again without having to look over our shoulders to see if anyone else can hear us. Barring some sort of disaster, Ahni's avatar -- or possibly avatars -- are still alive on Demon. Some of the blood sample marked ^Victoria Stadi was sent into the Silver Blood to be reproduced, along with one from the real Lieutenant Stadi.

We have no way to resurrect Ahni's human body, but we'll be able to reminisce about her with our crew mates again. A sweet person who died tragically can now live on in the Voyager family's collective memories, as she so richly deserves.

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Stardate 52518

I made an unscheduled visit to Sickbay today. It was embarrassing, really. When I slipped on a berlama fruit peel in the kitchen and lost my balance, I sliced my hand open on the knife I was using to prepare my afternoon snack. Dad insisted I go to the Doctor. "You need him to scan your hand to make sure there isn't any ligament or tendon damage," he said. So I went.
The Doctor confirmed my injury was minor. All that was required was for the cut to be sealed with his dermal regenerator. After he'd completed that task, however, the Doctor insisted on completing a deep scan of my entire body. I reminded him I'd had one during my annual physical, a little over a month ago. "I realize that, Lieutenant, but because of my recent . . . issues, I want to make sure I haven't missed anything."

For a moment, I became concerned that his feedback loop might be operating again, but after he'd taken the new image, he called up the one from a month ago and gradually "reconstructed me" holographically -- times two, which allowed him to compare the images and make note of any deviations. Once both images were standing there, dressed in identical Starfleet uniforms and smiling at us, I felt a pang of nostalgia. It was as if Neevok and I were together again.

Seeing both of us there must have reminded the Doctor of my brother, too. "Do you miss Neevok?" he asked gently.

I sighed. "I do. From the beginning, we knew we couldn't both continue to live. The duplication had a specific purpose: to bring back Father and Dad. Those few hours we visited with each other in Father's quarters together, though -- comparing our experiences -- I cherish that memory. Since we'd been the same person up until the duplication process succeeded, the only memories we didn't share were his, from when he was traveling with Tom and B'Elanna in the shuttle, returning to Voyager, and mine, when I materialized in the transporter room and walked to meet him in the shuttle bay. And of course, after we said good-bye in the transporter room, when he stayed and I came here, with Commander Chakotay . . ." I found my throat constrict slightly on the commander's name. It was a peculiar sensation. Perhaps I'd simply swallowed wrong.

"Ah. That must have been difficult. Memories can be fragile things, can't they?" He sighed then, a programmed action, but very appropriate under the circumstances. "I always thought mine were indestructible, but I know now it's possible for them to be removed without my consent. I'm gratified the captain finally returned my memories of Ensign Jetal, and everything that happened, even though I had a very hard time dealing with them . . . I suppose you've heard?" I nodded silently. "Yes, of course you have. Everyone knows I did. I learned a valuable lesson during my recovery, Lieutenant. I'm just as fallible as everyone else. Perhaps my brief role as 'President of Earth' set me up for a fall. Just between you and me, I'm sure my ego will recover completely. And I'm a duplicate myself, you know. My creator, Dr. Lewis Zimmerman, used himself as the model for the 'perfect' doctor. He has a prodigious ego of his own, from what I've heard."

"How interesting, Doctor. I didn't realize that. And, of course, the Delaney sisters are identical twins. They're also duplicates of each other, in a sense."

"Not necessarily. You know of the 'nature versus nurture' debate about identical twins, I'm sure, but
as people age, other changes occur. By the time identical twins are adults, they are *virtually* the same genetically, but the mutations each has experienced at the cellular level mean they are not *exactly* the same anymore, either. Thanks to my Delta Quadrant experiences, I'm no longer the same hologram Dr. Zimmerman created, so I'm no longer a perfect facsimile. You're not the exact replica of the person you were when you were separated into Neevok and Tuvix, either."

The Doctor turned to the two images. "When you were created through the transporter, you contained all the cells of both your parents and that symbiogenic orchid. Your body mass was 26.3% greater than Commander Tuvok's, because of those extra cells. I have a precise count of the number your body contained as of my first scan, when the captain was trying to decide exactly who and what you were. They were half normal size, however, or you would have been at least 76% heavier than your Father. I've kept a record of the number of your cells at every other physical I've done of you. Are you aware that the number of cells in your body has been steadily decreasing? As they die and are replaced -- a completely natural process, by the way -- your body seems to be consolidating them. All the genetic material from both of the smaller cells is present when that happens, but in one slightly larger cell. The reduction in numbers may be healthier for you, since it will make it easier for your body systems to support them all."

"Is that why I feel lighter?" I said in jest. He answered me quite seriously, however.

"Perhaps. That's why I want to keep careful records of the process, to make sure no physical problems develop as a result of this consolidation."

"Did you notice a difference in the scans you took a month ago from the one you did today?"

"Of course. A month ago you didn't have any scar tissue in your left hand! But to answer the question you're really asking me, yes. You have 13,174 fewer cells in your body this time than during that last scan. A trifling difference, given the trillions of cells in your body, but yes, you've lost a few, even in that short amount of time."

"Memory engrams, too, I suppose?"

The Doctor looked at me with concern. "That could happen. Are you having trouble with your memory, Lieutenant Tuvix?"

"I've been aware that my memories have been 'consolidating' for quite some time, Doctor, even before the crew was exiled on Hanon IV. I spoke to Father about this, and to Mr. Ayala, too, once I noticed it. They both told me memories can be lost if they're not reinforced. I've learned several techniques to help me retain the important ones. Actually, I'm relieved that some are leaving me. My
parents shared a few which are, quite frankly, of a more intimate nature than I would wish to revisit as myself -- if you know what I mean."

His smile became quite smug, reminding me of the conversation Kes and I had, when she told me that the EMH's fascination with sex could be a little too intense at times. I couldn't help smiling in response. The Doctor nodded sagely. "I catch your meaning. And truthfully, an eidetic memory is a very rare gift. Your Father and Mr. Ayala are correct. Everyone loses memories over time, making room for new ones to be retained."

"That's a good reason to maintain a personal log, or, in your case, an archive of memories which don't fit into your matrix. You can consult them when you need to, instead of having them cluttering up your memory files and causing problems."

"You know about . . . of course. You were already on Voyager at the time of that incident."

"Don't worry, Doctor. I won't say anything about it to anyone else. They all know anyway. Except for Naomi. And, possibly, Seven."

"Seven probably does know," he replied glumly. "At any rate, let's not speak any more on the subject, Lieutenant. I think we're done here. Try to avoid slicing up your fingers the next time you're in Mr. Neelix's kitchen. I would hate to see you emulating Mr. Paris, with his tendency to land in Sickbay as a result of his frequent indulgence in risky behaviors."

"It's a good thing he's a field medic then, Doctor. He can help himself when you're not around."

The Doctor chuckled as he released me from Sickbay. I was chuckling, too. His memories of Ahni Jetal now seem to be much like those all of us on Voyager share of her. They're sad, but not actually dangerous to his mental health. He's doing well. That's a great relief to me, and to our entire crew. We need a healthy EMH on Voyager. 

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Chapter Summary

Sometimes love -- and a voracious interstellar pitcher plant -- can interfere with rational decision-making.

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Stardate 52546

I feel like I just woke up from a dream. We all did.

Even Dad and Father were fooled by the "wormhole" that promised to provide a quick and easy ride home to Earth -- even though Dad's home is right here in the Delta Quadrant. I must admit, he's now as invested in Voyager's return to the Alpha Quadrant as everyone else on the ship. Well, almost everyone. And the ones who don't care about going back saved us from ourselves.

Tom and Seven were in the Delta Flyer, accompanied by a "crewman" on her first mission. They were scouting the region for a source of deuterium. Since they were only going to be gone for a couple of days, Samantha Wildman swallowed her misgivings and gave Naomi permission to go. Needless to say, our future "Captain's Bridge Assistant" was thrilled to add a little experience to her resume (not that she would phrase it that way, of course -- she's only three). During the return trip, Ensign Paris gave her "piloting lessons." He hovered over her while, for a very short time, she handled the controls, but it qualifies as Naomi's first "official" turn at the helm.

[Sigh] I think I'm relating so much of what Naomi told me about her away mission because I'm reluctant to record how everyone on this ship acted while the away team was gone. We all fell for the telepathic illusions of a giant space-faring pitcher plant. Now that I'm looking at those words on my terminal screen, I'm even more embarrassed. I have lots of company, of course. The captain, Commander Chakotay, Father, Dad, Tom, B'Elanna, Harry . . . everyone, with the exception of Naomi, Seven, and the Doctor.

Since the EMH is a program, he's not subject to hallucinations the way humanoids are. We shut down his program during much of this adventure, so he didn't know what was happening until Seven called up his program to ask him why the captain was flying the ship into a trap. Seven's investigations indicated the "wormhole" was a biological organism. The captain's own logs contained references to her skepticism about whether or not this "wormhole" was real. Those entries
were made right after it was discovered. Two days later, Captain Janeway was as enthused as everyone else about the prospect of an early return home.

Naomi and Seven were protected from the hallucinations by a different factor: they aren't enthralled by the prospect of a return to the Alpha Quadrant. Voyager is the only home Naomi has ever known. While she'd like to meet her father, she knows that when we do get to Earth, she'll lose the family she's grown up with until now: her Voyager family. Seven is apprehensive about the way a Borg -- even a human who has been disconnected from the Collective -- will be received by the people of Earth, not to mention Starfleet Command. Thus, the mental blandishments which worked so well on the rest of the crew were repellent to Seven and Naomi. Getting "home" to Earth is the last thing either of them want.

As we approached what we thought was a wormhole, our entire crew received messages from "home." The captain's fiancé Mark had sent her a message through the Hirogen communication array which informed her he'd married someone. Now she received one that said he'd broken his engagement with his new fiancée. The captain never noticed the discrepancy between a broken engagement and "I'm married." B'Elanna learned her friends in the Maquis weren't all dead. Harry received word from Starfleet that his promotion to full lieutenant had come through, even though he's yet to serve as a junior grade lieutenant. Tom was offered a post as a test pilot in Australia. Commander Chakotay's letter from Starfleet confirmed he'd received a full pardon and offered him a professorship in anthropology at Starfleet Academy. As for my own family, Father said he saw T'Pel walking towards him in a corridor. I received a message informing me that she planned to adopt me, so that I would be her son, too. Since Dad had been appointed ambassador to the Lan'Tuana sector, my entire family would be together in the Alpha Quadrant. As the saying goes, "If it seems to be too good to be true, it probably isn't." This creature had us completely fooled.

Seven's investigations revealed a small ship was caught inside the purported wormhole. She managed to contact the alien inside the ship. Qatai confirmed he was stuck inside a creature which had ingested the colony ship on which his family and 3,000 others were traveling. The creature lured them inside by planting the image of a beautiful, fertile planet in all the colonists' minds. Qatai, the only survivor, had been on a scouting mission in his small ship and returned too late to warn them of their danger. He's been following the creature for over 40 years now, a 24th century Captain Ahab, hunting the equivalent of a white whale in space.

Despite the efforts of Seven, Naomi, and the Doctor, Voyager flew inside the creature. Everyone who'd been enthralled by the creature fell unconscious. Frightened by her mother Samantha's very strange behavior, Naomi hid in Seven's cargo bay, which is where Seven discovered her. From then on, they worked together to reactivate the Doctor's program and devise a plan to escape annihilation. The Doctor suggested they induce a bad case of indigestion into the ship-digesting alien pitcher plant's gullet. Qatai fired his tetryon-based weapons at a pocket of antimatter Seven expelled from Voyager's warp core. To relieve the pain the electrolytic reaction produced in its belly, the creature belched out both ships. Seven, the Doctor, and Naomi managed to fly our ship far enough away from the creature, before the crew began to awaken, so it could no longer cloud everyone's perceptions.
Once returned to the scientific-minded Captain Janeway we've always known, she had us set a beacon a safe distance from the creature, warning others of the danger it presents to the unwary. The "letters" and "messages" from home were all forged by Dad. He had no idea he was doing it. The letters themselves were gibberish. Everyone "read" what they wanted to see. The captain couldn't say much to Dad. She was one of the people who entered misinformation into the computer database. So was Father! Seven has been kept quite busy, marking all of the fabricated entries so that they can be moved to a special file. I understand Tom suggested she give it the title, "Blissful Thinking." I don't think she thought it appropriate, although I do.

Everyone I speak with feels a little foolish, but this experience has also caused us to reconsider our most cherished aspirations. We all imagined we would receive the thing we most desire. For me, it raised the question of whether or not T'Pel will accept me. I've worked hard on my mental disciplines, but my Talaxian heritage seems to be becoming more prominent as time goes by. If I'm surrounded by Vulcans constantly, not by humans and other volatile species, would I be able to tame my Talaxian side a little better? Perhaps not.

From the memories Father bequeathed me of T'Pel, I know she's a lovely woman. She could never have anticipated having a stepson who is an adult, or one that is half-Talaxian. No one in the Alpha Quadrant had ever heard of Talaxians before the Doctor's visit to the Prometheus. I'm sure she'll do her best to make me part of their family. Whether I will be able to fit in with them is another question; one I cannot answer right now.

Stardate 52572

We've made First Contact with a species which calls itself the Varro. They're something of an enigma. They've lived for generations on their ship, traveling through space. Or, a ship that was traveling in space up until a short time ago. When we encountered them, their vessel, which looks quite like a many-segmented snake, was hanging motionless because their warp drive failed. If an aggressive species such as the Hriogen or the Borg had discovered them, I shudder to think what might have happened. Captain Janeway extended a hand of friendship and offered them our expertise (primarily B'Elanna's) to repair their ship.

Imagine our surprise when the leader of the ship, Jippeq, rejected our offer. The Varro are quite xenophobic. When our captain agreed to limit our crew's contacts with his people to professional interactions, however, he reluctantly agreed to accept our help. Generations ago, a small group of Varro left original home planet in a single ship. They added segments to it as their population grew. They've developed a culture uniquely their own -- and they want to keep it that way.
The only members of the crew permitted to interact with the Varro, other than our senior staff, belong to the engineering and operations divisions. Security is technically part of operations, and my primary duty has been maintaining the separation between our crew and the Varro's. B'Elanna quickly noticed their problems originated with their unwillingness to stop into a space station or surface-based facility for preventive maintenance. B'Elanna told them that a ship needs to be immobile for some repairs, but because of the Varro's xenophobia, this has never happened. Quite frankly, that's a shame. The Varro whom I've had the opportunity to meet, mostly those filling security posts equivalent to mine, have been very companionable and charming.

If I were not in Security, I would not have met Bren, my Varro counterpart. He's given me quite a bit of insight into the history of the Varro. He doesn't think all other races are that terrible, however, and he's questioned me about the structures of the Federation and Starfleet at some length. During the course of our discussions, he let slip that many among the Varro are disenchanted with the current regime (i.e. Jippeq, their leader). They're not as universally content with The Way Things Are as Jippeq has insisted they are to Captain Janeway.

As part of my end-of-shift report to Father, I shared what Bren told me. While he promised to mention it to the captain, Father suggested I should avoid further conversations with Bren or any other Varro. "It's a Prime Directive issue," he said. I agreed to keep my distance in the future, although it will not be very easy for me to do. My friendly Talaxian nature interferes with my duties as a security officer at times like this. Or perhaps it is Father's Vulcan nature that makes him more rigid than most in Security. Of course, I must admit, Security heads do have a professional need to maintain a touch of paranoia. On the other hand, if there is any discontent among the Varro, the captain certainly must know about it, since it may affect our Voyager crew during the time our ships stay so closely connected with each other.

Stardate 52585

The Varro generational ship's warp drive has been repaired. Our ships are almost ready to part company. Unfortunately, Harry Kim has become emotionally involved with a young Varro woman, Derron Tal. I hope we can avoid a human/Varro version of Romeo and Juliet.

I discovered their liaison accidentally, while reviewing the communication system's logs for Father. One of the circuits failed during a test on their warp engine, and he wanted to know why. I expected to discover the cause was either a malfunctioning gelpack or broken circuitry. The "malfunction" had been ordered from the helm station while my friend Tom was on duty. I was seriously confused, and then a little bit angry. Since Tom's Monean misadventure, he's been performing admirably, in hopes of regaining his lieutenancy. For him to play a prank on the captain and commander in this context is
completely unexpected and unwarranted.

Since the problem had already been "fixed" by B'Elanna herself, I suspected collusion between them. I'd become involved after the fact because I reported the malfunction and repair but didn't go into detail about who or what had been responsible. I took my lunch break at the same time Tom and B'Elanna were going for theirs. When I met them in the Mess Hall and told them we needed privacy for what I wanted to say, Tom guessed his secret had been discovered. Very casually, he said, "It's a nice day for a picnic in the Delta Flyer." Dad laughed and waved Tom and B'Elanna off, never suspecting, when I left right after they did, that I was going there, too. I wonder what he'd have thought if he realized I was joining them?

Once we were inside the Flyer, Tom took full responsibility. "I did it to cover for Harry. I've already chewed him out about it, Tuvix." I started to ask him why Harry would need Tom to cover up something, and then I knew.

"He was with Tal, wasn't he?" I asked.

"Not only 'with Tal' -- he wasn't at his duty station when the plasma transfer was being run." From the astonished look on B'Elanna's face, I knew she hadn't known that part, either.

"Tom, I would never have signed off on that 'repair' for you if I'd known that."

"I'm really sorry, B'Elanna. But this is Harry who's in trouble. He's only an ensign. If he's busted a rank, he'll end up a crewman -- and a crewman can't be the head of Operations. This was probably the last time he could be with Tal. He promised me he wouldn't do this again."

B'Elanna and I said it together: "He'd better not!"

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Stardate 52588

Father, Dad, and I found him hiding in a Jeffries tube when we were getting ready to part company with the Varro. Dad had noticed food was disappearing from his kitchen. That normally wouldn't be significant, but he also saw life support had been directed to Jeffries tube G-33, on Deck 15. That location normally has none unless an engineer is assigned temporarily to work there -- and this
diversion had been encrypted to keep it secret. My parents came to an obvious conclusion: we had a stowaway. When we opened a panel, we found him. It was Bren.

Once discovered, Bren requested asylum on Voyager. He gave Father and the captain even more detailed information about the situation on the generational ship than he'd given me. He'd hinted at discontent when I spoke with him. Now, Bren admitted a significant number of Varro are more than simply dissatisfied with the leaders' refusal to settle down somewhere. They feel they're being held prisoner on their own ship. While many of the Varro are as xenophobic as Jippeq and the other leaders, a significant minority have no problem with interacting with other species. Even those who were prevented from interacting with us have been impressed by our willingness to help strangers. Their cultural leaders had told them this "never happens." Bren has heard that one group of dissidents plans to sabotage the Varro ship. If they succeed in breaking the ship apart, those who wish to remain with the leaders will be able to do so by flying together in a convoy. The ones like Bren who are tired of traveling and want to settle down on a planet could not be stopped easily from leaving, after the ship is in pieces.

Supplemental

While Seven was working with Harry today, she noticed a glow coming from beneath his skin. She insisted he consult with the Doctor. His romance with Tal has been exposed. The glow comes from a condition the Varro call olan'vora, or "shared heart." Their attachment is not only emotional; it's also physical. When parted, such couples suffer chronic sleep loss, gastroenteritis, elevated beta endorphin levels, and unusual synaptic activity in the cerebral cortex -- often for months. When the EMH learned Harry "caught" this from Tal through intimate relations, the Doctor was scandalized. Before initiating an intimate relationship with a member of an alien species, the commanding officer and chief medical officer both have to authorize it. Harry is in violation of these protocols; he never asked for such clearance. Since the captain's direct order forbid "personal interaction with the Varro crew" because the Varro are xenophobic, the couple knew such permission would not be granted. They went ahead with their affair anyway.

And there is another complication. Derron Tal is a member of the dissident group Bren told us about, which has sabotaged the couplings between the Varro ship's segments. Specifications for the silicon-based parasite were found in Tal's personal database. She admitted her part in the plot to release these parasites, which caused microfractures in Voyager's hull as well as to the Varro ship's connectors. The process on the Varro ship is so far advanced, nothing will stop it from splitting apart at any moment. Many Varro may die from explosive decompression when the linkages give way. Harry suggested we expand the integrity field surrounding Voyager, to give those living in the segments most likely to explode enough time to evacuate to safety.

The captain was furious with Tal and frustrated by the cavalier way Harry has betrayed her trust, since she's always considered him to be an exemplary officer. She ordered him to Sickbay, to be treated for the biochemical bond he's developed with Tal. I don't know if he intends to comply. I can't predict what he'll do. He's not acting like the Harry Kim I thought I knew.
Stardate 52590

I spoke with Harry tonight. He's not in the brig, but if Father had his way, he would be. In addition to the other rules he broke, Harry "borrowed" a shuttle without permission and took Tal to visit a scenic nebula nearby. Father had to chase after them to bring them back to Voyager.

The Varro generation "ship" is no longer a single vessel. The evacuations went well, and there wasn't much damage to the resulting individual ships. They were all deemed space-worthy by the next day, once the treatment B'Elanna used to destroy the silicon parasites on Voyager's hull was applied to all of the Varro craft. The main group of ships are going in one direction. A dozen ships are going the other way, planning to investigate planets Jippeq refused to explore.

Derron Tal is in one of the latter. I don't know if the captain would have granted her asylum on Voyager to stay with Harry after what she did, but the issue is moot. She wants to stay with her own people. She invited Harry to join her, but returning to the Alpha Quadrant and seeing his parents again is too important to him. The captain did permit Harry a short visit with Tal for what must have been a poignant farewell. Bren also went with the dissident Varro. He seems quite competent and would have made a fine addition to our crew; but I understand why he made this choice. Now that he's free of Jippeq, he prefers to stay with his own, too.

Harry is deeply in love with Tal. He's refused to go to Sickbay for the treatment the captain ordered him to take and has been telling everyone, "Love isn't a disease." If he glows every now and then when he thinks of her, he told me, it's because he treasures her memory. If he feels pain, it will remind him that he found, for a handful of days, an "attainable" lover who loved him back. Unfortunately for Harry, she's now just as unattainable as the wrong twin, the alien female masquerading as a holodeck character, or a former Borg.

The captain is allowing him to feel the pain of that lost love, and she's instituted a different sort of pain as well. Harry now has a formal reprimand on his record. He says loving Tal was worth it. If it affects his chances of promotion, I wonder if he will continue to feel that way?
Captain Janeway's obsession with obtaining a Borg transwarp coil leads to Seven's abduction by the Borg Queen, who introduces her to a drone she never thought she'd see again. Once back on Voyager, Tuvix does what he can to help the former drone come to grips with what had happened.

Stardate 52606

The captain has a new project. She's eager to get her hands on a transwarp coil. She believes we'll never be able to use that technology to speed Voyager's journey home unless we can get one that has been field tested by the Borg. An encounter with a small Borg vessel sparked this latest obsession of hers. The ship's drive included a coil as standard equipment, but our attempt to appropriate it for our use was a rather spectacular failure.

After we took note of the small probe ship near Voyager, Harry came up with a plan that could have helped us to obtain one. Seven confirmed that Harry's plan was feasible. He'd previously noticed a pattern to the Borg's shield remodulations each time they switch from one frequency to another. For a split second between each change, a tiny gap appears in the shielding. He suggested we transport a photon torpedo inside the Borg vessel during one of those moments of vulnerability. When the probe noticed us and the drones started reciting the usual "Resistance is Futile" spiel, we put Harry's suggestion into operation. The torpedo was rigged to explode a few seconds after it through their shields, but it landed so close to the power matrix, when the torpedo blew up, the Borg vessel did, too. We managed to retrieved the vessel's transwarp coil, but it was so severely damaged, it was useless.

After sifting through the debris, which was fragmentary, for the most part, we salvaged a few items: several power nodes and plasma conduits, and a few data nodes containing tactical information from a wide area of space outside our normal sensor range. The Doctor was delighted with one relatively intact piece, the arm of a Borg medical drone. He thinks it will help him "revolutionize" his surgical procedures. Even though I try not to laugh whenever Father is around, I couldn't help myself when Tom added, "Every Federation Sickbay should have one." Once the salvageable parts were removed, Dad and I began to separate out the materials we can utilize on our ship or as trade items. We'll use phasers to vaporize whatever is left.
I'm saddened when I think of the drones on the vessel. We couldn't lead any of them to a new life on Voyager, the way we did for Seven. They all died in the explosion. A distressing percentage of the "fragments" from the Borg ship were the mortal remains of drones.

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Stardate 52608

The captain has decided to invade an active Borg vessel, which she's calling "Operation Fort Knox." Seven has identified a Borg sphere that's "limping along" after being damaged by an ion storm. She's determined its crew will need to complete many more repairs before they can travel at transwarp. The captain thinks we can transport an away team onto the vessel without attracting too much attention, if we can mask our warp signature upon our approach.

Since Seven's parents studied the Borg for an extensive period, and Father downloaded teraquads of data when he rescued Seven from her parents' ship, The Raven, the captain asked her to review the records to identify any technologies or techniques used by her parents that we can implement to increase our chances of success. At first, Seven expressed reluctance about the assignment. When the captain suggested she could assign the task to someone else, such as Commander Chakotay, Seven changed her mind. She feels no one else should view the documents she inherited from her parents. I quite agree.

After downloading files into stacks of PADDs, Dad told her (and later relayed to me), "The Hansens certainly had a lot to say!" There were field notes, personal logs, bio-kinetic analyses, schematics for technical innovations -- and that was only the first batch! He said Seven wasn't very pleased to see them at first, but after he revealed the only artifact he has left of his own family is a faded hololimage of his sister Alixia, she seemed to appreciate them a little more.

Dad's memories of his family are just about all he has left. He's happy they've been transferred to me, too. We speak of the family sometimes, especially since his crisis two Prixins ago. This past Prixin we decided to include a "Night of Remembrance" on the last night of the holiday, which Captain Janeway thought was a "lovely idea." We spoke of lost crewmates as well as our own family members who have passed on to whatever comes next, after our lives are over. Dad and I enjoyed the evening very much. I think it helped keep away any negative thoughts he might have had about what happened last year. But as Dad said when he told me about Seven's documents, "How wonderful it would be to have a record of some of our own family's thoughts and actions!" We would love to possess even a tiny fraction of the wealth of data Seven has available to her now, which she seemed so reluctant to review.

Perhaps I'm being too hard on Seven. These records describe the chain of events initiated by her
parents, which led to their assimilation by the Borg and the dissolution of her family. Seven may already retain memories of what happened to her, which may be so painful, she has no wish to revisit them. And here we are, risking the assimilation of everyone on this ship, just to obtain a transwarp coil. Better than anyone else on Voyager, Seven knows the fate we may bring down upon ourselves through confrontation with the Borg.

Stardate 52609

Father has been named to the away team which will try to "liberate" a transwarp coil from the damaged Borg sphere. It was battered quite badly from the ion storm, but in 72 hours, according to Seven's estimates, sufficient repairs to the vessel will have been made for transwarp capability to be restored. The attempt to seize a coil will have to be completed before that happens. While Father is off Voyager, Mr. Ayala and I will share duties at Tactical. All our Security staff will be on high alert during the mission. If the Borg decide our away team constitutes a threat, and they are able to locate our ship's position, they will send their own boarding party here. We must be prepared to defend Voyager if that eventuality arises.

Captain Janeway, Seven, and Harry will comprise the rest of the away team. Commander Chakotay has developed a holodeck program simulating a Borg sphere of the type we are planning to invade, which Seven confirmed is a "reasonably accurate representation." Three simulations have already taken place, but there will be a couple more before tomorrow morning, when the captain wants to embark on the mission. Father believes they will need all the practice they can get prior to the attack. The away team members have practiced walking in a slow, steady, nonthreatening manner, but fast enough to get on and off the sphere while achieving their objectives. Seven believes the plan is "ambitious, but can succeed." That was all the captain needed to hear in order to proceed.

Supplemental

Seven's research into her parents' records yielded schematics for two of her father's inventions, which will be used to assist in the completion of the away team's mission. When Magnus Hansen visited the inside of the cube to observe the drone's daily lives, he wore a "bio-dampener," a device which obscured his life signs from the Borg. Father ordered the Doctor to replicate four of them for the away team's use. Designs for the multi-adaptive shielding the Hansens used to hide The Raven from the Borg's sensors were also found. The captain has ordered B'Elanna to construct this device and fit it onto the Delta Flyer, which Tom will fly to deliver the away team to the sphere and, once the mission is over, retrieve them for the return to Voyager.

While these technologies may be helpful, I wonder if they'll work as well as we hope? Since the
Hansens were assimilated, whatever they knew that might be valuable to the Borg would have been retained in the Hive memory. Both of these inventions appear to be of the kind the Borg would consider useful. Wouldn't the Borg have developed ways to counter them? With luck, they may not discover the away team until after they've absconded with a transwarp coil.

Something has been bothering Seven lately, however. I'm not the only one who's noticed how on edge she's been during the past couple of days. Reviewing those records must be raising some very unsettling ghosts from her past. The captain was worried enough about her to suggest Seven remain on Voyager, to man Father's usual bridge station with Mr. Ayala. The captain had asked me if I would take Seven's place on the away team, if Seven agreed to staying behind. She did not. Seven insisted that she "must" be part of the team, and the captain gave in. I can't say I'm disappointed. Although I know I'll be worried about Father the entire time he's away, I'd rather be at Tactical. I haven't had any rehearsals on the holodeck, while Seven has taken part. She's better prepared for whatever may happen.

Stardate 52612

The "invasion of the Borg sphere" is over. We obtained captain's prize, the object of her obsession: a working transwarp coil. B'Elanna and her engineers are working on installing it right now. The mission didn't go off without a major hitch. Seven didn't return with the rest of the away team. Seven told Captain Janeway she had a "change of heart" and wanted to stay with the Collective. We gained a transwarp coil, but we lost Seven.

Everyone is extremely upset. Most consider Seven's action a betrayal of trust, even though she did assist the captain in stealing the transwarp coil before her defection. Only the day before yesterday, according to Father, Seven begged the captain to keep her on the away team and said Voyager was "her Collective now." When Commander Chakotay suggested that Seven planned to return to the Borg all along, and cooperating with us was the means for her to do so, the captain reminded him that Seven has had many opportunities to leave us, if that's what she truly wished. It's a weak argument, and the captain knows it. We all thought she'd gotten over her desire to return to the Borg. I know I did. What the captain says is true, however. If Seven had really wanted to return to the Borg, she could have remained on the Dauntless with Arturis once it entered Borg space instead of transporting back to Voyager with the captain.

Supplemental

While I was with Dad and the senior staff, cleaning out the remaining Borg "stuff" from Cargo Bay Two, I pondered Seven's decision to remain with the Borg. I went to Harry and suggested we check her personal log, which she keeps in Borg alphanumerics, to see if she left any clues about her reasons. When Harry was dazzled by Seven after she first arrived on Voyager, he studied the Borg
writing system in an attempt to impress her. That skill came in quite handy when she attacked Dad, stole a shuttle, and entered B'omar space. After Harry described her log entries to Captain Janeway, she realized Seven returning to her parents' ship, *The Raven*.

While Harry was downloading Seven's log entries from the previous week, I scanned her alcove to see if I could find anything anomalous in its mechanics. I found something. So did Harry.

We called the captain and Commander Chakotay over to the alcove to report our discoveries.

"Captain, the energy fluctuations in Seven's alcove during the past several days are quite different from the patterns the device usually displays during her regeneration periods. They don't seem to be due to malfunctions, but they recur too regularly to be random fluctuations. They first appeared two days after our attack on the Borg probe ship. It's possible they originated from an outside source -- the Borg, perhaps?"

"When Tuvix mentioned energy fluctuations," Harry added, "I translated Seven's last log entry. It's very short. She says, 'It is what I fear most. I must leave my Collective.'"

"Are you sure it doesn't say 'I must return to the Collective,' Harry?" Commander Chakotay asked.

"No, no. It's definitely 'leave.' In fact, I'm positive it says 'must leave.' Captain, it sounds like she didn't want to go. Didn't you say she told you *Voyager* was her Collective now? What if the Borg contacted her, threatened her in some way, and that's the reason she remained on the sphere?"

The captain ordered Harry to translate the rest of the past week's entries and ordered me to come with her to her ready room to assist her in checking the ship's sensor logs, to see if we can corroborate my findings about the energy fluctuations. While I was running transpectral analyses on all subspace fluctuations throughout *Voyager* during the past week, Father announced a member of the crew wished to speak with Captain Janeway. It was Naomi Wildman.

It was very sweet, really, maybe more than just "sweet." Little Naomi has been paying attention to all of those "Captain's Bridge Assistant" lessons she's been cadging from Seven and anyone else who's willing to help her (which includes me, whenever I have sufficient time to answer her questions). She knew exactly how to phrase her request according to Starfleet protocol: "Permission to submit a proposal for your review, Captain. A rescue plan for Seven of Nine."

Naomi suggested we adjust our long-range sensors to search for Seven's cortical implant frequency
to locate her. It's actually a very workable plan -- if Seven is still within long-range sensor range. Even if our main deflector dish is used to boost the range of our sensors -- which Naomi thoughtfully had included in her plan -- we probably wouldn't be close enough to Seven's current position to find her.

The captain praised her for her "initiative," but Naomi could tell she was being ushered out of the captain's presence. Plaintively, Naomi asked the captain if she was going to give up looking for Seven. I saw a flicker of pain cross the captain's face at the very idea being voiced. She leaned towards Naomi and told her that a Starship captain must always remember three things: "keep your shirt tucked in, go down with the ship, and never abandon a member of your crew." At that moment, the computer beeped with the results of our analysis. The captain smiled at what I had to show her and then at her other visitor. "Look at this, Naomi. What do you see?"

"They're sensor log records," she replied.

"Yes, but look here. As Lieutenant Tuvix suggested to me a little while ago, these aren't random energy fluctuations. They're Borg com signals. And they were directed at Cargo Bay Two."

Naomi jumped to the obvious conclusion, "The Borg were talking to Seven of Nine?"

"It certainly looks that way."

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Stardate 52613

After Harry's translation of Seven's logs confirmed that the Borg were indeed speaking with her and knew of our plans to invade the damaged sphere, Captain Janeway announced we would mount a long-range tactical rescue. B'Elanna is fitting the Delta Flyer with the transwarp coil. While Naomi's idea about looking for Seven through her cortical implant frequency actually is part of the plan, we can't use it to track Seven's position until after we're inside a transwarp corridor. The multi-adaptive shielding will make the Flyer almost invisible to Borg sensors. Father, Tom, the Doctor, and I will accompany Captain Janeway on this mission.

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We're back. We used the transwarp coil we'd "acquired" in the Operation Fort Knox raid to travel to Seven's current position, rescue her, and then escape from the Borg Queen's clutches.

When we first saw the heart of the Borg's -- I believe I must call it an empire, even though they have a Borg Queen, not an empress -- we were astonished. To call the Unicomplex huge is so inadequate a term, it's laughable. Cubes which are manned by a hundred thousand drones or more fly around by the dozens -- perhaps hundreds. I couldn't see from one end of the Unicomplex to the other, so I really don't know how many vessels were there, although Father probably does from the readouts taken at his science station. The multi-adaptive shielding apparently worked, at least, for a while. Eventually, we had Borg vessels chasing us out of their domain. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Using Seven's cortical implant frequency as a homing beacon, we discovered she was inside a construction that looked like fifteen or twenty huge tactical cubes haphazardly stuck together. It didn't look very efficient to me, but I'm not an architect. As we learned later, it was the Borg Queen's "castle," to maintain a royal analogy. Once we pinpointed Seven's position, we couldn't simply fly by and spirit her away using the Flyer's transporter. Seven was in a chamber what was heavily shielded. The corridors outside of the chamber were not shielded so well, however. I volunteered to go into the complex with Father and the captain, but she told me to stay on the Flyer with Tom "for the time being." I believe she wanted to minimize the collateral damage if we had to follow her orders to fire all of our weapons at the chamber upon her command -- although the captain, and probably Father, would still be there with Seven. Tom did question the order, but if Captain Janeway firmly says, "Do it," your answer must be, "Yes, ma'am."

We could tell the Borg knew about our multi-adaptive shielding capability. Tom was very good at changing the frequency frequently enough so that the Borg couldn't get a good lock upon our position, especially since the master of evasive maneuvers was at the Delta Flyer's helm, but they bracketed us with their fire. Eventually, even Tom couldn't befuddle them any longer. A Borg tractor beam began to drag us towards one of the cubes. I thought we'd run out of luck.

Then the familiar, husky voice of our leader rang out of our comm. "Tom, high-yield torpedoes, full spread. Fire on my command."

The tractor beam disengaged, but I had my hand above the torpedo release panel at the Flyer's tactical station, ready to follow her command once it was given. I was relieved when the captain instructed us to hold our fire, but my hand stayed where it was. After a short pause, during which something must have been happening in the chamber, the captain ordered us to beam three to the Delta Flyer. As soon as the captain, Seven, and Father materialized, Tom turned the Flyer around and we sped as quickly as we could through the complex.
Weapons fire and tractor beams flared all around us, but Tom's reflexes are remarkable at times like these, perhaps even superhuman. He calls it being "in the zone." Compared to Voyager, which is so big he could never have avoided all of what the Borg were throwing at us, the Flyer darted around, into, and through the tiniest of openings. I saw Borg cubes' weapons fire, which missed us, explode against other Borg vessels' shields. Once, a tractor beam intersected with another that had come from another cube. The beams began to twist, suddenly flashed brightly, and then died. I assume that what I saw was the equivalent of a feedback pulse.

Our own weapons were knocked out very quickly by the Borg's fire, but we weren't there to fight. Once we were clear of the Unicomplex, we initiated transwarp. It would be quite satisfying to state, for the record, that this was the end of the adventure. It wasn't.

A small Borg craft, very different in design from any other I've seen, shot out of the Unicomplex. It was streamlined in shape and looked a little like Arturis' Dauntless. It was very fast and managed to slip inside the transwarp conduit behind us, which the three tactical cubes chasing us could not do. The conduit we made was too small and closed up too quickly for them to enter. Those large vessels could have created their own transwarp corridors, of course, but they would have to anticipate our true course. I knew Tom had taken an initial bearing that wasn't remotely like the one he meant to take to return to Voyager. Tom had a few other tricks in his arsenal, even within the transwarp conduit; but the triangular Borg ship followed in our wake.

As soon as the Delta Flyer erupted into normal space, the captain contacted Commander Chakotay to let him know that a Borg vessel had followed us. I watched, fascinated, as a full spread of six photon torpedoes shot out of Voyager, bound towards the transwarp threshold perimeter. The conduit collapsed upon itself. That wasn't all, however. As the artificial nebula created by the sudden destruction of the conduit began to dissipate, chunks -- and many more fragments -- of flying Borg debris shot out of where it had once been. They looked exactly like the remains of the probe ship when it exploded after we sent our photon torpedo too close to its power matrix. I took a quick lifesign reading, just before the Delta Flyer entered its home shuttle bay. As with the probe ship, none of the Borg who had been on the triangular ship still lived.

As soon as we docked, B'Elanna ran into the shuttle bay, gave Tom a quick kiss, and slipped into the Flyer to remove the transwarp coil to transfer it to Voyager's propulsion system. I don't know how she did it, but in less than two hours, our ship created another transwarp conduit and shot through it for what seemed like ages, but was probably less than an hour. After the coil burned itself out, the conduit dissipated and we fell into normal space. Harry and Seven, in Astrometrics, reported we'd traveled close to another 20,000 light years while the coil was in operation. We'd cut off a minimum of fifteen years, and probably a few more, from our journey.

We'd "left the scene of the crime," so to speak, after a successful "heist," Harry was with Seven in Astrometrics for a reason. That haunted look had returned as soon as we'd flown into the shuttle bay, and the captain didn't want her to be alone. It was a very good call by Captain Janeway. Seven hasn't looked this pale since her skin was mottled gray, lying in Sickbay, recovering from disconnection from the Borg. I doubt the fact that she was no longer with the Borg was the cause of her pallor this
time. The entire experience must have been terrible for her. I'll offer to speak with her about it if I get
the opportunity. I never did the last time she looked that way, after the multitude of voices assailing
her had finally been silenced. Seven may have been alone in her now, but she was seriously shaken
by her ordeal. I won't make the same mistake this time. If she's willing to speak with me, I'll be there
for her.

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Stardate 52622

When I entered the Mess Hall for breakfast this morning, I saw Seven sitting alone at the same corner
table she'd occupied after the "voices" incident. That haunted look was back. Once I'd filled my tray,
I approached her and asked her if she would mind if I shared her table. From the way her eyes
flicked around the Mess Hall, I gather she might have said she did mind, if there had been any free
tables. It was crowded this morning, however, and she nodded to indicate I could take the other
chair. We didn't say anything for a few minutes. I must confess I was quite hungry and had to
consciously resist wolfing down the pancakes Dad had made for us today -- B'Elanna's favorite,
banana pancakes, but with the added twist of chocolate chips sprinkled in as he cooked them on his
griddle. They were substantial and tasted just wonderful.

After I'd assuaged my hunger enough to slow down and truly savor the rest of my meal, I noticed
Seven had chosen a serving of the same pancakes, although she was eating hers at a much slower
pace than I was. I asked her if she liked them, and she said they were "satisfactory." Seven took a sip
of her nutritional shake, while I reached for my mug of coffee. A suggestion of a smile crossed her
lips, and she commented, "The captain asked me if I would like a cup of coffee, just before we left
for our trip to the sphere. I turned her down. I've never developed a taste for it."

I was pleased to have an opening to talk to her about what had happened, but my initial response was
trite. "Coffee is an acquired taste, especially since some of Dad's blends are not what most of the
crew remembers as a 'taste of home.'" I smiled as warmly as I could while I spoke.

The slight smile faded. "I never had the chance to acquire a taste for coffee. I don't know if my
parents liked it. If so, they never mentioned it in their logs."

"Reading them must have been very difficult for you."

"It was . . . painful. I'd forgotten so much. And now . . . I'm angry at what they did. What they put
me through. Themselves through. And then to see him like that . . . " Seven's voice trailed off as a
momentary memory clouded her perceptions. I couldn't think of anything to say that wasn't inane. I
didn't want that look to show on her face again, but she came out of it very quickly.

"Are you all right, Seven?" I finally asked her.

She sighed. "I am, Lieutenant. It's just . . . I haven't told many people about this. The captain. The Doctor. I believe I will share this with you, too. When I was with the Queen, she summoned my father, Magnus Hansen. The drone. She didn't tell me his designation. I might be able to plumb my memories to find out what it is, but I'd rather not. She thought seeing him would make me want to rejoin the Borg. To return to 'the family.' She has no true concept of emotions, or she would have anticipated that seeing him, after what he put my family through, had the opposite effect of what she intended. I felt disgust and anger. He ruined our family because he wouldn't listen to my mother when she told him it was time to stop, to return to the Federation, to let everyone know the Borg were not a myth; that they were dangerous; and they'd destroy everyone in their path if they could. He ignored her. And then it was too late."

I couldn't help myself. I put out my hand and touched hers -- the one with the exoskeleton -- to comfort her. Perhaps it did. She didn't flinch or move her hand away. When I finally found the words to speak, I said, "Seven, if you ever want to speak with me about this, please come to me. I feel a kinship with you, you see. We're both 'hybrids' -- technological marvels, perhaps I should say. It isn't easy finding that balance between two very different heritages. I know how difficult that can be, I assure you."

She definitely smiled then. "Ensign Paris, when he was still a lieutenant, said much the same thing to me, shortly after I arrived on Voyager. I wonder if his offer still stands? I've heard he's had a difficult relationship with his own father."

"Yes, he's never been shy about that. Since his experience on Monea, he seems to be trying to examine their relationship more closely. I must say, Tom would also be an excellent person to go to -- to speak with about just about anything, really. He'd give you very good advice. He always has whenever I have something troubling me and I need to talk things over with someone."

"Your fathers don't help you?"

"There are some subjects I'm not comfortable discussing with either of my fathers."

"I see. Thank you for your offer, Lieutenant. I may take you up on it. I will see if Ensign Paris' offer still stands first."
I don't know if we would have spoken any further about the subject, because just then, Sam Wildman and Naomi walked into the Mess Hall. Naomi squealed with delight when she saw Seven and ran over to give her a hug. Generally, Seven stiffens up if someone tries to hug her (since it's usually Dad doing the hugging). But, as with the touch of my hand, this morning she seemed to welcome Naomi's embrace. I finished eating my breakfast and moved a free chair to the table, so Naomi and Sam both could visit with Seven and chat for a while. Our Captain's Bridge Assistant promised to lift Seven's spirits much more than I could. I left for my duty station, relieved. Seven had faced off against her greatest foe, and she'd survived. She's still here with us. That's good for her, as it is for our entire crew. Our *Voyager* Collective.

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**Stardate 52624**

There's a rumor going around that Seven went to Tom to talk about her experiences with the Borg Queen -- and more specifically, about "father issues." Tom has refused to go into detail about those discussions, although, from my conversation with Seven in the Mess Hall, I'm sure she did. While it's not generally known among the crew, Father informed everyone in Security about the Borg Queen's claim she'd placed Seven on *Voyager*. In a conversation with the captain and Father, Seven confirmed that she'd remained on the sphere because the Queen had threatened to assimilate everyone on *Voyager* if she didn't.

Once the Queen had Seven in her grasp, she was willing to continue honoring her promise not to interfere with *Voyager*'s return home -- if Seven agreed to help the Borg Queen achieve her goals. She ordered Seven to program nanoprobes and introduce them into a weapon that would assimilate everyone on Earth, but gradually. A biogenic charge detonated in the atmosphere would disseminate nanoprobes throughout the world, in the same way ash from an exploding volcano will drift in the prevailing winds and circle the Earth. Half the population would be assimilated before anyone realized what was happening, much too late to prevent it from affecting everyone on the planet. While we're certain Seven would never go along with such a plan, Father told us we must be vigilant. The Borg Queen may try to find another way to deliver this weapon to Earth, possibly by using *Voyager* itself as a carrier.

That's not where Seven's haunted look came from however. She admitted to Tom that the Queen forced her to help assimilate an entire race of 392,000 individuals. The Queen said they were doing those individuals a favor. They were being reborn to a "higher purpose," their "petty lives" transformed from chaos into order. It was really a test of sorts, since Seven didn't see anything particularly "special" about the technology Species 10026 possessed. While the Queen may have wanted them because she needed additional drones, Seven believes there was another reason she insisted Seven participate. The Queen wanted to bend Seven to her will, to prove her loyalty to the Collective. If that was her aim, it failed. Seven helped four members of the species escape. The Queen accused Seven of exhibiting "petty human emotions," like "mercy," but after Seven pointed out it would be a waste of resources to go after so few, the Queen let them flee.
Seven gave Tom permission to tell me about this. She told him, "Lieutenant Tuvix noticed something was bothering me. He offered to help, if he could. Tell him this was what was bothering me. Those four people aren't a threat to the Borg. At least I won't have to worry about hearing their voices haunting me in the future."

She's right, of course, but there are approximately 392,000 other members of Species 10026 whose voices may return to bedevil her someday.

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Chapter Summary

Lieutenant Tuvix proves he undoubtedly has a better sense of humor than Ensign Bronowski as he recounts his view of the events when Tomin, the Kadi monk assigned to remain on Voyager during trade negotiations, succumbs to temptation.

Stardate 52649

"Try one of these appetizers, Tuvix. What do you think?"

I nibbled on one. "Very tasty, Dad. I love the slight tang after the cheese melts on the tongue."

"Oh, dear. I may not be able to serve these, then."

"Why not? They're delicious."

Dad explained that the Kadi follow an ascetic lifestyle. They eschew anything that may stimulate their senses or appetites. Quite literally, in the case of appetites. Their food is very bland and all but tasteless. He had me try another hors d'oeuvre from a recipe the abbot had sent him.

I sampled the dish. It was mild, but not bland. It wasn't tasteless. "I like this, Dad. The flavor is very subtle. It's more like a Vulcan dish than a Talaxian one, to be sure." I could see he was still worried. He slipped out of the kitchen to offer a sample of the appetizers he'd prepared to Tom and B'Elanna, who were enjoying a quiet dinner. They seemed to like them, too. I couldn't help remembering what Tom had said to me, shortly after my place on Voyager had been confirmed. I'd mentioned I would advise Dad to tone down his spice-shaking arm. Tom's reply to me was, "Good luck with that, Tuvix." And, I'm sad to say, Tom was right and I was wrong. Dad's biggest challenge as head chef has always been remembering that everyone on the ship doesn't care for the spicy Talaxian cuisine Dad prefers.
I'd already offered to help him prepare the ambassador's dishes, but Dad said he'd get back to me on that. I'm still waiting for his answer. Although Dad usually exudes a great deal of confidence in any task the captain assigns to him, this one has him more than a little flummoxed.

The Kadi colony has a theocratic government, since the first settlers of the planet were monks. Most of the population are civilians, or, in religious terms, the laity, but the monastery leaders function as the government whenever interplanetary visitors come to call -- or more likely, to bargain. The planet itself (called Kad, after their deity) is blessed with mineral deposits of unusually pure quality. Even more are available in an asteroid field that is positioned in the next planetary orbiting position away from their sun. They won't trade with just anyone. They have exacting moral standards and will only agree to engage in commerce with those species whom they consider to be trustworthy.

Ambassador Tomin, one of the monks and the assistant to their abbot, will live board Voyager for a week to assess our crew. He will decide if our moral character is sufficiently high to qualify us as trading partners. Captain Janeway and Father will be visiting the colony at the same time to represent our crew. When I first heard about this plan, I wondered if the Kadi were like the Varro, but apparently they aren't that rigid. Although they disdain cultural contamination from more worldly groups, they aren't xenophobic. Dad, as Voyager's "ambassador," has been tasked with providing for all of Tomin's needs during his stay.

While Dad was circulating around the Mess Hall, handing out samples of his appetizers and asking for the crew's opinions, I noticed B'Elanna get out of her seat and cross over to the other end of the room, where Seven was sitting. Their conversation turned into an altercation. Seven has taken upon herself the task of studying mating practices. From the excerpts B'Elanna read from Seven's PADD of notes (at sufficient volume so that everyone in the Mess Hall must have heard every word), Seven's behavior seemed to fall more in the "stalking" category. Had she spoken to me about it beforehand, I would have urged Seven to explore the subject in the database first. I certainly wouldn't have suggested she record when Tom and B'Elanna resumed intimate relations after an argument -- especially if lurking in the corridor on Deck 9, Section 12 in the middle of Gamma shift would be the way she obtained her data. While it's certainly true that when Tom and B'Elanna are enjoying their physical relationship, everyone in the area knows exactly what's going on, by tacit agreement, the crew doesn't usually take detailed notes -- I don't think. If they have, no one has ever shared them with me.

The situation was escalating rapidly. Even though I was off-duty, I approached the potential combatants. Before I reached them, however, Tom threw his arms around B'Elanna and held her away from Seven, while Dad moved in front of our former Borg, effectively moving the two farther apart. No one suffered a broken nose (as B'Elanna threatened to do to Seven), and Tom successfully dragged his girlfriend out of the Mess Hall.

While I cleaned up Tom and B'Elanna's table, since they hadn't had the chance to do that before the situation became so volatile, I pondered what I should do about the situation. While it was a private matter in some ways, having the chief engineer and the head of Astrometrics ready to do battle is not an optimal situation at any time. It certainly isn't conducive for the pleasant visit with Ambassador
Tomin we're planning. These negotiations are sensitive enough as it is. When I mentioned to Dad that I really should report this incident to Father, he heartily agreed. "We don't want any trouble while Tomin is here!"

Supplemental

I contacted Father, who thanked me for the warning about possible "bad blood" between B'Elanna and Seven. He must have told the captain, because she contacted me a few minutes ago and asked me to describe the entire incident in detail. When I was finished, I could almost hear the captain rubbing her forehead, as she does whenever a headache threatens. She promised to speak to Seven in the morning, before she and Father leave for the Kadi colony. "I can't allow that sort of behavior to continue," she commented. "Voyager isn't a nature preserve!" While I quite agree, I'm not sure Seven will see it that way.

Stardate 52651

Dad doesn't believe he'll need my assistance cooking for the ambassador after all. Apparently Tomin has indicated he's more flexible in his food choices than the Abbot indicated he'd be. I was glad to hear it, as I have quite enough "on my plate," so to speak, as it is.

Captain Janeway's little talk with Seven must have made an impression. The captain suggested she would learn more about mating practices by trying the first step -- dating -- for herself. (Seven has already done a lot of research and has accumulated gigaquads of data on romantic relationships.) I learned this when I spoke with a morose looking Harry Kim, who was sitting in the corner of the Mess Hall. Fearing he was missing Tal again, I asked him what was wrong. His mopey mood had more to do with our resident former Borg than it did the long-departed Varro engineer. Harry had visited Seven in Astrometrics while she was perusing a list she'd made of possible romantic partners. Harry hadn't even made her list of prospective first dates.

Lieutenant William Chapman is a very nice fellow, to be sure, but he's not one I'd immediately think of as a good match for Seven. He is very intelligent, of course, but he's never struck me as the type of man who would be confident enough to deal with our Seven. She appreciates strength, and I can't see Lieutenant Chapman standing toe to toe with her. Harry would have been a "safe" first date. After all, she hit him on the head when she wanted to return to the Collective, only days after her separation from the Borg, and she humiliated him publicly when she demoted him to Two of Ten. Despite these actions, he's still her friend. I'm sure he'd be quite solicitous of her lack of sophistication during a "first date." Many crewmen (mainly the men) have made fun of Harry's abortive suggestion to Seven for a "stroll through the Ktarian moonrise holodeck program" with him.
She misinterpreted his suggestion to go there as a request to copulate. I'm sure he'd have liked to have copulated with her, but he knew it wasn't in her best interests to do so at that time, so he withdrew the offer. I have much more respect for Harry than I do for those who make fun of him for backing off from a "sure thing."

The Doctor has been advising Seven on the subject of dating, which raises all sorts of alarm bells for me. As Kes once told me, he can be a little TOO interested in the crew's mating habits. He hasn't had that much practice dating himself -- I'm hard pressed to think of anyone he's dated, other than Dr. Denara Pel, the Vidiian physician, or Charlene, his wife in his family holodeck program. While I haven't had much experience with dating since I've been Tuvix, either, I've plenty of memories stemming from my fathers' romantic attachments. I know the course of true love, as Shakespeare wrote, doesn't always run smooth. (There's a reason most Vulcan marriages are arranged by the parents when the prospective bride and groom are still children. Vulcans consider "dating" to be an illogical method of choosing a life-long mate.)

I commiserated with Harry by saying I probably wasn't on her list, either. Harry perked up after I mentioned that, because I wasn't. The only other candidate she'd been willing to consider was Ensign Bronowski. Harry confided to me that Ensign Bronowski has no sense of humor. I nodded sagely, thinking that the ensign might have actually been a good match for Seven. She isn't particularly known for her sense of humor, either.

Stardate 52654

Everyone is talking about Seven's date with Lieutenant Chapman. Since it went so badly for him, I doubt there'll be a second. They were dancing, and he ended up with a dislocated arm. How he managed that while dancing, I have no idea. And he should have known better than to order a lobster for her dinner, instead of permitting her to choose her own entrée. From several of the crew who "just happened" to visit Sandrines during the date, she had trouble knowing how to eat it, not to mention the fact she seemed disconcerted by the prospect of eating something with an exoskeleton -- since she possesses one herself.

After Lieutenant Chapman was taken to Sickbay for treatment by Tom, who was on duty last night, Seven danced more successfully with our Doctor. Perhaps she should have asked him out for her first date. She wouldn't have had to worry about dislocating his arm.

Harry asked me if I'd placed my bet yet. I had no idea what he was talking about, until he explained that Tom and the Doctor have posted a wager. It concerns Seven coming to the reception which will be held for Tomin tomorrow evening. Many of the crew are betting their replicator rations on whether Tom or the Doctor will win the bet. Bets upon bets. I'm afraid, in this instance, my Vulcan
nature comes to the fore. I'd prefer to earn my replicator rations the old fashioned way, not fritter them away trying to guess which of two crew mates have guessed correctly about an event which will or will not occur in the future. The wager seems quite complicated to me. For the Doctor to win, Seven must arrive with a date, still be on good terms with him (or her) at the end of the evening, and they cannot become involved in a diplomatic incident during the course of the reception. If I were going to join in with the other bettors, I'd back Tom. That's a lot to ask of Seven so soon during her personal study of dating and mating.

Tomin is giving Dad fits. If Tomin is acting in what the Kadi think of as an ascetic lifestyle, I would hate to see what they'd consider hedonistic. He's been running Dad ragged. The spiciness of his cooking is the least of Dad's troubles. Tomin has been spending an inordinate amount of time on the holodeck, indulging in all sorts of programs which emphasize sensual pleasures, particularly of the sexual variety. At least he isn't chasing after any of our humanoid crew -- that I know of -- not yet, anyway. Dad is worried the trade negotiations will break down if the Kadi abbot finds out what Tomin has been up to on Voyager. I don't know what to tell him. With any luck, Tomin will manage to sow his wild oats and calm down before the abbot comes to Voyager to finalize the trade agreement. The Kadi have many commodities we need. B'Elanna has been complaining about our lack of raw materials. We can't build shuttles out of thin air (even though we seem to lose them in thin air often enough).

Stardate 52556

I would like to report that the reception for Tomin went well; that the Doctor won his bet with Tom because Seven was the impeccable date; and Tomin behaved himself in a sober, dignified manner, befitting the anointed representative of his monastery. I'd like to report that. I can't. Since Father assigned me to oversee the evening in his absence, I was there; I saw it all. It was like watching shuttles crashing together in slow motion. The evening was a fiasco.

The Doctor was Seven's date. Tom had forgotten to exclude him from the list of eligible "bachelors." He was dismayed when he saw them walk in together. Initially, Seven's behavior was impressive. She offered a lovely toast to commemorate the occasion. Tom told the Doctor he'd won their wager. For the next month, Tom would work double shifts in Sickbay. When I heard Tom say this to the Doctor, I was relieved I had refrained from placing any bets of my own. I would have lost.

Unfortunately, Seven overheard Tom's comment and demanded an explanation. She was not happy about being the subject of ship's gossip, or that bets were being placed concerning her behavior. While Tom had conceded the bet to the Doctor to this point, all its conditions had not yet been met. Seven stomped away from the Doctor. The evening had not ended with the parties being on good terms with one another. And as for there not being a diplomatic incident . . .
During his entire visit, Tomin had been eating and drinking everything he could -- especially if the substance he was consuming was stimulating to the senses. At the reception, he'd overindulged in syntheholic beverages and was staggering around the Mess Hall in a state of extreme inebriation. The only individual I've ever known who's responded in a similar manner to synthehol is Seven of Nine. She became very drunk when we were celebrating the end of the slipstream engine building project (another disaster, as I recall). Since Seven had never imbibed syntheholic champagne before, no one knew her Borg implants couldn't process it. The Doctor had to adapt some of her nanoprobes to absorb the excess in her bloodstream. Perhaps that should have been a warning to us to be careful with Tomin. His body also cannot process synthehol. Since he wasn't supposed to be drinking anything stronger than water, no one had thought to test his tolerance for it prior to the party.

Seven became extremely upset by what she saw as the Doctor's betrayal, since she assumed he'd provided her with "social skills training" as the means for winning the bet. As she was walking out of the Mess Hall, Ambassador Tomin grabbed her by the arm and began to slobber all over her, asking her to come back with him to his quarters to indulge in "human mating rituals." Seven threatened to rip his arm off if he didn't let her go, and Tomin didn't take it well. Before I could reach him to detach his hand from Seven's arm before she did it for him, Tomin began to yell loudly that he was the guest of honor, as if this gave him license to do anything he wished. Tomin tried to reach for another drink. Instead, he crashed in a heap onto the floor. The "no diplomatic incident" proviso of the wager had also been a failure.

I helped get Tomin to Sickbay and stayed there while the Doctor and Tom worked on him. Seven agreed to modify nanoprobes to treat him for intoxication. The Doctor was quite apologetic, but Seven refused to pay attention to him as she worked. It's possible she was unable to hear the EMH over Tomin's cries of, "Seven of Mine! Assimilate me! Please!"

Seven did speak briefly with the Doctor before she left Sickbay, once she delivered the modified nanoprobes for Tomin. She didn't look happy. The Doctor looked upset, too. I remained at Tomin's side until he fell into a deep sleep -- probably more of a stupor -- at which point Mr. Ayala relieved me.

I hope the abbot, unlike Ensign Bronowski, has a sense of humor. If all the facts are relayed to him, I fear we will need to procure the minerals B'Elanna says we need from another provider. We really do need them, especially materials to repair or build new shuttles. We lose so many!

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Stardate 52557
I'm relieved to report that despite the "bumps in the road" with Tomin, the trade agreement was signed today.

Tomin was still very much under the weather when I accompanied him to the transporter room. Dad was following close behind us, wringing his hands and muttering about being abandoned with the Kadi after the way Tomin's visit had spiraled out of control.

When the Abbot arrived with the captain and Father, he was in a very mellow mood. He asked Tomin whether he had indulged in any "distractions . . . or any of their more colorful traditions" during his visit to Voyager. "Of course not," Tomin lied.

Dad chimed in, "We followed the itinerary that you approved to the last detail." I tried to prevent myself from rolling my eyes, but I must have moved them a little. Father was standing next to Captain Janeway, staring at me in a fairly good imitation of Captain Janeway's fearsome glare. He may not have needed to touch me to read me telepathically.

The abbot saved us. With an indulgent smile, he exclaimed, "What a shame! It isn't a violation to explore new experiences . . . as long as you don't make a habit of it."

Dad and I exchanged very knowing glances as Tomin stumbled onto the transporter, while the abbot followed the captain to the conference room. The abbot has a better sense of humor, as well as an understanding of life in general, I suspect, than anticipated.

More, I hear, than Ensign Bronowski.

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Think Tank Paradox

Chapter Summary

Bounty hunters, Kurros, duplicity (on many sides) and fate

Stardate 52734

Sensors read it as a planetoid laced with dilithium. In fact, it was a trap crafted by a group of bounty hunters who are notorious in this sector. We evaded them, but the captain thought we'd done so a little too easily. She was correct. Several Hazari ships, working together, blocked every path Voyager could use to escape. Father and I were with the captain, trying to construct tactical scenarios to allow us to slip away, but we weren't having much luck.

Before leaving the Mess Hall for the night, Dad served Captain Janeway another mug of black coffee (he told me later he offered to provide her with intravenous caffeine, if she thought it would help her concentrate), and left her sitting there alone, working on her calculations. In the morning, she announced that an isomorphic projection (shades of Dejaren, the murderous isomorph!) had visited her after Dad's departure. This Kurros uploaded tactical data into her computer terminal, providing analyses of several likely Hazari ambushes. He also left her the coordinates for his vessel, if she wished to contact him about a possible deal. Before his image faded away, Kurros said, "You have a problem, Captain . . . and I am the solution."

The captain was intrigued. We traveled to where his vessel was located, hidden in a subspace pocket. I was disturbed by the very idea of a "subspace pocket," since Father, Tom, and the Doctor had been lost inside one several months ago. The "vessel" was more like a space station, which housed Kurros' group. The technology was impressive. Seven declared that some was more advanced than the Borg's. The captain and Seven met a motley assortment of beings who require a special telepathic enhancement device to communicate with each other. Captain Janeway called the group a "Think Tank," a term which arose hundreds of years ago on Earth for organizations which did what Kurros' group purports to do. Those Think Tanks didn't perform their services gratis, and neither does this 24th century version. Kurros' Think Tank's fee for helping us escape from the Hazari included the schematics for the quantum slipstream drive (even though we haven't perfected it yet), Dad's chadre'kab recipe, Chakotay's ancient Olmec figurine -- and Seven of Nine.

The captain was reluctant to trade a member of the crew, quite naturally, but she told Seven it was her choice to make. Kurros told Seven they were offering her a tremendous opportunity to do good
in the galaxy and fully use her intellectual gifts, which he said are "wasted" on *Voyager*. After Seven told the captain she would not comply with the Think Tank's request, Captain Janeway quoted an ancient Earth saying to Kurros: "Don't call us; we'll call you."

We'd come up with one plan on our own which wouldn't allow us to escape from the Hazari, but if slightly modified, we knew it could buy us time. We used a very ancient trick, familiar to many in the Alpha Quadrant. Apparently it wasn't as familiar to the Hazari. We scattered debris in a small area to make it look like *Voyager* had exploded, with subspace charges hidden inside the fragments. When a small Hazari vessel entered the field to investigate, we triggered the charges, disabling the Hazari ship long enough to transport the two inside the vessel onto *Voyager*, while the craft itself was tractored into our shuttlebay. I was a member of the team assigned to examine their ship. I discovered several encoded transmissions, including scrambled bio-readings from the sender, and downloaded them for the captain to review.

Captain Janeway took the transmission records to Sickbay. The Doctor built a holographic image of a Malon, which indicated they were the ones who hired the Hazari. The captain noticed random isomorphic signatures embedded within the bio-readings, however. When the image was reconstituted to account for those signatures, she discovered the Hazari's actual client: Kurros.

When the captain showed the doctored transmission to the Hazari captain/pilot, he was shocked. The bounty hunters had had no idea of their client's actual identity until we shared the images with them. When he realized he was being duped himself, the bounty hunter agreed to work with us. The plan we came up with was a classic "sting" operation. The Hazari wouldn't lose out on their bounty, the Think Tank were infamous in the region. They'd duped many in the surrounding system who would be eager to pay for the favor of "neutralizing" them. (It helped that the Hazari, as part of our "sting," would demand Kurros pay triple their bounty fee.)

While the Hazari were "attacking" *Voyager*, Seven slipped away to the Think Tank's subspace hideout and agreed to join them as "the only way to save *Voyager*." Although this was the original reason Kurros had set the Hazri onto *Voyager*, he knew Seven's "defection" could be a trick. He was willing to accept Seven's word as truth only after his cybernetic partner probed Seven's mind, the way he'd done at their first meeting. As soon as the partner connected with Seven's neural transceiver, Father transmitted a carrier wave through it, exploding their telepathic enhancement device, destroying the group's ability to communicate. We immediately transported Seven back to *Voyager*. As we flew away, the Hazari had surrounded the Think Tank's vessel and were firing at it. Father said the vessel was showing signs of imminent hull breaches.

My parents and my closest friends all wonder if the Think Tank really did provide the Vidiians with a cure for the Phage, as Kurros had claimed. If we judge them by the fact they negotiated with space pirates to attack *Voyager*, they seem more like confidence men (another ancient Earth term) than the humanitarians they declared themselves to be.
Were they truly geniuses, or were they reasonably intelligent misfits who found a way to exploit the vulnerable? At the very least, they practiced extortion, charging their "clients" so much for their "remedies" that the leaders of some systems were unable to provide basic services to their people once they'd paid the group for the work completed on their behalf. As far as I'm concerned, the Think Tank deserves the fate the Hazari may have inflicted upon them.

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The Myth and the Man

Chapter Summary

Myths often descend from reality.

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Stardate 52748

When we received the distress call, we immediately rushed to the area from which it had originated. We discovered thirty-seven escape pods floating near an abandoned Malon antimatter waste transport, which was leaking mass quantities of theta radiation. Only two of the pods contained living Malons. The pair were beamed directly to Sickbay and placed inside a containment field to protect our crew from the radiation pouring out of their bodies.

The ship's commander, Controller Fesek, advised the captain that once his ship blew up, as it must very soon, an area three light years in circumference would be destroyed by lethal amounts of radiation. We needed to get out of there, but we couldn't. While we hadn't lost our warp drive, the warp bubble around our ship had collapsed due to the dense radiation. If we were to survive, we had to find a way to prevent the Malon ship from exploding.

When the captain suggested an away team board the vessel, Controller Fesek refused to go -- at first. Eventually, the captain convinced him that since he was the one in charge of the freighter, it was his duty. The individuals named to the away team by the captain were Commander Chakotay, B'Elanna, Fesek, and Pelk, Fesek's assistant and close friend. Since Dad had worked for six years on a Talaxian garbage scow and had experience with contamination from theta radiation during one of those runs, he volunteered to go along as well.

Although B'Elanna, as chief engineer, was the most qualified to deal with any technical problems on the Malon vessel, Father was not in favor of her placement on the away team. B'Elanna's ability to control her anger has been deficient ever since the incident involving the Crell Moset hologram. The alien fastened onto her body was detached with the Cardassian doctor's aid, but against her express wishes. She'd been extremely angry with Tom for urging the captain to authorize the hologram's use by the Doctor. While she forgave him fairly quickly, realizing he was desperate not to lose her, B'Elanna had less patience with the captain's rationale for allowing Moset's involvement. Captain Janeway told her chief engineer she did it "for the good of the ship and everyone on it." That argument didn't mollify B'Elanna at all.
I've heard her engineers complain about how short B'Elanna's temper has been during the past several months, but it seems to have gotten even worse over the past few weeks. She almost came to blows with Seven after B'Elanna found out the former drone had used Tom and B'Elanna's relationship as fodder for her study on "humanoid mating practices." If Tom and Dad hadn't intervened, it could have become an even uglier scene than it was. She also exhibited what Tom called an extremely "short fuse" during the time our crew worked with the Hazari, when they were trying to identify a way out of the "Think Tank Paradox."

Then, just a few days ago, the EMH decided "A Day in the Life of the Warp Core" would be the perfect subject for his latest "photo essay." B'Elanna had been deeply involved in a diagnostic that day, trying to uncover the source of a deviation in the core's resonance levels. It could have been an early symptom of a serious problem with the dilithium matrix. He kept interfering in her work until, finally, she crushed his holomaker and ordered him out of Engineering. I can't really fault her for telling him to stop getting in her way, considering the importance of her task, but destroying his camera was completely inappropriate. She did apologize later and replicated a new holomaker for him, but that response wasn't a good enough for Captain Janeway. She called B'Elanna on the carpet and ordered her to attend anger management training sessions with Father. (Father didn't tell me this. Tom did, after I mentioned my weekly meditation session with Father had been postponed for some unknown reason. Tom explained that B'Elanna's session had replaced mine -- on the captain's orders.)

I knew Father was troubled to see B'Elanna on the away team. Since Commander Chakotay was in charge and Dad was going along, too, however, he didn't object too strenuously.

The situation deteriorated rapidly while the away team was on the Malon freighter. The toxic waste ship's crews blame all kinds of mishaps on supernatural creatures they call the vihaar, who allegedly haunt their waste transport freighters. Fesek told us they're simply legends, ghost stories one tells to naughty children to scare them into behaving. Very soon after the away team arrived, Pelk went to fix a problem and was struck by something or someone. Before he died, he claimed a vihaar had attacked him. Fesek insisted this couldn't be true. No one could live very long when exposed to the radiation levels that existed on his ship by this point, but suffering from hallucinations is an early symptom of a fatal level of exposure to theta radiation.

Pelk's body was transported to Sickbay for a forensic evaluation. The away team, armed by the Doctor with an injection that prevented the absorption of theta radiation for several hours, went on with its task of opening airlocks on each deck, to allow the built-up radiation to vent into space. Problems kept interfering with their work. Airlocks which had been open suddenly shut all by themselves. After completing a decompression sequence on one deck, the team ran to another. The airlock on the deck they'd run to opened instead of the one they'd just left. Commander Chakotay was injured when a flying metal pipe struck him on the head. After he was transported to Sickbay, Father offered to go to the freighter to lead the mission. The captain told him she had confidence in B'Elanna. When Father voiced his concern about her emotional stability in a crisis, the captain said it was a "matter of trust," and left her in charge.
The Doctor told me about this conversation, since he was in Sickbay when it took place. The EMH is very good about not disclosing "privileged information" per the medical confidentiality regulations, but he's one of the ship's biggest gossips when the issue isn't medical. An adjustment to his program may be indicated -- although, I must confess, I listened intently to everything he told me. I could have stopped him, but I didn't. I rationalized listening to him by deciding someone in Security should know this, even though I'm sure Father would have told me himself if he thought I needed to know. So perhaps I need a "program adjustment" myself.)

Eventually, the team reached the control room. They'd hoped to restore the containment grid around the two unstable tanks, manually, if necessary, to prevent them from exploding. Only one containment grid was operational. Dad, B'Elanna, and Fesek worked to stabilize the first tank before working on the second. Before they were done, the Doctor contacted them from Sickbay. He found biological matter in Pelk's wound. This tissue was saturated with theta radiation, but it wasn't decaying. A person who had developed a resistance to theta radiation was on that freighter with them. By recalibrating her scanning instruments, Seven identified another life form moving on the control room deck, headed towards the away team's location.

Dad and Fesek were both struck down by the vihaar. They aren't mythological creatures. The vihaar was actually a core worker named Dremk, who wanted the freighter to explode. B'Elanna tried to talk him out of sabotaging their attempt to prevent the explosion. When he wouldn't listen, she was forced to strike him down.

We no longer had sufficient time to save the freighter. Our "Plan B" was to divert the ship into a nearby O-type star. The corona could absorb the radiation emitted by the explosion, preventing the disaster Dremk was so eager to produce. B'Elanna pulled Fesek and Dad outside of the control room. Just before the star's gravimetric forces pulled the transport ship into its corona, we locked onto our away team to bring them to safety. B'Elanna couldn't drag Dremk's body out of the control room. Whether he was still alive or already dead when they left him on the ship, his body was consumed by the O-Type star.

Stardate 52752

I was helping Dad serve breakfast in the Mess Hall this morning when our Malon guest came through the line. He's looking much better since our Doctor treated him for theta radiation poisoning. I find it very sad, however, that the man is doomed to live a very short life. No matter what the Doctor does for him, the radiation will kill him in ten years or less -- probably a lot less. His long-term exposure to theta radiation means he is terminally ill.

I'd already spoken with B'Elanna this morning to find out how she was doing. I know she went back
to Father for at least one more lesson in meditation -- I saw her leaving his quarters when I came to visit him last night. Father didn't need to tell me why she was there. His lamp was still on the table. The flame flickered as it always does after a meditation session, and the scent of the oil he utilizes in his lamp permeated the air, conveying all I needed to know about why B'Elanna had been there. After I walked into his quarters, I mentioned that I hoped she was proving to be a willing student. He replied that "her recent experiences on the Malon freighter have had a positive effect upon her attitude." We spoke of other things after this. He would never say any more about it to me, and I would never expect him to do so.

The Mess Hall was just opening for breakfast when B'Elanna and Tom came in. I hadn't had my own meal yet. Dad urged me to sit with them when they invited me to share their table. It wasn't busy yet, so I accepted their offer. From Tom's expression, it seemed like he would welcome my company today. I was concerned they might have had an argument, and that he wanted me to be there as an "innocent bystander." That's happened from time to time, although I usually don't bother to record such incidents in my personal log. That was not the case today. Tom had to eat his meal quickly because he'd scheduled his navigation team to meet before Alpha Shift, and he didn't want to leave B'Elanna alone. If he'd stayed, he'd be forced to cancel his meeting; and Commander Chakotay would have taken exception to Tom's doing that.

After Tom left, B'Elanna seemed eager to talk with me about her experiences. As she said, with a little smile, "Your Dad is the usual target for my hostility, but I see he's busy right now." She told me about her meditation lessons with Father. He must consider her lessons with him as confidential information, but she has every right to share the details with me if she wishes. She said Father had elicited a memory from her childhood, when a boy named Daniel Byrd had persistently teased her by calling her "Miss Turtlehead." Persisted, that is, until, in a fit of rage, B'Elanna sabotaged a playground ride that could have resulted in the boy's serious injury, or worse, if their teacher hadn't intervened. "I'd forgotten all about it. When Tuvok called me Miss Turtlehead, to show me that the name could still rouse me to fury, I stalked out of my first session. Last night I went back and told him I'd actually tried to meditate on the Malon ship, to calm myself at one point. Neelix found me, and he laughed!"

"Tuvix! I never realized you have problems with your temper."
"It's not that I lose my temper easily. I need to balance my logical, allegedly reserved Vulcan side with my natural Talaxian exuberance. That isn't easy for me to do. I've practiced meditation ever since Father and Dad returned to their own individual lives. You know, just before Neevok went to be transformed back into our two fathers, he told me that trying to please both of them might be a hard path to follow. Even though he was about to give up his own life, he said he did not envy me. Many times I think he may have been right."

B'Elanna thanked me for sharing that with her. She'd always assumed I could balance both sides of my personality without much trouble. "My Klingon side isn't easy for me to control, either. I'm always ready to lash out when I get annoyed at any little thing. And I'm almost always annoyed!"

"Is it just your Klingon side? Human beings can have quick tempers, too. Did your father have one? If he did, that could contribute to a volatile nature in his daughter as much as your Klingon mother's did."

"You're right. Maybe my problem isn't just my Klingon nature. I'm the child of both my parents. My Klingon grandmother told my mother that her marriage to my father was doomed to fail. She said my parents were 'mok'tah' -- that means 'bad match' in Klingon. She predicted their marriage wouldn't be happy, and it wasn't. Maybe my bad temper comes from my father as much as my mother." She looked quite startled at this realization. "I guess I really do need those meditations lessons from Tuvok."

"I'm sure he'll help you. Now, can you tell me more about what it was like on that Malon freighter? The 'vihaar' are people who are able to tolerate killing doses of radiation?"

"And go mad as a result. Dremk -- or what was left of him -- was insanely angry . . ." She went on to tell me about the confrontation with the twisted, horribly deformed being who told her he was "already dead" when she begged him to stop what he was doing, because thousands of people would die from radiation if the freighter exploded. He was convinced creating a disaster was the only way anyone would see that changes needed to be made dealing with radioactive antimatter waste. She also told me about Fesek and his son. The boy is only seven years old. "He wants to follow in his father's footsteps as a waste controller. Fesek hopes he'll take up his other profession. Fesek's a sculptor for half the year. He only works as a controller during the other half to support his family." Apparently the arts are not a sure road to riches for the Malon, any more than they are for most artists. Only the most renowned can support a lavish lifestyle.

After our encounters with Controller Emck and Vrelk, my opinion of the Malon had been, to say the least, extremely negative. Once B'Elanna told me about Fesek, I realized that some of their people must be better than those we'd met up to now. Not all of them are like the miserly Emck. She told me a very poignant story about the toy that Pelk, the Malon who died on the freighter from the vihaar's attack, was going to give to Fesek's son. The gift was destroyed when the freighter went into the star, along with all the other possessions Fesek had with him on the trip.
Once the Mess Hall began to fill up, B'Elanna left for Engineering. I went back to helping Dad serve our crew. Timothy Lang and Fesek came in together, towards the end of the breakfast service. The captain has asked Father to assign Security staff to accompany Fesek while he's on our ship. It's not that she's afraid of sabotage. She just wants him to have companionship while he travels with us on Voyager. Not many of our crew have shown an interest in interacting with him, even though, thanks to the Doctor's treatments, he isn't dripping with radiation anymore. I was scheduled to take over "companion" duties from Tim after they'd had their breakfast. Since the Mess Hall was emptying rapidly, Dad assured me he could take care of any latecomers and encouraged me to introduce myself to Fesek. I hadn't actually met him yet. I poured myself a mug of Tarkalian tea and went to their table to chat.

After Tim left, I told Fesek that B'Elanna had mentioned he was a sculptor who worked as a controller half the year to support his family. I asked him which was his favorite medium with which to work. What a transformation! His glum facial expression, which I'd taken for granted was the way he usually looked, slipped away. He answered my question with enough enthusiasm to satisfy any Talaxian. He usually works in clay first, he explained, but he only fires a piece if it comes out especially well, or if his wife wants to put it in their home gallery. Most of the time, his clay pieces are studies for a work in a more permanent medium. While he's carved wood and stone, he usually prefers to work in metals, preferably bronze, using the "lost wax" process. Most of his work is quite naturalistic, but when the mood strikes him and he wants to work in a more abstract style, he constructs pieces from scrap metal he finds in a local recycling yard.

When he mentioned recycling, I recalled the offer B'Elanna had made to Controller Emck, who rejected it out of hand. From what I'd learned of Fesek from B'Elanna, and from meeting the man myself, I thought he might be more receptive to new ideas. When I contacted Captain Janeway, I didn't mention my idea about recycling. Instead, I informed her that Fesek's preferred occupation is sculpting. "I thought he might enjoy a visit to your Leonardo daVinci holodeck program." She was quite eager to share it with him and told us to meet her there in fifteen minutes.

Fesek loved it. He asked many intelligent questions and was truly impressed by the scientific inventions the captain had replicated from daVinci's notebooks which formed the studio's decor. Those notebooks were a revelation to him, too, especially when Captain Janeway described the times in which Master daVinci lived and the restrictions on what could be expressed during that period of Earth's history. He was intrigued by the sketch of the flying machine which daVinci had invented hundreds of years before heavier-than-air flight was discovered, and even more by the replica of the one his hologram had "invented" with his friend "Catarina."

"We actually flew the original of this model, when we were escaping from pirates who had stolen much of Voyager's technology. What a glorious day that was!"

Fesek was also impressed by the reproductions of da Vinci's works of art. "We still call a person who is talented in many fields a 'Renaissance Man.' No one fit that description better than Master daVinci.
It sounds to me like you're a man of many talents yourself, Fesek," she suggested.

"I try," is all he said, but from the way his eyes sparkled, I could tell how much he was enjoying himself.

Since our rendezvous with the Malon transport wouldn't take place until the next day, the captain suggested Fesek spend some of his time in her program. "Feel free to work on a project of your own." He was visibly moved by the offer and thanked her quite profusely.

Fesek and I remained in the daVinci program for several hours. I watched him turn a ball of replicated clay into the head of a woman. I hoped she'd like the image, because it captured both her toughness and her vulnerability. I've always thought B'Elanna's rippled Klingon brow was beautiful, but under Fesek's talented fingers, it was simply sublime. The expression he caught on her face was one I've seen many times when she was absorbed in solving a problem. If she didn't care for Fesek's creation, I was quite sure Tom would love to have it.

Towards the end of his work, I casually mentioned we'd once met another controller, Emck by name. He said he'd heard of him, but he and his ship had been lost almost a year ago. I didn't say that I knew what had happened to him, of course, but I mentioned we'd discussed sharing a technology with him that he'd rejected. "He said he could make more money by doing it the way he always had, by dumping waste into a nebula. He didn't care to invest in developing a technology for recycling antimatter waste."

Fesek stopped smoothing the clay at the base of his figure and looked me squarely in the eye. "Recycling antimatter waste? What are you talking about?"

I explained my understanding of the process, "although the subject of your lovely bust can give you a much better description of what would be involved than I can."

He was torn between finishing his art piece and running immediately to speak with B'Elanna, but he made what I believe was the right decision. We took his clay "3D sketch" of B'Elanna's head to a replicator and, after a little programming, removed a metal replica of his creation. It was even more magnificent in bronze. We brought it with us to show the captain, who marveled over it as well. While Fesek was pleased with her appreciation of his artistry, what he really wanted to know was if she would agree to share the recycling technology with him. "We've offered it to the Malon once. If it's a Prime Directive violation, I'm already guilty!" she said, shrugging her shoulders and grinning up at him. (I'm quite sure it isn't a violation, given the level of Malon technology overall, but it had never occurred to me I might get myself in trouble by speaking with Fesek about it. I was quite relieved when she said it shouldn't be a problem.)
Stardate 52754

While I wasn't assigned to shadow Fesek at the time the Malon transport ship was arriving to bring him home, I made sure I was part of the group in the transporter room to say goodbye to him. B'Elanna gave him a big hug and thanked him for his gift, which Tom insisted belonged in *HIS* quarters so that he could gaze at it whenever his B'Elanna wasn't with him.

"I'm glad you like it. It's little enough to give you in return for all this." Fesek lifted his bag, which contained PADDs with schematics for the system to recycle antimatter waste safely, along with a couple of quick "3D sketches" to show investors what they'd have to build to put the system into operation. "I have some capital of my own, and I believe Pelk's family will want to help, too, in his memory. I hope I'll live long enough to make it happen. Dremk thought the only way to change the minds of the people on Malon Prime was to create a disaster, and he did that too well. I lost more than a hundred coworkers, including my good friend Pelk, because of his sabotage. But it would have been so much worse without your assistance. Your way of dealing with waste is much, much better. Thank you for showing me it's possible."

Tom presented a box he was holding to Fesek. "It's a gift from B'Elanna and me to your son. We heard Pelk planned to give him a toy transport vessel that was destroyed with your ship. I'm sure you can find a model like that one on Malon Prime. This toy ship might be harder to find." Fesek smiled as he opened the box and removed a model of the *Delta Flyer*.

"A sleek little craft! Thank you, B'Elanna and Tom. And B'Elanna, I promise you, I will tell everyone about the true nature of the vihaar. They're what all of us may become if our waste problem gets the better of us. Captain, Commander, Doctor, Neelix, Tuvix. I will never forget any of you, for as long as I live. I wish you all a good journey to your homes."

We all wished him the same, just as the signal from his ship was received by our transporter technician. They were ready for him. Fesek stepped onto the platform and was transported away, back to his family, for as long as he has left.

By the end of his stay with us, I found I liked the man very much. He's a victim of his culture. I hope he can transform it into a much more responsible one. Fesek knows he'll soon die from theta radiation poisoning. If he's successful in creating his company using the technology we've shared with him, he'll be able to provide for his family long after his death, while helping his people out of the mess they've created for themselves. And hopefully, unlike his doomed father, Fesek's son may live a long and healthy life.
The Bomb

Chapter Summary


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Stardate 52959

Ensign Harry Kim loves it when he's "in command of the bridge," even if it's only during a Gamma shift. He's been in charge for three nights in a row. Harry's very by-the-book when he's in command. I have to control my amusement when I'm on the bridge with him, which, fortunately, has only been once so far. Alpha Shift is when I prefer to work, although I don't mind an occasional Beta or Gamma assignment. When I do work one of the off shifts, I'm usually in charge of the entire Tactical Division. Harry will be on again tonight, and so will I. Father asked me to take the shift for Lieutenant Ayala, who had been scheduled. He broke a bone in his shoulder while playing Parrises Squares on the holodeck. The Doctor healed the break, but he ordered him to rest in his quarters for 24 hours. Naturally, I agreed to replace him.

Stardate 52961

Gamma shift was quite a bit more exciting than anticipated the other night. Of course, just because Voyager has established the Gamma shift hours as the ones the majority of our crew sleep, the rest of the galaxy doesn't know or respect our schedule and remain quiet until Alpha shift begins! Even so, most of the time, night shifts are uneventful.

Ensign Jenkins, who was at the helm, detected the automated distress signal just before I did. I traced it to an M-Class planet. Although we were unable to detect any life signs, Harry notified Commander Chakotay to inform him of our discovery. The commander told Harry he'd made the right call and took command, but he assigned Harry to head an away team to go down to the planet's surface to investigate. Tim Lang accompanied Harry and the Doctor, who was available to provide medical assistance, if any were required.

They didn't locate the source of the distress signal immediately, but after a short search, Harry and the EMH discovered a large metallic object stuck into a rock face. The mechanism showed signs of activity after Harry scanned it. Whatever it was, it had bioneural circuitry, very similar to Voyager's, and the EMH realized it was trying to communicate with them using duotronic algorithms. The
Doctor translated what it was trying to say for Harry and Tim. It was frightened because it couldn't see and couldn't feel its arms and legs! It had also lost huge chunks of its memory, and it didn't know its own name. Harry was appropriately cautious and was reluctant to bring it up to Voyager, but the Doctor, who always identifies with artificial intelligences, urged him to save a fellow sentient being.

Commander Chakotay left the final decision in Harry's hands. He finally yielded to the Doctor's pleading. Per the Doctor's recommendation, the AI wasn't initially told it was inside a metal housing. The device was beamed to engineering for a thorough evaluation. B'Elanna thought at first that it might be a probe or a communication relay of some sort.

Alas, when Alpha shift came on duty, the captain and Seven looked for the "traveling companion" the AI had mentioned and found what was left of it, near a large impact crater with heavy concentrations of radiogenic decay with its walls. The AI and its companion were weapons of mass destruction.

Matters, I fear, deteriorated rapidly after this. When B'Elanna and Harry tried to separate the intelligence from its explosive component, its programming took over. To defend itself, it took over the Doctor's holoprogram and insisted it be allowed to complete its mission: to attack a military target on Salina Prime, a planet 2.3 light years from Voyager's current position. Needless to say (although I will for the purposes of my personal log), the captain refused to comply. Becoming involved in a war between alien cultural entities is a major Prime Directive violation. The bomb threatened to blow itself up, along with Voyager and its crew. The captain stood firm, although she did order the ship to travel (slowly) in the direction the bomb desired.

Eventually, we learned that the order to attack the installation had been given three years ago -- after the war had already ended. The launch of a total of 34 intelligent bombs had been a mistake. The order had been rescinded by the Druoda Strategic Command Matrix. Our bomb and its companion had received those orders, which apparently was why they struck the planet where the bomb was found. The traveling companion exploded. Our bomb did not. At first, the AI refused to believe its orders had changed. It insisted the Salinians had discovered a way to interfere with its programming. When 32 other AI weapons of mass destruction suddenly appeared and surrounded Voyager however, our bomb began to realize that what Harry and B'Elanna were telling it might be true.

While all of this was going on, we had traveled within two light years of Salina Prime. According to the bombs' programming, the mission could not be called back once they'd come within two light years of the target. If they carried out their mission now, they would not only kill many individuals on a planet currently at peace with the Druoda, they could restart a war which had ended three years ago.

Eventually, Harry got through to the bomb. When it accepted the truth of its situation, the AI returned our EMH to its own holographic matrix and asked to be transported out to the rest of the bombs. It led them all away from Voyager and self-destructed in the midst of its fellows. We counted
the number of explosions through our sensors. All the remaining AI bombs had exploded, thanks to the one that had been on Voyager. The danger to Salina Prime was over.

The Doctor was extremely upset by his part in the incident. He acknowledged his culpability in encouraging Harry to bring the bomb on board before they had identified its function. He'd been in too much of a hurry to bask in the company of another non-biological intelligence to be cautious, and in doing so, almost caused the death of everyone on our ship. The real issue, as I see it, is that we haven't installed an anti-tampering subroutine into the EMH program. The artificial intelligence guiding the bomb took over the Doctor's holomatrix much too easily.

We're fortunate this "Smart Bomb" was smart enough to listen to reason and was able to grow, just as our EMH program has over the past five years. It's a little sad the AI couldn't be separated permanently from its explosive elements. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if we could have saved that part and include another self-aware, sentient AI on Voyager? I'm sure Tom could have designed a holographic body for it to inhabit. We might have been able to program it to be a true backup EMH. I'm sure Tom would have loved being assigned only occasionally to field medic duty, and the Doctor would have enjoyed having company with someone like himself.

It was not to be. As the AI said to Harry, when it accepted its fate and asked to be transported into the group of smart bombs, "I'm simply completing my mission. Only the target has changed." To have exploded on Salina Prime and started another war would have perverted its original mission: to protect the Druoda people. I'm glad it finally understood that.

This is not the first time such an event has happened, nor, I'm afraid, will it be the last. Incidents like the one that threatened Salina Prime have occurred many times, without the happy resolution of stopping the attack before irreparable harm had come to many. On Earth, in the year 1815, the Battle of New Orleans took place after the peace treaty between the warring parties had been negotiated and agreed upon. Messages could take months to cross the ocean during that time, and the opposing forces had no way to know they were fighting a needless battle. The Smart Bomb of the Druoda did know, and it saved its people much grief by its sacrifice.

On Voyager, we are explorers first. Sadly, there are times we are forced to defend ourselves. Since we've been out of touch with the Alpha Quadrant for so long, events could be taking place there right now that would change how we view what we're doing in this quadrant. We can only hope that someday, sooner rather than later, a form of communication can be established to make a futile event like this . . . irrelevant.

Or better yet, impossible.
Spirits of Good Fortune

Chapter Summary

We encounter another Starfleet ship lost in the Delta Quadrant, thanks to the Caretaker. We thought they were kindred spirits. We were wrong.

Stardate 52984

An astonishing thing happened today. We discovered we are *not* the only Starfleet ship lost in the Delta Quadrant. We received a distress call from Captain Rudy Ransom of the *USS Equinox*, a Nova class science vessel. His ship was under attack from aliens. His ship is less equipped for long-term tactical missions than *Voyager*, since its maximum crew is 80, while *Voyager* is designed to carry more than twice that number. We're on an intercept course to them now.

Receiving a distress call on a Starfleet frequency was a shock, but this isn't the first time that's happened. Just a few months ago we received a message on a Starfleet frequency and raced to its location. When we arrived, however, we only found clouds of deuterium, dichromates, and antineutrons floating in empty space. We didn't linger long, because there was no one to rescue. We couldn't identify a reason for the ship's destruction, either. Is it possible that ship had been attacked by the same aliens who are attacking *Equinox* now?

Supplemental

When we arrived at the *Equinox*'s location, we were able to stop the attack by extending our shields to encompass both ships. The alien beings, who were coming through interspatial fissures, must originate from another dimension. Seven detected several openings on our ship, too, on decks 10, 6, and 1. I was at the secondary tactical station behind the command chair and pulled out my phaser, but I didn't need to use it. Our shields held, and the alien attack ceased.

Multiple rescue teams were dispatched to *Equinox*. Dad and I were on the same team, searching for survivors. We found one . . . and he attacked us. I managed to stun him before he hurt us. In his delirium, his aim was off. A good thing for us, when I examined his phaser. He had it on the maximum "kill" setting. After alerting the Doctor we were transporting an *Equinox* crewman to him.
with serious psychological issues, but only minor physical ones, we sent him to Sickbay and resumed our search for other survivors.

We approached the *Equinox's* Sickbay and Science Laboratory, but we couldn't enter either of them. Both labs were filled with thermionic radiation. According to our tricorder readings, no living crew members were within, but with all that radiation . . . well, after our experience with the Malon vihaar, I just hoped our readings were accurate. If any of the *Equinox* crew had tried to take refuge in there, they probably wouldn't still be alive even if they hadn't been attacked by any aliens. The only member of *Voyager's* crew capable of going in to check was our Doctor, but obviously, he was needed in Sickbay. The hair-trigger crewman we'd discovered wasn't the only casualty. Several others required triage and treatment.

Dad and I found a couple of other members of the crew. Angelo Tessoni and Brian Sofin were barely conscious, huddled in a corner of what was left of their ship's cargo bay. Both had received wounds which resembled burns, although they didn't look too serious. After they were transported to *Voyager*, we checked over the *Equinox's* supply situation. There was very little food, but Dad found something that was very interesting. A crate of scrap materials had Trabe lettering on the side. As soon as we saw it, we exchanged knowing glances. Dad said it first: "The Caretaker must have brought this ship here, too."

How did they get so far from the Ocampa system? We've used unorthodox means to travel over 30,000 light years in less than five. Once Kes pushed *Voyager* away from the Northwest Passage that was being contested by the Borg and Species 8472. We used slipstream conduits formed by the *Dauntless* and, very briefly, during our own ill-fated slipstream experiment. And then, just recently, we traveled close to another 20,000 light years, thanks to the transwarp coil we stole from a Borg sphere. How did *Equinox* travel the same distance in a ship with a maximum speed of Warp 8?

The answers to those question must wait. Once we were certain we'd found all the survivors (and, unfortunately, the desiccated corpses of the half dozen who lost their lives in the attack), we transported back to *Voyager* to await further orders.

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**Stardate 52987**

We held a funeral service today for the six members of the crew of the *Equinox* who died in the alien attacks. Dad and I were right when we speculated that the *Equinox* had also been dragged into the Delta Quadrant by the Caretaker, a few weeks before *Voyager* and the *Val Jean* were abducted by that alien being. Captain Ransom chose a different vector than we did upon leaving the Ocampa system. Almost immediately, they ran into the Krowtonan Guard. Captain Ransom explained to our captain that half his crew died from the Guard's attacks, right at the beginning of their journey, which
made their survival so far from that area of space even more mysterious. Apparently they'd found a wormhole which took them a very great distance in a short amount of time, but when his ship reached the other end, it was still in the Delta Quadrant.

The *Equinox* is in VERY bad shape. Captain Janeway has suggested it might be better to abandon rather than repair it. *Voyager* has more in the way of resources than *Equinox* does, but we still must be careful how we utilize them. *Equinox* has less than a dozen crew members left. They all can be accommodated easily on *Voyager*. Captain Ransom would prefer to repair his ship. While I understand his reluctance to a degree -- since Commander Chakotay is our first officer, there isn't an appropriate rank for Ransom or his first officer, Maxwell Burke, to assume on *Voyager* -- it makes more sense to consolidate our forces onto the stronger ship. *Voyager*’s maximum warp speed is 9.975, much faster than Ransom’s *Equinox*. Although having two ships flying in a convoy normally would be desirable in battle, it wouldn't be if the second ship's structure has sustained the kind of damage *Equinox* has over the past five years. It's much slower as well.

Our captain finally agreed to repair the *Equinox*. Crews are going over there now. At least one member of the *Equinox* crew -- Ensign Marla Gilmore -- has requested a transfer to *Voyager*, but it won't be honored. As Commander Chakotay told her when she asked, the *Equinox* only has a skeleton crew. They can't afford to lose her. When Father told me about her request, I became concerned that some of our crew might be drafted into going onto their ship. Father assures me nothing like that has been suggested during the senior staff meetings he's attended. I'm glad of that. I'd hate to leave *Voyager*, where all my friends are, for a billet on *Equinox*.

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Stardate 52995

I can't believe Starfleet officers, graduates of the Academy, which both Rudy Ransom and Maxwell Burke are, could have betrayed Captain Janeway's trust like this! They've left us to fend for ourselves against the attacking aliens and stolen the shield device Seven invented that would have protected both ships! It's clear now why they did it. They'd prefer that everyone on *Voyager* perish here in the Delta Quadrant to prevent us from bearing witness to their crimes.

Dad and I couldn't get into their Sickbay and Science Labs because they'd deliberately flooded them with thermionic radiation to keep us from finding out what they've been doing in there. When Captain Janeway found out, she sent our EMH into their lab to uncover the evidence. There's a very good reason those aliens have been "attacking" the *Equinox*. That ship's crew has been capturing and killing members of their species and turning them into fuel!

When Captain Janeway confronted Rudy Ransom with the evidence, he claimed he "had no choice."
The aliens possess a very high percentage of nucleogenic energy in their bodies, which Ransom's crew convert into a power source. With the help of this fuel, their ship can travel at speeds that approximate transwarp velocities. Our captain wasn't impressed with Ransom's argument and put the Equinox crew under arrest in their crew quarters, but clearly, that was a mistake. They all should have been put in the brig. Someone managed to arm Ransom's crew and helped them escape. I was part of the Security team that was chasing Ransom and three of his crew through a corridor. One of them stunned me. When I woke up in Sickbay an hour later, I found out that the multi-phasic shield generator Seven had designed to protect both ships from alien attacks had been stolen while I was unconscious. Seven herself had been working on the Equinox when Ransom and his crew broke out of custody. They abducted her, too.

With the Equinox no longer in the vicinity, the aliens have been attacking Voyager. Three of our crew have been killed. One of them, I'm very sad to report, is Julie Jurot, the Betazoid who was in transporter suspension with Father and me while we were traveling through the Devore Imperium. Sherim Khan and Doran Joss have also perished.

The captain wants to rescue Seven, capture Ransom and his crew, and punish them for their crimes. First things first. We have to survive further attacks by the aliens, a much harder task now that Seven's multi-phasic shield generator has disappeared. We've done what we can to recharge our regular shields to protect ourselves, but with Captain Janeway so angry at Rudy Ransom and his crew, I'm worried we could end up like the Equinox: on a wreck of a ship, with a captain who has ceased to follow Starfleet protocols because she's lost her moral compass. That's not the Captain Janeway I know, but it may be the one I have now. Her lust for revenge is simply unprecedented.

Stardate 52998

We've been able to repair as much of the damage to Voyager from the alien attacks that we can, given our need to follow Equinox's trail. If they engage that obnoxious, alien-fueled propulsion system, we'll never catch up with them. As of yet, it hasn't been engaged, and there's no sign they've even gone to warp. Did Seven do something to prevent the drive's use?

From reading past records about Captain Ransom's actions, Captain Janeway has learned he likes to "hide" from attacks whenever possible. The Delaney sisters and Harry are in Astrometrics, searching for the Equinox. They think they've located it hidden inside the parthogenic atmosphere of a planet not too far away. We're headed there now.
Stardate 53002

So much has happened over the past couple of days. Not much of it has been good.

We located *Equinox* in orbit around the M-class planet with the parthogenic atmosphere. Two of the *Equinox* crew, Ensign Noah Lessing and Crewman Angelo Tessoni, were on its surface. Commander Chakotay and Tom transported down and ambushed them. When Ransom realized we'd captured his crew, he sent his ship deeper into the planet's atmosphere. Because our ship is larger than theirs, we couldn't descend into the denser layers of the planet's atmosphere. Our deflector dish - currently our primary defense against another alien attack -- couldn't handle it, and we had to break off pursuit. Since we only have impulse drive at present, when *Equinox* flew off at warp, we couldn't follow them. They still haven't engaged their enhanced alien-fueled drive, however. If they can't get it working soon and we can finish repairing our own ship, we may be able to catch up with them after all.

Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay interrogated Ensign Lessing in Seven's cargo bay this afternoon. I don't know all the details. Father refused to discuss them with our Security staff afterwards, but it's clear the captain and Commander Chakotay have had a serious difference of opinion. The commander had suggested we contact the Ankari, the aliens who introduced Ransom to the aliens who are attacking *Equinox* and *Voyager*, to help us find a way to communicate with them and convince them to stop attacking *Voyager*. While the captain has (reluctantly) agreed to his plan, she's also removed Commander Chakotay from his duties and confined him to his quarters. I'm at a loss to explain her rationale. The commander's plan seems quite workable to me.

Supplemental

We caught up with an Ankari trading vessel. While their world is 50 light years behind our current position, this ship was traveling barely two light years away. Our reputation as a Starfleet vessel has preceded us, unfortunately, thanks to Captain Ransom's actions. The Ankari captain wanted nothing to do with us and refused to even answer our hails. The captain ordered Father to capture the Ankari vessel with a tractor beam. Father was clearly distressed. It wasn't a good way to show them we're different from Ransom. Once she had the chance to talk with the Ankari captain, she convinced him to come to *Voyager* and call them so we could speak with the aliens.

Ironically, the Ankari call these nucleogenic aliens the "Spirits of Good Fortune." They have brought us very bad fortune thus far. Father was with Captain Janeway and the Ankari captain when the aliens were summoned by a device which looks somewhat like a very tiny pipe organ, or a set of pan pipes clustered together. The aliens who arrived were extremely angry. Although Father and the captain couldn't understand them, their "spokes-alien" could understand everything they said. The Ankari captain was able to translate the alien's speech. Captain Janeway managed to convince the alien that Starfleet does not condone actions like Ransom's, and that she wants to capture him to punish him.
The alien countered that the only acceptable punishment would be the total destruction of the
*Equinox* -- and everyone on it. When Father objected to the captain's agreeing to the aliens' demands
to kill the *Equinox* crew, she threatened to remove him from duty, too. Father could only acquiesce
in the face of the captain's intransigence.

Did Commander Chakotay refuse to acquiesce to something the captain demanded? It seems likely. I
don't recognize this Captain Janeway at all. No amount of meditation is likely to calm me tonight.

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**Stardate 53009**

It's over. The *Equinox* has been destroyed. Five of their crew are now on *Voyager*. Seven was also
saved -- and so was our EMH. We never knew that the EMH treating our crew members was the
one from *Equinox*. We thought we'd gotten our EMH back from the *Equinox* when Ransom's crew
stole the multi-phasic shield device, but we received theirs without our knowledge. The mystery of
how Captain Ransom was able to bring down our shields and do so much damage to our ship when
we were pursuing him over the M-class planet, on the day we captured Ensign Lessing and
Crewman Tessoni, has been solved. The *Equinox* EMH sent our command codes to Ransom, which
allowed him to take down our shields remotely.

While our Doctor was on *Equinox*, Max Burke removed his ethical subroutines so he'd do anything
Ransom and Burke wanted him to do. They ordered our EMH to remove Seven's cortical array,
which would destroy all of her higher neural functions. Fortunately, we caught up with them before
he'd finished that task. He almost succeeded in turning Seven's brain to Leola root, in an attempt to
discover the codes she'd installed on their power relays to prevent them from using their "enhanced
warp drive" to escape *Voyager*.

It was fortunate that Captain Ransom remembered something about being a Starfleet captain at the
very last. When Ransom announced he was going to surrender to our captain, Max Burke staged a
mutiny and took command of *Equinox*. He sent Ransom to his quarters, under Marla Gilmore's
guard. Marla staged a mutiny of her own against Max. She released Ransom once they left the
bridge, and he contacted Captain Janeway to surrender the *Equinox* to us. He ordered Marla to
transport Seven, the crew, and herself to *Voyager*.

I'm not sure how the "Spirits of Good Fortune" would have viewed the removal of *Equinox*'s entire
crew if Ransom had been successful. That would have betrayed the agreement Captain Janeway
made with them, to surrender the *Equinox* and its crew to the aliens. They might have begun to
attack *Voyager* again. However, Max Burke and the bridge crew discovered what was happening
and set up a force field around the bridge to prevent being transported to Voyager. Ransom was able to transfer our EMH program back to our Sickbay.

Ransom expected to be alone when he died with his ship. Max Burke and his confederates didn't get off, however. We don't know exactly what happened, but there was no sign of any shuttles leaving Equinox before it exploded. None of the bridge crew appeared in our transporter room.

The aliens must understand the punishment they'd demanded from Captain Janeway has been executed. There's been no sign of them here on Voyager since the Equinox exploded.

Seven will be all right. Now that his ethical subroutines have been restored, our Doctor has repaired the damage done to Seven's cortical array. Currently, she's regenerating. Tom told me our Doctor is extremely upset by what he was doing to Seven and is very glad he didn't succeed in finding out the encryption algorithms. "The Doc feels ashamed of his actions, and I told him I understood -- but I didn't let him off the hook too easily. It won't hurt him to live with a bruised ego for a while." I suggested that what the Doctor really needs is some sort of anti-tampering element added to his program. He was taken over by the Smart Bomb only a few weeks ago. I thought Seven wanted to work on a countermeasure after that, but apparently, nothing has been done on that score yet.

According to our official logs, the five members of Equinox's crew were called on the carpet by Captain Janeway. They've all been stripped of any rank they held on Equinox. The captain told them they'd been welcomed on Voyager when we first met them, but this time, they must earn our trust and places on our crew. I do not envy their position. They will face Federation justice when we return to the Alpha Quadrant. With their superior officers gone, they'll have to face what their crew as a whole did, without the support or any admission of guilt from their superior officers. They were "just following orders," but the deaths of three of our crew after the theft of the multi-phasic shield device (which was destroyed on Equinox) will be on their heads.

When it comes to trust and earning your place on Voyager, I would have to say our captain now needs to do a fair amount of trust-building herself. I was on the bridge, working on the primary tactical station's EMS circuitry, when the captain and Commander Chakotay arrived to take stock of the damage. I overheard their conversation.

She said to the commander, "You would have had a good reason for staging a mutiny of your own." He replied that for him to do that would be "crossing a line." Their estrangement must have had something to do with him accusing her of something like that. It was a tantalizing snippet of conversation for me to overhear.

I wish I'd heard a little more, but we were all distracted when they found Voyager's dedication plaque lying on the deck. It had fallen off the wall. I can't recall it ever happening before, and the captain confirmed my impression. They decided to remount it on the bulkhead before going to the
potluck Dad is throwing this evening in an attempt to lift everyone's morale. The commander told her he was bringing the salad. The captain said she'd bring the croutons.

It sounded like they were trying to repair a very strained relationship. I wonder if it can be that easy? It may take more than bringing a salad and croutons to a potluck supper. The captain did step over the line in some ways. I know Father believes she did when she made her agreement with the aliens. I guess only time will tell if the command team can become of one mind again.

Supplemental

The potluck seemed to raise everyone's spirits to a degree, but there's still a lot of discontent among members of the crew. The five from the Equinox never showed up, probably a good idea, since feelings are still so raw from the loss of three of our own as a result of their actions. Our regular crew members were careful not to say too much until after the captain, the commander, and Father left the get-together, but a lot was said once they were gone.

The consensus seems to be that our captain lost her mind for a few days. Either that, or she was infected by the same sort of megalomania Ransom developed. Or maybe Maxwell Burke cast a spell on her. Or the betrayal of the Equinox crew brought her "Darkling Side" to the fore. The Doctor's "Darkling Side" was certainly resurrected after the Equinox captain removed his ethical subroutines. (He wasn't around tonight, either. He usually comes to our gatherings to chat, even though he can't partake of any of the refreshments.) Seven was regenerating, recovering from brain surgery.

When I spoke with my closest friends, Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry, they were somewhat subdued. I expected B'Elanna to be angry, but surprisingly, she wasn't as emotional as I expected. She admitted to being extremely upset with Maxwell Burke, whom she had dated briefly while they were in the Academy together. She did say that they broke up because he was very manipulative, often "borrowing" engineering techniques she'd shown him and passing them off as his own discoveries. "I played 'sincerely dumb' when he asked me about his school sweater. I recycled it when we broke up. I didn't want it around to remind me of him."

Harry was all for giving the "Equinox Five" a chance to become part of the Voyager team. That's Harry. Even if they'd hit him over the head, the way Seven did years ago, he'd probably say that. Tom told us, however, that the "Five," along with many other members of their crew, had been coerced into agreeing to the aliens-as-fuel plan. Max Burke reportedly dragged Marla Gilmore to an airlock and threatened to "space" her and anyone else who didn't cooperate, after they first discovered what the aliens' bodies could do. Both Noah Lessing and Marla Gilmore had been in favor of abandoning Equinox, I remember, during the discussions that were held before the decision was made to fix the smaller ship.

Still, loyalty to a captain should only go so far. If they'd admitted what was happening on the
Equinox as soon as they came on board Voyager, asking Captain Janeway to help them stop what was going on, they'd be in a much stronger position. Before they met us, they had no way to appeal what was happening. They made a critical error by maintaining their silence. And if only they had appealed to Captain Janeway! If she'd known what was going on from the beginning, she may have been able to stop Ransom and Burke before things got so out of hand -- before she "stepped over the line" Commander Chakotay mentioned on the bridge.

We changed the subject at that point, before I had a chance to speak openly of what I'd seen and heard tonight on the bridge. I'm glad. I might have said too much.

When I returned to my quarters tonight, I meditated for quite a while before adding this Supplemental to my earlier log entry. My emotions are not very well-controlled. Perhaps that's how it should be. My Talaxian side from Dad is still very agitated. I can put on a show of Vulcan containment, but it will take a while before I will actually feel I've accomplished that goal. From the expression on Father's face tonight, during our meal, I suspect he's also still meditating in his quarters about what's happened during the past couple of weeks.

Did Captain Rudy Ransom return to the "right side" at the end? To some degree, perhaps; but since he's dead, he's also safe from prosecution for the murder of sentient beings when we return to the Alpha Quadrant. Lieutenant Maxwell Burke and his followers are also safely dead. Ransom told the captain that the five now on our ship were "worth saving." Would he have said the same about the others if they hadn't refused to come on our ship and, eventually, to Federation justice?

I know I could never have trusted Maxwell Burke again. If he'd survived, we might have been forced to deal with him the same way we had to deal with Lon Suder, the murderer. He'd been confined to his quarters and was expected to remain there the entire way home to the Alpha Quadrant, but he died a hero when he helped retake Voyager from the Kazon. I can't believe Maxwell Burke would have been as self-sacrificing as Suder finally turned out to be. Burke wasn't simply pragmatic. From what I've heard about him, he was a self-centered brute. He would have left our ship to be destroyed by the aliens, to make sure all the witnesses to the murders of the aliens were dead. If Voyager had been lost, they'd have been free to arrive in the Alpha Quadrant to universal acclaim. Everyone would call it "Equinox's heroic journey home from the far reaches of the Delta Quadrant."

Had Rudy Ransom counted on that, too? We'll never know. Father may still be very upset by the rough justice administered by the "Spirits of Good Fortune" -- but I can't say I am.

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Chapter Summary

A welcoming space station provides Tuvix with a pleasant interlude of a romantic nature. Viva his Talaxian side!


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Stardate 53049 Survival Instinct

We're come to a space station which has been extremely welcoming to our crew. That's not something we've encountered in the Delta Quadrant very often! The merchants have been eager to trade with us for commodities we need desperately. With the recent example of the Varro ship fresh in our minds, since they'd refused to stop anywhere to obtain maintenance for their vessel before serious problems cropped up, we knew it was time to provide Voyager with a thorough overhaul. Since this station offers just about all the services most Starfleet Deep Space stations do, the captain is ecstatic. B'Elanna is only slightly more restrained -- she's ordering everyone around and taking advantage of having resources close at hand for a change.

Since everyone on the station has been quite friendly, Captain Janeway decided to open the ship up to visitors. Tom told me this sort of event is called an "open house" on Earth. During the end-of-the-year holidays, his father and mother always opened their home to visitors. People would come in to view their Christmas tree and decorations and "overdose on punch and cookies." He promised to show me a file of images he always keeps with him, to remind himself of those good times. He has a picture of his mother. Tom doesn't talk about her often, but he's told me she's "great." He once said she was always tried to "smooth things over" between her husband and son. Since Tom has had trouble getting along with his father, I suspect Tom must take after his mother in personality. Perhaps he doesn't speak of her very often because he cherishes his memories of her. When it comes to Admiral Paris, he prefers to exorcise them.


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Stardate 53050

This open house policy is exhausting! Our Security department has been kept very busy because a significant number of our visitors have, shall I say, sticky fingers. Or other types of sticky
appendages. Father has not been shy about expressing his disapproval over our many losses, even though, I must say, almost all fall in the "inconsequential and easily replaced" category. He went so far as to ask the captain to end the open house policy. The captain rebuffed his suggestion. Our hospitality will "serve a higher purpose." She believes *Voyager* is only the first Starfleet ship that will visit this station. Someday, when the propulsion systems we've been collecting during our journey lead to an advancement in Starfleet technologies, other ships from the Alpha Quadrant will come here. Establishing a reputation of friendliness now will mean more then. "It's worth a few minor losses." She also pointed out we've received so many gifts from our visitors, as far as she's concerned, "it's a wash."

Father was not pleased with her response, but I must say, I agree with her reasoning. No one has lost anything so far that can't be replaced through replication. And, when I consider how bad our reputation was during our first two years in the Delta Quadrant, when the Kazon sects spread rumors about how terrible we were while they were under the sway of Seska -- not to mention what Ransom and Burke's actions on the *Equinox* must have done to it -- creating a good impression in the minds of those living, working, and traveling through this station will undoubtedly be far more important than Father has been willing to credit up to now.

When he hasn't been pressed into service as "*Voyager's* Ambassador to the Delta Quadrant," Dad has been kept busy in the kitchen preparing refreshments. The eating habits of the people on this station vary tremendously, but he's tried to keep selections available to suit all tastes. He's pressed me into helping him with food preparation during my off duty hours. While we have been extremely busy, I must say it's quite satisfying to have an opportunity to putter around in the kitchen, adding a few flourishes of my own to our dishes. Dad approves of my experiments since our visitors seem very satisfied. We never have more than a few scraps of food left over each night, and many of our guests have given Dad, Chell, and me their compliments for the "tantalizing tidbits" we've offered them.

Although we aren't surprised we haven't seen anyone from Talax or Rinax on this station (our home planet and its moon are 30,000 light years away), his more exotic Talaxian dishes, which he'd been forced to stop preparing because our crew disliked them, have proven to be extremely popular with our guests. Needless to say (but I will, with a touch of pride on his behalf), Dad is "tickled pink," to borrow a phrase from Tom, by the accolades that have come his way regarding his Talaxian specialties. When the captain brought him with her for a meeting with the station's commandant, he praised Dad's *chadre'kab* in particular. Dad agreed to share the recipe with the commandant's favorite restaurant's chef, so the commandant can enjoy it even after *Voyager* has continued on its travels. Tom said Dad blushed "almost fuchsia" when he came back to *Voyager* after that meeting. I was very happy for him.

Dad gets a beating sometimes for trying to see the bright side of things and "going with his gut" whenever possible. The senior staff and I all know, as do Samantha and Naomi Wildman, that Dad often has to fight hard to maintain that façade. He does it as much for himself as for anyone else's benefit. Dad is subject to bouts of depression. None have been as serious as the time he considered suicide, of course; but losing his entire family to the Metreon Cascade the way he did comes back to haunt him from time to time. When he discovered the "Spirit of Good Fortune" alien's corpse in a
corridor after one of the alien attacks, he spoke to me afterwards about him. He wondered if the alien had had a family who would always mourn his loss, since they could never know why he could never come back to them again.

At that time, there was speculation on the ship that the "Spirits of Good Fortune" were beasts and not rational beings. I never subscribed to that view, and neither did Dad. Father was unsure about their level of sentience, but even if they were not, Father had no patience with the cruel way they were being treated by the Equinox crew. After the captain and Father conversed with one of the aliens, proving they were, indeed, sentient beings, he came to Dad and me and said, "Perhaps that deceased alien did have a family who will always wonder about him, Mr. Neelix. Your feelings of grief for the being were not misplaced. Your 'instincts,' in this matter, were correct."

Since Father has always been rather disdainful of Dad's instinctual responses to issues, rather than looking at them in what Father considers a more rational, logical manner, this was a remarkable thing for him to admit. It's as close to an apology from my Vulcan parent as he's ever likely to give to Dad. After Father left, Dad said to me sadly, "I just wish the reason Tuvok told me this wasn't prompted by a murder."

Thus, receiving praise from the people on this station about his cooking, so soon after Father's subtle acknowledgment of Dad's perceptions during the matter of the "Spirits of Good Fortune," bolstered Dad's spirits in a very positive way. I was glad to see it. He's a very good person -- and I'm not just saying that because he's my Dad.

Supplemental

Father assigned me to Shore Patrol detail this afternoon. Tim Lang and I were sent to escort two of our officers back to the ship. They'd been arrested on disorderly persons charges. Tom and Harry had become caught up in a riot/fight. Depending upon which of the witnesses interviewed, they were either the perpetrators or the victims. Apparently a group of beings asked them to participate in what Tom and Harry thought was a game, but was probably some sort of religious ritual. Captain Janeway confined them both to their own quarters, but she hasn't forbidden them to have visitors. After my shift was over, I stopped by to check on Tom's black eye. It's healing nicely. (That will be the official rationale for my visit, if Father questions me about it.)

Tom shared his file of Christmas memories with me and explained the traditions when I was puzzled about what I was seeing. I was quite impressed by the way his mother decorated their family home. I retain some of Father's memories of that time of year from when he was living on Earth with T'Pel and their children, during his stint as a Starfleet Academy instructor. I complimented Tom on his mother's decorating prowess and suggested we could incorporate some of her ideas into the decorations for our upcoming Prixin celebrations. We've had Christmas dinners on Voyager, but we've never decorated the Mess Hall in as tasteful a way as Tom's mother embellished the Paris family home. The tiny little lights, in particular, would look lovely distributed on the branches of the
Guiding Tree. I told Tom I would suggest this to Dad. Tom was pleased. Perhaps it even took a little of the "sting" out of his black eye.

Stardate 53051

I've met someone. She's lovely! We may be "ships passing in the night," so to speak, since her ship is headed in a totally different direction than Voyager will after we leave the station; but if I get to spend some time with her, I will be a very happy Tuvix! Her eyes are dark and warm; and her ruffles of hair shine with beautiful, dark red overtones. She has spots, just like me (but no whiskers). Her personality shines through her smile.

We met on the station, naturally. I decided to visit the restaurant that requested Dad's recipe for chabre'kab. I was pleased to see the chef had it on the menu, but I decided to sample more local delicacies, too. The place was crowded. While I waited for a table, I noticed a lovely young person enter and give her name to the maître d'. She moved off to the side and stood by herself to wait. When the maître d' called me over to tell me my table was ready, I asked him to ask the young lady if she'd like to sit in the other chair -- if she wasn't expecting anyone to join her -- so we could have company while we ate. She accepted my offer with a very bright smile. I introduced myself when she took her seat. She said her name was Alyara. She's Morgini.

I thought we'd spend a pleasant hour or so talking about our life experiences. By the time we left, after our second dessert, the restaurant was just about empty and closing for the evening. It was only 1930, though, so it was still quite early. Since our open house policy was still in effect, I brought her on a tour of Voyager. She met Dad and Father. And then, one thing led to another, and we had a very nice interlude in my quarters. Nothing that would require clearance from the Doctor, according to Starfleet protocols, but when she indicated she wouldn't mind needing such clearance, we went to Sickbay to be cleared for . . . more intimate activities.

Well, she spent the night. It was marvelous. I'm quite certain now that when it comes to romance, I'm Talaxian. We've agreed to meet tomorrow for dinner, and . . . maybe a little more romance.
I haven't had the chance to update my log for the past few days. I've been busy.

[Sigh] Alyara had to leave today. She remained on the station for three extra days so we could spend more time together. It was wonderful to share our thoughts and bodies with each other. I think that's why I haven't updated my personal log. Telling her about myself, and asking her about her life, was a little like dictating log entries -- when we weren't performing activities of a more intimate nature, that is. I just can't stop smiling.

She asked me, quite playfully, but with a very serious undertone, if I'd thought about staying in the Delta Quadrant. Would I consider signing onto a trading vessel set up to be crewed by one person -- or a couple? She assured me she meant the offer, but I don't think she was surprised when I said I wanted to stay with my Dad and Father on Voyager. She understood. She thought how I was created from my parents, with the help of that unique species of orchid, was "amazo." It didn't bother her at all, which was very comforting. It gave me hope I'll find another person in the future who is equally open-minded. I must admit, I wouldn't mind spending enough time with Alyara to find out if she's the one for me; but we're traveling in opposite directions.

I'll miss her terribly, but Alyara has her life, and I have mine. It was wonderful to have a chance to share our lives -- and on my part, love -- for at least a little while. I hope I'll find that certain someone to share my life with forever, someday; but, as the Doctor put it when he cleared us for intimacy, she was my "Miss Right Now." I'll always treasure my memories of our time together.

Stardate 53060

I didn't pay that much attention to our new crew member until after Alyara left, although I knew basically what had happened. The attack on Seven involved Security.

Seven encountered three former Borg who were part of her first unimatrix. After the scout ship in which they were traveling crashed, their link with the Collective was broken. They were reassimilated, even though they didn't recall how it happened, due to a gap in their collective memories. I'm using the term "collective memories" quite deliberately, and differently from the way I usually do. These three former Borg were still linked with the other two, but not with the Borg Collective as a whole. Something happened when they were reassimilated. While they were part of the Collective, the "white noise" of the Hive hid this additional connection.

They were freed from the Hive mind a second time when their sphere suffered the same type of EM malfunction that broke the link for the drones of the Cooperative. A few dozen escaped in a small
scout ship. The others adapted easily to the broken link and went on their way, but these three now "heard" each other constantly. When they learned of a disconnected Borg named Seven of Nine living on *Voyager*, they realized she might be "their" Seven. They followed her here in the belief that she could help them accomplish their goal of living as individuals, as they did before their first assimilation. Eventually, they learned why the three of them were now linked in a triad. It wasn't a pleasant story.

After the scout ship crashed, four of the nine in their unimatrix were killed instantly. Seven discovered a fifth drone as he expired. Lansor, P'Chan, and Marika Wilkarah had been assimilated after they reached adulthood. When they realized they were no longer linked with the Borg, they wanted to remain individuals. Seven, however, had been assimilated when she was just six years old. For most of her life, the voices of the Hive had comforted Seven. Now they were gone. In a panic, Seven reassimilated the three, but she didn't do it correctly. Somehow, Seven connected the three into a triad, transforming their left parietal lobes into organic interlink nodes. When Seven was reassimilated, after the Borg rescued them, the drone who brought Seven back into the Collective performed the procedure as it should be done.

Seven had fused their minds together by accident, but now, because of that earlier action, she had to make a deliberate choice regarding the manner they would live the rest of their lives. The three were lying comatose in Sickbay. If the Doctor operated to separate them, he estimated they would only live for four more weeks, possibly less, as individuals. The only alternative for them would be to return them to the Borg to be assimilated a third time. Presumably, they could then live a normal lifespan for their species, but it would be as part of the Hive, the life they'd rejected twice before. Living as independent beings had been their express wish. While returning them to the Collective would pose a significant danger to our crew, Seven assured me that factor did not enter into her deliberations. She decided she'd made a terrible error eight years ago by forcing them back into the Hive even though they didn't want to return. They'd fled when Seven she demanded they submit to assimilation, but she caught up with them. She didn't want to make the same mistake again. Their lives might be short, but they would be lived as individuals.

After the three regained consciousness, the Doctor explained the limited amount of time they had left to them. This time, they agreed, Seven had made the right choice. Marika Wilkarah, a Bajoran Starfleet officer who had been assimilated at Wolf 359, will remain on *Voyager*, serving as a Starfleet officer for the remainder of her life. Lansor plans to stay on the station during his final days. P'Chan will spend his last weeks of life on a nearby world, camping under the stars. He knows he has no family left. His parents were too old and sick to become "good" drones. The Borg killed them, right in front of P'Chan, just before they assimilated him.

I plan to spend as much time with Lieutenant Marika as I can. We've already discussed her religious beliefs. She's certain she'll see her deceased husband again when she exits this realm of existence. While the lieutenant told Seven she couldn't forgive her for what she did, she understands why she did it. Seven had been assimilated as a child, without any knowledge of how to live independently. Seven the child was simply too frightened to be alone.
Stardate 53102

Marika Wilkarah died today. Seven remained at her side to the end. According to Seven, the passing was peaceful. Marika never told her she'd forgiven her for reassimilating their triad, but from the way Seven described her final hours (and which Tabor and Tal Celes corroborated), I trust she did. When she realized she was near death, Marika reached out and grabbed Seven by the hand. They stayed like that until Marika took her last breath.

Marika's funeral is tomorrow. Her coffin, a photon torpedo casing, will be shot towards the Bajoran wormhole. Her husband, who died on the Excalibur, will be waiting for her there.
The Deadly Strangers

Chapter Summary

Seven's disregard for protocol has serious repercussions when the "Deadly Strangers" of ancient Talaxian horror tales are set loose from a 900-year sleep.

Stardate 53147

We had to dive to the surface of a planet suffering through a nuclear winter in order to escape from people who claimed they own the subspace "undertunnels" we'd found.

Actually, we'd fallen into one of their corridors by accident. It was ancient, a millennium old, at least, according to Harry and Seven, and filled with debris of all kinds. The problem was, we couldn't get out of it right away. A ship of the Turei came upon us and demanded to know what we were doing in their undertunnels. The captain's response: "We're trying to get out!"

The Turei ship fired on our shield generator. The resonance frequency was altered, and our ship popped out of the corridor into normal space. In the short time we'd been inside the corridor, approximately five minutes, we'd traveled 200 light years! The captain immediately wanted to speak with the Turei again, not just to thank them, but to ask if we could make some sort of deal to travel through their corridors again, if any led towards the Alpha Quadrant.

The captain of the Turei ship's reply was to insist upon boarding Voyager to remove all traces of the undertunnel from our computer core, or he would make sure the information was destroyed in another way -- by destroying Voyager. Our captain was not in favor of either option. We fled.

Seven discovered a planet nearby with a radiogenic atmosphere, which would serve to obscure Voyager's actual location from the Turei sensors. Once we'd descended to the lowest level, we discovered the atmospheric conditions were not a natural phenomenon. The ruins of a highly-developed civilization stretched in every direction.

After the captain ordered Tom to land our ship on the surface to facilitate repairs, Harry announced, "Captain, I'm getting faint life sign readings from a cavern below the surface of this planet." Since
we'd determined the atmosphere had become radioactive roughly 900 years ago, the idea that anyone might have survived that long was astonishing. I was eager to join the away team, but the captain chose Seven and Father to accompany her. I moved over to the main Tactical station to monitor our situation with the Turei. They hadn't discovered our ship yet, but we knew it was only a matter of time.

The away team discovered hundreds of stasis tubes in a series of caverns below the ruined city, along with a great deal of equipment and many ships, most still space-worthy according to the team's tricorder readings. Some stasis tubes had been destroyed by falling debris, and the power to others must have failed, killing the occupants. Many of the pods contained living beings, however. Seven initiated the reactivation sequence to wake up one. That's totally against protocol. I would have known not to do it; but, as we all know, Seven can be . . . impulsive.

Stardate 53152

After Gedrin, the Vaadwaur scientist awakened by Seven, helped defend *Voyager* from a Turei bombardment, the captain made a deal with him. In return for access to tunnels Gedrin believes no one knows about (although I'm not sure how he can be sure of this, since he was asleep for 892 years!), the captain agreed to awaken the rest of the Vaadwaur. *Voyager* staff will look for another planet for them to settle and will help the Vaadwaur refurbish their ships and the equipment necessary for them to live there comfortably.

I met one of the first to be awakened. Morin was working in Engineering with B'Elanna. There's something disturbing about him. Well, I'm judging the man on very little information. I may be overreacting -- or my perceptions may have been altered by what happened to Naomi.

Our Naomi was trying to engage some of the Vaadwaur children in a game of Kadis-kot. They were teasing her unmercifully. Now, I know children can be cruel to each other before they're old enough to empathize with other people, but this was different. Nastier. There was a threatening undertone to everything the Vaadwaur youngsters said to her. When I approached the group, they made several jokes about how I was the "ugliest Talaxian" they'd ever seen, especially my ears, which they said were "even worse than Neelix's." They obviously had no idea how sharp my hearing is. When Naomi ran over to me and asked me to bring her back to *Voyager*, I answered by saying, "I'll return you to your quarters now, Naomi. I'm glad you don't think I'm the ugliest Talaxian you've ever seen." I said this loud enough to make sure the Vaadwaur children could hear me. From the startled way they looked at each other, they did, all right.

I brought Naomi home and listened to her when she tearfully said she didn't want to play with them anymore. I told her I understood, and that I'd tell her mother what I'd seen and heard.
When I described the incident to Sam, she agreed it was best not to expose Naomi to that sort of behavior. "I'm so sorry, Tuvix. My daughter almost never gets a chance to play with other children. All her closest friends are holodeck characters! I'd hoped she'd have a chance to play with children her own age. If they're like this, though, she's better off on the holodeck!"

I sadly agreed.

Poor Naomi! She finally gets to meet other children, and they turn out to be bullies. They weren't going to stop at making fun of me and Dad. It would only be a matter of time before they'd start to be nasty towards Naomi, too. Now, that's ugly.

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Stardate 53155

When I entered the Mess Hall, the dinner hour was long over. Dad was in a corner, speaking with Noah Lessing and Marla Gilmore. I haven't had much to do with any of our adopted crew members, late of the Equinox, but when Dad called me over, I really had no choice. (That phrase will always remind me of the Equinox, I'm afraid.)

They were talking about the Vaadwaur corridors. It turns out that when Rudy Ransom told Captain Janeway they'd "traveled through a small wormhole" that let the Equinox out at another part of the Delta Quadrant, the story wasn't a total fabrication. Noah and Marla both think they'd fallen into one of the Vaadwaur corridors.

"How did you get out?" I asked.

Marla explained that their ship had been badly damaged by the Krowtonan Guard. They fell into the "wormhole" when they were trying to escape another attack from a Kazon sect. "Our shield resonance wasn't as constant as it should have been because of all the damage. We hit something in the corridors that altered the resonance. We slipped out of the corridor and realized we were almost 12,000 light years away from where we'd fallen into it. We thought the only explanation was a wormhole, but Noah and I think the walls of that corridor looked like these."

Dad looked at me very expectantly. I had to admit this was all very interesting. It explained some
things we hadn't known about the *Equinox's* path through the Delta Quadrant, before they met the Ankari at their outpost, but I wasn't sure what else it might mean.

"Don't you remember the Talax-ilzay stories? From the Old Tongue?" Dad asked.

Then I understood. *The Tale of the Bloody Hand. The Demon with the Golden Voice. The Tale of the Deadly Stranger. The Tale of the Boy Who Lost His Head* (literally). The titles are disturbing, and the stories themselves are even worse. "You're thinking there's some relationship between the Vaadwaur and those old stories your family passed down to you, Dad?"

"Exactly. I still have copies of them on the *Baxial*. After Naomi told me why she doesn't want to play with the Vaadwaur children, I went to the shuttle bay and looked them up. They're just as upsetting to me as they ever were. I wondered if I should bring them to the attention of Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay. When I heard Noah and Marla talking about that 'wormhole,' I asked them to tell me more about it."

"And in the Old Tongue, 'vaadwaur' means 'foolish.' I see. What did the captain and the commander say?"

"Nothing, yet. I haven't gone to see them. Do you think I should?"

"I do. They may think it's a coincidence, but with this evidence from Marla and Noah that the corridors may extend as far as Talax, they should know about it."

"I will, then. I've been worried about this Gedrin from the beginning. He looks just the way the 'deadly stranger' is described in the tale of that name. We should never have awakened him from his 900 year sleep!"

Dad is right, of course, but the captain and the commander didn't have any part in the initial "awakening." Seven did it all on her own, against all Starfleet protocols concerning the need to be cautious when confronted by a previously unknown species. Unfortunately, Seven can be as reckless as she is intelligent. And no one has ever doubted her intelligence.

Dad went to speak with the captain, leaving me sitting there with my cup of Tarkalean Tea, Noah Lessing, and Marla Gilmore. I didn't want to just get up and leave them, like they were pariah, even though I've been quite ambivalent about their presence on *Voyager*. They're my shipmates now, for good or ill, but I haven't warmed up to them as of yet. After this conversation, however, I do feel
more sympathy for them. They were forced to participate in mass murder when their judgment was impaired by long-term trauma from death and starvation. And they're filled with remorse. B'Elanna shared that Marla once told her she "sometimes wished she were dead, like all of her friends. She said it was even worse when the aliens were attacking them or she was putting more 'compound' into their warp engines, knowing what it was made of."

They'd fallen into whatever the corridor was less than two months after they were dragged into the Delta Quadrant. They'd been on the run for days from the Krowtonan Guard and a vicious Kazon sect with which I was not familiar. "We hadn't had the chance to hold a proper memorial service for our lost crewmates," Noah said, "and we never did until after we were bumped out of that 'small wormhole.' That's what Captain Ransom always insisted it was."

We chatted a little more. I discovered I'm not the only one who's been shunning them, even though they arrived on board months ago. "Ensign Paris has been very helpful, and so has your Dad. They both told us stories about their past lives, and about mistakes they've made. I wish knowing others have made mistakes can make up for the way we behaved towards your crew after you took us in. It doesn't. If only we could have convinced Rudy and Max to blow up the Equinox before you found out what we were doing! It wouldn't stop me from agonizing over what we did, but maybe I'd actually be able to sleep nights." Marla said this in such a pained tone of voice, it made me look at her in a very different light, as an individual, not just as "one of the Equinox Five."

"And your crewmates might not have died if we hadn't stolen the multi-phasic shield generator," Noah said. I must have flinched a little, and he asked, "Are those lost crewmates why you've avoided us?"

I said that it was. I told them about Julie Jurot, and how we had to hide in transporter suspension while we were helping the telepath group escape the Devore Imperium. "We missed the Devore, but it wouldn't have mattered if we had met them," Marla remarked. "The only telepath on our ship died the first week we were here." She sighed. "So did everyone I was close to. And it got worse. I was afraid to make any new friends because whenever I did, they were killed, too. I barely spoke to you, Noah, until we were the only two ensigns left."

"We've lost our share of crewmates all along, too," I admitted. "That's always a risk in Starfleet, but this sort of unexpected long-term mission is unprecedented. Voyager is a much bigger ship. Hopefully, you'll get to make some friends here that you'll be able to keep."

"If anyone ever decides to speak with me again," Marla said sadly.

And that's true. It won't be easy for either of them. "But you must try. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't made a few friends after my advent. They helped me survive when it seemed I would be forced to give up my life for Dad and Father -- Neelix and Commander Tuvok, to you -- to come back to life.
They found a way to duplicate me. My twin Neevok agreed to be the sacrifice. I only knew him for a couple of hours, but I will always miss him. He will remain alive in my memory, for as long as I live. It may help you if you remember your lost friends, too."

They agreed it might help. Then they had to leave to go to work. They were on Gamma shift. I came back here and meditated for a while. I do that every night, of course, but it's always a deeper, more meaningful experience when I've thought of Neevok at any time during the day. I decided I should continue reaching out to the Equinox Five. When we return to the Alpha Quadrant, their futures will be very uncertain. Who knows what punishment will be administered to them? And while we face many obstacles traveling on Voyager, for weeks at a time we live almost normal lives. We do our jobs. Share meals. Have pool tournaments in Sandrines and luaus in Dad's resort program. Get silly with Captain Proton and company. Every day doesn't present us with a new disaster.

The captain wants them to prove themselves worthy of our trust. After my conversation with Marla Gilmore and Noah Lessing, I think I'm ready to trust them.

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Stardate 53167

After 900 years, the Deadly Strangers are awake and running through the galaxy again. They aren't a very nice people overall, although Gedrin, the first one Seven awakened, was a decent fellow in the end. He sacrificed his life so that Father could return to Voyager, and to help us escape from our enemies. It turned out the Turei, the race that chased us out of "their" underspace, were not our primary opponents. The Vaadwaur were. Dad was right. They are the dangerous strangers of the old Talax-ilzay stories. A fairly large number of their ships escaped the Turei by diving into their subspace tunnels.

It may take a while for them to be strong enough to wreak havoc on the Delta Quadrant once again. They'll have to rebuild their society first, and that won't be easy, with a gene pool of 600 individuals, at most, who are still living. They don't have a clear lead on a new home planet, either. Gedrin was working with Seven on identifying possibilities, but according to Father, the ceiling of the cavern collapsed on him just as Father was transported away and back to Voyager. The colonies the Vaadwaur had possessed before their nine-century sleep were all wiped out in the interim. They're now populated by other species who aren't fond of sharing, like the Borg and the Devore Imperium, to name a few examples.

I hope we're gone from their space long before they've had a chance to rebuild. I've seen enough of the Vaadwaur. Their children showed me all I need to know about what they're really like.
B'Elanna has a near-death experience, which sets Tuvix to thinking about who his mother is, considering the unorthodox way he was created.

Stardate 53196

We're lucky our chief engineer is alive. B'Elanna chased after the only multi-spatial probe we currently have available in one of our Class-2 shuttles. Going into an ion storm in a Class-2 is asking for trouble. When we managed to tractor it into the shuttlebay, she was stretched out on the floor, comatose. After she regained consciousness, she began to babble about meeting her mother Miral -- on the Klingon Barge of the Dead.

Commander Chakotay went to see her in her quarters after the Doctor released her from Sickbay. B'Elanna asked him if he believed in an afterlife. I imagine that must have been a loaded question for him, after what happened with Dad after his resurrection. B'Elanna told the commander she hadn't spoken with her mother in ten years. For the last five years, of course, she couldn't speak with her mother, since she was in the Delta Quadrant. I find it sad that they had nothing to say to each other for the prior five years, either. B'Elanna's resistance to accepting the Klingon side of her nature resulted in many arguments between mother and daughter. (I know something about that from conversations I've had with her.)

Tom doesn't know what else our first officer might have said to her, but when he went to look for B'Elanna, he found her reading ancient Klingon sacred scrolls. B'Elanna is convinced her mother is going to gre'thor, the Klingon hell, because her daughter has turned her back on all things Klingon. The personal honor of a person isn't the only thing taken into consideration when a warrior seeks entrance into Sto-Vo-Kor. The "sins of the child" can count against her, too. Tom pointed out that she doesn't know if her mother really is dead, but that didn't matter. B'Elanna decided to replicate the conditions of the accident and return to the Barge of the Dead to save her mother, the way Kahless saved his brother from gre'thor in an account she read in the paq'batlh.

Tom has always been an advocate for B'Elanna to accept her Klingon side, but he was upset she wanted to do something so radical only hours after she almost died. "One minute, she was in a coma, and the next she's a born-again Klingon, reading sacred scrolls. I told her I'll learn Klingon. I'll read the scrolls with her! But she's gone to the captain to ask for her permission to simulate her near death
When the captain initially refused to approve her request, B'Elanna accused the captain of being just like her mother. (And of course, when it comes to our "Voyager family," Captain Janeway is everyone's mother, as well as our captain.) But then, as Tom told me in an exasperated tone of voice, "She used the 'you're proud of me, but my mother never had a chance to be' card, Tuvix. And it worked."

In Sickbay, the Doctor replicated the conditions inside the shuttle, which had been filled with ionized particles from the ion storm. She fell into a coma again, but this time, B'Elanna was lying on a biobed in Sickbay and not inside a Class-2 shuttle buffeted by an ion storm. And the experiment apparently did work. B'Elanna found herself back on the Barge of the Dead. Her plan included being revived once Miral was off the barge and in Sto-Vo-Kor. Since she wasn't actually going to die, however, this was cheating, and therefore dishonorable. Her mother refused to go along with this plan. B'Elanna had to actually die. But when she walked through the gates of gre'thor, she saw herself on Voyager. All of our crew were there, singing Klingon drinking songs and lifting goblets of blood wine, toasting her dishonor.

According to Tom, B'Elanna's life really was slipping away at about this point in the . . . I'm not sure what happened. B'Elanna had seen all of us dying around her in what Kortar, the helmsman of the Barge of the Dead, told her was the naj, the "Dream Before Dying." Was she experiencing an actual paranormal event? Was she hallucinating? Or was her mind calling up images from her memories to help her make sense of her past life with her mother?

B'Elanna remembers coming back to the barge and meeting her mother, but this time, Miral was dressed like Captain Janeway. They had the "same old argument" they'd had almost daily, until B'Elanna left home ten years ago to attend Starfleet Academy. B'Elanna has always blamed her hair-trigger temper and bad attitude on her heritage from Miral. Her rage has always threatened to overwhelm her. Miral insisted that being Klingon doesn't mean lashing out at everyone. All Miral has ever wanted for her daughter is to act honorably. B'Elanna has never known what her mother means by that. After B'Elanna dropped out of the Academy, she joined the crew of the Val Jean. She never contacted her mother again before being thrown into the Delta Quadrant.

Then her mother and Voyager's the senior staff stood in a ring around her, telling B'Elanna over and over that her anger was consuming her and, if unchecked, would consume everyone on Voyager, too. Frustrated, tired of fighting to make herself understood, B'Elanna flung the bat'leth she'd been holding off the barge. Was this a symbolic way of throwing away her anger? She doesn't know, but that's when her mother told her she'd "made a start," and added, "Lanna, choose to live!" She told her daughter they might see each other again, either when B'Elanna gets home . . . or in Sto-Vo-Kor. B'Elanna threw her arms around her mother . . . and woke up in Sickbay, hugging Captain Janeway.

The captain, the EMH, and Tom insisted on getting the whole fantastic story from B'Elanna. Since
B'Elanna almost died and suddenly woke up, Tom isn't sure exactly what happened. Whatever it was affected her physical body as well as her perceptions. He understands why she gave the captain a hug in Sickbay first, (although she embraced him immediately after letting go of the captain). "She was hugging her mother when she flashed away from the barge, and when she opened her eyes, the captain was there to welcome her back to life."

Tom has a theory. B'Elanna needs to learn how to let go of reacting to every setback, no matter how slight, with anger. That's why B'Elanna's mother told her she'd "made a start" when she threw away the bat'leth. It's literally a two-edged sword, since a pair of curving blades, each ending in a wickedly sharp point, are joined together at the center. While the bat'leth is a weapon of violence, it's also a means of defense. It's difficult to get close to anyone holding a bat'leth in front of her. B'Elanna is only too quick to strike out at others (which Lieutenant Carey and his nose can certainly affirm), but she's also shown herself to be reluctant to allow others to get truly close to her -- even Tom. He believes this entire experience will be worth it if B'Elanna finally understands all her mother really wants is for B'Elanna to accept herself as she is. B'Elanna is constantly at war with herself, and it often spills out onto everyone else. Tom has been trying get her to see that ever since he fell in love with her.

Tom still plans to study the Klingon language and the sacred scrolls with her, if she's willing to let him. Such a journey could lead to self-discovery for Tom as well as B'Elanna. While he didn't say anything to me about his own interest in all things Klingon, I suspect his desire to seek redemption for his mistakes attracts him to the Klingon Code of Honor. I wonder if such a study could lead him to forgive and accept his own father, whose methods of teaching Tom to be "more Starfleet" may have confused his son more than helped him? Admiral Paris' and Miral's ways of dealing with their progeny seem to have been quite similar. While honor appears to be of vital importance to both parents, my friends' struggles with their own personal demons tells me their parents may have pushed them too hard to achieve that goal.

B'Elanna has no way of knowing if Miral really has died, or if this simply emerged from her subconscious when she realized she hadn't spoken with her mother in ten years. We won't know until we get back, I suppose, unless Starfleet finds a way to communicate with us while we're still in the Delta Quadrant. If not for the Doctor's excursion through the Hirogen Array, a method of communication no longer available to us, Starfleet wouldn't even know we're out here. I hope Miral is still alive, so she can give her blessing upon Tom and B'Elanna's relationship. Winning Miral's approval might make Tom even happier than it would B'Elanna.

While I feel very close to my fathers, my best friends on Voyager are Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry. I feel a special tie with the Delaney sisters, too. Together, they found a way for me to live a life lasting longer than two weeks, even though Neevok could not. I will always be grateful for the way they helped me. And I'm very glad B'Elanna is okay.

After Tom left, I found myself thinking about my fathers' mothers, T'Meni and Axia. Or are they actually my mothers, too, because of the way I was created? I honestly don't know how I'm related to them. I retain some of my fathers' memories, although not as many as I'd like. Perhaps many of them
had already faded before I appeared on *Voyager*.

When I hear the term "mother," I must admit Captain Janeway is the first person who comes to my mind. I don't know what her reaction would be if I ever told her this. It might be better if I never do! But as long as *Voyager* is our home, she truly will be everyone's "mom."

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Chapter Summary

Tom, meet Alice.

Stardate 53237

Tom and Harry were teasing Father unmercifully about his age, freely utilizing the term *pon farr,* which Father avoids mentioning as if it would give him the Phage. *He* didn't use it, I noticed, but he didn't seem to be particularly bothered by Tom and Harry saying it, either. I guess when he's not actually suffering from its symptoms, it's possible for him to be a bit more blasé about it. All the joking stopped when we noticed sensor readings consistent with a fleet of ships in our path. The captain and the commander, who were in her ready room at the time while Father was sitting in the command chair, were called out and Red Alert sounded. Father replaced me at Tactical, while I slid over to one of the auxiliary stations behind the command chairs. As we approached the other ships, I realized very few of them were whole. Most of the readings were from pieces of ships. Since we'd had issues with debris fields hiding explosive devices before, however, we remained at Red Alert.

Then the proprietor of *Abbadon's Repository of Lost Treasures,* Mr. Abbadon himself, hailed us. "Whether you're in the mood to buy or simply browse, we're always open! Take a look! You may find something you never knew you wanted."

"It's a cosmic junkyard!" Harry exclaimed.

"Better yet, it's a used spaceship lot." (This must be either a phrase Tom picked up from his studies of 20th century culture or an automobile reference. Maybe both.)

"Well, as the man said, we might find something we never knew we wanted," the captain said, and told Tom to "pull into a space so we can shop." From the way Tom was grinning, her comment must have been a comeback to his. I'll have to ask Tom about it later.

Supplemental
Tom found a sleek ship he just had to have. It isn't in perfect condition -- none of Abbadon's wares merit that label -- but it has some very interesting features, including an advanced weapons array and a neurogenic interface which reacts to what the helmsman is thinking. Tom claims this would make it even more maneuverable than the Delta Flyer is, quite an admission by Tom. Of course, those advanced features won't work until the craft is refurbished, but Tom promised to work on it during his off duty hours. He also volunteered Harry and me to help him. I don't mind, really, although it would have been nice if he'd asked me about it before he told Commander Chakotay I would assist in the repairs. After a little hemming and hawing, the commander agreed to trade for Tom's new favorite toy . . . I mean, shuttle.

We've already agreed to obtain the little ship. Tom has decided to name her Alice, after a girl he knew at the Academy who was also a "lost cause." I presume that means she was resistant to his charms. Abbadon promised delivery tomorrow, with the provision, "All trades are final."

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Stardate 53244

Alice's shuttle bay is a real-life version of Tom's "Grease Monkey" holodeck program, except we've been refurbishing a ship that can fly in space, not a holographic muscle car. While Harry and I have been helping him, Harry told me he doesn't really seem to want us involved. He's quite possessive of his sporty little shuttle. Even B'Elanna has been feeling a little left out. She told me, "Alice doesn't like me." I had to laugh at that. Alice can't have an opinion!

She can talk, however. Tom programmed her voice to be female, and quite seductive. Tom swears that the computer voice was always that of a woman. Harry doesn't believe him, either.

I'm not sure where Tom "found" some of the parts he's installed into Alice. Dad noticed that some of items listed on his storage manifest seem to have disappeared in the past week, and all of the missing are typically used for shuttle building and repair. The Doctor isn't too pleased with Tom, either. He's missed two shifts in Sickbay since Alice moved into Voyager. Tom hasn't spent any time working on his Klingon language studies or the sacred scrolls he promised B'Elanna he would, either. When he's on the bridge, he often seems distracted, like he's thinking about shuttle repairs instead of concentrating on his duties. He's more than a little obsessed with Alice. While that's something that often happens when Tom becomes involved with a new hobby, his fascination with Alice is even more intense than usual. I'm beginning to wonder if a neurogenic interface for operating a craft like Alice is a good idea, no matter how efficient it might be. Linking minds with a ship sounds a bit too Borg for my liking.
Stardate 53247

After B'Elanna learned that two power cells were missing from storage, she went to look for the missing parts, certain she’d find them inside Alice. When B'Elanna entered the craft, however, the hatch snapped shut and locked itself behind her. All the atmosphere was vented out, and B'Elanna's combadge failed when she tried to call for help. If Tom hadn't gone to the shuttle bay and noticed her banging frantically on the window, she could have died. After B'Elanna told him his ship tried to kill her, however, Tom refused to believe her. He even told her to mind her own business! (Missing power cells and data relays are the province of the chief engineer, but Tom was too wrapped up in his new hobby to make the connection.) B'Elanna ran off to inform Captain Janeway what had happened. Their discussion was interrupted by the news of an unauthorized shuttle launch. Alice had kidnapped Tom.

Things moved quickly after this. The captain ordered Ensign Jenkins to return us to Abbadon's Repository of Lost Treasures. At first, the trader didn't want to cooperate. After the image of his own version of Alice appeared and induced a medical crisis, which our Doctor was able to treat, Abbadon finally admitted that the Haakonian who traded the ship to him claimed it was "haunted." The shuttle needs an organic pilot, because she can't fly herself. Abbadon wasn't good enough. When Tom showed up, Alice could tell he was the one she needed.

We hadn't considered the possibility that Tom had been hallucinating Alice as a human woman. When Abbadon described the female of his species who'd appeared to him, however, it explained how the ship had managed to take hold of Tom so completely. After "rewarding" Abbadon with a "worthless" trinket he'd traded to Dad, which was, in fact, a very valuable beryllium crystal, we went after Alice and Tom. Seven had noticed he'd been working on a flight path in Astrometrics, which he'd claimed was "nothing." She reconstructed it and saw that it led to a particle fountain. Several years ago, over a dozen Federation vessels approached one in an attempt to study the phenomenon. All were drawn inside and were lost.

We caught up with them just as Tom was about to steer Alice into the particle fountain, which would have ripped them apart. We managed to transport Tom back to Voyager just before Alice flew into it and exploded. Was Alice destroyed? Was she a shuttle at all, or was she some sort of entity that actually belonged in the particle fountain, who wanted to find her way home? We don't know the answers to any of those questions. It's very strange, though. When I consider what happened to Tom, it reminds me of what happened to B'Elanna, just a few weeks ago. We don't know exactly what "Alice" was, just as we don't know if B'Elanna's experience on the Barge of the Dead was more than a hallucination. We saved B'Elanna, and we were able to save Tom, too; but it was touch and go for a while.

I had a long talk with Tom tonight. He's embarrassed and more than a little unsettled by all that
happened since he landed his "dream vehicle." He's more than ready to re-elevate the Delta Flyer to the position of "my favorite ride." His relationship with the Flyer, however, as he's assured B'Elanna, will be no more than "Just friends."

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Just Desserts

Chapter Summary

Father Tuvok turns out to have a flare for preparing scrumptious desserts. The downside: he's doing it while trying to recover from a serious brain injury.

Stardate 53264

It was supposed to be a simple mission to the Kesat home world. Since Father, Dad, and I worked together so well when we constructed the multi-spatial probe, I suggested to Captain Janeway that sending my fathers and me on this mission would be good for our little family. She reminded me she assigns just two people on diplomatic missions like the one she's assigned to Dad and Father. Since I'm quite satisfied with my relationships with each of my fathers, and they're the ones who could use an exercise in relationship-building, I agreed to stay behind on Voyager to help cover the shifts Father would miss while he was away.

I wasn't worried while they were away. Every time they checked in with the bridge according to protocol, the mission was going well. I looked forward to speaking with both of them once they returned, to find out if they'd been able to sort out any of their differences while they were alone in the shuttle, when no one else was present to referee.

Dad had just told Father a rather old riddle, the one about the lonely ensign who survives on an L-class planet with no native food sources and without any rations for a year. How did he manage it? The answer, of course, is that he eats the "dates" on his calendar. Father was not amused (he seldom is when Dad is trying to "have fun" with him). He went to the lower section of the Delta Flyer, probably to take a break from Dad's chatter. He noticed a computer download in progress. After Dad confirmed he hadn't initiated any downloads, Father told him they might have an intruder and announced he would attempt to detect a cloaking frequency. Seconds later, Dad reported hearing a blast, followed by the sound of Father's tricorder blowing up in his hands. Dad found Father convulsing on the deck of the shuttle. He immediately signaled Mayday to Voyager for medical assistance while he administered first aid.

The Doctor has stabilized Father's neural functions, but we don't know how long it may be before he returns to consciousness. Since the Doctor told him surrounding a patient with familiar things can be therapeutic, Dad moved some of Father's favorites into Sickbay, including one of the prize orchids Father has been cultivating in his airponics bay, Father's Kal-Toh board, and an incense burner given
to him by his spouse T'Pel. He's also placed a volume of classic proto-Vulcan dramas near the biobed and has been playing music from Father's personal file. Dad and I are spending as much off-duty time in Sickbay as we can, taking turns reading *Clash on the Fire Plain*, a favorite of Father's, replicating the various voices to the best of our ability. The Doctor admits our efforts "can't hurt." We don't know if they'll help. We can only hope.

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Stardate 53265

Captain Janeway has notified the Kesat authorities and asked them if they know of other attacks like the one on our shuttle. In response, they've sent Deputy Investigator Naroq from their security forces. When he arrived, Naroq told us he actually requested this assignment. On his way to *Voyager*, he studied Dad's description of the attack. Naroq believes the perpetrator may be one of the Ba'Neth, which means "shadow people" in the Kesat language. Naroq explained they're an extremely paranoid and xenophobic species. Dad was perturbed no one had mentioned them during his diplomatic contacts on the Kesat home world. Naroq replied that the Ba'Neth have managed to conceal their identity so thoroughly, the Kesat government officially maintains they do not exist. Since they're considered creatures of myth, the leadership saw no need to inform Starfleet's representatives about them.

Naroq does not share the "official" opinion. He's quite certain the Ba'Neth *are* real. He's investigated reports of other attacks quite similar to the one on the *Delta Flyer*, but up to now, he's been unable to convince his superiors of the elusive Ba'Neth's existence. No one has ever been able to actually see one and live to tell about it. He hopes Father can provide the evidence, since Father survived. Naroq has encountered this type of event twelve times before, and this is the first time there were *any* survivors. Naroq told us the remains of the other victims were not found until their vehicles were discovered drifting in space -- in a few cases, years after their occupants' deaths. When Dad apologized for not thinking to scan for other ships right after the attack, the captain pointed out, "You were too busy saving Tuvok's life!"

When Captain Janeway inquired about a possible motive for these attacks, Naroq said all the victimized ships were foreign to this sector. He surmises the Ba'Neth assess the technology of these new arrivals, possibly to gauge if they might pose a threat. Dad noted that the files which the intruder was downloading were all tactical in nature, which fits with Naroq's supposition. The destruction of Father's tricorder, which could have contained evidence of the cloaking frequency, also supports Naroq's hypothesis. As in all the other attacks, the weapon used on Father damaged the neural passageways. Naroq believes this is to prevent the victim from describing what he or she saw if death isn't immediate.

The inspector plans to remain on board for a few days. He hopes Father will recover sufficiently to be interviewed before he must return to Kesat. In the meantime, he'll use his scanning device to
examine the *Flyer*. After the meeting, Dad and I visited Father and told him about it. He's still unresponsive, but as the senior tactical officer on *Voyager*, it's his duty to learn the possible motives and nature of any assailant. We did what we could to inform him.

**Supplemental**

With the help of his photolytic converter, Naroq, the captain, and Seven were able to detect veridium isotopes in the cabin of the Delta *Flyer*, suggestive of a cloaking device. They saw a ghostly shape with ephemeral tentacles, bent over the shuttle's computer and downloading tactical data. The image was detailed enough to convince the captain Naroq's theories have merit.

The deputy inspector has received permission from his superiors to remain on our ship a little longer, in hopes that Father's memory and ability to communicate will improve. If Father awakens and can disclose the cloaking frequency, Naroq may be able to prove the Ba'Neth exist. Naroq has sought the truth for a long time. He can afford to be patient a little while longer.

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**Stardate 53266**

Father finally woke up, but he's a very different Tuvok from the one who left on the mission to the Kesat home world. Since he can't talk, he can't tell us any details about the attack. We don't know if he even understands a lot of what we're saying to him, let alone if he has the ability to convey a cloaking frequency, if he detected one before his tricorder was ruined.

Dad was with Father when he returned to consciousness. I was on duty, but I went to Sickbay as soon as Dad notified me. When Father saw me, he was afraid. I doubt he realized my connection to him. Dad is the only person who can calm Father down once he becomes upset. His devotion to him is quite touching, especially when one considers the way Father tends to reject Dad when in his normal state. Dad admitted that he hopes their relationship might improve as a result of this experience, even after Father's brain heals and he's back to "himself." The very fact he's so confident Father will completely recover makes me love him all the more. When our EMH discharged Father from Sickbay, Dad brought him around the ship to "visit" everyone. When they reached the bridge, Harry and Commander Chakotay were very gentle with him, but they quickly saw Father was in no condition to be there. Father is settled in his quarters. Dad believes his state of mind will improve in time, when surrounded by the familiar.

Since my presence agitates Father, I'm keeping my distance. I meditate more than once a day. I'm trying to maintain my mental equilibrium. This situation is truly upsetting. My reaction tells me I
favor my Talaxian parent more than the Vulcan at this point. It's heartbreaking to see strong, logical Father so childlike. His emotional state is volatile, consistent with the difficulty he had managing his emotions when he was a very young man. His parents sent him to a Vulcan Master to learn meditation techniques, since he needed to control his emotions before they controlled him. Father has passed on these same techniques to me. If Father can accept my presence, I would be happy to return the favor. I just hope I get the chance to help him in some way.

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**Stardate 53267**

When Naroq's photolytic converter revealed the image of the intruder in the *Flyer*, Seven suggested that linking the device to *Voyager*’s deflector dish might help us detect the intruder's ship. It's highly unlikely he's a true space-dweller. The captain authorized the procedure's implementation. When the test took place, I was on the bridge, manning Father's tactical station. Seven activated the deflector, and all of us on the bridge were stunned by what we now could see: a host of previously undetectable ships completely surrounded *Voyager*. They've apparently been tracking us all along. When the captain hailed them, the alien ships opened fire. Our shields protected us from sustaining any significant damage, but the alien ships scrambled away in every direction. Captain Janeway ordered Tom to follow the lead vessel, but we couldn't keep up. The deflector dish's range was too limited for a prolonged pursuit.

**Supplemental**

It was fortunate Dad was with Father when the alien vessels fired upon *Voyager*. Father became extremely frightened and hid beneath the table in his quarters. Dad told him he would keep him safe, which calmed him. Despite becoming frightened, Father responded positively in one way. He regained the capacity for speech. It's limited, however. He speaks haltingly, in the manner of a very young child. He has trouble coming up with the right words. Once he learned Father was speaking again, Naroq came to Father's quarters to question him about the attack, with Captain Janeway and Dad monitoring their conversation. Father was able to remember a little about the attack. He told them he was scanning . . . but then he didn't want to remember any more. When Naroq pressed him a little too hard about the cloaking frequency, the captain intervened and ended the interview. I spoke to our visitor afterwards. Naroq was disappointed, but he remains confident that Father will remember more in the very near future.

Father didn't seem to be afraid of me when I visited him this evening. Dad and I brought him to the Mess Hall to play Kal-Toh with Harry. It didn't go too well, I'm sorry to say. With Father's first move, the Kal-Toh pieces collapsed . . . well, actually, it was more like an explosion. Father stood up and declared he didn't like this game. When we got him back inside his quarters, he became quite agitated and began to yell at us that he'd never be the way he used to be. He pulled down a bookshelf and tore the Vulcan flag off his wall. The Doctor came, sedated Father, and brought him to Sickbay.
He spent the night under the Doctor's supervision.

Stardate 53268

When Dad visited Father in Sickbay, Father apologized for his outburst by offering him a flower he'd fashioned out of wax. Dad was touched. When Father began to talk about how he couldn't do anything as well as he once did, Dad told him that he did some things better now. For example, his sense of humor has improved. Father smiled -- something he never does. When Dad added that Father would never have given him a gift before, Father picked up on what Dad was really saying. "We weren't friends?" Dad explained they were colleagues, and that Dad admired and felt affection for him. Father noticed what Dad had left out -- that Father didn't feel any affection for Dad in return. Dad couldn't bring himself to say that normally, Father merely tolerates him. That's a bit too much for him to admit at any time, let alone right now, at such a delicate time in Father's recovery.

Late last night, while I was in my own quarters meditating, Dad went to the Mess Hall to think. He found Seven there, considering ways to find Ba'Neth ships when they're out of range of our deflector dish. Dad told her he was mourning the loss of the Tuvok he'd always known. Seven pointed out that when she was disconnected from the Collective, she was forced to adapt, not by becoming the pre-assimilation Annika, but the Seven she now could become. That was something the captain helped her achieve. The conversation with Seven prompted Dad to ask Father if there was anything he'd like to do. Father said he wanted to do what Dad liked to do.

They ended up in the kitchen, naturally. Father has quite a flair for desserts. He displays the talent to become the premiere pastry chef of the entire Delta Quadrant (or Voyager, at least). When the captain and I went to the Mess Hall for our break, Harry and Tom were there, scarfing up an array of sundaes and delicate pastries. Dad handed a terra-nut soufflé to the captain to try, while I nibbled on a sweet leola root tart -- normally quite an acquired taste. I was stunned. While I'd always assumed my love of cooking came strictly from Dad's heritage, perhaps I need to credit Father's Vulcan sensibilities as well. He combined ingredients one would expect to clash horribly, but which turned out to be delicious together. Through the judicious use of seasonings, not to mention a healthy portion of whipped topping, his tart was luscious.

Father went to the kitchen to frost a pistachio cake with parra-crème frosting. Captain Janeway moaned with pleasure when she heard what he was preparing. "Parra-crème is my favorite!" she said, and followed Father and Dad into the kitchen. While Father was frosting the cake, she spoke very gently, trying to help him remember anything at all about the cloaking frequency. Hesitantly, he admitted he'd seen one on his tricorder, but when she asked him to describe it using technical terms, he couldn't understand her vocabulary. Since my sharp Vulcan hearing allowed me to overhear their conversation, I walked over to the counter to suggest to Captain Janeway we return to the bridge before Father became agitated.
Father finished decorating the cake and, just as I reached them, handed the cake to her. The red decoration on top of the parra-crème frosting was quite fascinating. She immediately recognized it as the diagram of a cloaking frequency, as it would appear on a tricorder display screen.

With the help of our computer's image recognition program, the riddle of the cloaking frequency was solved. Once we knew the frequency, we were able to track a location that matched it. When we arrived, we shot a pulse out of the deflector dish that literally "lit up" a huge cloaked space station. The mythological beings -- who clearly are not myths -- weren't happy to be discovered. They powered up weapons and began to fire at Voyager -- until the captain announced she would transmit the coordinates of the station and the cloaking frequency to the Kesat home world if the attack continued. The firing stopped. The captain's message was quite simple. She wanted detailed information about the weapon that had injured Father, to permit our EMH to analyze it and devise a cure for Father. The Ba'Neth said they don't share technology, they only gather information to assess potential threats.

Because of the open channel, when Naroq exulted that he'd been right about the motive for the attacks, the Ba'Neth heard him. The Ba'Neth told the captain, "The Kesat investigator cannot to be trusted. He's been attempting to expose us for years. He is a threat. He must be stopped." While Naroq may have been as pleased to learn the Ba'Neth knew of him as he was that his theory about why they attacked foreign ships had been confirmed, he realized our danger when the Ba'Neth began to power up their weapons once again. Individually, their weapons had done little damage to Voyager, but twenty-two Ba'Neth vessels surrounded the station, which was also well-armed. Our shielding might not be able to withstand a combined assault. At that point, Naroq made what I thought was a most noble gesture. He offered to give them his photolytic converter, the device which had revealed their station to us. "You can use it to adapt your technology so ours can no longer expose you." After a moment, they agreed.

Once the information about the weapon was received and Naroq had fulfilled his promise to send the Ba'Neth his photolytic converter, Captain Janeway assured Naroq she would supply any and all images and documentation from this investigation to his superiors on Kesat, confirming the existence of the Ba'Neth. The investigator's long quest to justify his theories is over.

Supplemental

When Dad went to Father's quarters to give him the good news that the Doctor had developed a procedure to cure him, Father said he didn't want to be cured. He wanted to continue to "have fun" with Dad. I think Dad's heart was broken, just a little, because he knew when Father went back to his logical self, their close friendship would come to an end. Dad told him they could still have fun, but after the procedure, Father would prefer to call it "deriving satisfaction."

When Father asked Dad why he wanted him to go back to the way he was before, when he merely "tolerated" him, Dad replied, "Because this crew needs its tactical officer on the bridge, and I
wouldn't be a very good friend if I ignored that, just so you'd be nicer to me." Dad had a catch in his throat when he told me this, but the explanation worked. Father said he'd go to Sickbay with him. I was waiting outside of Father's quarters, with orders to make Father go to Sickbay if Dad could not convince him to go there on his own. We walked to Sickbay together, as a family. Just before Father jumped onto the biobed for treatment, he reached over to me, patted me on the shoulder, and, for the first time I can remember, smiled at me and called me "Son." As we left Sickbay, Dad said he was going to "miss him." Although the Doctor and I agreed, we all knew it had to be. This ship needs a healthy Lieutenant Commander Tuvok running the Tactical and Security Division. The needs of the many, and all that.

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Stardate 53275

The Doctor has cured Father and cleared him for duty. Commander Tuvok is back. He's very formal with everyone, including my Dad. Tonight, in the Mess Hall, Dad offered Father a glass of champagne to "celebrate." Father preferred a cup of tea. Since Dad is planning a special dinner to celebrate Father's return to duty, he asked Father if he'd like to prepare one of his wonderful desserts for the party. Father's reply was disappointing on many levels (especially to me, since his creations are so delicious). Father said he had "more important things to do than engage in the preparation of nutritionally deficient foods."

As Dad walked sadly away to fetch the tea, Father suddenly said, "Sundays. The ensign could also eat the Sundays." It was another answer to the riddle Dad had presented on the Delta Flyer. Dad replied, smiling broadly, that this wasn't a very "logical answer." Father agreed; and although he didn't smile back at him, Dad said, he did seem pleased.

Supplemental

I spoke to the Doctor after Dad told me the delightful story about the ensign eating the Sundays as well as the dates. I wanted to know if he thought Father would suffer any long-term effects from his injury. The EMH said he doesn't believe so. I wanted to agree, but I felt compelled to point out that Father has had a number of neural insults during the past five years. When he was treating Lon Suder with mind melds to control the Betazoid's murderous impulses, he became violent himself. Kes severely injured him when she lost control of her mental powers after meeting Tanis on Suspiria's space station. The Doctor had to cure Father when the memory virus afflicted him. And, of course, some damage may have come about when he was combined with Dad to form me, and more, perhaps, when he was reconstituted as an individual through Neevok's sacrifice. And now that he'd suffered this attack by the Ba'Neth . . .
The Doctor stopped me before I could recite any more examples. He assured me he's a very skilled physician and has completely cured Father after every problematic incident. He hustled me out of his Sickbay with a final, "Don't worry so much, Lieutenant Tuvix!"

After I retired to my quarters tonight, I meditated for quite a long time about my conversation with the EMH. I'll try to suppress my anxiety. The Doctor is just as capable as he claims, but I still worry. Father has suffered more than his share of neural traumas since he's been on Voyager. Even if each individual event was cured, the cumulative effects may leave him vulnerable to future injury. I won't say anything about this to anyone at the moment. I hope it will never become an issue. I will speak up, however, if Father is ever assigned a task that carries with it a significant risk of neural damage. Even the purely Vulcan brain isn't invulnerable.

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Lost and Found

Chapter Summary

The crew brings an alien from a dissipating nebula and the body of a lost astronaut from inside a graviton ellipse onto Voyager. The alien remains on board. After the lost astronaut's final discoveries are retrieved and become part of the historical record, his mortal remains are given a fitting funeral.

Stardate 53282

Dad is feeling much better since we exited the nebula. He can see the stars again. Although we had to leave prematurely, when the nebula began to destabilize, our ship's deuterium storage tanks are more than 80% full now. The captain and the commander are satisfied with how much we were able to collect.

As we were leaving the nebula, everyone on the ship felt several jolts. Since the only explanation for this is the standard, "It's simply turbulence," we're happy to put this region behind us.

I'm sure the captain will find another cosmic phenomenon to examine very soon. She's always on the lookout for anything unusual to analyze, and this J-Class Nebula permitted her to wallow in data collection. Seven was kept very busy in Astrometrics, taking all sorts of measurements at the captain's request. Yesterday, Jenny Delaney told me that, like Dad, she'd felt a little claustrophobic while we were inside the nebula. She prefers to study them from a distance. The captain may love her gaseous anomalies, but not everyone else does.

Stardate 53286

Megan Delaney came to my duty station after everyone was back on board and said, "It's way after Mardi Gras and much too early for Halloween." I'm not exactly sure how those holidays correspond to our current stardate, but I knew exactly what she meant. Some very strange things have happened to us lately. We had to abandon ship! While the entire crew is now back on board, I can't say
everything is back to normal. We have a new . . . passenger, I guess I should call it. Him. She? He/she/it isn't a member of the crew. It's a fellow traveler, on its way home. Unlike us, however, it doesn't know exactly where it's headed.

Our troubles began even before Voyager had completely exited the nebula. The ship shook so much, Tom said he had trouble holding onto the helm. Everyone in the Mess Hall was treated to a spiderweb-like energy pattern on the walls for few moments. Dad missed this, fortunately, since he was in Cargo Bay Two fetching stored food items for our evening meal. A lightning-like discharge penetrating our hull caused power outages on portions of three decks. We also lost our auxiliary computer subprocessors. There were no crew casualties, fortunately; and B'Elanna's engineers quickly made repairs to allow us to get underway again.

It wasn't long before we discovered new damage, or some we missed during our initial evaluation. Half our sonic showers went off-line. One of our two transporter rooms was knocked out of commission. When Deck Five lost artificial gravity, Ensign Mulcahy hit his head on the ceiling. The captain became really irritated, however, when the requested cup of her favorite beverage -- coffee, black -- was bitter and metallic-tasting. She spilled out the first cup and ordered a second. The ready room replicator made her the coffee, but it failed to create a cup to hold it first. The liquid splashed all over the floor. The captain added replicators to the "Need to Be Evaluated and Repaired When Necessary" list. When a disgruntled, coffeeless captain approached her window and glanced out into space, she realized we had a problem that was even more serious than bad coffee. Voyager was passing the same cluster of meteoroids it had passed only an hour before. Our ship was traveling in circles.

Tom's instrument display indicated his navigational sensors were functioning normally. Father ran a diagnostic, however, and was able to confirm they were not. The ship had made a hundred-eighty degree turn. Our ship was moving back to the position we'd just left. Suddenly, the engines accelerated to warp 6, then it shut down just as abruptly and mysteriously. Tom hadn't touched the controls to prompt any of these actions. And our real problems were just beginning.

When the captain tried to ask B'Elanna if she knew what had caused our navigation issues, she couldn't. Communications between decks were down. When Commander Chakotay entered the turbolift to inquire in person, the lift stopped front of the Mess Hall on Deck 2 instead of on Deck 11. When he stepped onto the lift again, the doors refused to close at first. When he tried to get off, they shut and wouldn't reopen. When the descent to Engineering finally began, the carriage plunged uncontrollably. If the stabilizers hadn't reinitialized at the last possible second, the commander could have been seriously injured or even killed.

Problems with bio-neural gel packs and the EM system began to surface everywhere. Seven was almost asphyxiated when another malfunction, to the venting system in Cargo Bay Two, funneled poisonous nebula gasses inside the ship instead of breathable air. She collapsed in a corridor outside the cargo bay from lack of oxygen. If B'Elanna and Commander Chakotay hadn't been tracing the pattern of the EM malfunctions on her tricorder and found her lying there, boxed in by force fields, Seven would have died.
Tom joined Seven in Sickbay shortly afterwards. An EM discharge jumped out of his helm station and burned his face. Then all the air on the bridge began venting away. The captain gave the order to abandon Deck 1. I helped her carry Tom down to Deck 5. By this time, Sickbay was filling up rapidly with other members of the crew who had been injured by EM discharges. When the Doctor's holomatrix started to malfunction, we quickly uploaded his program into his mobile emitter. Once the uninjured senior staff compared notes, they concluded that all the injuries were related to the ship's Electro-Magnetic systems in some way or other. The captain ordered that any necessary travel between decks must be accomplished through Jefferies tubes.

When power to Sickbay began to fail, she gave the order for everyone to climb down to 
**Voyager's** lowest level, the engineering decks, closest to the ship's power sources. Father volunteered to climb up from Sickbay to the Mess Hall to notify Dad, since the entire communication system was out. Dad had no idea what had been happening. I was tasked with helping transfer Tom, Seven and the other patients in Sickbay down to the engineering decks.

By this time, we realized an alien intelligence must be the culprit. This hypothesis was proven correct after the computer began to "speak" with an alien's voice. The captain negotiated with it. The entity told her it wanted to go home to its J-Class nebula. Unfortunately, the destabilization prompting our premature exit had continued unabated after we left. The nebula had dissipated.

The enraged alien intelligence took over **Voyager**, forcing the crew to abandon ship. Captain Janeway remained behind to continue negotiating with the entity. She convinced it that the ship couldn't bring it to a new home without the crew to staff it. When the entity tried to force the captain to be "the crew," she refused to cooperate.

Eventually, she persuaded the alien that unless it permitted our entire crew's return, it would never reach a new home. Once our humanoid crew was back on 
**Voyager**, we successfully created an artificial environment on Deck 12 for our passenger. It pulled out of the ship's EM system and into the "quarters" it will occupy until we find a suitable nebula in which it can live. Deck 12, Section 42 is off limits to everyone but senior officers and Security staff. The entity's gases contain corrosive elements that can make anyone sick, as Seven can attest.

This particular First Contact was a very difficult one. Since the alien intelligence was so different from humanoid life, we couldn't detect his presence in the nebula before we began to collect the deuterium. I actually feel rather badly about destroying its original home. At least the being is safe for now on Deck 12. That's the important thing.

And, as it turned out, our captain's passion for studying cosmic phenomenon has provided us with the data we need to facilitate our quest to find the entity another home. We possess a very detailed analysis of the composition of the creature's original J-Class nebula. As soon as Astrometrics was
fully operational again, Seven began to search for its next domicile. Unfortunately, that particular nebula had unique characteristics. While deuterium is commonly found in nebulae of all types, the other constituent gasses were in quite different proportions from those found in most J-Classes.

Since our journey to the Alpha Quadrant going to be a long one, we'll pass many other nebulae along the way. I'm certain we'll be able to find the right one for our hitchhiker -- eventually.

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Stardate 53301

We held Lieutenant John Mark Kelly's funeral today. A memorial service was held for him on Earth in December, 2032. We held his actual funeral today, in the year 2376. Our crew has, at long last, recovered his mummified mortal remains from the Aries IV command module, which we discovered inside a graviton ellipse.

When that rolling ball of energy approached Voyager, Commander Chakotay and Tom both noticed its resemblance to the phenomenon which killed Lieutenant John Kelly. He was in the command module during the first manned mission to Mars. When a football-shaped spatial phenomenon suddenly emerged "out of nowhere," he describe it to the other members of his team just before the command module was swallowed up by whatever it was. The rest of his team was stranded on the Martian surface for weeks before the space agencies on Earth could mount a mission to rescue them. After Father and Seven identified compounds inside Spatial Anomaly 521 (as the Borg call it, according to Seven) that were consistent with an early 21st century spacecraft, the captain decided to send Tom and the commander, who have long been fascinated by the early space exploration programs of Earth, along with Seven of Nine, to see if they could recover any artifacts from the inside of the ellipse.

Once inside, they discovered asteroid fragments, alien vessels - and the Ares IV command module, still basically intact after three and a half centuries. The commander wanted to tractor it out of the ellipse and onto Voyager for study, but his plan was ruined when a dark matter asteroid crashed into the ellipse. The impact damaged the Delta Flyer by compromising its power supply system, and Commander Chakotay sustained internal injuries and a severe concussion. After communications were reestablished between Voyager and the Flyer, B'Elanna informed Tom that the ion distributor inside the Ares IV wasn't that different from the Flyer's damaged plasma manifold. Tom and Seven could modify it to repair the Flyer. Tom had to remain with the commander to monitor him medically. The captain ordered Seven to beam to the capsule to obtain the part. Before she left the Flyer, Commander Chakotay asked Seven to download whatever she could from the module's computer database.
Lieutenant Kelly's body was still strapped into the command chair. When Seven brought the module's computer on line, an open datafile began to play, with Tom and Commander Chakotay listening to it through Seven's open com link. They quickly realized Kelly had not died instantly, as everyone had assumed. He'd lived for several days, until he saw his power was about to run out. At that point he shut down life support in the capsule, but he left his transpectral imager on to continue recording data for as long as possible. Although he couldn't transmit to his contemporaries the fact that he'd seen parts of alien spacecraft inside the ellipse, which confirmed that human beings were not alone in the universe, Lieutenant Kelly should receive credit as the first Earth native to recognize this fact. Of course, his information is somewhat out of date by now -- my existence on Voyager, as the son of two members of alien races, is definitive proof of that -- but this doesn't diminish Lieutenant Kelly's achievements.

After Kelly's last-ditch attempt to extricate himself from the ellipse failed, he knew he would never be rescued. While he gallantly faced certain death, he continued to document his observations. He hoped someone would discover them someday and put them to good use. He never believed his mission was a failure. Lieutenant Kelly was an explorer to his very last breath. I was so impressed with him when I had the opportunity to listen to his last words.

Once she'd removed the manifold needed to replace the Flyer's ion distributor, Seven placed her combadge on Lieutenant Kelly's remains. She instructed Tom to lock onto her biosignature as well as her combadge to transport her back to the Delta Flyer. By recovering Kelly's body and downloading the data from the Ares IV computer, Seven preserved history, something which, prior to departing for this away mission, she'd discounted as irrelevant. After hearing John Kelly continue on with his mission after he no longer had any hope of surviving himself, when he declared, "We are not alone," Seven understood what the captain, as well as Lieutenant John Kelly, had been saying about the benefits of exploration.

The captain's elegy at Kelly's funeral was profoundly moving. She noted that the word "space" means "emptiness," but that emptiness connects our planets of origin to all others. Explorers like Kelly led people such as ourselves to lead our lives in space.

Before the honor guard lifted the photon torpedo casket into the launcher, which would shoot it out into the emptiness of normal space, where it would be lit by veils of nebulae and a myriad of stars, Seven asked to say a few words of her own. As she walked slowly towards the torpedo holding his mortal remains, Seven compared Lieutenant Kelly's desire to explore the universe to the quest for perfection, which has always been so important to her. And then Seven leaned down and whispered, "Yankees in six." One of Kelly's final regrets was that he would never learn who won the 2032 World Series between the London Kings and the New York Yankees. Lieutenant John Mark Kelly may not have been able to hear that his favorite baseball team had won the World Series that year; but Seven was pleased to share the news with him, nevertheless.

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Dreams Fulfilled

Chapter Summary

The Doctor's new "cognitive projection algorithms" which allow him to daydream cause problems for the crew, but when Lieutenant Barclay's efforts to contact Voyager are successful, the entire crew rejoices.

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Stardate 53314

The Doctor has added a new subroutine to his mounting list of hobbies: the ECH, or the Electronic Command Hologram. Tom was quite disgusted when we heard about this. "He wants to command the ship now, too! What's next? President of the Federation?" I whispered to Tom that it might be better to control his vocal volume if he mentions that to anyone else. He wouldn't want the Doctor to hear him say it, since he'd already "been" the "President of Earth" in Tom's Captain Program holodeck program. Tom groaned, but he agreed that the Doctor doesn't need any more suggestions for new subroutines to fuel his already substantial ego.

Supplemental

The ECH isn't a single new subroutine introduced into the Doctor's holomatrix. He decided he wanted to be able to daydream and has introduced "cognitive projection algorithms" into his program. While the concept of a hologram fantasizing to amuse himself might be acceptable to the crew at large as just another expansion of his personality matrix, the ECH isn't the only manifestation of his creativity. Some are likely to upset people -- like Tom, for instance.

When the Doctor reported that this new subroutine was malfunctioning, Harry, Seven, and B'Elanna examined his matrix on the holodeck. The ECH didn't upset them as much as the other scenarios. In one, the captain, B'Elanna, and Seven are arguing about which of them will become his romantic partner. In another daydream, the EMH imagined himself as a great artist, a student of the great daVinci, perhaps. Dressed in full artist's regalia of smock and beret, the Doctor was painting Seven -- a naked Seven of Nine.

When Tom heard about the Doctor coopting Tom's own girlfriend into his daydreams, he was livid. B'Elanna thought the idea of the three senior staff officers fighting over the Doctor's attentions was
quite funny, until she watched her image beg the Doctor not to dump her. In this daydream, she said Tom "wasn't half the man" the Doctor was, after the EMH pointed out that Tom still cared for her. B'Elanna stalked angrily off the holodeck where they were viewing his daydreams and sought out Father to request a "refresher" course in meditative techniques. She needed to calm herself down before she impulsively took radical action against the EMH's holomatrix after the Doctor's slur regarding Tom's masculinity.

I haven't heard what the captain may have thought. It's not the sort of thing I could ever bring up to her directly! I do know the Doctor made a formal request to incorporate tactical subroutines into his ECH persona, to allow him to command the ship in a catastrophic emergency. She hadn't been willing before this; I doubt what she saw on the holodeck will change her mind.

I'm also not sure what Seven's reaction was to seeing herself posing in the nude for the "GMH" (Great Master Hologram). I haven't had the chance to ask her, but I suspect she considers it irrelevant. The Doctor has already viewed all of her charms during medical examinations.

I asked Harry about it. He just shrugged and laughed nervously. From his response, I gather this must be the first (and possibly will be the only) chance for him to view Seven in the nude.

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**Stardate 53317**

The cause of the Doctor's daydream subroutine's malfunctioning has been discovered. The cognitive projection algorithms were thrown off kilter because of intrusions from an alien who had been "tuning in" to his thoughts. This Phlox secretly notified the Doctor that *Voyager* is in danger. His people attack ships to steal desirable items and technology. Phlox's job is to scan passing vessels and report to his superiors when he detects they have things his people may wish to "acquire." Since Phlox was unable to scan through *Voyager's* shielding, he discovered what he thought was an alternate method of surveillance by tapping into the Doctor's holographic program. He heard and saw whatever the Doctor heard, said, or did. Unfortunately for Phlox, all the images he viewed came from the Doctor's daydreaming subroutine. Phlox "saw" the ECH take over *Voyager's* bridge after Captain Janeway's "death." Phlox informed his supervisor, or Overlooker, that our ship had lost its captain, but he was horrified when the ECH proceeded to "destroy" a huge Borg cube through the use of his "photonic cannon."

These aliens must have a very bureaucratic structure. Phlox's Overlooker reported to the "Hierarchy" that our vessel was vulnerable to attack because of the loss of our captain. As a result, the Hierarchy ordered an attack on *Voyager*. Phlox was mortified when he realized that he was viewing the Doctor's fantasies, not real events. His people are intolerant of all mistakes. The orders to attack were based upon Phlox's reporting misinformation to his superiors -- a very major mistake, indeed. Phlox
asked the Doctor if he could help him by posing as the ECH to fool his Overlooker. The captain decided to go along with the plan -- to a point. While the Doctor played the role of the ECH on the bridge, the captain was "pulling the strings" of her holographic puppet, telling him how to handle the situation, step by step, through a remote comlink.

After Phlox reminded his supervisor that he'd seen the ECH's "photonic cannon" destroy a Borg cube, the attack on Voyager was called off. Phlox's career as a spy has been saved, dubious though it may be. A grateful Phlox provided information to us about ways to detect other Hierarchy ships which could be lying in wait to ambush our vessel. He reported they have quite a few in the area. With any luck, the report of our deadly "photonic cannon" will be communicated to all of them, and Voyager will be assigned to the category of "unacceptable risk" to warn them off. We hope we'll manage to avoid further contact from this species.

Because of this experience, the captain has reconsidered her initial objections to adding aspects of the ECH into the Doctor's holomatrix. A situation could arise in the future in which the ECH is the only form of intelligence on Voyager available for a short period to act on the crew's behalf. She didn't make him any promises, but she's no longer ruling out providing him with enough tactical information so that he can make appropriate command decisions if necessary.

Supplemental

Tom is still peeved about the Doctor's daydreaming program, especially the scenario that had his girlfriend B'Elanna fighting with the captain and Seven for the Doctor's attentions. I heard him muttering about how the EMH had endangered the ship with his daydreams, "and then he got a medal from the captain and a kiss from Seven for his efforts!" When I reminded Tom that he hadn't gotten into any trouble about Alice, he calmed down and admitted, "You're right, Tuvix. I had to break the Prime Directive to get demoted. Those aliens withdrew their plans to attack us when the Doc was our 'captain.' But he'd better not daydream about B'Elanna anymore!"

I've advised the Doctor that it's unwise to populate his daydreaming subroutine with images of crew members, especially if the crew member in question is already involved romantically. Since Tom and B'Elanna are just about the only members of the crew who are truly a couple, he knew exactly the crew member I was warning him to abstain from using. I could have mentioned Tom's unauthorized use of B'Elanna's human face in the "Sainte-Claire World War II" program. Tom learned his lesson when he realized B'Elanna could have seen her face if she'd ever ventured into the program without him. Fortunately for him, the Hirogen invasion turned those files into rubble, and Tom made sure to scrub every trace of her from the character files. So, I didn't mention it. The Doctor "reserves the right to use anyone's image" he chose in the future, but he added, "B'Elanna, regretfully, will be off limits." I hope so. I trust he'll be smart enough to exclude B'Elanna Torres from his fantasies from now on.

I'm not so sure he'll be able to resist including Seven of Nine -- although maybe he should. After the
captain presented him with the Starfleet Medal of Commendation for "saving the ship" from the
aliens and Seven gave him the traditional kiss on the cheek, she also told him not to expect her to
pose for him. I do hope he can restrain himself from fantasizing about her in the nude in the future.
She isn't likely to be quite as forgiving if there ever is a next time.

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Stardate 53340

Seven and Dad were in Astrometrics discussing his lack of perfect pitch, a quality which Seven
believes is required if she is to continue giving him singing lessons. (Since Dad has no discernable
ability to carry a tune, his singing lessons are as futile for him as my mind-melding lessons with
Father were for me.) Their sparring was interrupted when a very short beep alerted Seven to an
incoming communication.

Seven immediately contacted the bridge, according to protocol. I was there, manning the secondary
tactical station behind the captain, and I heard the entire exchange. I don't usually do this, but this
was such a precious moment, I wanted to preserve it for myself for all time. I went to the official logs
to copy exactly what was said on the bridge today.

"I've detected what appears to be a micro-wormhole at coordinates 194.6 by 35."

Our crew had direct contact with the Alpha Quadrant once before, early in Voyager's journey, long
before my advent. A micro-wormhole was involved that time, too. The captain was able to
communicate her ship's situation to a Romulan scientist. Telek traveled through that wormhole to
visit Voyager; but after he arrived, we learned the wormhole wasn't just a passageway through space.
It was a rift in time as well as space, and the scientist wasn't our contemporary. He'd come from
twenty years in our past. Before returning to his own time and place, Telek promised to notify
everyone's family of our survival, but to protect the time stream, only after Voyager was reported
missing. After Telek left, Father checked the database and discovered he'd died four years before
Voyager was lost. He must not have prepared messages to be sent to our families posthumously -- or
the Romulan High Command had refused to send them if he did. If he'd done so, the Doctor's
appearance and revelations on the Prometheus would have been old news, not a shock, to Starfleet
Command. The captain may have had this incident in mind, from the tentative way she responded to
Seven: "A micro-wormhole?"

"I believe a message is being transmitted through it . . . on a Starfleet emergency channel!" All of
us on the bridge looked as stunned as Seven's voice sounded through the com.
The captain ordered Harry to play the message. It was distorted but clear enough for us to distinguish a man's voice. "Starfleet Command to USS Voyager. Come in, Voyager."

The captain and Harry fiddled with the audio resolution, and his next words were much easier to understand. "Do you hear me? This is Lieutenant Reginald Barclay."

Suddenly, the signal cut off. "That's it," Harry solemnly told us. "Whoever this Barclay is, he stopped transmitting."

Father ran a scan the check on the signal's source. "The micro-wormhole is collapsing at a rate of 0.2 percent per second."

The wormhole was rapidly disappearing, but it hadn't yet closed completely. The captain must have seen the same thing on her tactical display, located on the arm of her command chair. She ran up to Ops, and Harry stepped aside. "I hope Mr. Barclay is listening," she said. "Starfleet Command, come in. This is Captain Kathryn Janeway. Do you read me?"

Several seconds passed. I'm sure it wasn't a full minute, even though it seemed like hours before we heard a response: "Captain . . . This is Lieutenant Reginald Barclay at Starfleet Command."

The captain's overflowing emotions were obvious to us all when she replied, in a shaky voice, "It's good to hear your voice, Lieutenant. We've been waiting a long time for this moment."

"The feeling is mutual. Unfortunately, the micro-wormhole is collapsing. We have only a few moments."

"Understood. We're transmitting our ship's logs, crew reports and navigational records to you now." The captain nodded at Father, who indicated with a bob of his own head that he was doing so at that moment.

"Acknowledged. And we're sending you data on some new hyper-subspace technology. We're hoping, eventually, to use it to keep in regular contact. And we're including some recommended modifications for your com system."
"We'll implement them as soon as possible."

"There's someone else here who would also like to say something," Lieutenant Barclay murmured, before we heard a different voice say, "This is Admiral Paris." I saw Tom stiffen in shock.

When the captain heard the admiral's voice she smiled. "Hello, sir." I knew, thanks to Father's memories, that the admiral had been her mentor.

"How are your people holding up?"

Captain Janeway walked up behind Tom and placed her hand upon his shoulder. "Very well. They're an exemplary crew . . . your son included."

Voyager and Starfleet Command may be light years away from each other, and we had no visual on the admiral, but the slight catch in his voice told me he was filled with emotion, too, when he said, "Tell him . . . tell him I miss him. And I'm proud of him."

From where she stood behind Tom at the helm, the captain replied. "He heard you, Admiral."

The voices were becoming a little fuzzy. I heard Lieutenant Barclay's voice in the background, advising the admiral that the wormhole was collapsing. The admiral quickly continued, "I want you all to know we're doing everything we can to bring you home."

Captain Janeway said, "We appreciate it, sir. Keep a docking bay open for us!"

The admiral started to say something else, but there was a burst of static, and that was it. Our contact with the Alpha Quadrant, for this day, at least, was over. We'll have to wait to find out whatever else he meant to say the next time he calls.

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Stardate 53341
Dad never needs much of an excuse to throw a party. This particular celebration began at 1500 hours, right after word flashed through Voyager that, at long last, we’d had direct contact with Starfleet Command. The stragglers didn't leave until 0235 this morning, well into Gamma shift. Everyone came to the Mess Hall at some point to rejoice. I helped Dad prepare extra snacks and replicate more champagne toward the end of Beta shift, when I saw how exhausted he was getting. It's 0432 now, but I can't sleep. I'm still too excited by yesterday's events.

Since I was on Alpha, I was able to celebrate with the rest of the bridge crew at the end of that shift. When B'Elanna asked if anyone knew anything about Lieutenant Barclay, the Doctor vaguely remembered him as one of the engineers who'd worked on the original EMH program with Doctor Lewis Zimmerman (after the matrix issues he's had over the past few years, he doesn't have total recall anymore). He looked up Barclay's personnel record, however, and reported "he's had a rather colorful career -- not to mention an unusual medical history!" I doubt our EMH was following the approved protocols on Doctor-Patient Confidentiality when he revealed Mr. Barclay had been diagnosed with transporter phobia and holo-addiction, among other maladies. But, as the captain said, whatever his problems might be, "He certainly came through for us!"

Seven analyzed the data Mr. Barclay sent us about the hyper-subspace technology. She said it was "promising." She believes we'll be able communicate with Earth again in the future.

I don't know what Dad really thinks about all of this. After all, he's the one person on our vessel who has no ties at all with the Alpha Quadrant -- except through me. But he responded to Seven's news by saying, "That calls for a toast!"

Captain Janeway smiled and turned to our helmsman. "Care to do the honors, Tom?"

While Tom can usually come up with a bon mot or a wisecrack to suit any occasion, from the wording of his toast, he still seemed to be in shock about hearing his father's voice: "To my dad. It's nice to know he's still there." Before anyone had a chance to make a remark about this curious statement, Tom added, "And to the newest honorary member of the Voyager crew, Reginald Barclay -- whoever you are!" We all raised our glasses high to salute Admiral Owen Paris and, especially, Lieutenant Reginald Barclay.

Tom is right. Lieutenant Barclay has earned his place as an honorary member of our crew. No one deserves our approbation more than he does. And, with luck, we'll talk to him again -- and maybe even meet him -- very soon.

Supplemental
Despite meditating for an hour, I'm still too keyed-up to sleep. Fortunately, I'm not on duty until Beta shift today. Before I actually go to bed, I must record more about this momentous day. The first is that I feel privileged I was there on the bridge when this happened. Getting to hear the entire exchange "live," so to speak, was just as thrilling as the party was later. I suspect being on the scene when we first spoke made "first contact" will mean even more to me as time goes by.

Everyone I spoke with was ecstatic about the prospect of future contact with the Alpha Quadrant. Even the former Maquis members of our crew, who were devastated by the news Commander Chakotay received from his friend Sveta through the Hirogen array, are eager to maintain communications with "home." Many expressed the hope they'll find out more of their family and friends, even those who were fighting the Cardassians, have survived. Until they know without a doubt the fate of their loved ones, they'll hold to the belief that many found refuge, on Bajor, perhaps, or somewhere in the Federation itself. I certainly hope so.

I hope B'Elanna receives definitive word about her mother very soon. After what happened to B'Elanna on the "Barge of the Dead," I've always wondered just how real the experience was in a physical sense. It certainly was in a psychological sense. B'Elanna has been working with Father regularly, learning techniques to help her avoid lashing out in anger when something goes wrong. Her struggles to control her temper will probably be life-long, just as Father and I must meditate regularly to keep our strongest emotions in check.

As for Tom, from the shocked look on his face when he heard his father say he was proud of him, I wonder if Tom ever heard his father say that when Tom could hear him say it. From Tom's stories, my image of his father was of a man who was gruff and unforgiving. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then so is ugliness and grief. Tom has admitted he was to blame for much of the difficulty he had with his father. It's possible losing Tom softened Admiral Paris' attitude towards his only son. After this long separation, they may learn to express the love they feel for one another which they've found difficult to share in the past.

I wonder what Starfleet's reaction to Lieutenant Kelly's logs will be. I'm sure historians will have a field day studying them. Since so little was known about graviton ellipses through past sightings, his observations, when coupled with the log entries the Delta Flyer's flight crew made after their successful return to Voyager, will undoubtedly keep Federation astronomers busy for years. Megan and Jenny Delaney have spent a lot of "off duty" time in Astrometrics with Seven, studying that phenomenon themselves. Jenny has threatened to write a dissertation on it. I hope she does. Maybe she could send it to Earth long before we get home. I know I'd love to read it!

Dad is the "odd man out," since he has no actual ties to the Alpha Quadrant, but he says he's always looked forward to seeing the worlds of the Federation. He's discussed opening a Talaxian restaurant, or maybe applying for a diplomatic position of some sort, once we arrive. That may not happen for decades, so I suggested he not get too far ahead of himself. He agreed, but tonight he confided he plans to assemble some recipes, and possibly publish a cookbook, once regular contact is established. I have to hand it to Dad. He's learned the hard way that it's better to look forward than always look back.
Father didn't say much at the gathering. A few times, I caught him staring out of the Mess Hall windows, his mind traveling trillions of kilometers away. I can guess its destination. Father misses T'Pel and his other four children terribly. If I'm looking forward to corresponding with my stepmother T'Pel and my half-brothers and half-sister on Vulcan -- and I am -- what must Father be thinking? I have an inkling, although he'd never say it openly, even to me. To utilize a phrase he often uses to admonish me when my Talaxian exuberance gets a little out of hand, "It would not be culturally appropriate." But that doesn't mean he doesn't miss them. He cares for them deeply -- loves them -- and longs to be with them again, even if it's only through letters.

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Diversions

Chapter Summary

Tuvix's crew spends time in various holodeck programs, sometimes when they don't even know that's what they've been doing.

Stardate 53374

Tom has developed a new hologram program everyone seems to love. After he viewed an old 2-D movie set in Ireland called "The Quiet Man," Tom decided he simply had to adapt it for the holodeck. He wanted to play the John Wayne character, "Sean Thornton," opposite "Mary Kate O'Torres." Mary Kate Daneher, played by Maureen O'Hara in the movie, has a very fiery temperament, to be sure. While that reminds me of B'Elanna, Tom doesn't fit my idea of the "quiet sort of man" the title character is supposed to be, from the way he chatters. B'Elanna refuses to consider playing the Mary Kate role, but visiting a small Irish village around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries has its appeal, if nothing else, because of its gorgeous scenery.

Enter "Fair Haven," a quiet little town filled with what Lieutenant Carey and Ensign Mulcahy sneeringly called "stereotypical stage Irish folks with accents to match" -- although I notice they don't have any objections to quaffing a pint -- or three -- at Sullivan's Public House. The first time I went in, I immediately thought of Sandrine's, with an Irish twist.

I must confess, I like the Irish pub better than the Marseilles tavern. There's more to do. They have arm wrestling competitions, ring-toss and dart-throwing tournaments, poetry recitations -- contests of all kinds, really. Tom, the crew, and the townspeople characters he created will wager on just about any activity "to make things interesting," which results in the exchange of a shilling or two. Since the coins are holographic, I don't really mind losing now and then. When replicator rations are lost in "real world" betting in the Mess Hall, it hurts a lot more! While I enjoy playing an occasional game of pool or listening to the Doctor or Seven perform during visits to Sandrine's, I much prefer the wider variety of activities available at Sullivan's.

I'm relieved that none of the townspeople have said anything to me about my strange features. I don't look like anyone they'd have seen during their time period on Earth, let alone the Emerald Isle. I guess Tom's programmed them to ignore anyone's alien appearance for B'Elanna's sake, even more
than mine or Dad's. Father has already informed me he has no plans to visit the program in the near future. When Father chooses to indulge himself in a holodeck scenario, he prefers to visit the Vulcan Monastery of T'Panit. He says it's a serene setting in which to meditate. He finds the chanting of the monks soothing, but that's not really to my taste. The music in Fair Haven's pub is a lot more fun. You can dance to it.

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Stardate 53407

Captain Janeway has been seen in Fair Haven quite frequently over the past several days, particularly during the late evening hours. Since she started going there, Michael Sullivan, the publican and bartender, has grown in stature. While he seems a little taller, I'm sure that's just a trick of my memory. His excellent education, quite unusual for a bartender of the period, is a more noticeable type of "growth." I didn't notice how erudite he was during my earliest visits. Whether it's something Tom programmed into him from the beginning, or he's done some tweaking of the character, he's quite a bit more interesting to converse with lately. I've heard him speak more often about books and poetry since "Katie O'Clare" began to visit his pub, especially when he's around her. Perhaps it's a deliberate attempt on his part to impress her. I looked up the character's back story and discovered Michael attended Trinity College in Dublin for a few years. He didn't graduate, though. He came back to run the family business after his father passed away, or, as the residents of Fair Haven like to put it, "went to the other side." If there has been a change in the character, I approve. It's good to see our captain enjoying herself.

Captain Janeway is involved with every aspect of running Voyager. That doesn't allow her much time to "have fun," any more often than it does Father, who supervises twenty two divisions as Head of Security and Operations. Father claims not to need "fun," even when he has the time to do so. He adheres strictly to Vulcan cultural norms. Playing his lyre or Kal-toh, and reading classic Vulcan literature, is about as much "fun" in which he wishes to indulge.

The captain doesn't have any human cultural restrictions of that nature, but she doesn't have many permissible social outlets. She reads, of course. She and Commander Chakotay lend each other books quite frequently, since she prefers flipping pages to reading from PADDs when it's done for pleasure. While she attends recreational activities Dad organizes for the crew, she's usually so busy with the grind of captaining a starship, she tends to arrive late and leave early. A captain is not to become involved romantically with anyone on the ship, since everyone is her subordinate. (Of course, everyone knows that many male captains honor that provision through lip service rather than actual practice.)

I don't think the crew would really mind if she had a romance with someone appropriate on this ship, such as Commander Chakotay, but she's quite adamant about following the protocols forbidding such liaisons to the letter. So, although the captain occasionally comes to our parties accompanied by
her first officer as her "date," she's very careful not to display any behavior that might be interpreted as they're being anything more than "just friends" during their off duty hours. Captain Janeway seems exceptionally lonely to me. It's really not fair to her, but then, this whole situation, with everyone so far from home, isn't exactly fair, either. But no one ever said life is fair. Neevok and I learned that maxim very soon after our advent.

I know quite a bit about being lonely on a ship of one hundred and fifty or so sentient beings. Since Alyara and I parted, I've been "just friends" with everyone on this ship other than Father and Dad. They're my parents, and I enjoy interacting with them; but while I can go to either of them for advice if I wish, it can be awkward to do it at times. It's not like it is for, say, Tom and B'Elanna, who are romantically involved and can interact on that basis. I'm their pal, and with Harry, too, but I've never had a close enough relationship with anyone on this ship which could realistically result in a lifelong commitment. When it comes to romance, I'm not truly compatible with anyone currently on board Voyager. It does get lonely sometimes.

A flirtation with Michael is a nice diversion for his "Katie O'Clare," though. She deserves a little fun. It's enough to make one wonder why anyone would aspire to becoming a starship captain. I know I'm not ambitious on that score. I'm not sure I ever will be.

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Stardate 53412

We're "battening down the hatches," according to Tom. (It's a nautical reference. I looked it up in the database.) A Class-9 neutronic wave front, which Seven insists upon calling by its Borg designation, Classification 3472 Particle Density Anomaly, is approaching our current position. This "space weather" apparently was created by the collision of two neutron stars. Whatever one calls this phenomenon, it's extremely dangerous. The neutron radiation emanating from the wave front has disrupted our plasma flow. We can't go to warp, and the storm is moving much too fast for us to escape on impulse drive alone. We'll have to "ride out the storm" (another nautical term). Tom said similar weather patterns on Earth are called hurricanes or typhoons, depending upon where on the globe they're taking place and who is talking about them.

Since just about the entire crew enjoys Fair Haven, the captain has given Tom permission to run it on both holodecks for 24 hours a day while we're basically remaining in place until the storm passes. The village itself, Castle O'Dell on the hilltop overlooking the town, and several farmsteads in the immediate area are in Holodeck One. The seacoast, where we can fish, swim (if the safeties are on) or enjoy the waves crashing on the rocks, is on Holodeck Two.

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Stardate 53417

Tom had to shut down the Fair Haven program. When the storm overwhelmed us, we needed to reroute all available power to the deflector dish for Voyager to get through the wave front. Since we didn't have enough time to shut down the hologrid properly, Fair Haven was severely damaged. Most of the characters seem to have survived relatively intact, although some of their subroutines will need repair. The scenery, especially the seacoast on Holodeck Two, took a real beating, however. Tom and Harry reviewed what was left after the storm was over. They estimate 90% of the Fair Haven program has been lost.

Tom and Harry have vowed to rebuild it, but it'll take a while. Since none of the other programs were running at the height of the storm, they weren't damaged. Once the hologrid itself has been evaluated and any necessary repairs to it are made, we'll be able to visit any program OTHER than Fair Haven. I guess we'll have to be satisfied with going to Sandrine's, Dad's resort, and the "Adventures of Captain Proton" programs for the next several weeks, until Tom and Harry have had the time to complete the necessary repairs to Fair Haven. It could be worse, I suppose. The Monastery of T'Panit might have been the only program that was spared by the storm. I much prefer playing pool to chanting monks.

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Stardate 53447

Voyager will remain in orbit around the Norcadian home world for the next ten days. As the captain said when she announced this layover to the crew, we haven't had chance for any true shore leaves since we spent time on the Markonian Outpost, where I met Alyara. That was months ago. While she's scheduled some "housekeeping" duties for us to do while we're here, the captain's primary reason for Voyager's remaining in orbit this long is to provide her with an opportunity to visit the neighboring world of Pendari. Until the captain returns, Commander Chakotay will be in command.

While the captain gave him a whole list of things to work on while she's away, the commander has already told Dad and me that decorating the ship for Prixin will be a priority. His eyes twinkled when he said this to us. I don't know if the captain approved of this "priority" before she left, but Dad and I certainly do. We've been very busy, decorating the Mess Hall and setting up for the holiday. Dad's made two batches of compote. He started the first one more than a week before the second. It was bubbling away merrily while we assembled the ingredients for the second batch. Dad is looking forward to enjoying the "ultra-fermented" version. Ken Dalby, Jack Fitzpatrick, Koshimo Nozowa, James Morrow, and Angelo Tessoni have all expressed interest in sampling that first batch, too. I'll go along with the captain's preference and ask for the milder recipe. Since the majority of the crew has also shown a preference for the milder version, Dad's planning to make a lot more of the second
Naomi helped us make decorative "paper" chains (which are actually made from strips of multicolored plastic) to drape around the Mess Hall ceilings. We've also replicated some very lovely multicolored twinkling lights to hang along the Mess Hall windows and over the soffit above the serving counters. Serene white ones will wind around the Guiding Tree, which always sits in the middle of the buffet table. After Tom supplied us with images of his mother's holiday displays, we replicated holly garlands and floral-and-light sprays, which we've hung here and there around the room. Tom and B'Elanna helped us put them up. Tom kept us in stitches by singing, "Deck the Mess Hall with boughs of holly, Fa-la-la-la-la-la-dee-dah." He insisted those are the proper lyrics. B'Elanna rolled her eyes and told us to "humor him."

Tom and B'Elanna have decided to stay on board throughout our stay here. I believe their idea of spending Shore Leave in this system will involve a lot of staying home and -- Tom solemnly informed me this is a real word -- "canoodling." (The database confirmed his assertion, I was surprised to discover.) They're also planning on attending some sporting events. The Norcadi are famous (some would say, infamous) for a martial arts sport they call Tsunkatse. Many members of our crew have expressed an interest in attending a match or two.

Father and Seven are unwilling to waste their time in "frivolous" pursuits like celebrating a holiday or attending sporting events. Their idea of a relaxing Shore Leave is to investigate a micro-nebula 1.6 light years away from this system, which is on the verge of collapse. Since Father and Seven do not feel the need to indulge themselves in recreational pursuits (to quote Father), they will derive satisfaction from adding to the sum of knowledge by completing this away mission. Neither of them are fans of "having fun."

Father asked me if I'd like to come with them to the micro-nebula. If I wasn't so involved with Prixin preparations, I might have seriously considered it, but I can't abandon Naomi right now. Our actual Prixin celebrations have been set back by several days, since the festivities won't begin until after the captain returns from Pendari. To keep Naomi occupied in the interim, I promised her that every day this week, when she wants to visit her Flotter and Trevis program, I'd go in there with her. She's reached the advanced levels, and the program parameters recommend having two children participate in the program together from this point on. It's more fun to have a "buddy" to work on solving the more challenging problems presented at this stage of the series. I'm the closest thing on Voyager to another child (other than Seven, who, of course, would never accept that designation). So, I had to tell Father, "Next time, perhaps."

Stardate 53449
I wouldn’t say B’Elanna was in a bad mood, exactly, but she wasn’t pleased that Commander Chakotay went down to Norcadia Prime to attend that afternoon’s Tsunkatse matches. She’d planned to go with Tom, Harry, and Dad. The commander was in command of the bridge. When he mentioned he wished he could go to the match, B’Elanna had been unwise enough to advise him to “delegate” command to someone else. She didn’t expect it to be her. While she seldom takes the “big chair,” she’s certainly competent enough. How could she complain if he decided this was the perfect day for Lieutenant B’Elanna Torres to be in charge?

Well, actually, she could complain a lot, and did. At least she kept her whining to a quiet, steady mutter instead of indulging herself in roars of rage, but our chief engineer made her true feelings known by the tasks she assigned. Voyager was in orbit, which meant it should be safe enough to provide maintenance to the primary bridge stations. And that's what we were doing. Lieutenant Ayala was manning the secondary tactical station while I crawled around beneath main tactical, checking out the junctions of every circuit to the nth degree. Ensign Lang was doing the same at primary Ops. Ensign Jenkins checked out the primary helm, while poor Lieutenant Rollins had to handle Ops and Helm at the auxiliary station that's seldom manned, unless there's an emergency, or in situations like this. Of course, since we were in orbit, the primary need for the helmsman was to make sure our altitude and course remained stable. Steering the ship wasn't much of a concern. It became even less of one when Jenkins announced she'd completed the helm systems check, and everything was A-OK. (The navigators have adopted that phrase ever since we found Lieutenant Kelly. Apparently it was a staple response during the earliest space missions.)

Ensign Lang was still kneeling on the floor, in the final stages of her task, when I finally could stand erect and announce that the primary tactical station met or exceeded all specifications. Ayala was free to go to lunch before taking his own turn crawling around to check out the circuitry of our back-up station. He'd left his post just as Crewman Gilmore arrived to maintain the engineering station, when we received the frantic communication from Commander Chakotay. "B'Elanna, Seven of Nine is in the pit!"

"What?!"

"No time to explain. Beam her out of there!"

I didn't need to tell B’Elanna what I read on my sensors. She'd already done so from the display in the arm of the command chair. "Seven's not there."

The commander shouted to be heard over the background din of the people in the stands nearby, cheering for Seven's opponent. "I'm looking right at her!"

But she wasn't there. We recalibrated the bio-scanners several ways, but the actual combatants weren't in the arena. The only readings picked up by our sensors were photonic. The Voyager crew
weren't looking at Seven and her massive Pendari opponent, they were viewing their holographic representations. By this time Ensign Lang at Ops had joined the search, but we couldn't find Seven anywhere on the planet. And, since Seven had been with Father, he must be someplace else, too . . . assuming he was still alive.

Commander Chakotay and a dozen other members of the crew who'd attended the match transported back to the ship as soon as the Blue Match ended. The Pendari champion had defeated Seven. When Dad returned a few hours later, he told me she actually could have won that match, but she hesitated when she had her opponent down. That gave him an opening to hit the polaron target sensor on Seven's chest, which shocked her into unconsciousness.

Dad didn't return at the same time as the commander, Harry, and Tom did. As Voyager's ambassador, he went to the embassy which serves extra-terrestrial visitors and lodged a formal diplomatic protest with the Norcadian officials. Dad knew she's left with Father to study the micro-nebula.

Dad also knew, without a doubt, that Seven would never willingly become involved in a martial arts activity. She'd expressed a distaste for even viewing such an event, let alone actually condescending to fight in one. When Seven does participate in a sporting activity, it's always a game such as Velocity, in which she excels because of her superior hand-eye coordination. She had to have been coerced in some way to agree to fight hand-to-hand.

The Norcadian officials insisted they know nothing about off-worlders participating in matches against their will and promised to begin an immediate investigation. Before Dad left the room, he was certain that if any investigation was initiated by the Norcadians, nothing would come of it. He doubted they'd even make the attempt. Afterwards, Dad spoke to a Pendari delegate who agreed with Dad's assessment. Tsunkatse generates a huge percentage of the Norcadian home world's revenue. No official would dare interfere with such a successful enterprise. As the Pendari told Dad, how could the officials not notice that Red Matches end only after one of its participants dies? How many people would willingly volunteer for matches in which half the combatants end up dead? The Doctor called this sport barbaric. In fact, it's sanctioned murder.

Commander Chakotay contacted Captain Janeway, just as she arrived at the Pendari system. She turned back immediately, but it will take the Delta Flyer about a day to return to Norcadia Prime. In the meantime, we're continuing to search for our missing crew members.

Supplemental

We searched Norcadia Prime again, and then all the other planets in its system, without locating Father and Seven. We did discover the remains of their shuttle, adrift in space just outside the system on the line they would have taken to the micro-nebula they wished to study. An explosive device had
been introduced inside, probably through a sophisticated form of transporter technology. The equipment and baggage Seven and Father brought with them were still in the shuttle's storage lockers, but the only evidence we found of them were traces of Vulcan blood residue. The Doctor believes the blast injured Father, but he assures me that since there isn't that much blood, Father was probably injured, not killed. That's meant to reassure me. But if he's injured, how can Father defend himself if he's forced to fight in the Tsunkatse ring?


Stardate 53450

Father and Seven are both safe. We rescued another kidnapped off-worlder, too. They had quite a story to tell after we spirited them out of Penk's clutches. The "arena" wasn't located on any planet, although that's where Harry and B'Elanna expected to find it. They plotted points from which the transmissions originated, thinking to line them up with the coordinates of planets in the sector. They'd assumed the arena was being physically moved from one world to another. When the coordinates didn't line up with any planetary bodies, they "connected the dots" on their grid and saw the line formed a flight path. The main arena was actually on a ship. The events were being transmitted through holoigraphy to the "arenas" on several planets. The spectators never suspected they weren't watching the actual combatants fighting live before them. Once we realized all this, we quickly discovered the ship's present location. Retrieving Father and Seven wasn't going to be easy, however. Penk's ship was strongly protected with substantial shielding and armaments even more powerful than Voyager's.

When Commander Chakotay hailed the Tsunkatse promoter and demanded the return of our people, Penk laughed at him. We fired on his ship, but at first, the shields were too strong for us to make much headway. Eventually, they weakened enough in one area for Harry to locate Father and beam him to Sickbay. Father told us the arena was on the uppermost deck of the ship, which was protected by multiphasic shielding. We couldn't even find Seven, let alone rescue her.

And then, to borrow one of Tom's 2-D western movie references, "The cavalry saved the day." When Captain Janeway arrived in the Delta Flyer, Commander Chakotay asked her to target the signal generators on Penk's ship. She shot off one of the huge satellite dishes, reducing his ability to transmit the match between Seven and her opponent to half of the Tsunkatse arenas. To restore his transmissions, Penk compensated by withdrawing power from other ship functions, boosting the signal through the remaining generator. That action weakened the multi-phasic shielding on the combat ship's upper deck. We located opponents, but we couldn't tell which one was Seven. The commander ordered both to be beamed up to Voyager. Since her opponent was a Hirogen Hunter, he ordered Tom to lead a security team, which included me, to Transporter Room 2, to counter any aggressive moves the Hirogen might make when he appeared.

When the combatants materialized, the Hirogen was lying on his back, with Seven crouched over
him, her arms raised, ready to deliver a killing blow. She never did. Once she realized they were safe on \textit{Voyager}, Seven helped the Hirogen to his feet. We lowered our weapons. After the pummeling Seven had administered, the Hunter wasn't in very good shape. We could see he wasn't a threat, although whether he might become a friend was still in doubt.

Tom dispersed the rest of the security team, but he asked me to accompany him to Sickbay with Seven and the Hirogen. The Doctor had treated Father for his injuries. Seven and our guest were now the focus of his attention. As tough as the Hirogen and Seven were, both needed treatment for multiple bruises, abrasions, and cracked ribs. Switching to his field medic persona, Tom remained in Sickbay while I spoke briefly with Father. He assured me he would recover, and I went to the bridge to make a report to the commander in Tom's stead. By the time I arrived, Captain Janeway was in her command chair, receiving the commander's status report.

\textit{Voyager} was already on its way to the Pendari system by this time. We had no intention of sitting around waiting for Penk to attack us in revenge for ending his well-publicized "Red Match" before anyone had been killed. Except for its signal generators, his ship is relatively undamaged, but \textit{Voyager} can move faster than his traveling Coliseum. The captain will get her "vacation" on Pendari after all. \textit{Voyager} needs repairs to many systems, thanks to the battering it received from Penk's ship. Unfortunately, that includes much of the circuitry inside the primary bridge stations. I suspect a lot of our hard work will have to be redone once we're in orbit there.

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\textbf{Stardate 53455}

Our Hirogen guest is still here on \textit{Voyager}, celebrating Prixin with us. He seems to be enjoying himself. He informed me he prefers Dad's "first batch" of ultra-fermented compote. Somehow, I am not surprised.

When the Doctor scanned our guest, he uncovered a number of old injuries which never had healed properly, in addition to the new ones he'd received during his contest with Seven. The beating she gave him exacerbated the damage. As a result, the Doctor is still treating him, although at this point, Kraahn claims he's "just a little sore."

He wouldn't give his name at first. Seven was the one who found out it was Kraahn. He never told her while they were prisoners on Penk's ship because "as a prisoner who was without honor, I had no name." For nineteen years, Penk has forced him to fight in his arena. The fact he's still alive after nineteen years of punishment is a testament to just how tough the Hirogen are physically, although Kraahn doesn't seem much like any Hunters I've met before this. The captain commented that he reminds her a little of Caahr, the Alpha who took over \textit{Voyager}, to run holodeck programs. He wanted to see if photonic technology would provide his people an alternative to the Hunt. Caahr
Captain Janeway contacted a group of Hirogen hunters who have agreed to rendezvous with Voyager, once our ship is again underway. They told her we needn't worry about another attack on Voyager. The truce that ended the stalemate three years ago still holds. After Kraahn heard about what had occurred between his people and ours, he insisted on learning all the details. Before he leaves us, he wants to sample a few holodeck programs. He's skeptical that Caahr's idea will work, although he admits Caahr wasn't wrong about the Hirogen culture's deterioration. "The males are so enamored of the Hunt, if it were not for our females, I don't know if our people would still be in existence." When I asked him if he plans on going on a Hunt again, he replied, "The only Hunt I will ever go on again is the search for my son. Killing the way I did in the Tsunkatse ring has ruined me for killing Prey."

Seven told us Kraahn would have defeated her easily if she had met him without the training he'd provided to her beforehand. Apparently just about everyone who was at one of the holographic arenas wanted the Hirogen Hunter to be the victor. The Borg are hated throughout this sector, and it doesn't seem to matter that the "Borg drone" they wanted to see murdered in the arena had been disconnected from the Collective over three years ago.

Kraahn knew Seven would be his opponent in the Red Match. She did not. When he said he didn't want to kill Prey anymore must be the truth. He prepared her to fight effectively because he saw her strength and thought that, at long last, he'd found an opponent worthy enough to take his life in the arena. He was weary of fighting and just wanted to die with honor. From what I've now learned about the Hirogen, their honor code sounds a little like the Klingons'. If enough of their people are like Kraahn, perhaps there is a chance they can end their ceaseless Hunts and rebuild their culture, as Caahr, the long-deceased Hirogen visionary, had hoped.

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Stardate 53465

Our journey towards the Alpha Quadrant resumed yesterday after our rendezvous with the Hunter's ship. There was no trouble from them, I'm glad to say. They behaved "with honor" and took a completely different heading from ours as we parted. Before he left, Kraahn gave Seven the polaron disc he'd worn on his chest which would have delivered the killing shock if she'd struck it when he was down. He told her to keep it as a "trophy" of their battle.
The Norcadian government has apologized most profusely about what happened to Father and Seven. They claim they had "no idea" off-worlders were being captured and enslaved to perform in the Tsunkatse arena. They did initiate an investigation, they say, and discovered the remains of the last three victims of Penk's Red Matches on his ship. All the corpses were of alien species, just as we'd alleged. The officials told us Penk will be charged with three counts of murder, as well as illegal imprisonment and a host of other offenses.

The Pendari aren't buying any of this. They say Penk will be back in business before the year is out. He's not the only Tsunkatse promoter, although they claim he's the most bloodthirsty.

The members of the crew who attended the Blue and Green Matches thought they were entertaining. They hadn't understood that one of the combatants had to die before a Red Match ended. I never attended any of the matches, so I don't know how entertaining it would be to watch people brutalize each other, even if the match didn't end in a death. If people volunteered to fight because they were compensated well for their efforts, and all the participants were members of the races who live on the Norcadian-controlled planets and were well-aware of the risks, the decision to fight would be up to them; but the Red Matches are still a travesty. I'm glad we're leaving this sector. I hope we'll never need to deal with the Norcadians ever again.
Once again, Voyager factors into a planet's mythology.

Stardate 53498

I now have a much better understanding about Father's and Tom's experience when they were stuck inside the gravity well, along with the Doctor and Noss. They thought they'd been stranded for months, while we knew they'd only been gone for two days. As we were traveling towards the Alpha Quadrant, we noticed a unique planet had properties similar to that of a collapsed dwarf star. The planet revolved so fast on its axis, every second on Voyager is roughly equivalent to a day on the planet. We approached it cautiously, planning to assume a high orbit to observe the planet before continuing our journey; but we miscalculated how powerful the planet's gravity was. It drew our ship closer in and locked us into a synchronous orbit. We couldn't use warp drive, and we were unable to pull free with thrusters and impulse drive alone. We were stuck, like a fly in a spider's web, a web made of powerful gravimetric forces. While we were still experiencing time the way the rest of the galaxy was, if our ship came much closer to the planet, its temporal distortion would begin to affect Voyager, too. Our trip home would end right here.

While our dilemma was serious, what made it worse was that our presence had changed the planet's magnetic field. The planet's outer crust destabilized, causing frequent and powerful seismic events. While Commander Chakotay enjoyed watching civilizations rise and fall through our scanners, since time sped by at such an accelerated rate compared to our perceptions on Voyager, there was a degree of danger from that, too. Our scans showed rapid industrialization, which we later learned was fueled by the planetary population's fascination with the "Sky Ship." Legends told them it had arrived at the same time the earthquakes did, which was a quite perceptive observation. When their science advanced to the point that they'd developed nuclear weapons, however, some of them decided that shooting down the "Sky Ship" might improve their quality of life, and, of course, they'd have been right. Seismic events would no longer threaten their lives or buildings as often, but it wouldn't have done much for our quality of life.

Besides scans of the surface, we'd gleaned this much from intercepting transmissions broadcast to the populace, once they'd attained wireless forms of communication such as radio. Although none of our organic crew members could investigate what the people know about us in person with safety, one of us could: our photonic Doctor. From Voyager's perspective, he was only supposed to be away for three seconds, just under three days on the planet. Something went wrong, and the Doctor spent three years on the surface. When we finally did get him back, he was happy to be able to report his
findings about the "Sky Ship" legends, but it was a sad day for him, too. He'd been down there so long, he'd gotten lonely. He met a woman named Mariza, a composer. They had a son together -- Jason Tabreez. Although he never expected to see us again, he integrated three centuries of meteorological records about seismic events into his program, completing his mission, "just in case." In his spare time, he studied medical journals, sang arias at the Central Protectorate Opera House, and became a passionate supporter of the "Mountain" team, even though the home he shared with Mariza and Jason was in an area where their rivals "Lakeside" were favored.

The Doctor also described a short war, now ended, between the Central Protectorate and one of its neighbors. There was also something of a space race going on among the various states. Everyone wanted to be the first to reach the Sky Ship. The Doctor couldn't say whether the first rocket to arrive would contain an astronaut or a warhead; but, as he said to the captain, "At their rate of development, it won't be long before we find out."

He was right. Not long after this, two people suddenly materialized on the bridge -- without the benefit of a transporter beam. Dad and I were among those who ran over to assist them, although Security didn't really need to be involved. They were unconscious. We rushed them to Sickbay, but only the male survived. When he woke up, he looked around and correctly perceived there was a time differential between our ship and his planet. On the bridge, he'd seen Dad pouring a stationary column of coffee into the captain's mug; and the astronauts had lost contact with their Launch Control Center when they came close to us. He was dismayed to learn that in the time it took for him to return to consciousness, everyone he'd known on the planet must have died.

When the first shots were fired, Pilot First Rank Gotana-Retz was working with Seven in Astrometrics. They'd learned the people of the planet had developed antimatter technology, and they'd apparently decided they'd had enough interference from us. The Sky Ship may have been a central character in their mythology, but it was time for us to go. Gotana-Retz volunteered to go home to tell his people the truth about Voyager before they destroyed us.

It was almost too late. Our shields went down when the final rocket, a tri-cobalt weapon, hit us. We braced ourselves for that last attack which would surely end Voyager, but it never came.

Ten minutes later (our time), our proximity alarms blared. We detected another launch from the planet. Two massive rockets appeared, but instead of striking us down, they caught us in twin tractor beams and lifted us up, out of orbit, high enough to escape our accidental imprisonment. A very mature Gotana-Retz appeared briefly on the bridge. With the help of his temporal compensator, he could stay for only a few moments, but he wanted to say good-bye "to my old friends," before he returned to his own time frame. Two hours passed before B'Elanna could repair our warp nacelles, which had been disrupted by a subspace particle field produced by the planet's tachyon core. We'd become, briefly, part of the planet's particle field.

Although many years passed during those two hours on Voyager, I hope Pilot Gotana-Retz, our
good friend, lived long enough to see the Sky Ship wink out of his planet's skies forever.

After we were on our way again, I visited the Doctor. I asked him to tell me about Mariza and Jason. He said he knew he might have to leave them so suddenly someday, he wouldn't have a chance to say good-bye. "So every time we parted, and at every bedtime, I kissed them and said, 'and maybe good-bye -- just in case.' I miss them, Tuvix. I'll never forget them."

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Children of the Borg

Chapter Summary

Children need mothering, and when a small "Collective" of neonatal drones are in need of homes, Captain Janeway, Seven, and Marla Gilmore step up -- with a little help from Lieutenant Tuvix, another "child" of Voyager.

Stardate 53508

I wanted to join the team in the Delta Flyer, but Dad asked me to stay behind to service the Mess Hall. Chell had come down with a malady affecting his digestion just before the away team left. It wasn't serious, as long as he kept himself well-hydrated, according to the Doctor, but Chell had to stay near one particular fixture in his quarters for the duration. Dad expected to be away for four days, and he didn't trust anyone else to be in charge of feeding the crew besides me. As Commander Chakotay told me, with that infectious grin of his, "You wouldn't want the captain to try her hand at making a meal. She's been known to burn soup." He promised I could come along with them on a future mission. The commander's comment prompted a smile, but I told him I'd remind him of this conversation someday, when an interesting mission presented itself. Tom and Harry were going on this trading mission, too. We really did need those supplies.

After three days (miserable ones, according to our loquacious Bolian), Chell was back on his feet and able to share cooking duties with me. That allowed Father to schedule me for bridge duty again. I was there the next day, when the captain became concerned that the Flyer's had failed to check in with us as they're supposed to do at least once every 24 hours, according to protocol.

With Commander Chakotay away, Father was acting first officer. I was manning the main tactical station and tracing the Flyer's ion trail when we saw it. The cube was massive, and the Flyer's trail led right in front of it.

The attack initiated by this Borg vessel was surprisingly ineffective. It switched targets so constantly instead of concentrating upon a single critical location, it failed to produce any significant damage to our ship. On the other hand, I was able to disable the cube's weapons fairly easily -- perhaps too easily. We learned the reason for their failure to be more aggressive after Seven noticed their propulsion system was off line, even though it didn't appear to be that badly damaged. Since drones usually repair the type of damage she'd detected in very short order, Seven was quite disturbed by the drones' inefficiency. That's when she scanned for Borg lifesigns and came to a startling conclusion. On a cube that usually carries five thousand drones, she could only detect five. Seven
couldn't explain how such a thing could be when the cube, other than for its propulsion system, was basically intact.

Our efforts to scan many areas of the cube were hindered by the cube's shields. We discovered its generator was intact, and because it was buried so deeply within the vessel, we were unable to put it out of commission. Dad's Talaxian lifesign did show up, however. That meant the rest of the away team was probably there, too. Eventually, Seven announced she'd found two other human life signs, but surprisingly, none of them had been assimilated -- yet.

We finally heard the standard refrain, "We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile," but it didn't sound right. It was weak. Tinny. I asked Seven if the small number of Borg drones on board had affected the sound of the Collective's voice. Since she didn't answer, I gathered she herself didn't know.

When the captain addressed the cube and demanded the return of our crew, the Borg's response were confusing. First, they said "Negotiation is irrelevant." Then they scanned our vessel and said they'd return our crew if we gave them Voyager's navigational deflector dish. Apart from the fact that the deflector is an integral part of our ship, if we did manage to detach it (which would take many hours of work), we'd be unable to go to warp; and we couldn't get very far on impulse drive alone. It took a few moments for Seven to realize why they wanted it. The cube's communications array was severely damaged. They'd lost their link with the Collective and thought they could adapt our dish to reestablish it.

Captain Janeway demanded to see the hostages to make sure they were okay before giving them her response. "You may transport one individual," they replied. Seven was the logical choice.

She returned fairly quickly to report that the five "drones" we'd been dealing with were neonatal drones -- children -- who should still be in maturation chambers, being indoctrinated into the ways of the Collective. They'd been expelled from their chambers prematurely. All the adults on board the cube were dead. Seven had to step over many corpses to reach the five children who were running the ship. Before Seven returned to Voyager, she sent one of the dead drone bodies ahead of her to Sickbay, to see if the Doctor could determine why five thousand adults had perished -- and as far as she could tell, all at the same time.

Seven also reported that while she'd spoken with Dad, Commander Chakotay, and Tom, there was no sign of Harry. "The neonatal drones do not seem to know he's there." Captain Janeway ordered Father to activate Harry's combadge, using a carrier wave on a Borg interlink frequency. The five juveniles would be unlikely to identify it as a form of communication.

After the Doctor examined the corpse, he determined a space-borne pathogen had killed him. When the Doctor said the pathogen would affect only the Borg or other cybernetic organisms it
encountered, Father suggested reintroducing the pathogen into the cube as a weapon against the children. While the Doctor was aghast at the prospect of murdering youngsters, Seven admitted they probably would kill the hostages if the captain didn't give them what they wanted -- and we simply couldn't comply with their demand.

Captain Janeway decided to go to the cube to propose a solution. She offered the children sanctuary on *Voyager*. The one running the cube, whose designation was "First," refused to consider this. The captain then suggested Seven could remain on the cube to help them make repairs, since she has so much experience with Borg systems. First accepted Seven's help, but he only gave her two hours to finish her tasks and then rudely ordered the captain back to *Voyager*.

When Seven returned to *Voyager* after her first meeting with the "Collective," she told us the children weren't like mature Borg -- they were unstable, unpredictable. Father commented, "They are contemptuous of authority and convinced that they are superior. Typical adolescent behavior, for any species." When I heard Father say this, I was momentarily glad I'd never been an adolescent living under his roof. He would have been a very hard taskmaster, indeed.

Eventually, we heard from Harry. He was still inside the *Delta Flyer*. He'd been trying to fix the warp drive when the cube attacked and had been knocked unconscious. When the children extracted the rest of the away team from the shuttle, they either never found Harry, or they'd left him for dead. The captain asked Harry if he could penetrate the interior of the cube and set plasma charges to deactivate shield generator so we could transport our crew and the *Delta Flyer* out of the cube. I hoped he would succeed. I was extremely worried about what would happen to Dad when the children finally decided to assimilate the away team. I was quite surprised the children hadn't already done this. If they had, they'd have had three more drones to work on repairing their vessel.

While Seven was working on the propulsion system inside the cube, a sixth neonatal drone was "born." This one was only an infant who would not have emerged from her chamber for several years if the mechanical womb hadn't failed. When Seven couldn't stabilize the baby's condition, she convinced the children to permit a transport to *Voyager* for treatment so that the baby's life could be saved. The Doctor was quite surprised when he turned around and saw a Borg baby lying on a biobed in Sickbay. Because she'd left the mechanical womb of the maturation chamber too soon, the infant girl was suffering from respiratory distress. After the Doctor's treatment relieved her breathing problems, he called the captain to come to Sickbay and see the "little tyke," as he called her. He manipulated Captain Janeway into holding the child, hoping to change her mind about using the pathogen against the children. The captain told him she wanted to avoid using it -- but she took the syringe with her anyway. If using the pathogen was the only way to save our away team, the captain was prepared to utilize it.

Harry had almost arrived at the field generator's location, deep inside the cube, when we lost contact with him. A short time later, First contacted us and demanded we give them our deflector dish "immediately." When Captain Janeway told him we couldn't remove it that quickly, since it was integrated into the structure of our ship, a tractor beam shot out of the cube and fastened itself onto the deflector dish. If we wouldn't give it to them, they'd rip it off. Father suggested we deploy the
pathogen, but Seven was still on the cube. If she did, Seven would die, too. Instead, the captain ordered B'Elanna to send a feedback pulse through the tractor beam. Since the same energy grid fed both the cube's shield matrix and its tractor beam, the pulse might weaken or even bring down the shields to allow us to rescue our crew members.

The shields did weaken, which allowed me to transport Dad, Commander Chakotay, and Tom out of the cube. I snatched the Delta Flyer out of the cube's hanger, too, but I couldn't find Harry. The shielding around the cube's central chamber was still too strong for us to scan through. I assumed Harry had been taken there, where Seven and the five children probably were, as well. We detected a minor explosion in that area (which we later learned occurred when the feedback pulse overloaded the induction coils), and seconds after that, our sensors revealed the entire cube was on the verge of a cascade failure. After what seemed like a very long time, but probably was only a minute or two, Seven instructed us to transport Harry, four children, and Seven herself to Voyager. First -- the rude young drone who had been so intractable -- was dead.

As soon as we had everyone on board, the captain ordered us to go to warp. Just as we did, the cube exploded. We could feel huge pieces of debris hit our shields, literally shaking Voyager from the impacts, but our shields held.

We now have four children in this ship -- five, counting the baby -- who will need care and supervision for an unknown length of time. We don't know how this experience will affect them. Even though they were never fully Borg, their lives have been shattered twice: first, when they were assimilated, and now again, because their link to the Collective has been severed. We'll do our best to help them accept a return to individuality. Seven is here and willing to help them, although she has struggled with this process ever since her link with the Collective was severed. I hope their paths will be smoother than hers has been.

**Supplemental**

Initially, Father sent me to Sickbay to serve as part of a security detail, to keep the children under control. This turned out to be unnecessary. The surviving children behaved well and meekly followed Seven's directions. They were still too stunned by all that had occurred, I suspect. I contacted Father to report my presence wasn't really needed, but he told me to remain in Sickbay, off to the side, "just in case." Harry and the children all have implants which will need to be removed, although none seemed to be fully formed, even the ones in Harry. The baby's eyepiece literally fell off when it was barely touched. Seven told me the infant hadn't been in the maturation chamber long enough for the mechanical part to become fused into her biological body. The slow rate of Harry's assimilation puzzled her, however. I asked Seven if this was typical of the process. Her "no" was quite succinct.

While the Doctor worked on Harry, who had been dragged through the corridors of the cube and handled rather roughly after nanoprobes were introduced into his body, Tom took blood and
nanoprobe samples from the four older children for evaluation and brought them to the lab for analysis. When he returned, his expression was quite grim. He handed the PADD with the results to Seven, and her eyes widened in surprise. While Tom continued his examinations of the children, I asked her about the results. Unlike the Doctor, she had no qualms about sharing medical information with me. "Their nanoprobe samples are as immature as their implants." I asked Seven if that was why they hadn't assimilated our away team, and she replied, "They'd already killed another being when they tried to assimilate him. His body was lying on a table in the chamber where our away team was confined. That may be why they hesitated to assimilate their new captives. I don't believe Second would have been willing to try until he knew why they'd failed in their first attempt."

After Tom finished his examinations, he came to us and revealed that some of the children's implants, such as their cranial arrays and cortical nodes, are fairly well formed. Others are barely functional. The Doctor should be able to remove most of them without needing to perform the number of complex operations that were necessary to save Seven after her link to the Collective was severed. Tom also said the children were fortunate we'd removed them from the cube. The deteriorating corpses were creating a very unhealthy atmosphere within that vessel. If the Borg had failed to send a vessel to retrieve them very soon and we hadn't come along, they could easily have died. Since their nanoprobes are so immature, the children would be vulnerable to infection.

That's when Seven told us the children never would have been retrieved by the Borg. First had been desperate to obtain our deflector dish to send a second distress call to the Borg Queen. He assumed the first message they'd sent had never been received. While Seven was on the cube, however, she discovered the Borg had replied to their request -- and had denied it. No Borg vessel had been dispatched. The Queen had ordered the neonatal drones to terminate themselves because they were damaged, unworthy of assimilation -- irrelevant. Since none of the youngsters had known how to decrypt this message, however, First had no idea the Borg would never come, no matter how many messages he sent them.

Seven hadn't informed the children about the Queen's reply at the time she initially found it. When the cube was falling apart all around them and she told the children about it, First refused to believe her. He attacked Seven, but Second intervened to save her life. First, still in denial and determined to save the cube and his Collective, was fatally injured when he tried to keep the induction coils from overloading. He survived for less than a minute afterwards -- until Seven told him something he needed to hear. After First said, "We are Borg," Seven agreed. "It was as if my confirmation we were Borg gave First permission to let go of life," she told us. "All the children felt the moment of his deactivation. I know I did."

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Stardate 53511

Captain Janeway has assigned Seven to supervise the four older "neonatal drones." She's stopped
referring to them that way, however. To her, they're now just "the children." The crew has been referring to them as the "Borglets." I have a feeling that might stick for a while, but we do know their names now.

Just before they were transported to Voyager, Seven ordered Second to detach data nodes from the central chamber which she expected would contain information about the individuals which had been recently assimilated by the drones. The oldest survivor, previously referred to as Second, is a Brunali male named Icheb. The only girl, or "Five of Five," is Mezoti, a Norcadian. We haven't been able to identify the species of the twin boys, but their names are Azan and Rebi. Seven was confident she has correctly assigned each of the twins his correct name. I hope she is right and hasn't reversed their designations. Names. (I'm starting to "adapt" to the Borg way of expressing myself, which is somewhat alarming. I'm half Talaxian and half Vulcan. I have enough trouble balancing my heritage from those very different species as it is.) The infant's genetic history is a mystery. Since she was assimilated as a fetus, it's doubtful her parents ever had the opportunity to provide her with a name.

The captain has contacted officials on Norcadia Prime and representatives of the Brunali to request searches for relatives or, failing that, new homes for the children. Until we hear from them, we'll keep the children safe on Voyager -- or as safe as anyone can be on this vessel. Until we can identify the species of Azan, Rebi, and the baby, they'll have to remain with us.

I'm not happy we must deal with Norcadia Prime again. However, I like what I've seen of Mezoti so far. She's just a child; and she's certainly not a Penk -- even though, while he was in the children's custody on the cube, Mezoti shocked Tom without batting an eye to "punish" him for trying to disconnect the force field around the chamber in which they were being held. Since she was under First's influence at the time, I hope she really isn't as cold-blooded as Tom claims she was. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt -- for now.

The baby remains in Sickbay and will be there for quite a while. Her respiration issues have been treated, and her health is currently stable; but she was born prematurely; and she's so little, she'll need constant care. Who will provide it? The captain has talked about dropping her off at a nearby planet, but since we have no idea who her people are, we don't know who might be willing to take care of her.

I actually hope we can keep the baby on Voyager. It wouldn't hurt for us to have a new generation on board. We may be traveling towards the Alpha Quadrant for four more decades. We'll need new crew members down the line.

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Stardate 58525
Marla Gilmore, formerly of the *Equinox*, has volunteered to care for our infant. She's decided to call her Aimee, which means "Beloved" in one of the Earth languages. Such a sweet name! I think Marla has already become attached to the little girl. When her people are located, Marla will find it hard to give her up. Even though they've only been with us for a very short time, I think it will be difficult for us to give *any* of them up.

I promised to help Seven with her little Collective whenever I can. I think she was about to say she wouldn't need my help when I offered; but then she stopped talking, nodded her head, and walked back into Cargo Bay Two without saying another word.

Oh, and I should record one more detail. The crew have been started to refer to Cargo Bay Two as "Borg Central." As Tom said, that's "cheeky -- but accurate."

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Dealing with unruly neonatal drones who have just regained their individuality provides Seven with a glimpse of what Captain Janeway went through when Seven first came to Voyager, while Harry and Lyndsay Ballard's struggles to rekindle their friendship--and maybe deeper feelings--are interrupted when Lyndsay's Kobali father tries to convince his Jhet'leya to return home with him.

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Stardate 53660

I've been trying to counsel Seven on her methods of supervising the children, but so far, I'm not having very much luck. She's researched parenthood, naturally. She says she's embraced advice of experts, in particular, that children require a regular schedule of activities in order to develop properly. While I quite agree with this advice in principle, Seven has taken scheduling to extremes. The children barely have a chance to breathe before they're expected to switch to their next activity. Icheb has been chafing at the restrictions Seven has imposed. He'd prefer to spend most of his time studying; and he's made it clear he wants to be free to select which subject to pursue, and when to devote his time to it, instead of Seven choosing for him all the time.

Seven has never been a fan of "having fun." She chose to spend her "Shore Leave" while Voyager was in orbit around Norcadia Prime by accompanying Father to study a micro-nebula, with disastrous consequences that would have been tragic if they hadn't been rescued by our crew. The children's opportunities for recreational activities have been rather limited as a result. When I mentioned this to Seven, she stared at me in that way she has that says, more succinctly than any words can, that my comment was ridiculous. She said she knew best. I doubt that, and besides, there's another child on this ship who could also benefit from socializing with children. Poor Naomi! After being the only child on Voyager for many years, she finally has other children living on our ship -- and they're never given the chance to play with her!

Dad and I have finally managed to convince Seven that it would be an excellent idea to schedule a playdate for the Borg children and Naomi. Since Seven has enjoyed playing Kadis-kot with our junior Captain's Bridge Assistant, we suggested they start with that activity. If the playdate goes well, we may be able to convince Seven to loosen up the children's schedules. They should be able to choose for themselves which recreational activities to pursue, and not always have them imposed upon them by Seven.
Stardate 53660

The playdate had barely started before it turned into a disaster, primarily due to Seven's rigidity. Naomi and Mezoti began to bond immediately, right before our eyes. Naomi complemented Mezoti on her hairstyle, and Mezoti promised to show her how to do it. Dad and I smiled at each other. It was such a nice beginning -- and then Seven had to spoil it by insisting there was no time for "irrelevant" discussions. Mezoti pointed out that discussing hairstyles was relevant to the two girls. Seven ignored her and ordered them to begin playing Kadis-kot, declaring, "Fun will now commence," as if it were the beginning of a Tsunkatse match.

The fun lasted for two moves. Naomi observed the twins were cheating. Mezoti concurred, and informed Seven that Azan and Rebi were using their neural interfaces to share information before Rebi made his move. Seven angrily imposed "Punishment Protocol Nine Alpha" on the boys, who obediently rose out of their seats and stood in the corner.

This didn't go over at all well with Icheb. He told Seven that if they couldn't play, neither would he. Seven accused him of encouraging disorder. Icheb swept his arm across the table, scattering the playing pieces all over the deck, and yelled, "You never let us do what we want!"

Seven tried to impose "Punishment Protocol Nine Alpha" upon Icheb, too. Refusing to comply, the adolescent stalked angrily out of the Mess Hall.

After Seven herded Mezoti and the twins out of the Mess Hall, Naomi told us she really liked Mezoti. "Why won't Seven let her play with me?" she plaintively asked. Dad told her he would talk to Seven. Naomi slipped away, saying she was going to her quarters to read a book. Alone.

Dad and I put our heads together. He said he'd speak to Seven about letting Mezoti visit Naomi every now and then, with Dad or Sam supervising them, so they could get to know each other. Dad believes Seven should let all the children pursue their own interests, since they're unlikely to enjoy the same thing. Since Icheb is older, he obviously might prefer to engage in some activities which are either unappealing or inappropriate for younger children. It would also be good for the twins to interact with other people separately. Dad observed that they seem to be a little too attached to each other. It's rather eerie to see the two of them acting like they were joined at the hip. Azan and Rebi may have been assimilated by the Borg, but they were never drones who followed orders without question.

I agreed and suggested we ask the captain and the commander to intervene with Seven. They can't
always function as a unit if they're to become individuals. They're children, not a Unimatrix!

**Supplemental**

I spoke with Commander Chakotay later that day. When I described the schedule of activities Seven has imposed upon the children, he agreed that it was far too rigid for them, especially since we want them to learn how to make good choice for themselves. He's promised to speak with the captain, and after that, with Seven. "I don't want to make this an order," he said, "but I will if Seven doesn't agree to be more flexible with the Borglets."

I admit, when he said that, I had to stifle a groan. As I'd anticipated, it will take a while for our crew to view the children as the individuals they really are -- and that goes for Seven, as well.

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**Stardate 53665**

Ensign Lyndsay Ballard has returned to life! I remember her, although I didn't know her well before we lost her. She died about two years ago, while on an away mission with Harry. We buried her body in space, and it was found by members of a race called the Kobali. They reproduce by reanimating dead bodies, thereby giving them a second chance at life. It's all quite amazing, really. Harry was devastated when she died. They were close friends when they were at Starfleet Academy together. He's overjoyed now that she's come back into his life.

Lyndsay is just as charming as I remember and great fun to be around. The Doctor has been devising a treatment to return her to a more human appearance. He can't bring her all the way back physiologically, but he can help her look human again. I visited with Harry and Lyndsay last night. Lyndsay and I agreed we're alike in many ways. We're not true hybrids, like Naomi Wildman and B'Elanna Torres. We're fused beings, with two heritages, but not through the usual way DNA is combined. Since the Kobali haven't discovered any of our other deceased crew members as far as she knows, Lyndsay must be the only Kobali/human in the galaxy, just like I'm the only Talaxian/Vulcan.

**Supplemental**

The story of Lyndsay's return to Voyager would not be complete if I didn't record what happened when she first made contact with us. Since a problem had cropped up with one of the systems we've
adapted from Borg technology, B'Elanna requested Seven's presence in Engineering for a brainstorming session. Seven placed Icheb in charge of the three younger children and ordered him to keep them all in Cargo Bay Two. Mezoti saw her opportunity to explore on her own and slipped away to Astrometrics. When someone from another ship hailed us, Mezoti responded. It was Lyndsay, who'd run away from the Kobali. When Mezoti provided her designation, Lyndsay remarked that she seemed a little young to be working the com. Mezoti said, "I'm eight." When Mezoti tried to put the call through to the bridge so Lyndsay could speak to a grownup, she wasn't tall enough to make the transfer and disconnected the communication instead.

Father entered Astrometrics at this point and berated Mezoti for being there by herself, since her presence in Astrometrics without adult supervision was "unauthorized." When Seven and the boys came in, Father began to chastise Seven as well. Mezoti explained she'd just wanted to look around, and now she was "trying to talk to the woman in spatial grid 2369." That's when Seven and Father noticed Lyndsay's second attempt to connect with *Voyager* and opened the channel.

Lyndsay recognized Father's voice and addressed him by name. When she identified herself by name, however, he was, to say the least, skeptical. He put her through to the captain, however, who gave permission for Lyndsay to come aboard to discuss her claim.

The Kobali's appearance is strikingly different from a human's, but when she described the circumstances of her last mission and death, Harry confirmed all the details she provided were accurate. After the Doctor discovered traces of human DNA in her altered body, the captain welcomed Lyndsay back to our ship.

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**Stardate 53668**

I am soon to receive a gift from Mezoti which, I'm quite sure, will be a lovely addition to my quarters. Dad told me all about how the offer came about after the art lesson was all over.

Thanks to prodding from Commander Chakotay, Seven has loosened up the children's schedule to a degree, but she's still imposing a LOT of order upon our four Borg children. Yesterday, she assigned the children to sculpt with clay, an activity Captain Janeway once had encouraged Seven to pursue. While Seven didn't exactly welcome the activity when the captain suggested it to her (from what I've heard, she only tried working with clay once before refusing to pursue the art any longer), Seven set the children up in the Mess Hall for art class. Of course, she also assigned a specific task to them. They were to sculpt a geometric shape.
The twins both fashioned simple cubes, fulfilling the assignment without taxing their brains to any great degree. Icheb sculpted a 26-sided polyhedron composed of hexagons, octagons, and squares. When I saw it, I couldn't decide if he was displaying his advanced mental skills or was trying to impress everyone, especially Seven. It was probably a bit of both.

Mezoti chose to complete the assignment in a very free-form sort of way. She'd sculpted a head of Seven of Nine, complete with ocular implant. At first, Seven wasn't pleased her directive hadn't been followed to the letter. When she told Mezoti the head was "crude," however, Mezoti's expression dimmed. Realizing her error, Seven went on to say that the piece did "demonstrate ingenuity and individuality." Dad said Mezoti smiled at this bit of praise, while Icheb was annoyed. He'd reminded Mezoti of the actual parameters of the assignment and had expected Seven to administer a punishment protocol to Mezoti for non-compliance.

To Seven's credit, she resisted Icheb's challenge to her authority. Instead, she instructed Mezoti to "Resume your disorder."

When I came by a little later, the other children were cleaning up their worktables. The boys' efforts were lined up on the sill of the Mess Hall to dry. Mezoti was still putting the finishing touches to hers. Dad told me what had happened, and I walked over to praise Mezoti for her work. I didn't have to exaggerate when I told her how much I liked it. After all, our bodies are a combination of geometric shapes put together into biological form. Mezoti's observational skills, as well as her creativity, were fully displayed in the manner she'd completed Seven's assignment.

Mezoti asked Dad if he would replicate another block of clay for her to sculpt tomorrow. He said he'd be happy to do that for her. Mezoti turned to me and said, "You have a very unique head, Lieutenant Tuvix. I would like to use you as a model. Will that be acceptable?" Naturally, I agreed, and she added, "If you like it, I'll give it to you. You can put it in your quarters."

I'm not sure how long I'll have to wait for the piece. Seven's eased up on the children's schedule a bit, but she still keeps them very busy. I don't know when she'll decide to schedule another art class. But, as they say, it's the thought that counts. The very fact that Mezoti made the offer to make this for me is a gift in and of itself.

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Stardate 53675

Harry has been quite happy with Lyndsay. I hope they can stay together. Lyndsay's Kobali father Q'ret has come to bring her back with him to her new people. While Lyndsay has made it clear she
wants to stay with us, and the captain supports her decision, Q'ret does not. He's told the captain he'll be back, and the next time, he won't be alone.

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**Stardate 53679**

At first Lyndsay balked. She really did want to stay with us -- with Harry, really. After her Kobali genes began to reassert themselves with a vengeance, and the Doctor had to admit he could only do so much to keep her human, she became more ambivalent about where she now belonged. Lyndsay couldn't stand the taste of her favorite foods anymore. She began to speak in Kobali without knowing it.

Harry and Lyndsay seemed to be on the verge of becoming a couple, like Tom and B'Elanna. In some ways, I think they already were. So, when she told him that she'd changed her mind and was going to go back to live with the Kobali -- and to her little sister Tynsia -- he begged her to stay. I was so sorry when I heard she'd decided her life on *Voyager* really was over. If her father Q'ret cared for her the way he claims he does, he would have wanted to allow her be happy, even if it was far away from him . . . but perhaps I'm being unfair. Lyndsay has changed. Maybe she really didn't fit in with us anymore.

Harry is in deep mourning. It was bad enough when he first lost Lyndsay. It's even worse to lose her a second time. Before they parted, she told him the girl he'd loved had died two years ago, but at least they've finally had the chance to really say good-bye. Lyndsay will no longer fantasize about returning to her past life, her *kyn'steya*, on *Voyager*. I hope her father appreciates her brief return taught her this: she's truly Jeht'leya now. She accepts she's become a Kobali.

I understand the decision Lyndsay made. It's taken me almost four years to integrate my two heritages, and that's something she really couldn't do because of the power her Kobali genes have to reassert themselves. I know what it is not to quite fit in with everyone else. I'm neither fully Vulcan nor fully Talaxian, although I now accept that while I can act Vulcan because of my training in the mental disciplines from Father, at heart, I'm more Talaxian. I suspect that may be because Vulcans, without training, are more like Talaxians than they'd like to admit. The Romulans left Vulcan centuries ago and make no attempt to dampen their strong emotions, while Vulcans turned to logic and the practice of meditation to keep theirs under control. Father will never acknowledge this, of course, but I am very aware of it from reading his thoughts.

Mind melds are not one-way. The person performing the technique also opens his or her mind to the recipient. I am aware of so much more about Father's inner life, as a result, than I would have known only from the memories I retain from my advent. I sometimes wonder if that was one reason he continued my mind-meld training long after it was clear I had no aptitude for it. Did he wish to share
his acceptance of me as his son in this way, since he could not discuss it openly? If he did, then I accept it as the wondrous gift it has been. Father and Dad are equally precious to me, but only Dad will say I'm precious to him, too. Thanks to all those attempts at melding minds with Father, I know he also feels this way, without ever telling me in words.

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Stardate 53686

Harry has given Mezoti Lyndsay's hairbrush. She left it behind because the Kobali have no hair to brush. Mezoti's hair is very pretty, and she was very pleased to receive the gift. It was a nice thing for him to do; but I don't know if Harry, in his current state of mind, is a particularly good influence on the children. He brought Mezoti with him when he went to the holodeck to "tweak" the Temple of Panit program that Father utilizes as an aid to meditation. After Harry and Mezoti were finished with it, the monks were chanting very profane Ferengi limericks. Father was NOT pleased, and Seven instituted a punishment protocol to Mezoti.

I can't help liking the Norcadi girl, despite all that happened on Norcadia Prime. Mezoti is very bright and fun. Naomi is thrilled to have another girl to be her friend. No one is sure exactly how old Mezoti is, since maturation chambers accelerate a child's growth to such a degree. The Doctor says she's eight, which is as good a guess as any. He arrived at this estimate from scans of Mezoti's joints, which he says are indicative of the physical age of a body. Mezoti spent more than a year inside a maturation chamber, however, and even Seven is not certain how that might have affected her rate of development. This varies according to the speed a given species develops. Naomi isn't four years old yet, but she looks ten. The girls are a good match for each other, although that may change if Naomi continues to grow in the Ktarian pattern rather than slowing down a bit to be more like her mother. As long as the girls appear to be roughly the same age and they have similar interests, that's more important to their friendship.

Icheb is a very serious young man. He was the first to awaken on the cube, so he has even more bad memories of decomposing drones than the others do. He's also very bright. The twins may be bright, but it's hard to tell. They don't interact with our crew very much. Since they're biological twin brothers, they turn towards each other, not to the crew at large.

Little Aimee is thriving under Marla Gilmore's care. I don't think the captain is going to be able to give that baby away to anyone else. Marla is fiercely protective of her. It's good to see.

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Stardate 53697
I was finishing my dinner in the Mess Hall tonight when Mezoti, Naomi, and Seven marched in and presented me with a gift. Mezoti's artistic interpretation of a Talaxian/Vulcan head is now resting in pride of place on the console in my quarters. It really is a beautiful piece. I love the way she left finger marks to suggest the spots on my skin, and she captured my ears perfectly! I couldn't thank her enough. Just offering to make it for me was a gift. To actually receive it is an even greater one.

Mezoti said she wanted to do this for me because I take care of the children sometimes and because, "I like you."

When the girls got up to leave to go to holodeck to visit Trevis and Flotter, Seven stayed behind, "I wish to thank you, too. You've given me good advice, although you're not a father."

I corrected her. "Father has four children on Vulcan. I've learned quite a lot from his memories. Enough, I hope, to serve as a mentor to all the children." She smiled slightly. That struck a chord with Seven. Father has been her mentor, as well.

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Chapter Summary

Tuvix records his reaction to a participating in a terrible tragedy that he knows, objectively, he could not have been a part of, but the memories seem completely real to him and to everyone else on Voyager.

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Stardate 53708

I was so happy to greet Dad when the team returned. Despite Commander Chakotay's promise to take me on an away team, Dad was chosen again, along with Harry and Tom. The commander had his reasons. I've been spending a lot of time with the Borg children whenever Seven is working in Astrometrics and I'm off-duty. Icheb likes to spend time with her there, but he cannot if he's been placed in charge of the twins and Mezoti. I often stay with the younger ones, which allows Icheb to satisfy his fascination with stars, planets, nebulae, comets, and such. All the children have come a long way, but Icheb is the only one who knows what he wants to do when he's an adult. He wants to work in Astrometrics. The other three need guidance in discovering what excites them enough to turn it into a life's work. I find exposing them to new subjects to be personally quite satisfying. When I told the commander I was needed here at present, he agreed.

Supplemental

I was on Gamma shift last night, and Tom was troubled. He'd been enjoying the gift B'Elanna had made for him while he was away -- a 1956-style television (only the remote control was anachronistic) -- watching different shows B'Elanna had loaded into it from our entertainment archives the entire night. Suddenly, Tom began to shout something about soldiers killing civilians and grabbed his forearm, claiming he'd been shot. At first she thought he was having a nightmare, but when he began to say something about an enemy ambush, she contacted me. I scanned the ship thoroughly and sent out security teams, but we didn't encounter any intruders. After I came to his quarters and checked his arm with a medical tricorder, I went back to the bridge. B'Elanna put Tom to bed and remained with him the rest of the night, to calm him down if he began to scream again.

A little later, Seven contacted me. Tim Lang relieved me on the bridge so I could visit Cargo Bay Two. All four children had experienced visions of some kind that broke their connection to their alcoves before they'd finished regenerating. Like B'Elanna, Seven initially assumed the visions were nightmares. Mezoti said she'd seen soldiers murder people and that she'd been one of the victims. I
conjectured she was finally remembering something of her family's assimilation. Seven said she'd thought that, too, until Icheb told Seven he had done terrible things while he was a soldier. She informed him this was impossible. He's never left *Voyager* since he came on board, and he was much too young to have been a soldier before he was assimilated.

When the children had calmed down, I went back to the bridge and made an official report about both incidents, since they seemed to be related. There may not be any intruders, but something odd is going on.

**Supplemental (2)**

I'd just ended my shift and was looking forward to meditating before going to bed when Father called me to the Mess Hall. He said there was a security breach. I knew Dad would be there at this time of the morning, serving breakfast and beginning his lunch preparations. He would be vulnerable to an attack in the kitchen. While he could defend himself with a carving knife, what good would that do against particle weapons? Maybe I'd made a mistake last night. What if there had been a cloaked intruder after all, one that I'd failed to detect?

I joined Andrews and Lang in the turbolift. On the way to the Mess Hall, I began to wonder why the phrase "particle weapons" had occurred to me. I felt a little queasy, but I told myself I was just worried about Dad.

When we arrived in the corridor outside the Mess Hall, I discovered the security breach situation *originated* with my Dad. He was holding Naomi hostage and screaming about wanting to protect her from harm. Commander Chakotay was trying to talk him down, telling him, "Saavdra ordered a cease-fire. The colony's secure. The battle's over."

What battle? What colony? And who was Saavdra?

The commander finally calmed Dad down enough for him to release Naomi, who was terrified. Commander Chakotay handed her to me, and I turned around and gave her to her mother Sam. I didn't say anything aloud; I was afraid Dad might hear us; but I shrugged to show her I was as mystified as she was by what had happened.

When I returned to the back entrance of the kitchen, I saw Dad and the commander clutching each other, as if they were trying to save themselves from drowning. From the expressions on their faces, they were haunted by something the rest of us couldn't see. Tom, Chakotay, Dad. The only one who had been with the away team that I hadn't seen since their return was Harry. Was he upset, too? What had happened to them while they were gone? I decided to ask Harry about it.
I found him in Sickbay. The Doctor had treated Harry for acute anxiety and hallucinations. He'd prescribed two days of rest and was just been about to release him to his quarters when I came in with Commander Chakotay and Dad. Harry had suffered a panic attack while working in a Jefferies tube. He hadn't escaped whatever was going on, either. The Doctor summoned Captain Janeway. After the Doctor reported that they all had been suffering acute emotional distress, I told the captain about Tom's difficult night. "You may have been abducted and brainwashed," she said. "We'll need to retrace your mission and review the Delta Flyer sensor logs. We need to find the location of this colony and investigate what may have happened there."

**Supplemental (3)**

Father and I stood on either side of the conference room door while Captain Janeway and the Doctor held a meeting with the away team members. They all told the same story. They'd volunteered to go on a mission to relocate Nakan colonists to a camp off the planet. Commander Saavdra was in charge of their unit. While they were on their way with the colonists to the transport ships, weapons fire erupted. Tom and Harry claimed they'd been fired upon by colonists who hadn't been where they were supposed to be. Commander Chakotay insisted they had no way of knowing if their own people hadn't fired first. Their squad had been awake for days, and everyone was exhausted. "I suggested to Saavdra we wait until daybreak, so our people could get a little sleep," the commander said, "but he said we had to move right away." Dad moaned that he'd tried to protect the children, but they were frightened and ran away.

There was one key fact upon which they all agreed. They remembered the murder of eighty-two innocent civilians on that fateful night. All of the colonists had been killed.

After the shaken away team left the conference room, the captain called Father and me to give her our impressions of what we'd just heard. The Doctor said he's scanned all four of the team members and concluded that they weren't hallucinating. He'd detected memory engrams, suggesting that these events had actually happened to them. Father wondered if Tom's outburst, which included mention of an intruder, might have been an accurate statement. "We would not remember these events if our memories have been tampered with."

I shook my head. "I don't believe it, Captain. Tom claimed he'd been wounded in the arm, but when I went to his quarters to check on him, there was no sign of any old injury. Commander Chakotay testified that their unit had been exhausted from being awake for days on patrol. The away team was gone for two weeks, but unless there's indisputable evidence to the contrary, I don't see how they had time to take part in these events and still return with all the dilithium they brought back in the Delta Flyer. Unless this colony planet has a temporal distortion similar to Gotana-Retz's world, it's impossible. "
"I agree, Lieutenant Tuvix. The timing doesn't make any sense. We'll review the mission logs to see if we can identify a significant gap of several days, or more likely, a week, to account for what the away team believes happened. If we find something like that, however . . . "

The captain left her sentence unfinished. If such a gap were found, our first officer, my two best friends -- and my Dad -- would be complicit in murder.

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**Stardate 53714**

We were just entering the last planetary system the *Delta Flyer* had visited before returning to *Voyager*. The captain, Commander Chakotay, and Seven were in Astrometrics, reviewing the mission logs recorded by the away team during their two-week hunt for dilithium. The views of the first couple of stops didn't provoke any reaction from Commander Chakotay, although the captain laughed when she saw the image of a Captain Bathar of Hodos. He'd tried to sell the away team a formula that allegedly could halt the aging process. The commander maintained it would make a better shoe polish. When Seven displayed the next planet's image, however, the captain suddenly stopped laughing. "Tarakis . . . the planet -- it's called Tarakis. I've been here."

When Seven told me about this later, she said, "Lieutenant Tuvix, how could the captain have ever visited Tarakis? She's never been in this region of space before. She hasn't gone on an away mission since she took the *Delta Flyer* to the Pendari system. That was months ago. But she insisted she was there. Then she collapsed, and we sent her to the Doctor in the Mess Hall. Thirty-six members of the crew are now suffering from hallucinations and complaining of physical symptoms, but none of them could have participated in this massacre. They were all here! There's no logic to this."

I agreed it was illogical, but then I asked her, "Are you also envisioning a massacre, Seven?"

She fell very quiet for a minute and then said, very softly, "Yes."

"So am I," I admitted. "And I know I haven't left this ship. Both of us have been too busy taking care of the children. The visions the away team reported, and now the ones we're experiencing, are the same as those Icheb and Mezoti described to us that first night. Mezoti thought she was a murder victim; she's very much alive. There must be another explanation for what's happening."
"Commander Tuvok has suggested our ship could have been taken over by aliens who tampered with our memories and database records."

"He said that in the conference room, too, after the meeting the captain held after Dad's outburst with Naomi. I'll say what I did then. It's very unlikely. There's not enough time for it all to have happened. The chronometer in your cranial implant should tell us if it's even a possibility."

"I've already compared my internal chronometer with Voyager's. There is no discrepancy, no gap which would allow for the ship to have been overcome, to attack a colony, for invaders to remove everyone's memories of the incident, and for us to proceed to our rendezvous with the Delta Flyer as we have. I agree. There must be another reason for our mutual discomfort."

After my conversation with Seven ended, I spent several minutes meditating. I've had vivid, extremely disturbing visions which include Commander Saavdra and the murder of dozens of innocent civilians. Whether or not there were some who were not so innocent, I do not know. Father has admitted to experiencing them as well. Father and I, through our meditative techniques, have been able to handle these visions better than many of our fellow crew members. Seven has experience from being Borg to help her deal with multiple perceptions and still function. She's been helping the children cope with their own nightmarish visions. I understand Sam and Naomi have gone to Sickbay, as many of our crew have done, to receive the Doctor's neural suppressant treatments.

I don't know if these are hallucinations or are some sort of shared memories, but I'm confident of one inexplicable fact. Everyone is being haunted by the very same events, but I do not believe everyone could have experienced these incidents in the very same way. That is totally illogical.

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Stardate 53717

The closer we came to Tarakis, the more everyone's symptoms escalated. This system had to be the source of our distress. As we approached the mustard-colored M-class planet known as Tarakis and assumed orbit, we scanned the entire region. Our vessel was the only one within ten light years, and the planet itself was uninhabited by any humanoid form of life. We couldn't identify any weapons signatures or phaser residues, although we did verify the presence of an erratic power source located on the northernmost continent. The captain decided an away team comprised of the captain, Commander Chakotay, Father, Tom, Harry, and me should go down there to investigate. Sending a team of six on such a mission is unusual, but it showed how concerned the captain was about what we might find down there.
When we arrived at the erratic power source, we discovered a huge tower, a memorial, erected to commemorate lives lost in a massacre which occurred on this planet three centuries ago. It was designed to make anyone passing by the system experience what happened to the victims and to the perpetrators, who were full of remorse after they realized what they'd done. The memorial is malfunctioning. Instead of just sending out the testimony of the surviving soldiers, with an introduction to make it clear that what a person is picturing in their minds happened centuries ago, those who receive the transmissions now have no way to know what is real and what is not. They're receiving flashes of partial memories. As a result, like our crew, they can suffer from emotional shock and physical symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The memorial's transmission's range now extends far beyond the planetary system's outer border, which may be considerably farther than the designers had anticipated. The power cells need to be replaced if the memorial is to remain in place.

The captain has decided to make the repairs. The victims deserve to be remembered, and I agree. I've volunteered to work on the repair crew. We also plan to place a buoy at the edge of the system, to warn anyone coming near about the true nature of the visions. This will be especially helpful if the memorial dampeners fail again, as they will some centuries from now if no one else replaces the power cells. These provisions should prevent others from suffering the way our crew did. It's interesting to note that once we knew what was causing our visions, our psychological and physical symptoms disappeared. The not-knowing was the real problem for all of us.

Supplemental

The memorial has been repaired. Instead of fragmentary images, which are extremely disturbing because they're out of context, anyone who experiences the transferred memories now will know, from the beginning, what they are. The warning buoy is in place.

We'll be leaving orbit in a few moments, but first, the captain called for a moment of silence, in memory of those who died on this planet three centuries ago. Tarakis is a very fair planet. I understand why the Nakan people chose to settle here. Although we know what happened, we don't know why the Nakan colonists were being moved from their homes, or if it truly was going to be a temporary removal, or more permanent. I don't believe we'll ever know.

We'll also never know who fired first on that fateful night three hundred years ago. Was it an ambush? Did one soldier have an itchy trigger finger? It might have been an accident, a simple mistake, but 82 people died, many of them children. No wonder Dad, who is so fond of his god-daughter and her new Borg friends, was so terribly affected. All of us were -- and speaking for myself, still are.

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Walking with the Faerie Queen

Chapter Summary

The Fair Haven program is up and running again, but its inhabitants aren't behaving quite like Tom Paris expects.

Stardate 53725

Michael Sullivan, the proprietor of Sullivan's Public House, was walking around Voyager today. He knows we live on a spaceship, but he thinks we're time travelers, too. From his perspective, that's true. And maybe from ours as well, if we really think about it. I'll need to meditate upon that perception tonight, I suppose. However, thanks to Michael's "visit," enabled through the use of the Doctor's mobile emitter, the good people of Fair Haven are now aware we're from the future and not "Spirit Folk" who will whisk them away to the Land of Faerie. And that's a good thing, because they had Tom, Harry, and the Doctor trapped on the holodeck and were about to "cleanse the demons" from their town by burning them on pyres! And since the safeties on the holodeck were disengaged at the time, that would have caused some very permanent character deletions indeed.

The trouble started because our merry prankster, Tom Paris, "repaired" the tire on his flivver with a wave of his hand. Seamus saw him do it and enlisted Milo, one of his cronies, to spy on Tom. Unfortunately, that was the night Tom thought it would be great fun to change Maggie O'Halloran into a cow, after she'd said young Harry Kim could give her a kiss. Seamus and Milo saw Maggie's transformation and drew the logical (to them) conclusion that it was magic -- and dark magic at that. The villagers gathered together in the pub and shared other strange things they'd observed, such as Father Mulligan's disappearance into thin air after his sermon one Sunday morning (when the Doctor had to return to Sickbay) and when a child of the town fell into a well while Katie O'Clare was nearby. When the mother returned after trying to find help, the child was at play next to the well. Katie O'Clare told the mother she'd imagined the whole thing. Grace added, "And that Neelix, the cook at the Ox and Lamb! He looks like a leprechaun!"

Even Michael was stunned when he suddenly found himself in a grid-walled room with Tom and Harry, who were talking about him like he wasn't there, saying they'd have to "fix" everyone in Fair Haven. Unlike the rest of the townsfolk, who wanted to banish the visitors permanently, Michael decided to investigate for himself what was happening. When the townspeople had tied Tom, Harry, and "Father Mulligan" on chairs in the church, Michael noticed the Doctor's mobile emitter and put it on himself. After demanding instructions on how to make the device work, Michael went looking for Katie O'Clare. He found her -- on Voyager's bridge, performing her captainly duties. Just by looking around at us working at our stations with their blinking lights and the view of space visible on the
viewscreen before the helm, Michael knew he wasn't in Ireland any longer. He insisted that Katie tell him what was going on.

The captain took him on a tour around the ship. She explained we were explorers who enjoy going back in time every now and then to visit his fair village, and to relax for a bit. She never mentioned that the town or Michael himself were holograms. She offered to go and speak to the townsfolk, however, and they went back to Fair Haven together. Captain Janeway soothed their high tempers, assuring them that what they'd seen wasn't magic, just science. We certainly weren't demons from hell! She asked them if our crew could still visit their pleasant little town, now that they knew we weren't from the same time and place as the townspeople. She also promised we'd never pull the sort of pranks Tom had again, and extracted the same promise from him. Since Tom was in a chair awaiting execution at the time, he wisely apologized for his misdeeds and promised, "It will never happen again." The townsfolk were satisfied with the explanation and the apology, and the prisoners were released from custody.

The captain, Tom, Harry, and the Doctor spent the rest of the evening in the pub. Other crew members and many of the townsfolk were there, too. Tom placated Seamus and Milo by buying them more than a few "pints," courtesy of the shillings in Tom's pocket. At "dawn," the Fair Haven program was shut down to permit necessary repairs to be completed.

The captain has researched holodeck problems in our database and discovered the USS Enterprise, under Captain Jean-Luc Picard, once had a similar problem when Moriarity, a Sherlock Holmes program character, became self-aware. That program was also running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We've learned doing that destabilizes holodeck programs. It's hard on the holoemitters, too, which need to be shut down every day, even if it's only for a few minutes, to recharge and reconfigure themselves. (B'Elanna was getting tired of repairing blown holoemitters. She's complained she had to fix three of them during the past week alone.)

Tom and Harry have decided not to alter any of the characters' memories. The townsfolk know we're from a different time and live on a spaceship. Tom explained that if he did wipe that from their memories, he would be making a liar of the captain, who promised we would do no harm to the townspeople. I praised Tom's reasoning as perfectly logical, assuming my very best, pedantic Commander Tuvok voice. Tom laughed at me. I'm glad he still can!

**Supplemental**

Michael gave the captain a book, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, when he was hinting he knew something was going on with her that was outside his own experience. When the program reopened, she returned the favor by presenting him with a copy of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Michael's a very intelligent man -- well, he is a man, even if he is photonic -- and understood the reference right away. For the captain's sake, and for that of everyone on *Voyager*, really, I'm glad we'll still be able to visit our fair Fair Haven when we want to leave the
24th century behind for a little while. It's a very pleasant place to visit, and, thankfully, once again, a very quiet one.

Stardate 53731

After today's shift was over, I went to Fair Haven with Seven, Naomi, and the Borg children. Sam never had a chance to bring Naomi to the program before the problems from the storm forced Tom to shut it down. Since the pub seemed so central to all activities, she wanted to make sure the program was appropriate for her daughter first. As long as I was supervising the children, however, she was willing to allow Naomi to go there with Mezoti. I guess it's a good thing I didn't bring them before, since the townspeople thought Dad "looked like a leprechaun." If I'd gone there with the children when the characters were becoming so suspicious of the crew, we might have gotten into trouble, too. All three of us have alien heritages.

Today, the people of the town accepted it without comment when I told them we were visitors from another planet. Since they now saw me as I am, which is different from the way they look, I presume Tom had previously included perceptual filters on the characters so I looked just like one of them during my visits prior to when the neutronic wave front arrived. Tom didn't replace those filters, which I think was a good decision on his part. If you can accept spaceships and time travel, it isn't that much of a leap to accept an alien visitor or two, is it?

Although we toured the town for a little while and had dinner with Dad at the Ox and Lamb, we spent most of our time down by the seashore. Seven, of course, insisted on using our walk along the sea strand as an educational experience. The youngsters seem to have figured out a way to have fun anyway, even when Seven is pontificating.

Icheb spent much of the time discussing the project he's been building for the upcoming science fair with Seven. The twins were -- well, they were the twins. They don't say much to anyone other than each other, ever. They were silent so much of the time in Fair Haven program, I think they must have been communicating the way they did on the day they were cheating at Kadis-kot, through their Borg neural interfaces, rather than audible speech.

It did my heart good to see the two girls skipping along the edge of the sea in their bare feet, throwing pebbles and shells into the water, and every now and then, finding a shell that was too pretty to throw away and asking to have it replicated as a souvenir. Little Mezoti always looks so pale inside the rest of the ship. Today, the simulated sea breezes made her cheeks almost as rosy as Naomi's. She even broke into a smile every now and then. And Naomi was simply glowing. She finally has a real, live girl to play with, one who is nothing like a Vaadwaur.
Betrayal

Chapter Summary

Icheb's parents exercise their parental rights and request his return to their care. Their concept of "care," however, is quite different than that of Kathryn Janeway and Seven of Nine.

Stardate 53747

The "First Annual Voyager Science Fair" was held in the Mess Hall today. The children did a wonderful job on their science projects, although some adults did pitch in to assist. Mezoti loves bugs -- the insect type, not the kind that infect technology. During a food-gathering mission on a planet with an abundance of local flora and fauna and many productive farms, one of the colonists showed Noah Lessing an ant hill the farmer was planning to eliminate. The ants interfered with the setting of some of the more delicate fruits he was growing. Noah dug out the entire ant colony and brought it to the Exo-Botany Lab for Mezoti's project, and I helped her construct a clear cube to house them. Mezoti studied the database on the ants and added a substance to make them glow.

Captain Janeway was very impressed with the project, although when Mezoti talked about the drones of the colony serving a queen ant, she said, "I thought we were trying to get the children away from the Borg!" Seven told her she hadn't wanted to interfere with Mezoti's desire to make her own choice. (I'm glad the captain didn't have any problem with the ant farm's cubic housing!)

Dad helped Naomi set up her globe of Ktaris IV, her father's home world. She'd researched the climatic patterns and used holographic animation to display the prevailing winds changing with the turn of the seasons over the course of a Ktarian year. She did a wonderful job.

The twins SAID they wanted to clone Naomi. Seven decided they should start smaller, so they cloned a potato instead. Since they're twins, I can see why they might be attracted to the idea of cloning something, but I think they displayed their intelligence -- and deviousness -- by "taking Seven's advice" and choosing to do the easier project. If Seven had said they could clone Naomi, I suspect the twins would have decided potatoes would be a better experimental subject after all.

Icheb was the star of the fair. He's the oldest, of course, but the gravimetric sensor array he created can detect neutrino fluxes. Since neutrinos are often found near wormholes, the array wasn't only an
exercise in pure science. The device might help Voyager discover a shortcut to the Alpha Quadrant. Seven assured the captain the engineering principles were sound. I could see how proud Seven was of Icheb's achievement. Even B'Elanna was impressed. If he continues to develop as he has up to now, he'll prove to be a real asset to Voyager's crew in the future.

**Supplemental**

My earlier log entry included a prediction that won't come true. Icheb's parents have been located. They want us to return him to them. They're his parents and have the right to get him back. We've changed course and are underway to the planet Brunal right now.

Seven will be devastated by this news. It won't be easy for her to tell Icheb about this, either. They've grown very close. I don't know what this may mean for Mezoti. Tom and Harry told me the captain has sent at least four messages to the Norcadian government, asking them to make arrangements for her to be returned to family members or to a foster home. The authorities have acknowledged receiving the messages, but that's always the end of it. Considering all the drama that occurred when we rescued Father, Seven and Kraahn from the Tsunkatse arena, it's unlikely they're really looking for a home for her. I don't know where in their system she comes from. Mezoti's facial features are very different from Penk's.

As for Azan, Rebi, and little Aimee, we can't even identify their species! There's no record of their genomes in any of the Delta Quadrant databases to which we've had access. I won't be surprised if they stay with us all the way to the Alpha Quadrant.

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**Stardate 53751**

We're currently in orbit around Brunal, Icheb's home planet. It's a desolate place, with a Borg conduit barely a light year away. Judging from the tremendous gouges on the planet's surface, the Borg must have victimized the Brunali repeatedly, helping themselves to cities, industrial areas, and mineral deposits. At this point, it's a poor place for a young man like Icheb to live. He's quite resistant to going "home" to his parents. He says he can't remember them and would prefer to remain on Voyager. I wish that were an option. It isn't. The captain will not allow it. From the first day they came onto our ship, Captain Janeway has been adamant that we need to find homes for the children - - preferably with their own families -- although she'll accept any reasonable substitute. His parents have been found. Icheb will be leaving us.

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Stardate 53755

We said goodbye to Icheb today. The first time he was transported to the planet's surface, he was only with his parents for a few minutes before he insisted on leaving. The captain invited them to visit Icheb on our ship, so they could become reaquainted. Dad allowed Yifay, Icheb's mother, into his kitchen so she could prepare a dish her son has always loved. Once Icheb tasted the *poma*, he cleaned his plate and asked for seconds. (Dad told me he tried some. It was so good, he asked Yifay for the recipe.)

The next day, when the parents asked him to spend a night with them at their home, Icheb consented. During this visit, he learned more about them and about his home planet. When Icheb came back to the ship, he told me how impressed he was by their advances in genetic modification. Unfortunately, it's a vital technology for the Brunali. The Borg have stolen so many of their resources, the people are constantly looking for ways to improve the efficiency of their farmlands. Hoping to avoid further "visits" from the neighbors, the Brunali hide their technology from the Borg. Judging from the ruins that can be seen beyond the settlement, the Brunali civilization must have been quite sophisticated before the Borg began plundering it regularly. I asked Icheb if he's decided what he'll do. He believes he may be able to contribute what he's learned from his time on *Voyager* and from being Borg to help his people. He didn't come right out and tell me his decision, but I was fairly certain I knew what it would be.

After he left me, Icheb went to Seven and told her he'd be staying with his parents. She accepted his decision quite stoically, I understand; but after Icheb left her to say goodbye to the crew, I went to see her. The expression on her face reminded me of the way she looked after One's death. She was in mourning -- and no wonder. She'd begun to think of Icheb as her son as much as her protégé. I tried my best to comfort her. She requested my help assembling educational materials for him so Icheb can continue his studies after he leaves us. We even replicated a high-resolution telescope for him to use. Icheb told Seven his father Leucon loves to "stargaze." I suspect that may have helped Icheb accept leaving *Voyager* and its wondrous Astrometrics Lab, where he's spent so many happy hours studying the stars with Seven.

I was with Seven when she gave the materials to Icheb, just before he mounted the platform steps to transport down to the planet's surface. He thanked us for the gifts and promised to use what we'd provided and study every day.

Seven is devastated, and I know I'm truly going to miss that wonderful young man.

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Stardate 53760

We've just rescued Icheb from the Borg a second time. I'm still having trouble processing everything that's just happened.

I didn't know why the captain suddenly ordered us to change course and return to Brunal, but I could sense Seven's agitation when she came onto the bridge once we entered the system.

The captain contacted Yifay and Leucon and asked them a very simple question: "I'd like to speak to Icheb." The parents said he "wasn't available." Of course he wasn't. He was in a one-person transport vessel, headed towards the Borg conduit, just as a sphere was about to emerge. Icheb's parents insisted we had no right to interfere with their plans. Their plans? For him to be assimilated by the Borg? How could they do that to their own son?

The parents' objections meant nothing to the captain, who was now in full child protection mode. Icheb's transport had been doctored up to entice the Borg into thinking the technology was far more advanced, and therefore more attractive to the Collective, than it really was. As soon as we were close enough, we transported Icheb to Sickbay. Since the sphere was about to attack our ship, too, Seven suggested we use a variation of the trick Harry came up with last year. That time, the photon torpedo we slipped through the scout ship's shields exploded much too close to its power matrix, and the small Borg vessel exploded into fragments. This time, we transported the armed photon torpedo inside the craft which Icheb had occupied, and the plan worked to perfection. A few seconds after the Borg tractored the Brunali transport inside their sphere, the torpedo's charge erupted. The sphere wasn't destroyed, but it was severely damaged, particularly to its tractor beam mechanisms and propulsion, that it was unable to pursue Voyager as we flew off at maximum warp.

I know I have a very unorthodox family. Despite the fact that I entered into their lives as a fully grown individual, capable of living an independent life, both of my fathers have embraced me, in their own very different ways, as their son. They've wanted the best for me ever since my advent. I know Father loves me, even though he's unable to say it to my face. Dad, of course, has told me many times how wonderful it is to have me for a son, since all the earlier generations of his family and his siblings are long dead. We consider the Wildmans our "relatives," since Dad is Naomi's godfather. We're close to our Borg youngsters, too. Voyager's "children" need to stick together.

Every child needs to be loved and nurtured by its parents. Unfortunately, not all parents do that for their offspring, and if they don't, the child has the right to be loved and nurtured by someone who will. If Yifay and Leucon didn't want him, why didn't they simply allow Icheb to stay on Voyager? I cannot understand why they did what they did. It defies logic.

Supplemental
When I came to the end of my shift, I went to Sickbay to see how Icheb was doing. Mezoti and Naomi were standing near the entrance. The Doctor told them they couldn't visit Icheb until he was awake, and then, only if Seven or Samantha Wildman were there to supervise them. I contacted the Doctor and asked him about Icheb's status. He was still unconscious. I asked the EMH if I could bring the girls for a visit once Icheb is awake. Could I substitute for Seven and Sam? He said that would be acceptable, as long as Sam and Seven agreed. The girls were listening to our conversation, of course. After I contacted Sam and Seven, who consented to my supervision of the girls during a visit to Sickbay, I suggested we wait in the Mess Hall, where snacks would be available, instead of standing around in the corridor of Deck 5.

Once Dad supplied Naomi and Mezoti with their favorite snacks, we sat at a table near the windows to wait for word from the Doctor. Everyone who came into the Mess Hall for a break or late lunch asked us about his status. Despite the possible danger the Borg had presented to our ship during our rescue of Icheb, everyone agreed the risk was acceptable to save him from a second assimilation. He's quite a popular young man.

While we were sitting there waiting, Mezoti shared details Naomi and I hadn't known before, which explained why our ship turned around to check on Icheb's status so soon after we'd left him with his parents. Mezoti had been unable to regenerate after Icheb left. When her cycle was disturbed, she interrupted Seven's because she wanted to talk about how much she missed her "big brother."

"I was afraid Icheb would be assimilated again because that planet is so close to a transwarp conduit. Seven said I shouldn't worry because the Brunali no longer have any technology to interest the Borg. But Icheb's father lied to her about how Icheb was assimilated. Leucon told Seven that Icheb was curious about new farming equipment and went into the field where it was located all by himself. The Borg came and assimilated the apparatus and everyone in the field that day. Leucon said this happened four years ago. But Icheb was alone in a small ship when he was assimilated, and it was only a few months ago. Seven didn't believe me at first, but she checked other records and found out Leucon's story didn't fit the facts. Mine did. 'A class-one transport was detected in grid 649 . . . one life-form . . . species: Brunali.'"

Naomi was horrified. I was, too. Icheb's parents had lied about the circumstances of his first assimilation and had deliberately sent him to be assimilated by the Borg -- twice.

Mezoti told us she hoped the captain never found her parents. "I don't want to leave Voyager. This is my home now. This is my Collective. Seven told us Voyager is her Collective, too." It was gratifying to hear Mezoti say she wanted to stay with us. I like her quite as much as I do Naomi, my "pseudo-sibling," as we call ourselves sometimes, when we're being silly. (I would never let Father know about it, of course, but Dad joins in the fun sometimes.) Mezoti is certainly a no-nonsense kind of girl, but Naomi enjoys Mezoti's company. They're very good for each other. I'd like to think Mezoti is more typical of the Norcadians than Penk!
When the Doctor contacted us to tell us Icheb was awake, we went to Sickbay to visit him. Seven and the captain had already been there, so Icheb knew what had occurred. He didn't say very much; he was still in shock from the turn of events. He said his mother spent little time with him during the three days he was on Brunal, but Leucon did. "My father . . . seemed to like me . . ." Icheb said, so quietly, with so much pain, my heart went out to him. It may take a long time for Icheb to get over this betrayal by the ones who should have loved and protected him.

I dropped Naomi off at the Wildman quarters before I brought Mezoti to "Borg Central," as the crew has been calling Cargo Bay Two. Seven was there and told Mezoti to get ready to regenerate. The twins were already in their alcoves. Once Mezoti's regeneration cycle was running, I asked Seven if there was anything I could do for the children -- or for her.

I wasn't sure if she was going to reply, but then she shook her head, as if to clear it from cobwebs (unless Mezoti has managed to convince an away team to bring her some from a food foraging expedition, we don't have any spiders on Voyager). Finally, Seven said that she's still trying to understand everything that's happened. Then she added, rather cryptically, "Commander Tuvok will explain what the Doctor discovered about Icheb. Voyager's security staff should know about this, although there shouldn't be any danger to the crew on this ship."

I was intrigued, but since I could see she needed to regenerate, I left her, with instructions to call me if she thought of anything I could do to help. Since Icheb is still in Sickbay, Seven won't have to wait for a free alcove to take care of her own needs. After taking my leave of "Borg Central," I didn't return to my own quarters right away. I went to see Father, who explained Seven's last statement regarding danger -- or rather, it's lack -- to our crew.

Icheb was genetically programmed to be the carrier of the pathogen that killed the adults on the Borg cube. If the children hadn't been protected by their maturation chambers, they would have died, too. It's possible the chambers disgorged the children prematurely because of the pathogen's influence. "It initially works on the biological parts of a Borg's body, but when the Doctor performed the post-mortem on the corpse from the children's cube, he found evidence it also damages the mechanical components of a drone. Although the pathogen in Icheb's body is currently inert, it remains present in his DNA. It will reactivate if he is assimilated by the Borg again. Icheb's parents created him to be a 'Typhoid Mary' to the Collective."

"Is that why the children's cube blew up?" I asked Father.

"It may have been a factor, although the feedback pulse we sent through the tractor beam to free Voyager from the beam was the direct cause. In any event, we must do everything we can to protect the other children and Seven of Nine from an accidental reactivation of the pathogen."
Father didn’t need to say more. The Borg believe resistance is futile, but they would do well to avoid *Voyager* from now on. With Icheb on this ship, assimilating our vessel would be an exercise in futility for the Borg -- and a fatal one, as well.

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Gentle Wanderer

Chapter Summary

Kes returns to Voyager.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Stardate 53774

Kes came back to Voyager yesterday. I wish I could say she's come to stay, and that she's back together with Dad, but I can't. She's already gone.

I was standing at the back-up security station on the bridge, trying to decide if Father would be more disturbed by the surprise party Dad was planning for his "milestone birthday" if I failed to warn him about it beforehand or if he'd be even more annoyed at having to appear there after I did (since the captain would make him go to his own party, whether he wanted to attend or not), when Harry reported Voyager was being hailed by the occupant of a small shuttle. For several seconds I searched my memory, because her voice seemed so familiar, yet different, too. I realized it was Kes just before the visual of her face came up on the bridge viewscreen.

If I'm honest with myself, as I always try to be in this log, I might have had just as much trouble recognizing her from looking at her face as I did from her voice alone. I know the Ocampa generally don't live for more than ten years or so (except on Suspiria's space station, which the crew and Kes encountered before my advent). According to Dad, the Ocampa keep their youthful looks until the last year of their lives. Kes looked, well, she looked older than Father does. A lot older. Kes hasn't celebrated her seventh birthday as of yet. When I realized it was her, I guessed she must have led a very hard life since leaving Voyager.

She asked to come aboard. The captain agreed, of course, but we (Father, Harry, and I) scanned her shuttle (which wasn't the same one she took when she left Voyager two and a half years ago) and noticed it was in worse condition than it looked -- and it looked very beat-up. After the captain mentioned this to Kes, she replied, "I know. Could you please use a tractor beam to bring me in? I'd hate to crash into the shuttle bay. This little ship is just about ready to give out on me."
We did as she asked, and the little craft landed safely inside the bay. Father told me to notify Dad so he could meet Kes there. Captain Janeway suggested that Father call Mr. Ayala and Crewman Sofin to take our places at Tactical and Security, so we would be free to go to the shuttle bay, too. It was most thoughtful of her. That's another reason we all adore our captain so! She thinks of little things like this all the time. The captain also contacted B'Elanna and asked her to examine Kes' shuttle, to see if we can take care of any necessary repairs to make the craft safer for Kes to utilize. From what we could see of the shuttle's exterior, it may require quite a bit of work to make it space-worthy.

Kes seemed very happy to see us. She hugged us, one by one. I thought it was interesting she didn't ask us how we were doing. It's as if she already knew we were doing well. We could see she was tired, and the captain insisted she should rest for a while before we "caught up." Kes wouldn't go to her old quarters, though, which have been mine ever since she left us. Instead, Kes said we should go to the Mess Hall. "I can take a nap on one of the couches if I need one. I can sleep through anything, you know." She said this with a little laugh; that was the first time I could really see our Kes again.

Nothing the captain said would change her mind. Finally, except for B'Elanna and Vorik, who were poking their noses into every nook and cranny of Kes' shuttle, we trooped up to the Mess Hall "for a little snack," as Dad put it. I insisted he replicate things everyone else would like, not just Talaxian fare, and he agreed without any argument. ("Of course," he said. "It's for Kessie.")

Once she was seated at a table in the Mess Hall, Kes began to revive a bit. She even looked a little younger. I mentioned this to her, and she laughed in that warm way she's always had. "When I'm rested, I do look younger, don't I?" The lunch rush was over, so we were able to sit around and relax. Chell was there, as he often is, backing up Dad. He was overjoyed to see Kes again and flattered her so effusively, I was tempted to ask him to tone it down a little. He does rattle on so sometimes.

Captain Janeway asked Kes about her adventures. She said she'd been traveling "here and there and everywhere," but she seemed reluctant to give us any specifics. Father asked, quite tentatively, if she'd had any more problems with her "energy levels."

"You mean my 'energy surges,' don't you, Tuvok?" He admitted that's what he was actually asking. She reassured him she would no longer be a danger to Voyager. "I've learned how to control them well. I've had to. There are some very dangerous species out and about in the galaxy, you know. You've met some of them, I'm sure."

Just then, Seven of Nine walked into the Mess Hall, followed by her four young charges and Naomi Wildman. "And domesticated some, too, I see!" Kes exclaimed with a grin. Naomi remembered her and ran over to Kes to greet her. Our former Borg hung back. Kes asked to be introduced to the
youngsters, and soon they were all chatting about their lives on *Voyager*. Azan and Rebi actually spoke in full sentences to Kes, which astonished me. (I’m lucky to get more than three words at a time out of either of them without a prodigious effort.)

As I was musing about the twin boys’ sudden friendliness, I realized that Kes, unaccountably, looked even younger than she had when she first arrived. In fact, she looked almost like the Kes I’d known from my first days on *Voyager*. I glanced over at Dad, and then at Father, and I realized they both looked extremely puzzled, too.

Finally, Seven told the children that their "recess" was just about over. They each replicated a snack - nutritional supplements for the Borg children, and an oatmeal raisin cookie and glass of milk for Naomi -- and sat down at a table in the corner. While the children were at the replicator, Seven inquired after Kes' health. I wondered if she’d also noticed how Kes seemed to have gotten younger as she was talking with the children. Kes said she was doing "all right for now." That set up several worried glances between the captain and the rest of us.

"Kes, did you come to us to see the Doctor?" the captain asked.

"Of course I want to see him! But it's not because I need a physical examination or anything like that. The truth is, I'm dying; but there's nothing anyone can do about it."

Everyone began to talk at once, until Kes hushed us. "I'll explain in a minute. Maybe we should summon the Doctor before I tell you why I'm here. By the way, has he picked out a name yet?"

"No, he has not," Seven said, in her usual forceful manner.

"He hasn't? Whatever is he waiting for?"

"You should ask him that. Maybe you can get him to finally choose one," the captain said.

After Seven and the children said their goodbyes and returned to their lessons, the captain contacted the EMH. "It's about time you called me!" he grumped, but when he arrived at the Mess Hall, he was all smiles. Since Kes had maintained her more youthful appearance, he didn't attempt to carry her off to Sickbay for that physical she claimed she didn't need.

By this time, the early dinner crowd was starting to gather. Since Kes said she had more to say, Dad
asked Chell to take over the Mess Hall for the evening meal, too. The captain suggested we go to the conference room to continue our visit, and Kes said that would be perfect. Chakotay, Harry, and Tom could hear what she had to say then, too, since we'd be next to the bridge. When we arrived, B'Elanna was already there, ready to report her appraisal of Kes' shuttle.

B'Elanna came right out with it. "That ship is about to disintegrate any second! I'm surprised you could keep it together long enough to get it here."

Kes smiled enigmatically. "I have my ways. That's one reason it's in such bad shape." Then she sighed and said she needed to get home to the Ocampa caverns, "before there isn't enough left of me to tell my people what they need to know." That prompted the Doctor to remove his medical tricorder from his belt and scan her. "Don't bother, Doctor. I'm coming to the end of my corporeal life. I know it, and there's really nothing you can do about it. I just hope I can keep myself together long enough to get home first." She smiled at him, then. "Tell them, Doctor. How old does your tricorder say I am?"

He cleared his throat in that way he does when he wants to delay saying something. Since he has no throat to clear, it's an affectation he's adopted from one of the many physicians in his matrix. Finally, he stated, "It says you're fifteen years old. That's ridiculous. You're not a day over . . . "

"Oh, but I am that old, Doctor. Probably older, considering the way I've traveled to so many places -- so far, and so fast, and before and after in time -- but I've got a trick, you see. I used it on Voyager when I left you, after I began to change. Remember?"

The captain answered her. "When you gave us that push out of the space that the Borg and Species 8472 were fighting about? Ten years closer to home?" Kes said she was correct.

"For a long time after that, I was just energy. It was exhilarating for a while, but then . . . I got bored. It's true! Having a body and enjoying life with other people is very stimulating. I remembered your Mr. Einstein and began to experiment transforming myself from energy to matter, and then back to energy again. It's like anything else. Practicing a procedure makes it second nature after a while, and I learned how to prevent those bothersome energy surges. Then I remembered something I'd read in Voyager's database, about an Alpha Quadrant species called the Organians. I went there and discovered the Ocampa are very much like them."

"Like the Organians," Commander Chakotay said. He sounded very surprised, and looked even more so when Kes agreed with him.

"Only I'm not sure the Ocampa can come back to corporeal form once they've finally achieved
morilogium. The Organians can, as they showed Captain Kirk and Commander Kor during the time the Federation and the Klingon Empire were vying for their planet. They put an end to their confrontation by imposing the Organian Peace Treaty. My true, final morilogium probably won't come for a few more years, but I have to start back now if I'm going to get home in time. I need to tell my people what I've learned about our true natures."

The shuttle Kes had been on when she left Voyager was consumed when she was transformed into a creature of pure energy. She found the craft she arrived in floating in space, abandoned. Since the technology is "nothing special," Kes believes it may have been thought not worthy of assimilation when the people inside it were taken.

"I did find traces of Borg nanoprobes in the ship," B'Elanna confirmed, a little reluctantly. I was glad Seven wasn't here to hear this. B'Elanna went on to say that certain components may have been removed by the Borg. Parts of the warp drive were missing from the propulsion system. "That's why I was so surprised you managed to get here!" B'Elanna said.

Kes smiled her beatific smile, although she already looked a little older than she did in the Mess Hall, when the children came in to say hello to her. "Yes, it's taken more of a beating since I picked it up. It won't make it back to Ocampa in the state it's in now; and I won't be able to maintain a corporeal body if I try to travel all the way there solely as a creature of energy. If that happens, I'll lose the ability to come back as a humanoid; and I wouldn't be able to share the proof that the stories of our people's mental powers aren't myths. You know they're real, just from knowing me. Species 8472 may have triggered my energy surges earlier in my life span than would have come about in the natural way of things, but my people need to know the old stories are true. Our mental and physical powers are our birthright. We don't need to fear the morilogium, because it's really the same thing as . . . well . . . as puberty."

"You mean it's not death?" Chakotay asked.

"No, it's our passage from childhood to adulthood. An Ocampa doesn't live for nine or ten or even twenty years. That's how long our childhood lasts. It's also when we create a new generation of Ocampa. In the past, we maintained our population levels through multiple births. I believe the Caretaker did something to us, perhaps in our food, so that only one child was born during a woman's solitary elogium. He meant for our people to die out before he did. When we finally grow up, we shed our corporeal bodies, but our consciousness lives on for hundreds of years. Maybe thousands. I've never had the chance to find out exactly how long it can be. The Q might know, but I'd rather not ask them. They're so erratic."

The captain shook her head, as if it couldn't contain everything Kes had said.

I looked over at Father. He was leaning back, looking very solemn, with his fingertips joined
together. That's something he does whenever he's contemplating anything important. Or when he's meditating. I looked at Dad. His mouth was open, but he looked like he couldn't find any words to say. I know I couldn't. That's why I've been able to remember so much of what was said at this meeting. Everything Kes told us is engraved into my memory.

Tom was the one who broke the silence. "Kes, your shuttle is in bad shape. Do you need us to provide you with another one?"

"Well, no, not a whole new shuttle. I don't need a propulsion system. I can move it along very nicely on my own. I know how to control my surges now. The solid parts shouldn't disintegrate when I do it anymore. But I do need a structure, a container of some kind, that's stronger than my little ship is now. That one would be fine if its structural integrity can be reinforced so it can hold together during the rest of my journey home."

B'Elanna consulted her PADD and said it might be possible to reinforce the craft Kes used to come here, but she recommended returning the impulse engines to operational status, "... in case someone else gets curious about how you're getting from place to place."

"They probably wouldn't believe you if you told them the truth," Tom said, which broke a lot of the tension. It was hard for US to believe it, and we all know about Kes' abilities.

The captain told B'Elanna to do whatever she needed to do to rejuvenate Kes' shuttle, and the meeting broke up. I went to Kes and offered to stay with Dad or Father tonight, so she could rest in her old quarters. She said she'd prefer setting up a cot in her airponics bay. "I've been dreaming about being there again, with the smell of fresh plants all around me." That's when the captain had to tell her that while we still grow foodstuffs and flowers on the ship, they're now spread out in different locations. The airponics bay which she remembers isn't at that location anymore. "Why isn't it still in Cargo Bay Two?" she asked.

"Kes, that's Borg Central now," Tom said. "It's where Seven and the children are billeted."

"If they're willing to let me stay with them, maybe I could set my cot up there. All of the Delta Quadrant 'children' should stick together. It is only for one night."

The captain laughed, but Father, I noticed, did not. "You truly believe that the Ocampa, in their corporeal form, are children?" he asked.
She became very serious. "That's what The Caretaker always called us."

The captain became very pensive, finally saying, "You're right. That is what he said to me about the Ocampa. That they were children."

"...who needed to be taken care of. That's why he went to such lengths to find someone to replace him, after he realized he was dying. And there's something else that worries me, Captain. He built up the underground city's energy reserves just before he died. I don't know how long those reserves will hold out. I hope they aren't already gone. I need to get back to Ocampa. With what I now know, I might be able to find alternative energy sources before they have to try their luck on the surface. You know what happened to me when I went up there. I wouldn't have lasted long if Neelix and your crew hadn't come along when you did."

Supplemental

Seven and the children were delighted to have a guest for one night. Mezoti, in particular, was fascinated by Kes. This morning, when we gathered for breakfast, Kes said our favorite Norcadian peppered her with questions last night, until Seven insisted Mezoti climb into her regeneration cubicle. And even then, Mezoti was procrastinating, standing far enough in front of it so it wouldn't engage. Seven had to push her into her alcove to initiate the cycle. As we've learned, Mezoti's curiosity knows no bounds.

B'Elanna ordered Ensign Vorik and many of the Gamma shift engineering staff to work on Kes' shuttle overnight. The Shuttle Building and Maintenance crew came in early for Alpha shift and installed a very basic impulse drive. By 1300 hours, the job was done. The captain asked her to stay another day, just to visit (and to attend Father's birthday party), but Kes was eager to get underway.

The "family," along with the captain, Commander Chakotay, Father, and the EMH, gathered in the shuttle bay to say goodbye. B'Elanna, Tom, Seven and the Borg children were there, too. B'Elanna gave Kes a package to take with her. "We have something to give to Dr. Denara Pel, if you can do it without putting yourself in danger. The Think Tank claimed they'd given the Vidiians the cure for the Phage," B'Elanna explained. "But we're not sure they were telling us the truth. They had a talent for lying. Whether the Vidiians have a cure now or not, we owe these DNA samples to Dr. Pel. If you recall, we couldn't finish the exchange for the serum that cured the captain and Chakotay on New Earth. We owe her. We like to pay our debts."

"I remember," Kes said. "Is this your DNA sample?"

"Actually, everyone on the ship has provided one, even little Aimee, Azan and Rebi, although we
"Thank you, B'Elanna. I'll find a way to get this to her. If the Phage has been cured, Dr. Pel might still find a use for your 'payment.'"

And then it really was time to say goodbye. Kes hugged everyone briefly, but her last embrace was the longest, and reserved for Dad. She held him close and whispered something into his ear. Her voice was so gentle and soft, even with the superior Vulcan hearing I inherited from Father, I couldn't catch what she said to Dad. Then she walked to her shuttle and waved goodbye from the hatchway. No drama this time, no wildly fluctuating energy surges to endanger Voyager's hull. Her ship simply floated out of the shuttle bay, and then, in a flash quite like any ship going to warp, it was gone -- except her little craft isn't equipped with a warp drive. Kes herself, with her marvelous powers, flashed it away from our humanoid senses.

I didn't ask him about it right away, but when Dad and I were cleaning up after Father's birthday party, I hinted it would be "nice to know" what Kes' last words were to him. "She told me I would find someone to love me again, the way she'd loved me. And I'd have a family again someday. Of course, she's right. I do have a family. I have you, my son, and Mr. Vulcan, too. Although it may be a bit strange to some, we're a family!" He laughed then, but it was a sad one, full of longing for something -- and someone -- he'd never see again.

I didn't say anything more then, but when I meditated this evening, all I could bring to mind was my family. It's unconventional, but I'm so glad to be here, to support my fathers, as they mourn their loss of Kes for a second time. Kes was Dad's girlfriend. He thought they were mated for life, even though he always knew they wouldn't be together long. Father was her mentor; and since Kes was the Doctor's mentor, I included him in my meditations tonight, too. While everyone on Voyager is one family, in a sense, ours is a special bond. I know how lonely Dad is. I'm his son, but I know he'd be so much happier if he had a spouse of his own, too.

I will miss Kes. Our relationship was sometimes a little rocky, but I wish her well. I hope she makes it back to Ocampa in her rebuilt shuttle. The sad thing is, we'll never know for sure if she did get home -- or if she never did.

**Supplemental**

I never did get a chance to warn Father about the birthday party. He may have been somewhat dazed by Kes' sudden visit, but after everyone in the Mess Hall yelled out "Surprise" and "Happy Birthday, Commander Tuvok," he was very gracious and thanked everyone for thinking of him on this day. He even thanked Dad for the pistachio cake with parra-crème frosting, which he said was "almost as flavorful as the one I once prepared here." The only negative thing Father had to say was directed towards Captain Janeway, when he admonished her for "letting everyone know the significance of
this date." That's about as close to a joke as Father ever permits himself; and everyone laughed. Since he didn't seem annoyed by our reaction, I'm certain he really was pleased by the events of the day.

All of them, particularly our visitor, who managed to whisper a sincere "happy birthday" to Father before she departed. Kes couldn't have chosen a better day to stop by.

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Chapter End Notes

Yes, this is my take about how "Fury" should have been. I didn't care for the complete trashing of the character in the episode, and it was so unnecessary. They could have added somebody chasing her shuttle to Voyager and maybe some shooting by Voyager's crew to let her get free of her pursuers, and there's the action quotient the show insisted upon having. Oh well. This is what alternate universe fanfiction is for....
**Family Ties**

Chapter Summary

Project Pathfinder begins normal operations. Although the crew receives correspondence, they are unable to respond because one particular "message" takes up almost all the transmission space.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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**Stardate 53781**

The first time we heard from the Alpha Quadrant, we were shocked. Admiral Paris said his staff was going to continue working on ways to communicate with us regularly. There was barely enough time to say that, and for the admiral to say he missed his son and that he was proud of him, before the micro-wormhole Lieutenant Reginald Barclay had opened began to close. We sufficient time for a condensed datastream exchange. The captain sent our ship's logs, crew reports, and navigation records to the Alpha Quadrant, while Barclay forwarded data on a new hyper-subspace technology, with recommendations on how to modify our current system to permit its use after it had been perfected. Seven and Harry implemented those modifications promptly. So, while we were surprised and excited when another transmission came through Astrometrics today, we were well-prepared to receive it.

At the time of the initial transmission last year, Lieutenant Barclay had to guess where our ship might be, based on the information our EMH provided Starfleet when he traveled to the *Prometheus* and confirmed *Voyager's* survival. We'd made several very long jumps through various one-time-only technologies since then, however, which Barclay couldn't have anticipated. He used up a significant amount of time aiming the array from place to place until his last choice was close enough for us to intercept his message. Less guesswork was necessary this time, as he had our navigation records available to fine tune his aim. We received a rapid burst of data which contained, in addition to official communiqués from Starfleet Headquarters, a multitude of letters sent by family and friends, in visual and textual form. This personal correspondence warmed the hearts of just about everyone, even those of us who weren't privileged to receive any.

Sam and Naomi received a very precious message. They never received a letter from Naomi's father through the Hirogen array. This time Gresgrendtreck sent a visual message to his wife and daughter. You could see the tears glistening in his eyes as he told them how much he longed to see them in person, so he could "hug them close and never let them get on a starship without him again." That
message will be played and replayed over and over again by both mother and daughter. Sam has had images of Gres to share with Naomi, but to have him speak directly to his daughter and call her by name -- well, that was a very special moment for her. I'm so pleased they chose to share that message with Dad and me.

The initial, "highest priority" message to the captain provided a time frame for her to send back logs and other reports generated since the initial "Project Pathfinder" communication (which we now know is what they call it), and for our crew to communicate with their loved ones. Every 32 days, datastream signals can be aligned through an artificial micro-wormhole, allowing compressed datastream messages to be sent in both directions for a period of about seventeen hours, before conditions deteriorate and the window closes until next time.

Even though the crew has been preparing and updating messages to be sent to their family and friends ever since the first transmission, not many could be sent -- in fact, none were.

The Doctor received a message from Lieutenant Barclay, informing him that Dr. Lewis Zimmerman was terminally ill. None of the physicians in the Alpha Quadrant, including the upgraded EMH Mark-2, -3, and -4 programs, had been able to cure him. Lieutenant Barclay sent Dr. Zimmerman's medical records to our EMH, requesting a consultation. Could our Doctor recommend a course of treatment no one else has attempted?

The Doctor noticed that his creator suffered from acute subcellular degradation, a condition that looked a lot like the early stage of the Vidiian Phage. The Doctor thought he might be able to devise a cure based upon Borg regenerative techniques, but there was a catch. He wanted to travel back through the datastream to implement the treatment himself. There wouldn't be room for anything in the return datastream other than the tactical and log information the captain was required to send to Starfleet Command. None of the crew's personal messages could be sent until the next transmission date, and our helmsman Tom Paris would need to agree to act as Voyager's chief medical officer during the Doctor's 32-day absence from the ship.

While the captain was reluctant to permit this excursion, the Doctor had done his homework. He'd gone to Tom and explained the situation. Tom agreed to replace the Doctor (although he told him that he'd better return in 32 days or he'd have B'Elanna remove every single recreational subroutine he'd ever slipped into his program without permission -- and some of the ones authorized by the captain, as well). The Doctor also went to members of the crew, including Sam and Naomi, to explain the situation and ask them if they'd be willing to wait a month before replying to their own messages. "It will give me more time to decide what to say to my father," Naomi said to me after the Doctor left. I know Father gave his blessing to the EMH without a second's hesitation. This was a mission of mercy. How could anyone object?

The Doctor had to make sacrifices of his own. He had to experience life without his precious subroutines for a month, since Seven and B'Elanna needed to pare down his program for it to fit
through the datastream. He wasn't pleased, but since the crew was giving up the chance to send their mail to their loved ones so he could go, how could the EMH object?

So off he went, and everyone has gone back to updating and expanding their messages to their family and friends in the Alpha Quadrant while the Doctor is on his "house call." I hope he can help Dr. Zimmerman, the "Father of Modern Holography." Who knows what other inventions he may be able to create if given the chance to live a longer, healthier life? I wish him well.

Supplemental

Father told me Tom had been most willing to cover for the Doctor during the EMH's absence. When I saw Tom tonight at dinner, he didn't look that willing to me. "I'm a pilot! Not a doctor!" he exclaimed, more than once. I assured Tom that everyone has complete confidence in him. The Doctor wouldn't have asked the captain to go if he didn't believe his primary field medic -- and occasional whipping boy -- wasn't competent to fill the position in the interim.

Tom still isn't very happy that his primary assignment will be acting chief medical officer until the Doctor returns. Frankly, I'm not too happy about it myself. When confronted by an aggressive alien species, which happens all too often in the Delta Quadrant, I want Tom Paris steering Voyager out of trouble. While Tom has trained his navigation staff well, no one else has his reflexes or creativity when it comes to evasive maneuvers. And if the Doctor's "house call" should last longer than 32 days, "It may be a case of 'physician, heal thyself,'" Tom mourned. "I'll be a basket case!" I hardly think that's likely, but I do feel for him. The only thing Tom loves as much as his B'Elanna is speeding through the Delta Quadrant while seated at the helm.

Stardate  53822

Thanks to a homework project, we've learned the truth about Aimee's heritage.

The Doctor was the children's primary instructor in Humanoid Biology, and Icheb has relieved some of the pressure on Tom's Sickbay obligations while the Doctor's away by teaching them a unit on Genetics. The one positive aspect of his short, and otherwise traumatic stay on Brunal was his discovery that he has an interest and a fair degree of talent in that subject, particularly when it comes to the manipulation of DNA for hybridization purposes. Icheb assigned a project to Naomi, Mezoti, Azan, and Rebi. They were to collect DNA samples from representatives of the various species of the crew. They were also asked to transcribe information from the data nodes salvaged from the children's cube just before they escaped to Voyager. The children chose to split up the tasks, with
Mezoti and Azan working on the data nodes while Naomi and Rebi analyzed the DNA samples obtained from the crew. Naturally, I volunteered mine. My orchid chromosomes threw them until I told them how they came to be part of me. Naomi and B'Elanna were of particular interest, since hybrids, according to Icheb, usually have "cleaned up" DNA. Genetic manipulation is often essential for two different species to procreate.

When they examined Aimee's sample, they realized that she's a blend of two unknown species. Under other circumstances, this would be wonderful news, but now the captain has sent out a message requesting information from anyone who recognizes the identity of either species. She wants to contact their governments to request a search for the baby's family or a foster home.

Marla Gilmore is taking this news very hard, and I can't blame her. She's devoted to the child, whom she's mothered since Aimee's birth. Naomi was the first one to realize the baby must be a hybrid. Since she realized the implications for Marla and Aimee, Naomi has been almost as devastated as Marla. She told me she hopes everyone on Aimee's home worlds was assimilated so that Marla can keep her baby. I chided her gently and asked if she really wished that all of them -- babies and children, too -- have become drones. Naomi broke down in tears and shook her head. "No, but I don't want Marla to lose Aimee, either. Oh, Tuvix, why didn't I stop myself from saying anything when I saw the signs? I should have kept my mouth shut!" What could I do? I gave her a big hug and told her she didn't make a mistake. Sometimes bad things happen, even when we have the best intentions.

I had to meditate a long time tonight to maintain my own equilibrium. It should be happy news. No one is rejoicing.

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Stardate 53825

It didn't take long. A freighter captain recognized that one of the species which contributed DNA to Aimee. We're heading towards the Bardarean's home system now. It's not far out of the way to our rendezvous point for retrieving the Doctor. It's as if fate decreed we'd find out about this before we were so far from this region of space, it would be too late to turn back.

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Stardate 53831
Our entire crew is rejoicing now! The little baby Marla Gilmore has been caring for since she arrived on *Voyager* can now be hers! We found out who her people were and spoke with her maternal grandmother. Her story is actually very sad. Lehthea, the grandmother, is the manager of a space station on the outskirts of the Bardarean system. Her daughter ran away with a young man she met on the station. The Shellisti are both so xenophobic, the grandmother said it would be better for Aimee to remain with us than for her to raise Aimee herself. Lehthea will return to her home planet soon, and she told us her granddaughter would be called an "abomination" because she wasn't "pure-blooded." She's sure her daughter would prefer that Marla Gilmore raise her baby on *Voyager* than have Aimee suffer on her home planet. Marla is ecstatic she's received permission to adopt the little girl. When Lehthea heard Marla gave her granddaughter a name which means "Beloved," she said she knew that Crewman Gilmore would be a good mother for the only grandchild she will ever have. Lehthea's daughter was her only child.

We had a party in the Mess Hall after Lehthea left. Naomi is very happy her wish for Marla to keep her baby has come true, *without* the necessity of the Borg assimilating the entire Bardarean and Shellisti populations. (Lehthea mentioned that one reason for the xenophobia and limited contact with other species comes from fear of the Borg -- which may be another reason she feared for her granddaughter's welfare if she took her home. Aimee only has a few visible implants, but the Doctor says he cannot remove them.)

When I say everyone is rejoicing, one member of our crew is a little more subdued about this turn of events. Captain Janeway has made it crystal clear to everyone that the children belong on their home planets, not *Voyager*. Rescuing Icheb was absolutely necessary. He insists he wants to remain here with Seven and live his life in the Alpha Quadrant. Naomi, of course, was born to Samantha Wildman. Sam's choice of her daughter's name appears to be a very subtle reference to the Biblical account of Ruth and Naomi ("whither thou goest, I will go"). After five requests to the Norcadians for them to find Mezoti's family or a substitute home, I understand the captain has given up and left it as, "Call us if you find something." She's not contacting them again -- particularly since they're just about out of subspace communications range. We still have no idea where Azan and Rebi belong. They're "Species X." Seven has no idea of their Borg designation. The data nodes salvaged from the children's cube were damaged, and the only information about the twins that we could recover were their birth names.

Marla has already consulted the information sent by Starfleet Command about long-distance legal proceedings in the Alpha Quadrant and plans to submit a petition to adopt Aimee in the next datastream. It looks like *Voyager*'s next generation is here, ready to be trained to take over for us down the line, when we're too old to dodder to our duty stations.

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**Stardate 53853**
The Doctor is back, safe and sound. He successfully treated his creator -- not that Dr. Zimmerman made it easy. I understand the term "curmudgeon" would be an accurate adjective to use for our EMH's "father," Dr. Lewis Zimmerman. The man was "impossible," although in the end, thanks to a conspiracy concocted by Lieutenant Barclay; Commander Deanna Troi, the counselor of the USS Enterprise, who's a former crew mate of Reg's; Haley, who is, in essence, our Doctor's photonic older sister; and possibly, Leonard the holographic iguana, our EMH "Mark 1" is confident Dr. Lewis Zimmerman will make a complete recovery.

At first, Dr. Zimmerman thought that since the EMH Mark-1 was the "inferior program," (something the Mark-2 had intimated when our Doctor visited the Prometheus), and all the other versions of the EMH had failed to provide an effective treatment for his disorder, there was no use allowing himself to be humiliated by letting our EMH examine him. The Doctor was dismayed to learn that all of his counterpart EMH's were working on waste transfer barges or facilities mining radiogenic materials, since their personal interaction skills are so poor. From the way the Doctor describes his creator, that's probably due to Dr. Zimmerman's own eccentric personality. Our Doctor looks the way he does because Dr. Zimmerman used his own face, physique, bald head, and -- I must say -- his less than charming personality as his templates when he fashioned the original Emergency Medical Hologram.

I do recall, thanks to Father's and Dad's memories, that our EMH was quite the curmudgeon himself when he was first activated. Out of necessity, his program has been running almost constantly for over six years. All the organic medical personnel assigned to Voyager were killed because the fixtures in Sickbay exploded during the rough trip into the Delta Quadrant when Voyager was dragged here by the Caretaker. If not for Kes' encouragement to expand his programming, occasional advice from Tom Paris (although the Doctor would undoubtedly contest Tom's positive influence upon him), and his efforts to "humanize" Seven, he might still be that way. Although he was unable to bring most of his program enhancements along with him to the Alpha Quadrant to allow space for the medical expertise he's gained during our journey home, one thing that did make the transition was his improved bedside manner. He's no longer a stop-gap measure until a "real" physician can be obtained, which was Dr. Zimmerman's original design. He's a true physician now who practices medicine. Our EMH was forced to develop those skills. We didn't have anyone else.

The "conspiracy" occurred when the other parties mentioned let slip that our EMH's program had destabilized during the trip from the Delta Quadrant to Jupiter Station. Dr. Zimmerman thought he was saving the EMH and allowed him close enough for our Doctor to finally examine his creator while Dr. Zimmerman was examining him. I must admit, I wish I could have been there to see that. The absurdity of it all tickles me.

The most important part, of course, was that our Doctor was able to provide his creator with a treatment based upon Borg technology, and the patient's condition rapidly improved. By the time our EMH returned to Starfleet Command's Communications Center for his return to Voyager, Dr. Zimmerman was out of danger and well on his way to being cured. Our EMH told us he wouldn't have returned in this datastream if he was still needed on Jupiter Station.
The Doctor spent a couple of days at the center, "dazzling" the staff there with his expertise. (This is by his own self-report, I should add; and I must admit I'm taking it all with a rather large grain of salt.) He met Admiral Paris and "his lovely wife," who passed on her own "love you and miss you" message to Tom through the Doctor. Tom was very touched by this. He was also gratified to hear the Doctor allow that Tom "had served adequately" as a replacement during the Doctor's absence, even though the EMH simply couldn't resist mocking Tom while he praised him. Tom did do a fine job, although it must be said we were fortunate to have had a relatively uneventful month, without any major medical crises to disrupt our crew. Tom was able to serve regular shifts at the helm as well as during a few close calls while providing medical care to our crew whenever it was needed. The Doctor was especially pleased to receive the medical information Aimee's grandmother Lehthea had provided concerning the medical needs of the Bardareans, as well as what she had available about the more reclusive Shellisti. Since the Doctor tried to convince Captain Janeway, in the middle of the crisis created by First's unreasonable demands, to spare the children on the Borg cube by handing little Aimee to her, he was extremely happy the little girl was still here when he returned to Voyager.

We're VERY glad our Doctor's come back to us, too. And no one's happier than Tom.

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Chapter End Notes

The part of this story concerning Aimee Gilmore's parentage was adapted from another fanfic I wrote, "Fostering." So if it sounds familiar, you may well have read it before. I didn't plagiarize it from anyone else's work, though -- just from myself ;-)
Far From Home

Chapter Summary

The crew recovers crew members who were lost, while a "passenger" finally finds a new home.

Stardate 53920

B'Elanna and Harry were searching for dilithium in the Delta Flyer, but now they're missing. Tom is agitated because he didn't insist on going with them. I've now had a detailed demonstration of what the expression, "he's beside himself," truly means. Tom can't sit still. He wants to undertake a search of his own, but only Class-2 shuttles are available. They're so much more fragile than the Flyer, the captain won't allow him to go in one. The conditions are just too dangerous. Because of frequent ion storms erupting seemingly out of nowhere, this region of space is reminiscent of the area we encountered three years ago, when we almost lost Tom and the Cochrane to a spatial eddy.

An ion storm formed shortly after B'Elanna and Harry left Voyager. The turbulence churning throughout the region has been so intense, the Flyer's ion trail has been masked or obliterated. Father has been evaluating all our sensor logs 24 hours a day, eschewing sleep, for a week now. He told Dad he's capable of doing so for two weeks. I know I couldn't go without sleep that long.

The captain has sent messages to every ship in the area, asking them to report anything they find which might tell us what happened to our lost shuttle. All we can do is continue our own search, while hoping someone will pick up an indication of their whereabouts very soon.

Stardate 53929

We finally received a bit of good news, although when the message as a whole was reviewed, there was still a lot of uncertainty concerning Harry and B'Elanna's safety. Are they okay, or aren't they? A transport vessel picked up B'Elanna's distress call and relayed it to Voyager. B'Elanna reported that she'd sent Harry off in an escape pod while she tried to land the shuttle on an L-class planet. Our
cruising speed has been lowered to impulse, but at least we now know we need to search for a specific type of planet, within the range the Flyer could reach after it was blown off course by a spatial eddy.

Unfortunately, the prognosis for Harry is quite grim. Life support in an escape pod would have been exhausted days ago. Unless he was able to find refuge on a planet, satellite, or alien ship in that area that was able to provide him with an oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere, we're unlikely to find a living Harry Kim. And although B'Elanna, thanks to her significant other's tutelage, is an excellent pilot, we still don't know if she was able to land the Delta Flyer safely.

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Stardate 53932

B'Elanna and Harry are back! When Harry's pod encountered severe turbulence, he decided to turn around and follow her ion trail and landed the escape pod on the same planet, 200 kilometers away from B'Elanna's position. He had no power left for his pod's transmitter, but he carried it with him when he walked to the Flyer. The shuttle's communication system was "toast," but thanks to the playwright Kelis, who obtained a "Winter's Tear" (the name for dilithium on his planet), B'Elanna had a power source. Once Harry arrived with the unit he'd brought with him, she was able to construct a workable com unit and direct us to the Flyer's location.

The Prime Directive states . . . well, all I'll say here is that we would have been in a lot of trouble if we'd left concrete evidence of our visit on that planet. The population of this world is at the Bronze Age level of development. Fortunately, Voyager successfully retrieved the Flyer, the escape pod, and our officers.

B'Elanna's interaction with Kelis was problematic but unavoidable. When B'Elanna crashed, Kelis found her, but she was unconscious. Kelis managed to activate the shuttle's recording system and listened to her last entries in the Flyer's log. What he heard inspired him to write a play about "Shining Voyager, Far from Home" and the "Eternals" that dwelled within her. After she woke up, he provided her with what she needed to survive -- but by that time, the local warlord had viewed the play and liked it so much, he demanded a sequel. If Kelis couldn't produce one, he'd be in trouble, but there was another complication. Kelis' warlord opened hostilities against the neighbor who "insulted" him. At any moment, Bronze Age warriors might troop through the woods. B'Elanna couldn't risk them discovering her or obtaining the advanced technology of the Delta Flyer. To avoid this, she had no choice but to help Kelis write a second play, which he hoped would stop the war.

By the time the play was ready for presentation to Kelis' audience, B'Elanna and Harry had made contact, and Voyager was on course to rescue them. When we arrived, B'Elanna directed us to transport Harry and all of our technology up to Voyager, but she said she had something she had to
do before she could signal us to return her to the ship. Kelis needed an ending for his play, included a plea to find ways other than warfare to settle differences between city states, since war is always hardest on the people who fight the battles and die in them. Since she approved of Kelis' message, B'Elanna went to the theater, appeared on stage, delivered the final lines . . . and disappeared, right in front of the warlord's eyes.

While B'Elanna related what happened on the planet, and especially about Kelis, his play, and the warlord, I vividly recalled Father's memories of discussions he'd had with colleagues at Starfleet Academy during his teaching days. They sometimes spoke about the classic literature of their societies. The ancient Greeks based poems and plays upon gods and goddesses whose interference with the affairs of men and women resulted in the conflict known as the Trojan War. Some of them seem to bear a strong resemblance to Kelis' work. For centuries, scholars assumed these mythic stories were totally fictional. Approximately 500 years ago, however, an archaeologist unearthed the ruins of an ancient city that fit the description of Troy, the site of that war. It's now generally accepted that the stories handed down from one bard to another may have been based upon actual events and personages. As the they were retold over the centuries, history was transformed into epic myth. Father confirmed that early classical Vulcan literature is thought to have originated from similar roots.

So, will the story of "Shining Voyager, Far from Home" be taught in the future universities of this planet, from myths which originated from the crash on this world by an alien shuttle? We will never know, of course, but I'd like to think that the name of Kelis will resonate through the ages in the way Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes and Homer are remembered even today on the planet Earth. From what B'Elanna told us about Kelis and why he simply had to present this play, it sounds like he deserves to be revered as a founding father of his planet's literary heritage.

And once our crew was whole again, Father was finally able to get some sleep.

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Stardate 53967

We've finally discovered the right sort of nebula for our passenger on Deck 12. I was beginning to wonder if we ever would find one, or if our nebulous friend was destined to come with us all the way to the Alpha Quadrant.

The only problem is, we will need to shut down the main power system on our ship so the entity can slip away to its new home. None of that circuitry can be "live" when we release our "ghost." All the gelpacks must be quiescent, which means all the circuitry must be, too. Active power sources may disrupt the being's substance as it leaves our ship. It was bad enough when we destroyed its home. We don't want to damage our "ghost" now, too.
Battery powered units won't cause problems. We can use them for light and to run fans to circulate air while main power is down. B'Elanna says we can enrich the oxygen content in the air by about 5% beforehand to compensate for the time the main system is paused. Now the only thing we need to worry about is avoiding panic among our passengers. I'm not speaking of our gaseous anomaly now. It's our children who concern me.

Samantha will take care of Naomi, and Marla will be there for Aimee. Since the baby is so young, I doubt the darkness will bother her. It's the others that will need to be distracted in some way while all this is going on.

Dad said he would take care of it. He has a plan, but he doesn't want to tell me what it is. "Trust me," he said. I do trust him, but I'm not sure Father does. He's assigned me to take a station in the corridor outside "Borg Central." If the children become agitated, or if Dad needs to take them anywhere else while the power is out, I will be there to offer assistance as needed.

**Supplemental**

It's over. Our gassy friend is home. And Dad . . . what a masterful performance! He related exactly what happened when our "haunt" came on board several months ago, before the children's arrival, but then he told them it was "just a story." They weren't frightened at all. From the way Icheb and Mezoti kept interrupting Dad and peppering him with all sorts of saucy comments and questions while he was trying to tell them his "ghost story," I think they actually had a great time.

Our gaseous friend has left quite a mess on Deck 12: corroded walls, deck panels, and such. We'll begin cleaning up those sections tomorrow morning. We won't need to use the space for anything immediately. It hasn't been available for months anyway.

I thought it was wonderful to see our friend cavorting in his new nebula. It may be many light years away from the last one, but everyone I speak with says our haunt looks happy, now that it's in a permanent home. Long may our "ghost" dwell here in peace.
Memories Were Made of This

Chapter Summary

When the drones of Unimatrix Zero summon Seven to their virtual refuge to ask for Voyager's protection, Tuvix volunteers to go on the mission to the Class-4 Technical Cube with Captain Janeway and Lieutenant Torres, taking his Father Tuvok's place. When his offer is denied, Tuvix handles the main Tactical station on the bridge during the start of the attack, but he cannot stop worrying about the long term effects of the action to his Vulcan parent, even if the EMH's serum prevents a full assimilation into the Collective.

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Stardate 54005

Dad and I have been sharing child supervision duties for the past day and a half. Seven has been spending an unusual amount of time regenerating, even during the evening hours she usually spends with the children eating dinner, discussing the events of their day, and serving as their mentor and a role model for adjusting to life as an individual. Seven usually "tucks them in," as Dad likes to put it, between 2100 and 2200 hours. While she sometimes goes to Astrometrics to complete a few tasks left over from Alpha Shift, she usually works at the console in the cargo bay while the children rest. If Seven needs to regenerate while the children are occupying all four main units, she uses a portable one created from those which were dismantled after the other eight drones of her Unimatrix . . . left. Seven has been regenerating in a unit on the main platform for the past day and a half, however. This afternoon we learned why.

While she was regenerating yesterday morning, Seven experienced something she couldn't explain. She found herself in a forest glade and noticed three aliens walking on a path nearby. One of them disappeared while Seven watched. Right after that, a man called Seven by her birth name of "Annika." She broke off her regeneration cycle and ran to Sickbay to see the Doctor. He diagnosed Seven's vision as a dream, gave her a cortical monitor to record her brain waves, and sent her back to her alcove.

When she started her regeneration cycle again, however, she found herself on the same forest path where she saw the aliens walking. This time it was night. Evening mists were drifting through the trees. Suddenly someone placed a hand on her shoulder. Seven turned and saw he was Klingon, and she ran away. The same man who'd called out her human name the first time called to her again. Although she felt her heart pounding, Seven told herself it must only be a dream. Except it wasn't. The man told Seven he'd summoned her here.
He identified himself as Axum, his name before his assimilation, which he said was what he's called whenever he visits Unimatrix Zero. It's a virtual reality construct, a refuge, where a very small percentage of drones can experience a measure of individuality during their regeneration periods. Seven admitted the place felt somewhat familiar, as was Axum's voice when he shouted out her name. Axum told Annika, as he's always called her, that the Borg have learned of their refuge. Almost two hundred of the drone avatars have disappeared over the past couple of months. The Borg Queen wants to destroy Unimatrix Zero. Since the drones never remember their sanctuary once they "wake up," the Queen has had difficulty devising a way to do this. Axum admitted it's only a matter of time before she finds a way. Axum and his friends have invented a formula for a nanovirus which would hide the mutation that permits them to visit each other here, but they have a problem. They have no way to deliver it in the real world.

That's why Axum found Annika and contacted her. All the time that she was linked with the Collective, Seven was one of the rare individuals who carried the Unimatrix Zero mutation. For eighteen years, while she was in her maturation chamber and after she became a functioning drone, Annika visited the others here and was "herself" while she regenerated. She never remembered her visits after her link with the Borg was broken until she responded to Axum's summons. Several of the drones who visit Unimatrix Zero were assimilated at Wolf 359. Seven recognized Laura, who had been a friend. They asked Seven for assistance from Starfleet, the only source of aid they could reach. It's method of delivery might be very unusual, but those who visit Unimatrix Zero had sent out a distress call to Voyager through their friend Annika Hansen. Would Voyager's crew help them protect their sanctuary from the Borg Queen's enmity?

Stardate 54007

Dad was present when Father volunteered to accompany the captain on the away mission to deliver the modified nanovirus to the Borg. The only target close enough for an attack is a Class 4 Tactical Cube, one of the most powerful vessels in the Borg arsenal. When I expressed my concerns about this proposal, Dad told me he shared them, but "we can't let the captain go on this mission alone. Chakotay believes there's a greater chance of success with a team of three." I told Dad it's not the concept of the mission itself which bothers me, it's that Father is one of the people who are going on this mission with the captain.

With Icheb's help, the Doctor has concocted a substance which they believe will block our away team's mental connection to the Hive mind. However, when nanoprobes are introduced into Father's bloodstream, a number of implants will be constructed within his body. Even if the transmissions from the Borg Queen and the rest of the Collective are blocked through the use of this "anti-assimilation serum," at least some hardware will form inside his cranium. After what happened to Father when the Bu'Neth attacked him, I'm very afraid he could end up like that again. That neural weapon damaged his brain so severely, we almost lost him. Even if he doesn't suffer any immediate
problems, how many injuries can one brain sustain before the cumulative effects overwhelm the ability of a skilled medical practitioner to heal it? I asked the Doctor that question. He admitted he doesn't know, but he told me to trust him.

I requested an audience with the captain, who listened to me quite avidly until she perceived I wasn't arguing in support of her original proposal, to go to the cube alone. I told her I agreed with the basic nature of the mission, but I was very worried the expedition may not go as planned. Considering Father's history of neural injury, how might he be affected? I offered to replace him, since I have not suffered injuries like Father has, yet my brain possesses almost all of his tactical knowledge. The captain thanked me for my willingness to serve, but she was certain the team as constituted could do the job.

After she politely but firmly ushered me through her ready room door, I went to Commander Chakotay's office and made the same offer to replace Father, citing the same concerns. He commiserated with me but said, "You know the futility of arguing with the captain when her mind is set on a course of action, Tuvix. I've already used all the pull I have convincing her not to go on this mission by herself. If we all do our part, the plan has a reasonably good chance of success. I need your support on this. You've shown yourself to be every bit as competent an officer as your Father is. I'm counting on you. Are you with me?"

What else could I say? The decision had already been made. All I can do now is to meditate like Father -- and to pray like Dad to our relatives in the Great Forest to keep the away team safe while they're on this insane away mission. I do trust the Doctor and his medical expertise, but as much as I enjoy eating Father's desserts, I'd prefer to have him continue to function as Lieutenant Commander Tuvok, and not as Tuvok, the full-time pastry chef of Voyager. If he can still function at all.

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Stardate 54009

I've received my assignment. I will be on the bridge at main tactical during the assault on the cube. Lieutenant Ayala will back me up at the secondary station. Samantha Wildman and Marla Gilmore will be in charge of all of the children during the attack. Since Icheb assisted the Doctor with the serum preparations, he knows about the mission. In addition to the one designed to protect our away team from linking with the Hive mind, Icheb and the EMH have produced the nanovirus which Axum and the other Unimatrix Zero drones asked us to introduce to the Borg, but with one key change.

When the captain "visited" Unimatrix Zero with Seven, facilitated by Father's "Bridging of Minds" mind meld technique, she convinced Axum that even if the nanovirus they designed hid the mutation to make it more difficult for the Queen to find the drones who carried it, now that she knows
Unimatrix Zero exists, it would only be a matter of time before she found another way to uncover their identity. She's already identified the frequency the avatars use to travel there and ordered drones loyal to her to attack Unimatrix Zero while Seven and the captain were visiting with Axum. The captain suggested they "tweak" the virus so that the Unimatrix Zero drones' link with the Hive mind would be broken. When they woke up they'd remember who they were. After the Queen's attack on their refuge, Axum, Laura, and Korok, a Klingon who was also assimilated at Wolf 359, agreed the captain's suggestion made sense.

The Borglet boys appear to be quite stoical about what's going on. Aimee is too young to have any idea of the danger of our current course. Naomi and Mezoti, however, are extremely agitated by the events which are about to unfold. They're both aware of the dangers presented by this action. I've done what I can to reassure them that we'll do everything we can to protect them; but they know there's a limit to our ability to defend ourselves if that powerful Borg cube attacks Voyager. All I can do now is to fulfill my role to the best of my ability -- and hope it's enough.

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**Stardate 54014**

Events moved quickly once our assault began. Our away team transported onto the Borg cube just before our wonderful Delta Flyer exploded into millions of fragments. The team searched for the cube's Central Plexus, the device which connects Borg vessels with every other, which the Borg Queen uses to disseminate her orders to every drone in the Collective. As anticipated, the Borg captured them and introduced nanoprobes into their bodies. The team turned into drones, giving them the power to walk through protective force fields and access other Borg functions, but with one crucial difference: they'd been protected by the anti-assimilation serum. They weren't linked with the Hive. To look at, they were drones; but in their minds, they were still Kathryn Janeway, B'Elanna Torres, and Tuvok.

Their search took much longer than the two hours allotted for it, however, after problems arose to impede their plans. The nanovirus allowing the drones of Unimatrix Zero to realize who they really are was introduced into the Central Plexus, but the team was unable to escape to a section of the cube with weak shielding. We couldn't get a lock to transport back to Voyager. The serum preventing connection with the Hive mind didn't work as well with Father as it did the other two, either. It wore off so quickly, he became Three of Twelve. Although B'Elanna was knocked out and left behind on the deck near the Central Plexus (a critical mistake), Father, at the Queen's command, took the captain to an alcove so she could visit the Borg Queen in her Unicomplex via virtual reality, in much the same way Axum and his friends visited Unimatrix Zero.

The Queen showed our captain a mutated virus which would destroy the drones who visited Unimatrix Zero. She said she wanted to negotiate "a compromise." The Queen would spare Voyager if the captain gave up the fight to protect Unimatrix Zero and ordered the drones to submit to
reassimilation. The Queen said she *might* help us travel to the Alpha Quadrant more quickly (perhaps to deliver that serum she’d wanted Seven to create to assimilate Earth via the atmosphere?). To set up the compromise, the Queen sent a holographic representation of the captain to *Voyager's* Sickbay. The captain, as ordered, told Commander Chakotay, "Unimatrix Zero can no longer exist." Seven and the Doctor, who were with him when she gave this order, assumed it meant the drones who went there would be killed if they did not return to the Collective; but Commander Chakotay realized the captain's order had been very carefully worded to convey a different command. He sent Seven back to the virtual reality sanctuary to tell everyone there they must leave or be killed when *we* destroyed Unimatrix Zero. The nanovirus had already done its work. When they were awake, Axum and the others would know who they were and could fight for their own freedom. Unimatrix Zero could be sacrificed.

We were able to retrieve our away team with help from an unlikely source. General Korok and his "Borg Resistance Movement" sphere arrived and assisted us in an attack on the Class-4 cube. We concentrated fire from both ships on a weakened spot we'd detected in the shields, near the cube's surface. The attack weakened it enough for our transporter beam to penetrate the shielding there, letting us spirit our away team back to *Voyager*. We learned later how that weak spot in the shields came to be. B'Elanna returned to consciousness, found a control panel, and literally turned off the shield grid in the spot we detected. Once B'Elanna freed the captain from where the Queen had confined her, the two of them dragged Father to the area. That's when Harry was able to get a lock on the away team to transport them off the cube.

Moments after our away team materialized on our ship, and without any additional weapons fire from General Korok's vessel or *Voyager*, the cube blew up. Captain Janeway believes the Queen ordered the cube to self-destruct, as she'd done to several other Borg vessels when the Queen claimed she could no longer "hear" one drone inside them, during her attempt to force the captain to cooperate with her. The Queen wasted the lives of thousands of drones and then tried to pin the blame on Captain Janeway. "Your fault," she'd said. General Korok agreed with Commander Chakotay when he conjectured our combined fire power would be insufficient to destroy such a huge cube. The Queen must have ordered its destruction.

After the cube exploded, General Korok came aboard *Voyager* to visit us before taking his sphere away to join forces with another Borg vessel taken over by the Resistance. He's the first full-blooded Klingon I've ever met as Tuvix. I liked him. He insisted on meeting our former Borg children, as well as the away team, to convey his appreciation for *Voyager's* assistance in freeing him from the Queen's control. I think the children benefited from meeting him, especially Mezoti. She was visibly relieved to hear the cube was no longer a threat. Meeting someone other than Seven who had been fully Borg may have been even more beneficial for Icheb. He clearly looked up to Korok. When Icheb and I brought him to Sickbay to meet the away team, I couldn't bring myself to ask Korok what rank he held prior to his assimilation. It is wise to refrain from needlessly provoking a Klingon. That knowledge doesn't only come from my Father's memories; I know our feisty half-Klingon, Lieutenant Torres, very well.

The original *Delta Flyer* is part of the debris cloud created when the Class-4 Tactical Cube exploded. Tom has taken the loss of what B'Elanna calls her "competition" rather well. He says we have the
schematics to build another. The *Delta Flyer II* will be the "new and improved version," he told me, when we were visiting our loved ones in Sickbay. "We did a great job when we built it, but with the way it's gotten crunched during the past couple of years, it's probably time to build a new one anyway."

So, it's over. Unimatrix Zero itself couldn't be saved, but the drones who went there are now free to be individuals again. The captain is happy her "Borg Resistance Movement" can now become a thorn in the Borg Queen's side. I wonder, do we have the Hirogen Caahr to thank for that concept? When the captain was Katrine in the Sainte-Claire scenario, she was the head of a unit of the French Resistance against the Hirogen and the holographic characters who portrayed Nazi officers. If that's so, I hope Axum and his fellow resistance fighters will be even more successful fighting the Borg Queen than we were when we fought against the "Nazis." That time we needed help from our holographic Klingons, including Dad and me, to overcome them long enough for the captain to push Turanj off a "cliff" to his death on the floor of the holodeck.

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**Stardate 54014**

B'Elanna and Captain Janeway will be released from Sickbay in a couple of days. The Doctor has operated and extracted every implant he can without damaging their original body systems. None are visible on the surface of their bodies. The cortical arrays and other neural implants are no longer present within their craniums. Other implants will remain inside them for the rest of their lives. The Doctor has declared they'll all recover fully, although he admits Father will need more time in Sickbay. He's decided to induce a medical coma to allow Father more time to heal.

When Father woke up briefly, before the Doctor induced the coma, he recognized Dad and me. He doesn't seem to have been as affected as seriously this time as he was after the Ba'Neth attack. I can't say my mind is truly at ease. The very fact that the Doctor decided to induce the medical coma to give his brain more time to recover is of grave concern. Father's brain has suffered another insult. I'll stay with him in Sickbay as much as I can, but it won't be as much as I'd like. Until Father returns to duty, Lieutenant Ayala and I must share the shifts Father usually serves at main tactical, in addition to our own.

Tom will continue to be acting first officer for a while, too. After the captain is released from Sickbay, the Doctor is ordering her to rest in her cabin for at least another 48 hours. She's not to return to full duty for another week after that. If she doesn't comply, the Doctor's threatened to put her in a medically induced coma, too, to make sure she gives her body enough time to heal properly. He made the same threat to B'Elanna, but she's willing to cede command of Engineering to Lieutenant Carey for the duration. As Tom muttered to me afterwards, B'Elanna's agreeing to the Doctor's pronouncement lets him know she really isn't feeling up to par yet.
Stardate 54017

The captain and B'Elanna are in their quarters, resting. The Doctor brought Father out of his coma today and told Dad and me he now expects him to make a complete recovery (he said the same thing days ago, so I wasn't particularly gratified when the EMH felt compelled to tell us that again). We brought Father a tureen of Plomeek Soup to enjoy. Dad was concerned it was too bland, since I insisted on preparing it. I know how Father prefers his soup to be seasoned, though. He confirmed it was "perfect" after the first taste and ate all of it. At least his appetite had apparently recovered completely.

When he was finished with the soup, Dad asked him, somewhat facetiously (I hope), if he'd like to spend a little time preparing desserts once he's released from Sickbay. Dad pointedly ignored the Doctor glowering at him when he made the offer. Father's expression lightened slightly, however, as he told Dad he does not believe he will be "up to it" for a while. However, he said he'd be pleased to share some recipe ideas for the two of us to implement. I took that as a great sign. Father was, at last, on the road to recovery.

Supplemental

I spoke with Seven in the Mess Hall tonight. I was helping Chell with dinner clean-up, since Dad had taken Naomi and Mezoti to Fair Haven for the evening. She asked me how Father was, and I told her he was on the mend. I asked her how she was doing, since she seemed distant, perhaps a little sad, in a way I hadn't seen since our last encounter with the Borg Queen.

At first she said she was fine. When I looked at her with my most penetrating Commander Tuvok stare, however, Seven admitted her visits to Unimatrix Zero brought back memories that were at best, bittersweet. We sat down at the corner table we'd occupied over a year ago, after her rescue from the Unicomplex. Over a cup of Tarkalean tea for me and a nutritional supplement shake for her, she explained that Axum, the one who summoned her to Unimatrix Zero to initiate this adventure, was someone she'd known when she'd visited the refuge while she was linked to the Collective. I told her I'd heard that.

"Did you hear we were romantically involved when I visited in the past?"

That, I had to admit, I hadn't heard before. I asked her if he'd been on one of the cubes the Borg
Queen ordered to self-destruct. She replied he'd still been alive the last time she went to Unimatrix Zero, just before it was destroyed, but she had no way to know now if he'd been killed subsequently or not. "His scout ship was stationed outside a rift between Fluidic Space and our own -- in the Beta Quadrant. He's on the other side of the galaxy. We'll never get the chance to meet in person. Now that Unimatrix Zero has been destroyed, we'll never be able to see each other there again, either."

I understood her melancholy mood then. I was at a loss for words for a moment, but then my "inner Dad" kicked in. "Seven, don't lose hope. You may find each other again. Who knows what can happen in this crazy universe we live in? Miracles can happen. I'm sitting here chatting with you now, and I assure you, four years ago, if the captain hadn't given me a stay of execution for one more night, I wouldn't be here. Even if you never do meet Axum again, your memories of your time together have been renewed. Isn't that correct?" When she nodded, with a slight smile on her face, I continued, "Then you've regained something from this experience that you must have thought you'd lost forever."

She agreed with me, but, with a very slight, sad smile, she added, "When I'd lost my memories of Unimatrix Zero -- and Axum -- I didn't realize what I was missing. Now, I do, and it's painful. I know I'll get over him, Tuvix. But in some ways, I hope I never do."

Stardate 54046

The repairs on Voyager are complete. Father has been pronounced fully healed by the Doctor, and he's returned to duty. He's also been holding ship-wide Security division drills for the past week. Since he puts out alerts at odd times of the day and night, our entire crew has been complaining about "ersatz combat fatigue," me included. We were due for a short break, and today, we received one, or actually two, courtesy of our juvenile contingent.

Our children, particularly Mezoti, were very shaken by our recent brush with the Borg. The four older Borg children have memories of their partial assimilations. They didn't need this reminder of what could happen to them. Samantha protected Naomi as best she could, but some of Naomi's old concerns about the Borg returned and gave her nightmares, too. The only child who wasn't thrown by the events that took place during the Unimatrix Zero action was Aimee. She's so young, she had no idea what was happening. It's doubtful she has any Borg memories anyway. She'd spent a few weeks of prenatal life in a maturation chamber before it malfunctioned. Under normal circumstances, Aimee would have remained in her maturation chamber for at least seven more years. I'm happy she was spared that sort of childhood.

Tom came up with what I believe was a brilliant activity to divert their attention from the Collective. Since he hasn't had time to put together the Junior Captain Proton program he's promised the
children, he suggested they put on a play they would write themselves, about an experience we all lived through. The chosen incident was the story of "The Haunting of Deck 12." With Dad's help, along with Tom and B'Elanna's, the children prepared a script and assigned roles to all the children -- even little Aimee. Marla carried her daughter around and spoke the lines for our miniature Lieutenant Torres. Our Assistant Bridge Assistant Naomi was, naturally, Captain Janeway. Mezoti was the image of Seven. Dad played himself from the side of the stage and served as narrator. Azan played Father, and Rebi was Harry. Icheb used masks to play Commander Chakotay, the Doctor, and Tom, a trick B'Elanna learned from the playwright who'd saved her on the planet we've decided to call Kelis. By switching from one mask to another, a single actor can play multiple roles without confusing an audience.

The play was presented twice today, to give everyone a chance to see it. I think a few saw it twice. Little Aimee was so good, gurgling happily away as her mother carried her around in her arms. Vorik and Bill Chapman provided sound effects and portrayed our "ghost" by shining lights on the stage. Captain Janeway proclaimed the play a great success, and I heartily agree.

The children have brought so much to our "Voyager Family" life. The Delta Quadrant can be a scary place, but I truly believe they will all grow up to be happy, productive members of our crew. Icheb is already halfway there. He asked me if he could take some classes in preparation for enrolling in Starfleet Academy. Considering how long it will be before we get to Earth, I wasn't sure whether I should encourage him or not, but then I remembered something from my Father Tuvok heritage, from his teaching days at Starfleet Academy. There's a program designed for applicants who can't physically attend the Academy on Earth or any of the subsidiary campuses on other Federation planets.

I discussed the Distant Learners Program with Icheb. Since we now have communication with the Alpha Quadrant through Pathfinder, and Father is qualified to provide training in many areas, enrolling in that program is feasible. Icheb told me he'll explore the program's requirements by consulting our database. Icheb is ready to prepare for his future career. He's a very bright and dedicated young man who has been an asset in Astrometrics for some time. Once he's received some training, he'll become a fine young officer. I look forward to serving with him.
At Last

Chapter Summary

A special song is performed at an event on Voyager that many thought would never happen. A multitude of replicator credits are exchanged as a result.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Stardate 54058

Tom and Harry were taking the new Delta Flyer II through its final test flight when a woman in what Tom later described as a "souped up little craft" challenged them to a "drag race." (I had no idea what he was talking about until I looked up the reference in our database, under "archaic terminology." ) She had an accident during the race, however, and Tom and Harry brought her to Voyager for treatment.

After the Doctor treated Irina her for her injuries, she told Tom and Harry about the Antarean Transtellar Rally, a shuttle race that's being held to celebrate a recent peace accord. Tom asked the captain for permission to enter the new Delta Flyer in the race. She was all for it as a way of making First Contact with several species in a more casual manner than through the usual diplomatic channels -- or battles. We've made First Contact often enough in negative ways. Engaging in a sporting event would be a far more pleasant way to introduce Starfleet and the Federation to this region of the Delta Quadrant. So Tom and Harry are officially entered into the race -- and under orders from our captain to win!

There was one wrinkle that threatened to derail our participation in the race. Tom had forgotten he'd already made plans for a weekend on the holodeck with B'Elanna, who'd called in many favors to clear enough time on the holodeck for a romantic getaway. Lieutenant Barclay sent us the Gedi Prime program in the last datastream. After the Doctor reminded Tom of his prior obligation, he went to B'Elanna and said Harry would pilot the Flyer in the rally so they could go to Gedi Prime. B'Elanna said there would be "other weekends" and told him to go win the race.

Although B'Elanna had given Tom permission to "do his own thing," she was very disheartened by the whole situation. Dad spoke with her in the Mess Hall and provided her with a little perspective. When B'Elanna said she thought their romance wasn't meant to be, Dad prodded her a little. She admitted Tom was a great guy, and they'd spent many happy times together. Maybe they weren't
"mok'tah" as a couple after all. (Dad told me she said it means "bad match," a phrase her Klingon grandmother used, apparently about B'Elanna's parents.) I don't know if what Dad said made the difference, but B'Elanna came up with a way to salvage the weekend. She talked Harry into letting her become Tom's co-pilot on the Delta Flyer during the two-day race.

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**Stardate 54061**

The *Delta Flyer* won the first leg of the race! The captain was ecstatic. It wasn't all good news, though, since there was another accident. Irina's co-pilot Joxom was injured quite badly when his console blew up in his face. He'll be okay, and now that her co-pilot is out of the race, Irina has asked Harry to replace him for the final leg of the rally. Harry's quite dazzled by Irina (she is quite pretty), and now he'll get to spend the rest of the weekend with her.

While Harry's relationship with Irina is likely to be even more short-lived than mine was with Alyara, I'm sure he'll enjoy his weekend with her. Perhaps she'll decide to stay aboard *Voyager* for a few days after the race so they can spend more time together. That would be great for Harry's morale. It would be nice if -- for once -- Harry wasn't unlucky in love.

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**Stardate 54063**

Poor Harry. Unlucky in love again.

Happy B'Elanna and Tom. Congratulations! It's about time!

If the first day of the Antarean Transtellar Rally was a triumph, the second almost became a tragedy. Irina's a terrorist! She wanted to kill everyone at the finish line, including me and everyone else on *Voyager*, to destroy the peace accord.

Irina's copilot had been injured the first day through an act of sabotage which, we later found out, was caused by Irina herself. During the course of the second day's race, Harry realized the fuel converter Irina lent Tom to qualify the *Delta Flyer* for the race had been rigged to blow up once it crossed the finish line. Harry used the ancient cipher system -- Morse Code -- they used in the
Captain Proton program to warn Tom. The *Flyer's* warp core had become contaminated by then, however. Tom and B'Elanna had to dump it inside a J-class nebula to contain the inevitable explosion. (I hope no relatives of our "haunt" lived inside this one.)

Irina was arrested. Harry had fallen for the wrong woman once again.

After the *Delta Flyer II* was dragged back to *Voyager*, Tom and B'Elanna announced their engagement. Why do those two only make major advances in their relationship when they're in the midst of a life-threatening crisis? I have no answer to this question, but it seems to be so. When they got back, they asked the captain to marry them this very day.

The captain agreed to perform the ceremony. Dad rushed around to inject some basic wedding traditions into the post-race celebrations he'd already prepared. A few quick revisions to the Mess Hall's decorations, a replicated wedding cake, and a "wedding chapel" scenario introduced into one of Tom's existing programs and, voila! We were ready for a wedding. Even before the actual ceremony, many of the racers and diplomats had gotten a little tipsy from toasting the outcome of the race with Antarean Cider and replicated champagne. (Commander Chakotay told me the cider is excellent because it's the "real thing." He's negotiating with O'Zaal to obtain a "private stock" of it for himself.) We may have lost the race to a pilot named Assan, but we've won quite a few friends by the way we've handled ourselves during the race and its aftermath.

The ceremony itself was very simple. The bride and groom wore their dress uniforms. The replicator supplied party dresses for Naomi and Mezoti, who served as flower girl/bridesmaids. The twins were tabbed as ring-bearers. They received new clothing, too, although they didn't seem to care much about getting new outfits. The girls were delighted with theirs.

After the captain pronounced Tom and B'Elanna "husband and wife," the partying began in earnest. Food and liquid refreshment flowed freely. About an hour into the proceedings, I noticed Harry, Seven, Sue Nicoletti, and the Doctor arguing about something in the corner of the room where Harry and Sue had been playing musical selections on the oboe and clarinet. After a bit, Sue shrugged her shoulders and walked away. The Doctor wasn't too happy with whatever they'd decided, either. He gave Seven very specific instructions about something. She nodded her head and said, "Yes, I know. I will," several times. Her voice became quite strident with annoyance, so it wasn't that hard for me to hear what she was saying to the EMH. The Doctor finally stalked off, and Harry approached the captain.

By this time the happy couple were making "it's time for us to get out of here" noises. They'd decided to spend a honeymoon weekend alone in the *Delta Flyer* (no warp drive, but since we're staying here the rest of the weekend to hold a series of meet-and-greets with representatives from several nearby worlds, they won't need one). The captain clapped her hands to get everyone's attention and announced, "The race is over; a marriage has begun; and all the wedding cake has disappeared -- except for a few crumbs that are getting cleaned up by a couple of very industrious
mice . . . " (She stared at Azan and Rebi, who had the grace to blush. They'd been scooping up the crumbs left on the cake platter for several minutes. Everyone else laughed, even the bridal couple. ) "Now, before the bride tosses her bouquet, Ensign Kim and Seven of Nine would like to present a song so they can take a turn around the floor for their first 'official' dance as husband and wife. Tom and B'Elanna . . . Harry, Seven . . . "

Harry played the introduction of a very mellow song on his clarinet. Seven stepped up next to him and began to sing in a very sweet voice . . .

At last, my love has come along!
   My lonely days are over,
   And life is like a song!

   Oh, yeah, at last,
   The skies above are blue,
   My heart was wrapped up in clovers
   The night I looked at you!

I found a dream that I could speak to,
   A dream that I can call my own.
I found a thrill to rest my cheek to,
   A thrill that I have never known.

   Oh, yeah when you smile, you smile
   Oh, and then the spell was cast,
   And here we are in heaven.
   For you are mine . . . At last!

I looked around the room. The Antareans and the guests from the other worlds didn't know the song, of course; but the melody is quite pretty; and I suspect the words are almost universal. They listened and clapped politely at the end of the piece, along with our crew. I don't know if B'Elanna had ever heard the song before, but from the way Tom suddenly smiled and glanced up at Harry and Seven, I was sure he was familiar with it. They swayed around the dance floor, oh, so slowly. B'Elanna closed her eyes as she leaned against Tom's shoulder and let him guide her around the room. (He may not have many other chances to do that, except when they're dancing, so I wasn't surprised to see how happy he looked.)

Once the song was over, the couple walked over to Seven and Harry and thanked them for the performance. They moved to the front of the room, and B'Elanna tossed her bouquet high into the air. I think Naomi and Mezoti both tried to grab it, but it was the singer of the song who instinctively pulled the posy out of the air. Our crew cheered and laughed. Seven, confused, bent her head towards the captain and asked her something. After the captain answered, a sour look appeared on Seven's face. That's when I recalled the Earth tradition. An unmarried woman who catches the bridal bouquet at a wedding is destined to be the next one to marry. Somehow, I don't think so, unless there's to be a dearth of marriages on Voyager for a VERY long time.
The Doctor didn't seem to agree. From the way he was beaming at Seven, I suspect our EMH has ambitions for another "Real Life" family -- and not one restricted to the holodeck.

Good luck, Doctor. I think you'll need it.

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Chapter End Notes

Tampering

Chapter Summary

Tuvix's Father investigates a crime. The perpetrator? Himself.


Stardate 54088

We've received another transmission from Project Pathfinder. Many of the crew received messages this time. Sek sent Father one which he offered to share with me, but I haven't yet seen it. Sek wished to provide Father with the reasons he's decided to make a change in his choice of career. Dad and I agree, it's wonderful Father can be a party to his Vulcan family's life again. I didn't receive a message, of course, but I understand Tom did. He finally received the message his father sent him years ago, the one which was caught up in the Hrogen array and, with the exception of a few fractured bits, never arrived before the array was destroyed.

B'Elanna's letter was from her cousin Elizabeth. The news was very upsetting to our chief engineer, even though it wasn't a total surprise. B'Elanna's mother Miral really did die in a shuttle accident around the time B'Elanna had her experience on the Barge of the Dead. Was that vision a message to B'Elanna? Did she save her mother from going to Gre'thor? I guess we'll never really know, but at least B'Elanna now knows her mother is gone. Tom told me it made him very sorry to hear it. He'd hoped to meet Miral once Voyager returned to the Alpha Quadrant, to receive her blessing for his marriage to her daughter.

Neither Dad nor I received any letters. We didn't expect any, so it wasn't that much of a disappointment.


Stardate 54090

Tom was planning to open his new movie palace holodeck program today. While it promises to be a fun place to visit, Tom and B'Elanna can already view any of the movies from our archives on their television without leaving their new quarters. I guess I don't understand the appeal of going to the
What wasn't fun was finding Ensign Tabor comatose in the front row. The Doctor examined Tabor and discovered microfractures in the Bajoran engineer's right temple. Father has promised to investigate the situation and tabbed me to aid him in this endeavor. I promised to do my best to discover the identity of the perpetrator.

**Supplemental**

B'Elanna Torres, Commander Chakotay, and Crewmen Yosa and Jor are all lying in Sickbay now. Every one of them was a member of the *Val Jean's* crew, the Maquis ship destroyed at the Caretaker Array. Some of the former Maquis, including Chell, are saying the most recent Pathfinder datastream included orders for the Maquis to be "eliminated." I'd like to stem the panic, but until we can determine the true cause, I'm afraid suspicion will continue to grow.

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**Stardate 54102**

I still don't understand! How could Father have done this to Dad and me? Everyone who wasn't part of the mutiny was incarcerated while Chakotay and the mutineers were in control of the ship. Chell's assertion that someone from the Starfleet crew was responsible turned out to be true. *Father* was the attacker.

While Father was undercover in the Maquis, a Vedek Teero Anaydis had captured him and learned he was a spy. Instead of revealing who Father was, he inserted a secret message into his brain, to be unlocked when Teero gave the order. The vedek intercepted Sek's message and hid the second order inside it. Father had no memory of attacking the Maquis, using a mind meld to wake them up, and then using a second meld to compel them to take control of *Voyager*. Chakotay ordered Father to murder the captain to prove his loyalty to the mutineers, but Chakotay had given him a defective gun, saving the captain from death. Father's true personality reappeared after this, however. He gave Chakotay another mind meld and returned him to HIS true personality.

It was a very strange interlude. Most of our Maquis crew never joined the mutiny. Chell and Golwat stayed loyal to Captain Janeway. So did Umai and T'Varia, our Vulcan-Romulan hybrid. We were confined to quarters until Chakotay released us today. Chakotay (I'm reluctant to call him either commander or "captain" at present) had ordered *Voyager* to travel to an M-Class planet, where the Starfleet crew and any Maquis who refused to join the mutiny would have been marooned. It was a crazy idea. Even if all the Maquis joined the mutineers, they'd have less than half the number of crew
needed to run this ship effectively. Considering the proximity of the Borg and the possibility of encountering other aggressive Delta Quadrant species, how likely would it be for Voyager to make it back to the Alpha Quadrant?

In essence, Teero was condemning everyone to death. Was that what he wanted? To punish the Maquis on Voyager because the Maquis leaders, disenchanted by Teero's mind control schemes, had thrown him out of the organization even before the Val Jean was lost in the Badlands?

The war with the Dominion is over. The Maquis movement has been crushed. Almost all of those who fought the Cardassians are dead or in prison. The only motive that makes any sense at all to me is revenge. Once we inform Starfleet about his actions in the next datastream, they'll go after this Vedek Teero. I hope they catch him. He sounds deranged.

I never did view Sek's message. Since I inherited Father's memories at the time of my advent, I wonder, would I have joined the mutiny, too? Would Chakotay, B'Elanna and the others have accepted me if I'd tried? Or would the hidden message have meant nothing to me, because the mind control instructions were among the memory engrams I've lost over the past four years? I don't think I'll ask the Doctor to poke around in my mind to answer any of these questions. I'm just worried that the mind control experiments performed on Father by Teero Anaydis may have done more damage to Father's brain. How much more must he suffer before we return to the Alpha Quadrant?

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**Someone to Live For**

**Chapter Summary**

After some of the former Borg children leave the ship to live with the Wysanti, Seven becomes seriously ill. Tuvix does what he can to help out in "Borg Central" while the captain and the Doctor search for a cure. Icheb comes up with a plan to save her, which Seven, predictably, rejects. Icheb, however, is a very persistent young person.

**Chapter Notes**

See the end of the chapter for notes

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**Stardate 54106**

The captain ordered a change in Voyager's heading today, deviating slightly from our planned course. The grandparents of our twin Borglets are eager for us to bring the boys to them. Their parents were killed when the Borg assimilated Azan and Rebi.

At Tom and B'Elanna's wedding, Ambassador O’Zaal of the Antarians recognized the boys as Wysanti, a species we'd never encountered before. Ambassador O’Zaal sent a message to his contact there and asked if any of her people had been assimilated by the Borg recently. O’Zaal hadn't heard of any such incident, but that didn't mean there hadn't been one. He received a very quick reply. Three years ago, a colony several light years away from the Wysanti home planet had been decimated by the Borg. Two of the lost were twin boys. Once O’Zaal informed the captain, she sent the twins' DNA records to the Wysanti. They matched the ones on file for the missing children. The boys' maternal grandparents are alive and can barely wait for us to bring them home to them. I was quite pleased to hear this. It will be wonderful for the boys to live with relatives. They've never really fit in with the rest of us.

The next bit of news the captain shared was not at all gratifying. The relatives have offered to make a home for Mezoti as well, and she's agreed to stay with them. I was stunned. We've been leaving the Norcadians further and further behind as we travel towards the Alpha Quadrant. Despite many messages from Voyager to them, the Norcadian government never responded favorably to the captain's request to find Mezoti a home. Since I remember all too well the way Seven and Father were treated by Penk, and how much the Norcadian economy relies upon Tsunkatse, I didn't want her to grow up in their culture. Mezoti doesn't seem to identify with them now anyway. I thought she'd bonded with Seven. With us. And I'm not the only one who assumed Mezoti would remain on Voyager throughout our journey to the Alpha Quadrant.
When I spoke with Seven after the announcement, she told me she's strongly opposed to Mezoti's staying with the twins. The memory of Icheb's parents' cruelty is fresh in her mind. Seven was present in the ready room when the captain spoke with the relatives about the twins and Mezoti. "They seem like good people, Lieutenant, but Yifay and Leucon presented themselves as devoted parents, too. The Doctor has confirmed their DNA matches their grandparents, and the captain has decided to return the twins to them. As we both know, when the captain decides to do something, she will not be swayed from her course." I agree with Seven's assessment, but I'm so fond of Mezoti. I hate to see her go. And poor Naomi! She'll lose her best friend.

I've never seen the slightest evidence that Mezoti cares that much for Azan and Rebi. This would make sense if Icheb decided he wanted to live with the Wysanti, too. Mezoti and Icheb are very close. I believe it will be difficult for him to leave her and travel on with us, but Captain Janeway hasn't said yet what Icheb is going to do. When I asked Seven, she told me Icheb hasn't given her his decision, but she admitted the grandparents offered Icheb a place in their home, too.

I can't believe Icheb will leave Seven. She's the one who demanded we check on him when the contradictions between Leucon's story and Mezoti's raised questions about the young man's safety. She saved him from his parents' betrayal. She's the primary reason he's not fully Borg now -- or dead. When Naomi, Mezoti, and I were waiting for Icheb to wake up after he was saved from the Borg, Mezoti told us she hoped her family would never be found because she never wanted to leave Voyager. And now she wants to go? I don't understand. It's so illogical.

The captain also failed to mention Marla Gilmore or Aimee when she announced the reason we were headed towards Wysanti, but I trust Aimee will stay with Marla. Aimee's grandmother granted Marla permission to adopt the baby. Marla and Aimee would both be devastated if the captain tries to separate the baby from the only mother she's ever known.

**Supplemental**

Little Aimee Gilmore will remain with her mother Marla. A formal adoption petition was sent through the datastream last month. From information Starfleet provided to us when regular communication was established, her request will be reviewed and, hopefully, granted before the year is out. Icheb has also chosen to stay on Voyager with Seven. I'm very relieved.

Now Mezoti's choice to stay with Azan and Rebi on Wysanti is even more puzzling. I can't believe she's really going to leave us.
Stardate 54129

Mezoti was all packed and ready to leave the ship with the twins. She'd said her good-byes to everyone on the ship as we neared Wysanti. Her luggage had been sent down to the planet along with Azan's and Rebi's. Shortly after Voyager assumed orbit over the planet, a Wysanti shuttle rendezvoused with our ship so that Azan and Rebi's family could meet the children in person before they brought them down to the surface.

I was on bridge duty during the "bon voyage" party Tom, B'Elanna, and Dad held for the children in Engineering. My shift ended just before the children were to leave, so I hurried to Transporter Room 2 to say a final goodbye. I arrived just as Mezoti stepped down from the transporter platform and told Azan, Rebi, and their new guardian to leave without her. She's changed her mind. She wants to stay with Seven and Icheb. I was as overjoyed by Mezoti's last minute reversal as Icheb and Seven were!

But Captain Janeway stood next to them, totally still, looking as if she'd been carved into a statue during the few seconds it took for Mezoti to say she wanted to remain on Voyager. Since she'd already told everyone Mezoti was leaving of her own volition, and that she was simply "honoring Mezoti's expressed desire to leave," Captain Janeway could hardly refuse to let the girl stay after she said she didn't want to leave us after all.

I offered to wait for Mezoti's luggage to be returned by the Wysanti, to allow what was left of our little "former Borg family" to leave and announce the happy news to the rest of the crew. They thanked me and left. When I turned towards the captain, she was still frozen in place. Ken Dalby, who was serving as transporter technician this shift, must have sensed the undercurrents in the room. He asked to be dismissed briefly, for "a call of nature." I told him I'd man the transporter station for him until he returned.

Once we were alone, I casually asked the captain if there was something I could do for her. At first she said no, but then she could no longer hold in her exasperation. Her careful plans for the Wysanti to take Mezoti -- something she'd never admitted to anyone, although our entire crew strongly suspected as much -- had gone for naught.

I asked the captain why she was unhappy Mezoti had changed her mind. "Everyone knows the twins will be fine as long as they have each other, but Mezoti is as close as any sister to Icheb. Maybe even closer. Both of them look to Seven as much more than a mere mentor. I doubt Mezoti understands that what she feels for Icheb and Seven is love, but we both know that's what it is. She belongs with them, not with Azan and Rebi."

"Children do not belong on starships," she said firmly. I countered that Ensign Wildman and Crewman Gilmore would surely beg to differ. The captain replied, "It's different for them, I'll grant you that, Mr. Tuvix. One was born on this ship to her biological mother. The other is in the process
of being adopted, with the blessing of the only relative we've been able to identify."

"Actually, I thought Naomi is from the duplicate Voyager, just as Ensign Kim is."

Captain Janeway's face twisted into half a grin as she admitted, "You're correct, but that only proves my point. It's a dangerous Delta Quadrant out there, Mr. Tuvix. Mezoti would be safer with the Wysanti. On solid ground."

"Permission to speak freely, Captain?" When she nodded to indicate she'd granted it, I said, "It's a dangerous existence for people who have no one to love them, especially children who are separated from the ones who do. What chance will Mezoti ever have of seeing Icheb and Seven again, once we leave orbit? You set all this in motion when you placed the four older children in Seven of Nine's care. Seven, Mezoti, and Icheb became a family."

The captain sighed. "I never anticipated Seven would grow so attached to Icheb and Mezoti, especially in the short time they've been together. I thought we'd find families for all of the children much sooner than we have."

I hoped I still had her permission to speak openly. I felt compelled to remind her of someone else who had come on board Voyager through circumstances that were, perhaps, even more unlikely than my own. "Just about the only emotion Seven could express when she was first with us was anger -- until we saw how deeply she mourned One."

The captain nodded ever so slightly. "I can't say I even thought about him when I assigned Seven to look after the children. They'd been Borg. She'd been Borg. I thought she could help them make the transition to individuality more easily, thanks to her own experience with the process. She didn't seem to be the maternal type. You're right, though. I should have remembered One. He was . . . special."

I couldn't keep myself from philosophizing a little. I honestly can't say if what I said came from Dad's view of life, or from Father's. Perhaps both contributed to my comment. "Life would be so much easier if we could anticipate every eventuality, Captain; then we could avoid ever making a mistake. Perfection is impossible for mere humanoids like us to achieve. I don't believe Mezoti's choice to follow her heart and stay with Seven and Icheb is a mistake."

"I hope you're right, Lieutenant." At that point, Ken Dalby returned, and a moment later Mezoti's luggage reappeared on the transporter pad. I picked up her bags to take them to Cargo Bay 2 and followed the captain out of the transporter room. She didn't say another word to me.
When I arrived at "Borg Central," Mezoti was sitting on the edge of the regeneration alcove platform, staring down at the deck. I asked her where everyone else was. She told me Seven had to go to Sickbay because her ocular implant was malfunctioning. Icheb went to Astrometrics to cover Seven's shift until the Doctor fixed whatever had gone wrong and Seven returned to duty.

This provided the rationale for Mezoti to be sitting here in "Borg Central" all by herself, but it didn't account for her somewhat depressed mood. I asked her if she was sorry she hadn't gone with Azan and Rebi to live on Wysanti. "We haven't left orbit yet. I'm sure the captain can still transport you down, if you want to do that."

Mezoti told me she never really wanted to leave Voyager. "The captain wanted me to go." (This statement shows just how perceptive Mezoti is.) Mezoti was upset because Seven wanted to shut down the fourth cubicle to save power, since the three remaining Borg will each have one available whenever they wish to regenerate. Icheb disagreed. He thought it was too soon to shut down the other alcove, and Mezoti sided with Icheb. "That's when Seven's ocular implant began to water. Maybe we caused it to malfunction by disagreeing with her."

I assured Mezoti that a simple argument shouldn't cause a dysfunction like that. The Doctor probably needs to make a slight adjustment, and Seven will be just fine. Mezoti perked up after I said that. I offered to help her unpack, but she said she would like to go to Naomi first, to let her know she was staying on the ship.

"You know what Naomi always says. 'It's a small ship.' She probably already knows." I agreed to take her to Mr. Lessing in the Science Department, though, since Naomi was scheduled to have a Botany lesson today. Now that she's remaining on board, Mezoti needs to attend class, too. We didn't come ahead, to surprise Naomi if she didn't know yet.

We were in the corridor, just a few meters from the Botany Labs, when Naomi burst out of the door. "You're here! You stayed!" She rushed up to Mezoti and hugged her, as Noah and I beamed at their joyous reunion.

Supplemental

I recorded the previous entry shortly after leaving Mezoti and Naomi with Noah for their lesson. I was confident all would be well. Tonight I learned some distressing news. The captain called me to her ready room and asked me to supervise Mezoti and Icheb while she goes with Father and Tom Paris on an away mission. We passed a Borg debris field several days ago, on route to Wysanti. They hope to find a Borg drone 's corpse so they can remove its cortical node. Seven's is failing. If a replacement can't be found quickly, she'll die. Seven has been confined to Sickbay, and she's asked
us not to tell Mezoti what's wrong with her. Icheb will know soon enough that something's wrong, once Seven doesn't appear in Astrometrics.

I asked the captain if what happened earlier today with Mezoti might have caused this problem. The captain said it had not. Seven has been having symptoms, such as headaches, for the past couple of weeks, but she failed to report them because she thought they were insignificant. They were not. I advised the captain I will be happy to supervise Mezoti, but I pointed out how very upset Naomi became when she accidentally learned her mother was on the missing Delta Flyer with Tom and Father. Dad hid the truth from her for several days. "If Mezoti asks me directly what's going on, I will tell her, even if Seven doesn't want her to know." The captain said she trusts my "discretion" concerning what to tell Mezoti. I have no doubt I'll be telling her sooner, rather than later. Mezoti is too smart, not to mention observant, to be satisfied by half-truths.

When the captain spoke to me about discretion, I perceived a subtext. It will be difficult for Icheb to lose Seven as his mentor. It will be far more difficult for Mezoti, who has just decided to remain on Voyager to be with the two of them. I don't think the captain blames me for what happened, exactly, but I don't think she was happy with my argument that Mezoti's choosing to remain on Voyager was the correct decision. She told me Voyager will travel at Warp One until the Delta Flyer returns from this away mission, which she expects to take roughly a week. At that speed, if the worst happens, I'm afraid the captain will decide to return to Wysanti and beg the twins' grandparents to take both Mezoti and Icheb, rather than have them stay on this ship without Seven.

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Stardate 54130

Icheb knows about Seven. He approached the captain when the away team was walking to the shuttle bay and asked her an innocent question, which the captain was unable to answer. Seven had forgotten to ask the captain if she would recommend Icheb for Starfleet Academy training. He was very disappointed when the captain didn't reply the way he expected. He assumed she didn't believe he would be a good candidate. Once she realized what Icheb was talking about, Captain Janeway was forced to tell him about Seven's medical problem.

It didn't take long for Mezoti to learn the truth, either. She insisted on knowing why Seven had not come to regenerate in their cargo bay the previous night. She took it quite well, actually.

The one who hasn't been taking the entire situation well is Seven herself. When Icheb went to see her in Sickbay, she became extremely belligerent, and she refused to allow Mezoti to come near her. The Doctor reported all this to me when I came to get a very upset Mezoti. He'd taken the time to explain to the children that Seven wasn't really angry at them; she was angry because she was ill. "It's a common response when someone is facing a serious illness," he said. Seven's attitude was
I brought them to their cargo bay. We talked over what had happened and agreed upon a plan of action. Icheb will work in Astrometrics to cover Seven's shifts there. He'll be away much of the time overnight. Seven has scheduled herself for many Gamma shifts over the next couple of weeks. She prefers working on projects without being interrupted. (I also suspect Seven wanted to keep herself occupied after Mezoti left the ship.) When Icheb is not here, I'll sleep on a cot in the cargo bay while Mezoti regenerates, like Dad stays in the Wildman quarters with Naomi whenever Sam Wildman is away on a mission. If I hadn't mentioned Naomi, I'm not sure Mezoti would have agreed, but after thinking it through, she did. I promised I would help them get through this crisis any way I can. If they need anything, or if they just feel the need to talk about what they're feeling, all they need do is ask me. I'll be here for them.

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Stardate 54135

Commander Chakotay has lightened my schedule to permit me to spend as much time in Cargo Bay Two with Mezoti as she needs. Mezoti and Naomi are engaged in educational activities with various crew members during Alpha shift. As things have worked out, I'm sleeping on my cot in Borg Central during most Gamma shifts, so I'm there if Mezoti's regeneration cycle is interrupted. I should probably say, "when it's interrupted." It's happened at least once every night so far. She's very worried about Seven. We all are.

The away team has not yet returned from the debris field. I'm grateful to my crew mates in the Security and Tactical Division for covering for me. They've assured me they're very willing to help out. Everyone is as fond of Mezoti as I am. It's very kind of them, because it's a lot of extra work. I've promised to make this up to my crewmates as soon as possible, once Father returns to the ship. Because of his absence, they must cover Father's shifts as well as mine. I do work as scheduled on Alpha, since Mezoti is with Naomi then.

I was glad I was there last night. Mezoti was restless. At 0126, her cubicle announced her regeneration cycle was incomplete. I went up to her alcove and asked her what was wrong, other than the obvious: "You must not be able to regenerate."

We sat down on the edge of the platform, a favorite place for Mezoti and Icheb to sit whenever they want to chat with one another. She said she was worried about Seven. "She can't live if her cortical node isn't functioning." Then she asked me what I knew about "termination."

What a question that was for me to answer! If Neevok hadn't drawn the short straw, he would have been the one sitting on this platform with Mezoti. We're the same person, after all. He would be
responding to everything that happens the same way that I have. I finally decided it was best to be completely honest with her. I explained I had a twin who sacrificed his life so that my fathers Tuvok and Neelix could return to their own lives. I was almost terminated myself, I explained, but I didn't go into detail about that being part of the same cycle of events. As intelligent and resourceful as Mezoti is, I have no doubt she'll look it up on her own anyway.

I also explained that my Dad, Neelix, actually did die two years ago, but Seven was able to bring him back to life with her nanoprobe. He had a very tough time after that. If not for little Naomi, he wouldn't be here now. He'd hid his distress from me, his son, when he had trouble adjusting to his resurrection. And then, a year and a half ago, my Father Tuvok lost his memory, which is a terrible thing for a Vulcan to experience. "And there was the time Father's shuttle crashed inside a subspace pocket. Lieutenant Paris, the Doctor, and Father were only gone for two days, as far as we knew on Voyager, but to them, months passed. Time ran much faster there where they were. Some aliens came and fired at this subspace pocket, intending to seal it up so no one else would be lost. If we hadn't managed to get our away team back before the aliens succeeded, Father and the others would have died. And of course, you know about how Father went with the captain and Lieutenant Torres to the Borg cube to help the drones of Unimatrix Zero break away from the Queen. That was a very close call. You were here then."

"So you know a lot about terminated lives."

"More than I want to know, Mezoti."

She looked very young and very lost. "I do, too. When we were on our cube, First died."

"You saw him die?" I knew, of course, but I was curious to hear her version of the story.

"I felt it, too. We were Borg, connected, although we could think as ourselves, too. One second he was there, in our thoughts, and then he... wasn't. I don't want that to happen to Seven."

I assured her that the Doctor was doing everything he can. "He's quite the miracle worker, don't you agree?"

She looked up at me with those big blue-gray eyes of hers, like I was some sort of crazy person for assuming the Doctor would succeed just because he'd managed to save others. It was not a logical response. Father would have lectured me on it, I'm sure, if he were here right now.
Illogical or not, it seemed to do the trick with Mezoti. She said she thought she might be able to regenerate now. I stood by her as she stepped back up and into her alcove. Once the unit was humming again, I went back to my cot. I didn't fall asleep immediately, however. I spent sixteen and a half minutes sitting up, but with my eyes closed. I had no need of a meditation lamp. The flashing green light of Mezoti's alcove shining through my eyelids substituted for one as I ruminated upon life and death, and beginnings and endings. It was a productive sixteen and a half minutes. When I was finished, I was able to lie down and sleep for several hours. Mezoti was able to complete her regeneration cycle without another break, too.

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Stardate 54143

The away team returned this morning. They'd found an undamaged cortical node in one of the drone cadavers and had come back to Voyager as quickly as they could. For the rest of the day, they were in the holodeck, practicing the procedures needed for insertion and integration of the device into Seven's cortical array. They weren't successful. There was never any official announcement, but on our "small ship," something like this can't be kept a secret.

It's devastating news, but Icheb told me he knew it wouldn't work. "A drone's cortical node must be replaced within a very short time or the drone will die. The node mechanism shuts down and can't be re-initiated. I knew one that came from any of the drones in the debris field near Wysanti would be useless. Those drones had been dead for months." Then he asked me if I could stay with Mezoti tonight. He said he'll be working a shift and a half in Astrometrics on a project for Seven. Since I worked Alpha shift today and had already planned to spend the evening with Mezoti, I readily agreed. I could see the poor lad wanted to bury himself in work to avoid thinking about what will happen to Seven. She's been more of a mother to Icheb than Yifay ever bothered to be.

When I arrived in Borg Central tonight, Mezoti hardly said a word to me at first. She'd also known how futile trying to use a node from a dead drone would be. I talked her into reminiscing about fun things, like Tom and B'Elanna's wedding; and the story Dad told the four Borglets on the night we released our "Haunt" from Deck 12 into its new nebula; and the play we wrote about that night. I finally coaxed Mezoti into her cubicle at 2220. Her cycle has been interrupted twice already, and it's not 2400 yet. I'll try to get some sleep, but it's going to be a long night.

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Stardate 54144
I woke up just as Mezoti's alcove announced her regeneration cycle was complete. She opened her eyes, and I walked her to Deck Two to get breakfast from Dad. I wondered where Icheb had been. He'd told me he was scheduled to cover Beta and half of Gamma shift in Astrometrics, but I'd expected he'd return to the cargo bay by 0300 to begin his own regeneration cycle. When Mezoti and I arrived at the Mess Hall, I found out the two Ensign Delaneys had shared duty in Astrometrics yesterday. Jenny had covered Alpha and the first half of Beta, while Megan had been there during the rest of Beta and all of Gamma shift. Where had Icheb been?

I found out he'd actually spent the night in the biology lab, researching the feasibility of donating his cortical node to Seven. He'd never been completely assimilated. Icheb reasoned that if several changes were made to his genome, he might well be able to survive without one. He went to the Doctor and Seven with his proposed methodology in hand, requesting they look at his plan. The Doctor brushed him off at first, but when Icheb insisted he examine it more closely, the EMH realized the proposal might actually work. Seven's refused to even glance at it. Captain Janeway tried to convince her to at least look at Icheb's plan, but Seven will not put his life in danger.

**Supplemental**

Icheb hasn't taken Seven's "no" for an answer. He went to his regeneration cubicle and set it to inactivate his cortical node and disconnect it from his cortical array. When the captain and the Doctor responded to his summons, they found him hanging from the platform, near death. Seven still didn't want to accept his node, but Icheb declared that if Seven could refuse to have it inserted into her array, he could refuse to have it reconnected, too. Since Icheb had locked the Doctor out of the cubicle, he couldn't reconnect it without Icheb's permission. When the Doctor proclaimed the node would go bad if no one agreed to accept it and both of them could die, Seven finally gave her consent for the procedure.

After an emergency transport to Sickbay, and with Tom assisting, the Doctor removed Icheb's node from his cortical array and placed it inside Seven's. The "restructuring" DNA therapy protocols for Icheb that he provided to the Doctor have been initiated.

Seven seems to be doing well. That headstrong young man is not. We all hope he pulls through. Icheb is very brave, and he dearly loves Seven and Mezoti. I hope he recovers. Losing Seven would be a tragedy, but if we lost them both, poor Mezoti would lose the family she loves. And if **that** happens, I have little doubt the captain will turn **Voyager** around and bring Mezoti back to the Wysanti to stay.

And this time, Mezoti will have no say in the matter.

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Stardate 54149

Icheb finally woke up today. The word sped around the ship at warp 6! Everyone was thrilled.

He'll have to spend another week in Sickbay while the Doctor and Tom keep him under observation, but unless he has a major setback, which the Doctor now feels is unlikely, he'll be fine. He's lost the ability to communicate subvocally. A cortical node is necessary for that Borg function. I'd forgotten Mezoti and Icheb possessed that capability. They apparently used it often to speak with one another with no one else (other than Seven, possibly) being the wiser. Sly foxes, both of them! Mezoti told me the twins used that mode of communication most of the time, so the reason why they didn't speak aloud very often has been confirmed.

Seven had to regenerate for two full days without a break after the surgery. Icheb has been in Sickbay all this time. He won't need to regenerate very much at all from now on. Once he's completely healed, the Doctor predicts he'll need it for no more than a few hours a week, if that. B'Elanna and Seven had previously converted a few of the extra regeneration alcoves into portable units. He'll be able to use one of them most of the time, if he wishes. During his recuperation, the Doctor had him connected to one in Sickbay.

Mezoti had spent part of the time in Sickbay, to be with Icheb, and the rest with Seven in Cargo Bay 2. Naomi stayed with Mezoti as much as Sam would allow. Naomi has been friends with Seven ever since the former Borg helped Naomi with her "captain's assistant" studies a couple of years ago; and Naomi also wanted to keep her friend Mezoti company while she waited for Icheb to recover. Classes were suspended for the duration. Everyone agreed that until the medical crises were resolved, neither girl would be able to concentrate on their studies. While Icheb was comatose, Naomi and Mezoti took turns reading to him from materials Father gave them. He told them it was "vital" for Icheb to learn this information for the Starfleet Entrance Exam, which he must take before he can be accepted into Starfleet's "Distant Learner Program." What Father didn't tell them was that everything they read was educational for them as well. Father doesn't lie (unless he's ordered to by a superior officer), but he can be devious when it suits his purposes.

Tomorrow, the girls' "vacation" will end, since Seven and Icheb are both now "out of the woods," as the Doctor put it. Their first subject will be Health. The Doctor teaches those sessions in Sickbay. This way, the girls will be able to spend time with Icheb while they're learning their lesson. Very smart.

During our visit this afternoon with Icheb, Captain Janeway called me over to the Doctor's office and said, very quietly so the two girls and Icheb couldn't hear, that my support for Mezoti's choice to remain on Voyager has turned out to be the right decision for everyone's sake. I admitted it had been a very difficult situation, and it could have been a traumatic one if things had turned out differently.
for Seven and Icheb.

The captain was more philosophical. "Maybe Mezoti gave both of them someone to live for."

Supplemental

I've spoken with Seven about what's to become of Icheb and Mezoti if our return to the Alpha Quadrant occurs while they're still quite young. I suggested Seven might wish to form a family through adoption, the way Aimee is being adopted by Marla Gilmore. Apparently Icheb has already asked her about this, and she's considering it. I told Seven I thought it would be a wonderful solution for them all. I hope she decides to do it.

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Chapter End Notes

Mezoti emphatically declared to Seven that she hoped her parents were never found, after seeing what happened to Icheb when he was returned to his. She insisted she wished to remain on Voyager. So I simply couldn't believe she'd leave the ship with the twins to live on Wysanti. One of the great advantages of an AU, of course, is that the writer can "fix" things which don't make sense. Since Tuvix is alive, and this is already an AU, there's no reason Mezoti can't change her mind and stay on Voyager, where she belongs. So here she remains.

(In fact, one of the major reasons I decided to proceed with this story was to make this necessary correction to Voyager's history.)
Hiding in Plain Sight

Chapter Summary

A less-than-accurate holographic version of Lt. Reginald Barclay who comes to visit the ship seems to have a hidden agenda. After the problems "Reg" caused are resolved, the Lokirrim vendetta against sentient photonic beings causes problems for our EMH, Seven, and Harry Kim on the Delta Flyer -- and for Tuvok on Voyager as well.

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Stardate 54209

We've finally met Reg Barclay of Project Pathfinder -- or his holographic representative, I should say. He isn't what I expected from the stories our EMH told us about him.

This version of Mr. Barclay is brimming with self-confidence. He's been quite the "life of the party," entertaining us with vocal impressions of Father and Captain Janeway, among others. The EMH is quite perturbed. He's not upset about Reg's becoming more sociable and self-confident, I must point out. He's upset that the Reg hologram has been monopolizing the EMH's mobile emitter ever since he arrived. The biological Lieutenant Barclay our Doctor met on Jupiter Station was always very considerate of everyone on Jupiter Station, whether they were photonic or organic in nature. The Doctor confided, "He seems . . . well . . . quite selfish now."

I pointed out that when the EMH was sent through Project Pathfinder, much of his programming was deleted temporarily and placed in data storage until his return. Otherwise, his program wouldn't have been able to travel through the transmitting system. It's possible some of the traits of the organic Lieutenant Barclay had to be altered so that his hologram could travel through the datastream, too. The Doctor admitted this must be the case -- but he would like to be able to travel more freely around the ship while Reg is here, at least some of the time. I quite agree. If I have an opportunity to speak to the Reg hologram or the captain, I'll mention it.

The most exciting news Reg brought us, however, is that Starfleet has worked out a way for Voyager to travel back to the Alpha Quadrant within the next few weeks! The technique involves simultaneously shooting verteron beams into two red giant stars, one in the Delta Quadrant and another in the Alpha Quadrant, creating a geodesic fold in space. This technology is not unknown to our crew. It was one the captain ordered the Science Division to study on a couple of occasions. The first time study was done quite early in Voyager's journey, even before my advent (which, if they'd done it then, would have prevented my coming into being). Not long after Seven came on Voyager,
Sciences revisited the concept to see if her knowledge of ways the Borg avoid radiation contamination would make such a journey feasible. Neither study confirmed it was a workable mode of travel. The ship would be irradiated to such a degree, no biological matter would survive the journey. Even Father's orchid collection would be reduced to nothing more than greasy smears of petroleum-like residue. Reg brought us schematics to upgrade our shields. If the crew also receives enhanced anti-radiation inoculations, Reg claims the methods working together would preserve our lives -- although Father's orchids might not be so lucky.

The captain is willing to work on the shield upgrades immediately. As she explained to the senior staff, who were told to disseminate the information to the entire crew, any improvement in our shield technology is beneficial, whether we choose to go through a geodesic fold or not. The Doctor is evaluating the prescribed anti-radiation medication. After he completes his study, which he expects to finish sometime in the next day or two, the captain will decide upon our course of action.

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**Stardate 54211**

Well, as an old Earth saying goes, "back to the drawing board." Our attempt to use a geodesic fold to journey halfway across the galaxy failed. We're not yet sure why. The opening in the red star in the Delta Quadrant did appear briefly, but then it closed up again before we could guide *Voyager* through. Not only that, but for some unexplained reason, an escape pod containing the holographic Reg Barclay and Seven of Nine suddenly appeared on our sensors. We were able to transport Seven and the Doctor's mobile emitter, with the Barclay program inside, back to *Voyager* before the empty escape pod arrived at the opening. The fold closed before the empty pod could get through, and it disintegrated in the red giant's chromosphere. I don't know how Seven could have survived the trip in the pod, since it hadn't been equipped with the shield modifications that would protect her. We were fortunate to retrieve her and the Doctor's mobile emitter when we did.

Icheb came to me after he visited Seven in Sickbay. He went to B'Elanna and Seven before the fold was initiated to convey his concerns that the shield modifications would not protect us adequately, even with the added protection of "improved" anti-radiation technology. He'd examined the Doctor's research and noticed the "upgraded" inoculations would fail to counteract several forms of radiation he'd detected during his own surveys of the star's chromosphere and corona. He's convinced Seven would have died if she'd been in the escape pod when it entered the fold. Icheb suspected the Barclay hologram wasn't telling us the truth about the project. He asked me if I had any idea what this venture had really been about. I had no answer to give him.

**Supplemental**
Father addressed our Security Division today. Seven had been targeted by the Barclay hologram for reasons unknown. After Icheb turned in his evaluation of the shield modifications, the inoculation components, and his study of the radiation emanating from the red giant star, Seven confirmed his findings. After Seven told Reg she was going to share this information with the captain before radiation killed Voyager's crew, he overpowered, sedated, and stuffed her into the escape pod before flying it to the star. Why would Reg kidnap Seven and expose her to certain death? We don't have a motive yet, but the scenario, as it played out, is extremely troubling.

The Barclay hologram was deactivated and his program was uploaded into a data storage module. It's now in a secure location well away from any holoemitters. B'Elanna and Seven tried to question the Reg about what happened, but advanced encryption codes in the program prevented him from answering them. B'Elanna's confused. She's encountered this type of encryption before, but only in Ferengi programs. She's certain Starfleet wouldn't encrypt any sensitive information with Ferengi codes. Tom's assessment has merit. He told us that if the Ferengi are involved, there must be a profit motive attached somewhere.

The captain plans to ask Admiral Paris for an investigation in the next Project Pathway transmission window. The EMH says he now believes this Reg Barclay hologram was based upon an imposter, and not the real Reg.

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Stardate 54237

We received an explanation in today's datastream about what happened when Lieutenant Barclay's hologram visited us. The captain didn't even have to ask Admiral Paris what it was all about. His transmission through the datastream provided us with a complete explanation.

While we actually did receive the "real" Lieutenant Barclay's hologram, it was one which had been intercepted en route by a gang of Ferengi "entrepreneurs" (really, criminals) who were willing to destroy the lives of everyone on Voyager so they could get their "slimy paws" (to use Naomi's succinct phrase) on Borg nanoprobes and sell them to all sorts of businesses, some legitimate, and even more probably not, at an immense profit. I understand that six bars of Latinum, the Ferengi's preferred form of currency, would make anyone extremely rich, and that was the going rate for just one nanprobe. Seven has hundreds of thousands circulating in her body at any given time. And that's not including the additional nanoprobes that Icheb's, Mezoti's, and little Aimee's bodies hold. The Ferengi thieves must not have known about the children's existence, or the Reg hologram may have tried to abduct them as well.

We were all concerned when we never received any datastream communications the month before
"Reg" came through. That's when the first Barclay holographic program was intercepted. Lieutenant Barclay and the rest of the Project Pathfinder team assumed the first program had been too large to be transmitted and sent us a second one with even more deletions of "extraneous" material. This second Barclay hologram was also intercepted and destroyed by the Ferengi, who sent the corrupted program in its place.

Lieutenant Barclay sent us a personal message, apologizing profusely for his hologram's lies and evil deeds. He feels responsible because his own "loose lips" provided the Ferengi with sufficient information to make this attempt. The Ferengi sent a human woman, Leosa, to pose as a teacher who was attracted to Lieutenant Barclay. Since, from all we've learned about him over the past year or so, he's very much a loner, he was susceptible to the blandishments of this woman. Reg confided many details of his work to her, including his plan to send a holographic representation of himself to serve on Voyager as a member of the crew. She's actually a Dabo Girl who works for Nunk, one of the Ferengi "businessmen." (Tom believes he's crossed paths with Nunk and Leosa in the past. "She's quite a salesman, and not averse to selling herself on occasion, either," he told me. I didn't ask him how he knew that. He is a married man now.)

At any rate, with the help of Counselor Deanna Troi, Admiral Paris, and Lieutenant Barclay himself, they were able to pry enough information out of Leosa to deduce what the Ferengi plan must be. Lieutenant Barclay, posing as his own hologram, contacted the Ferengi and told them Captain Janeway had discovered their plan and possessed technology that would protect Voyager and its crew from the radiation. Our crew would NOT die, but our captain was so angry, she planned to go after them with all sorts of exotic weaponry we'd supposedly obtained in the Delta Quadrant to "more than simply kill" the conspirators. The Ferengi were the ones who closed the geodesic fold themselves, to prevent our captain from coming through "with all guns blazing," as Tom said afterwards, laughing.

I did my best to chuckle along with Tom. I wasn't very successful. All I could think about was that this was still another attempt to use the datastream to destroy Voyager's crew, and both almost succeeded. That insane monk Teero Anaydis interfered with Father's letter from Sek, and now Ferengi intercepted the Barclay hologram to pervert it from performing its true purpose, which had simply been to assist our crew in any way it could to help us return home more quickly. B'Elanna was still in Engineering, checking over all the shield modifications to make sure the ones "Reg" had installed didn't have any "Trojan Horse" inclusions to endanger the ship and its crew, or I doubt Tom would have revealed any of this to me.

After I left the Paris-Torres quarters, I visited Father to express my concern over the lack of adequate protection for the transmissions going through the datastream. He's also recognized the danger. In his revised report about the incident, which he submitted to Starfleet as soon as he heard about the Ferengi involvement, he insisted that Project Pathfinder's security system needs a serious upgrade before the next transmission is sent to us.

I would like to say my visit with Father put my mind at ease, but it did not. While it was good to hear he'd anticipated my concerns and dealt with them in the manner I would have done in his place, in
the future we will need to be extremely vigilant whenever we receive datastream transmissions. Every message must be stringently examined to make sure no malefactor has tampered with what has been sent to us, before we disseminate any of them to our crew.

I had another concern once I left Father. In the privacy of his quarters I observed his physical condition has deteriorated. He was sweating profusely, and he had difficulty formulating sentences during our datastream discussions. I reviewed my memories and recalled that seven years have gone by since Father's last pon farr. I asked him if he has a plan for dealing with his "condition" (since I didn't dare mention it by name). The Doctor has arranged for a specific medication to be made available to him, "when necessary," to ease his symptoms. He expects to meditate throughout his "time of trial" and deal with his "problem" that way.

I'm concerned about the timing. The Doctor is currently off the ship on an away mission with Harry and Seven. He assured me that Tom will have access to the Doctor's records if he needs the preparation prior to the EMH's return. He reminded me that we expect to rendezvous with the Delta Flyer within the next 24 hours, and he believes he should be able to deal successfully with his "condition" until then. I told him he should come to me if there was anything I could do for him. While he told me he would, I'll be quite surprised if he does. Father even had trouble discussing the situation with me!

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Stardate 54238

Father has the "Tarkalean Flu," according to our acting chief medical officer. Tom is filling that position once again, since the Doctor is still with Harry and Seven on the Delta Flyer. After sending Father to his quarters and examining him there, Tom's diagnosed Father with this illness to explain his absence from the bridge and has asked me to stay away from Father to support this diagnosis. There's no sign of it yet in me. If I don't get the "Tarkalean Flu" sometime in the next three years, it's unlikely I'd ever experience pon farr. By then, eight years will have passed since my advent. At this point, I doubt I ever will need to deal with it. After my time with Alyara, I'm fairly certain my . . . appetites . . . are Talaxian.

What is far more disturbing to me now is that we have no idea when the Doctor will be back. The Delta Flyer last checked in with the bridge well over 24 hours ago. A long range sensor sweep was instituted, but there's no sign of the Flyer anywhere near the rendezvous coordinates. After Tom "quarantined" him, Father contacted me through the comm system and advised me to search for the Flyer's ion trails. He'd planned on trying that himself before his condition worsened to the point he could no longer function on the bridge.
We know the *Flyer's* last position as of its most recent check-in, but that's a long way from our current location. The captain's ordered us to proceed further into Lokirrim space to see if we can find them, but that has its own hazards. We understand the Lokirrim are in the midst of dealing with an insurrection of some sort. We don't have any details, but after our experience with the Devore, we know any sort of internal conflict can create problems. With Father unable to function optimally at present, that's a very worrisome situation.

Stardate 54240

Father has been unable to meditate away the worst of his symptoms, even with the assistance of the medications Tom has prescribed for him. Tom's alternate solution is a variant of the EMH's "treatment" for Ensign Vorik when he went through the pon farr three years ago. It didn't work for him, but the Doctor's "Miss Right Now" for Vorik was a generic character. Tom plans to create a holographic T'Pel for Father to use as the focus of his meditations. Father was reluctant, but after Tom convinced him that as long as the hologram was of his wife, and he wouldn't really be disrespecting his vows then, he relented. Tom asked me to check over the holocharacter to see if it was reasonably accurate, as far as I could tell from the memories I inherited from Father.

Tom's creation looks almost like Father's spouse. I thought her ears were a bit short, and her vocal tones weren't quite right. T'Pel's voice is a warm, mellow alto, and it can be a bit breathy at times. Father shared a letter she'd sent him, shortly after audio-visual communications were permitted for civilian correspondence. I lent my copy to Tom so he could get a better feel for the way she spoke, and he adjusted the voice. It's a good match, but no recording sounds exactly the way a person does. There's always a touch of distortion. It's as close a recreation of my stepmother's voice that we can provide to Father at present, considering our current situation.

Father had barely entered the holodeck, however, before a Lokirrim warship appeared and demanded all photonic energy usage on our ship to cease immediately. Captain Janeway assured the Lokirrim captain that all of the holograms on our ship are for "recreational purposes only" (true at the moment, since we don't have our EMH on board) and ordered the holodecks shut down. Poor Father! When the Lokirrim captain insisted on boarding our ship to inspect *Voyager*, the captain told him she would allow him to travel beside us while we traversed Lokirrim space, but if he insisted on trying to board *Voyager*, she would order his vessel destroyed. This was not an idle threat, and he knew it. The Lokirrim ship's weaponry and shields are no match for *Voyager's*. He reluctantly complied with her demands.

So we are now traveling through Lokirrim space, plodding along because the annoying alien vessel that's accompanying us is much slower than ours, while we frantically search for the *Delta Flyer* and our missing crew. It would be laughable if the situation wasn't so serious. Father is suffering from the pon farr, and unless it's resolved satisfactorily -- and soon -- he could die.
Stardate 54243

We're finally out of Lokirrim space, and not a moment too soon, as far as I'm concerned.

Father is fine. As soon as we rescued our away team and the Delta Flyer from the Lokirrim patrol ship that had imprisoned them, Captain Janeway ordered us out of their space at top speed. As soon as we crossed their borders, she turned the holodeck back on so that Father could finish his "therapy" without any further interruptions. Dad and I were waiting for him when he exited Holodeck 1, and it was obvious that Tom's therapy had indeed worked, even though it hadn't for Vorik when the Doctor tried it with him. Clearly, the fact that Father and his spouse have enjoyed many such interludes during their lives together enabled him to be successful with this form of meditation therapy, thanks to Tom's holographic programming skills. Father had nothing negative to say to Dad or me while we walked down the corridor after leaving the holodeck. Tom told me later Father did have one complaint. "Tuvok said I made T'Pel's ears too long." Tom was laughing when he told me this. I was sorry I'd told Tom to make them a bit longer. I also did my best not to think about the role ears play in Vulcan sexual practices. Yes, there is one. I wish Father hadn't mentioned the ears to Tom, because now I can't seem to expunge those images from my mind. Oh, well. Perhaps if I don't try to keep them out of my mind, I'll eventually be able to forget. Someday.

Once I was assured of Father's renewed health, I was apprised of other events which took place while the team was in the custody of the Lokirrim. We thought Seven notified us about their abduction by the Lokirrim. Actually, it was the Doctor who notified us, since he was in control of Seven's body at the time.

Because of the insurrection from their own photonics, the crew of the patrol ship captained by Ranek was under orders to decompile any sentient holograms they encountered. When the Lokirrim patrol ship insisted on searching the Delta Flyer told the team about their orders, we were in imminent danger of losing our EMH. His program hid inside of Seven's cybernetic network. Ranek fell for Seven's explanation that his mobile emitter was a "portable regeneration device." He impounded the Delta Flyer and its crew because the substances the EMH had collected for transformation into medications apparently can also be converted into biochemical explosive devices. Our away team was accused of weapons trafficking, of all things! Possession of holographic technology is also a crime in Lokirrim space. I can't say I condemn them for this, under the circumstances, but how can their sentient photonics can function independently enough to be part of an insurrection? The rest of Lokirrim technology doesn't appear capable of producing anything like our EMH's 29th century mobile emitter. However they've managed it, the war between "organics" and "photonics" has resulted in many deaths. I was reminded of the isomorphic projection Dejaren, who murdered the organic crew of the Serosian ship B'Elanna and the Doctor encountered a few years ago. (The Doctor still has Dejaren's pet holographic fish in Sickbay. Spectrum's cute. Dejaren wasn't.)
Whether the Lokirrim's methods can be justified or not, charging our away team with criminal activity on minimal evidence and impounding the Delta Flyer were clearly beyond what our captain considers acceptable behavior between sentient species. Once we learned our crewmates' location, she rather forcefully broke the agreement between us and the first Lokirrim captain we'd met. After she discovered our crew had been imprisoned on Ranek's patrol ship, she ordered us to disable the weapons and propulsion on the ship that had been accompanying ours, and we sped away to retrieve our crew and shuttle from Captain Ranek.

After the Doctor went back into his mobile emitter during the rescue, Captain Ranek fired upon the Doctor and Seven. He missed and damaged one of his own consoles. Although Seven warned him to stay away while she fixed the problem, Ranek refused. The console overloaded and exploded, just as she'd predicted. Ranek was seriously injured. Despite the danger that another Lokirrim ship might reach Ranek's before the Doctor had completed treating Ranek for very serious injuries, the EMH refused to return to Voyager until he was certain the Lokirrim captain had been cured. While Ranek and his executive officer, a young woman named Jaryn, did not say they would look at all "photonics" in a better light after our Doctor provided urgently needed medical care, they agreed our EMH was, in fact, a hologram who was serious about keeping his vow to provide assistance to anyone, friend or foe, who was in need of his services. I'd like to think that this will eventually lead them to reconsider their attitude towards photonics.

Supplemental

Seven became noticeably peeved with the Doctor when she overheard him say he wished he could have more New York Style Cheesecake. At first I had no idea why that would upset her. My friend Mezoti has since provided all the particulars. (If Seven isn't careful, Mezoti will report whatever Seven is thinking to Dad, Naomi, and me, since our young Norcadi girl has no qualms about sharing what she's "overheard." On multiple occasions I've pointed out that this behavior is inappropriate, but she hasn't accepted this yet. Mezoti picks up Seven's thoughts through her cortical node, as she did with the twins and with Icheb, before he gave up his node to Seven and lost the ability to communicate subvocally.)

"When the Doctor was inside Seven's cortical array," she reported, "he ate an entire New York Cheesecake with Ranek, the Lokirrim captain -- and K'tarian chocolate puffs -- and alcoholic beverages." (Seven has a great deal of trouble metabolizing anything alcoholic or syntheholic.) "Seven's not happy. Her clothing is tight. And he was flirting with Jaryn, the woman who was on the ship with them. He was flirting with Ranek, too -- or maybe it was the other way around. Ranek was flirting with the Doctor when he was inside Seven. Anyway, she's mad at him for abusing her body. I wouldn't want him taking over my cortical array, either." After providing this intriguing information, Mezoti sniffed in disapproval.

Mezoti's information, as usual, was totally accurate -- although I hope she hadn't been aware of the extent of his sexual arousal when Jaryn gave him a massage. Mr. Kim had no qualms sharing that
information with Tom and me. (He's old enough to know better than to report such a thing -- although I regret to say that neither of us objected to hearing this bit of gossip until after he'd finished his recitation.) Harry overheard Seven and the Doctor arguing about it while they were all locked up in Ranek's brig, while the EMH briefly moved back into his mobile emitter. (I think Harry still has a bit of a crush on our former Borg and was incensed about the Doctor's cavalier treatment of Seven's lovely form. He swore Tom and me to secrecy. The only time I've breathed a word of this anywhere is right now, in my personal log. I don't know if Harry told anyone else, or if Tom is responsible -- but the story is all over our small ship anyway.)

Seven appears to have forgiven the Doctor. Since this was the only time he's had the ability to truly experience taste and smell, I can understand why he got a little giddy and went overboard exploring the wonderful world of sensory perceptions. I've learned she's been bringing her dinners to Sickbay, eating them in front of him, describing how everything tastes, so he can experience the meals vicariously through her descriptions.

I mentioned to Icheb and Mezoti that this was a very nice thing for her to do for the Doctor. Icheb snickered a bit (which is the first time I ever heard him do that) and said, "Maybe not so nice. Eating in front of him frustrates the Doctor because he can't taste the food she's eating. He now knows what he's missing. I think she's punishing him for the way he acted while he was in control of her body." I've given the matter a considerable amount of thought. While Icheb may have identified her true motivation, I prefer to believe Seven is acting out of altruism and not vindictiveness towards our EMH -- although it wouldn't hurt his program to experience a little frustration now and then. From the way he reportedly acted during this incident, he deserves to suffer a bit for being so self-indulgent.

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Humanitarian Aid

Chapter Summary

While Harry is off on a mission and gets to "play Captain Proton" for a change, 
*Voyager* is on the surface of an uninhabited planet for repairs, giving Tuvix a chance to 
take the girls exploring.

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Stardate 54270

The captain has finally succumbed to B'Elanna's pleas to land *Voyager* on an uninhabited planet for 
a long-needed "maintenance stop." The warp engines require a complete overhaul, and while we can 
manufacture most of the components ourselves in the industrial-size replicators, a complete refit 
usually requires either a stop at a friendly, well-equipped space station or a period of time spent 
immobilized on a planet's surface. The last time we came to an appropriate station was years ago, 
when I met Alyara and had such a wonderful time. It wasn't so wonderful for Seven. That's when 
Lieutenant Wilkarah came on board, after the Doctor broke her link with Lansor and P'Chan.

That might be one reason the captain decided to send Seven with Harry and Dad in the *Delta Flyer*, 
searching for dilithium, while Tom landed *Voyager* on a Class-L planet. Scenic, it's not, but the 
atmosphere is breathable and the gravity is a little weaker than Earth-normal. Our crew will be able 
to examine the hull and return it to a "newborn" surface for the first time in a very long time, without 
having to work in spacesuits. Two other teams in Class-2 shuttles have been sent in other directions 
looking for supplies such as dilithium. Hopefully one or more will find crystals for the refit.

The rest of us are resigned to doing the drudge work. Well, most of us are. Tom begged Captain 
Janeway to let him go on the mission in the *Flyer*, but she'd sent out the search teams before we 
landed on the planet's surface. Tom has had several opportunities to land *Voyager* during our 
journey. None of our other pilots have had that experience. The captain insisted that the best pilot 
had to be the one at the helm. When the subject came up, no one mentioned the time Commander 
Chakotay landed *Voyager* on the Demon planet. He was successful, but his history of shuttle 
accidents may have made the captain leery of letting him perform the maneuver if there's an 
alternative. Tom has had his share of shuttle accidents, too, but everyone knows his couldn't be 
avoided when they occurred. No one is quite so certain Chakotay's accidents have always been so 
unavoidable. This means Tom is stuck completing assignments that are boring, dirty, and beneath his 
dignity -- just like everyone else. (He's been scrubbing plasma conduits, which is often a punishment 
detail. I can't blame him for complaining about *that* assignment.)
Since we're trying to reserve energy for the repairs instead of using it to conjure up meals in the replicator, and with Dad away, I'm stuck myself. When I'm not working with Chell, planning and preparing meals for the crew primarily from food we've stored from foraging missions, I'm busy taking inventory of our weapons lockers with Lieutenant Ayala. Thanks to Project Pathfinder, we've received schematics which allow many of our existing supplies to be upgraded. In some cases, the captain has authorized us to replace outdated models with new ones. That almost always requires assembling them once we've replicated the parts.

As long as Seven is away, I am also "in charge" of Icheb and Mezoti. I've received permission to take a nature walk later today with Mezoti, Naomi, and Noah Lessing, who wants to examine the vegetation on this world. It seems very sparse to me, but he says it looks like what one finds in desert landscapes on Earth and Mars (where most of the vistas are still desert). We may find some interesting edible varieties to supplement our food stores. The girls are eager to go. The captain has agreed to leave Chell in complete charge of the Mess Hall for dinner so we can spend the entire afternoon on the planet's surface. I hope I won't hear too many complaints when we get back. Chell is an accomplished cook, but his constant chatter drives the crew crazy at times.

Supplemental

Our nature walk was a lot of fun. Although there's little water on this planet, we did find a few little springs with an astonishing array of wildlife surrounding them, animal as well as vegetable. A few plants were so aromatic and abundant, I asked Mr. Lessing to check them out to see if they were edible. They were, so we transported several flats of them to one of the airponics bays to grow to supplement our spice supplies. I made a pudding and used two of the herbs to disguise the taste of leola root, since most of the crew still isn't fond of it. Mezoti and I had to laugh when the captain and first officer both complimented me on the dessert. When they sampled it, they had no idea it contained an ingredient they loathe! The girls, Mr. Lessing, and I plan to ask the captain for clearance to take a few more hikes before we leave this planet -- for educational purposes only, of course. That's our story, and we're sticking to it.

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Stardate 54274

Icheb is now working in Engineering. He had been assigned to work with Father as part of his "cadet training." I think delivering PADDs was a little beneath Icheb's abilities, although it's always important to reinforce the need to follow orders. We aren't so short on energy that the information Icheb was delivering in a PADD couldn't have been entered into the computer for the captain to access at her leisure, though. At any rate, when he was in Engineering delivering a PADD to the captain from Father, they suffered a brief power failure. It could have taken us a while to fix, except Icheb remembered having to make a similar repair on the Borg cube when he first "woke up" as a drone, when he had to restore power to one of the cube's main areas. He quickly took the initiative
and fixed the connections in Engineering by himself. At first he was afraid he'd overstepped his bounds, but the captain decided his talents would be better utilized as part of Lieutenant Torres' engineering team instead of as a messenger boy. Icheb is pleased, and so am I. I'm sure Seven will be gratified when she learns about this as well.

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Stardate 54276

A Captain Geral, a member of a race calling themselves the Annari, has come on board and interrogated us about what we're doing here. His people claim this world. The captain explained our need to complete an overhaul of vital systems in a stable location, gave him a tour of our ship, and asked if we could institute a trade of some sort with the Annari. We need dilithium injectors for our warp drive but have zeolithic ore to spare. Working a trade would save us the trouble (and energy expense) of making the injectors ourselves. He accepted this explanation and transported back up to his ship. It's one of three currently in orbit around the planet.

Supplemental

While the captain was working on the trade, Dad, Seven, and Harry returned from their away mission. They didn't find any dilithium, but once the Annari ships left orbit, they approached the planet, accompanied by another ship belonging to a race called the Kraylor. Harry answered a distress call from the Kraylor. in a medical transport, who were begging for help after an Annari ship began firing on them, Harry had to disable the Annari ship's weapons in order to protect the Flyer, which was sitting between the two vessels and effectively was being attacked by them as well. While the Kryalor ship has a cloaking device to hide its location from the Annari, it was severely damaged in the attack. Many of its crew were killed. Only one bridge officer survived. He'd just graduated from the Kraylor officer training program, and this was first assignment. All of his pilot training had taken place on a shuttle. He didn't know how to fly anything as large as a medical transport.

Dr. Loken, the senior physician on the transport, said they needed help getting back to his homeworld to deliver a vaccine to the Kraylor homeworld. Without an experienced crew, they'll never get through the Annari blockade of his planet. Dr. Loken has asked the captain to allow Harry to pilot their vessel back to their homeworld. After the captain interviewed the Kraylor doctor and Harry, she's decided to grant his request. Seven will go along to assist. While he has been in charge of the bridge of Voyager from time to time, usually during Gamma shifts, Harry always has support available from the other officers if and when he needs it. Since Seven has no actual Starfleet rank, on this mission, Harry will be in sole command of a true starship for the first time. I'm happy for him.

Dr. Loken had one last thing to tell Captain Janeway before Harry left for this mission. Dr. Loken
claimed that while the Annari initially present themselves as friends, they end up subjugating every species they meet. He warned the captain not to believe everything Captain Geral told her.

Stardate 54279

Icheb is no longer working in Engineering with B'Elanna. He’s been reassigned to scrubbing plasma conduits. I was quite upset when I heard about it and went to the captain for an explanation. It seems that Icheb mistook B'Elanna's gestures of friendship towards him for inappropriate romantic overtures. He misinterpreted what the Doctor told him were "signs" of sexual attraction -- elevated endorphin levels and blood pressure -- when he took tricorder readings of B'Elanna while they were working in a Jeffries tube! The environmental controls weren't working well at the time and they were struggling to make the repair, which obviously affected Icheb's tricorder readings. B'Elanna was astonished when Icheb said they "couldn't see each other anymore." Rather than make him feel worse about the misunderstanding, she "let him down easy." He accepted this change of assignment, thinking B'Elanna was trying to spare him from having to spend time with her when she was "frustrated" by losing him.

Icheb’s little sister Mezoti hasn't had any qualms telling him he must be wrong about B'Elanna’s interest in him. She mercilessly told Icheb, "B'Elanna's in love with her husband Tom." And Mezoti is quite right. Some of the Engineering staff have gleefully spread this story all over the ship. Icheb is very embarrassed about his mistake. I’d like to speak with him about what happened, but I'm not sure my relative lack of experience, despite those I remember from Dad and Father, would qualify me to counsel Icheb about this. I went to Tom for advice. He said he was sure Icheb had made an innocent mistake, and something he’d said in jest to Icheb a couple of days ago might have made the situation worse. He said he'd talk things over with Icheb, since "I've been there myself," misinterpreting the true meaning of overtures from another person.

Stardate 54282

We've been expelled from this planet by the Annari. They found out the Delta Flyer had fired on one of their ships several days ago. Of course, the Annari ship had fired upon the Flyer first in their attempt to destroy the Kraylor medical transport, but they refuse to accept that explanation. They told us we've "taken sides" in the fight against the Kraylor, since they discovered two humans on a Kraylor vessel in orbit around their home planet. Obviously, they'd detected Harry and Seven on board the medical transport ship. So, no trading for dilithium injectors with the Annari. At least we still have the ore to trade with someone else for a commodity we still need. And Mezoti, Naomi, and
I managed to take another nature walk the other day, so I don't feel too badly about leaving the planet. We've seen all we could reasonably hope to see here.

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**Stardate 54284**

We're out of Annari space, and the Kraylor have returned Harry and Seven. It turns out that Dr. Loken wasn't a medical doctor at all, and there was no vaccine. *The Nightingale,* as Harry had dubbed their *Medical Transport 136,* was actually the item that had to be delivered to the homeworld. Its cloaking device was a prototype, designed to protect Kraylor ships escape destruction from Annari vessels when they ran the blockade.

Harry wasn't too happy about the situation once he found out there was no true medical emergency. Although what Dr. Loken told Harry -- and Captain Janeway -- wasn't literally true, now that the Kraylor ships are cloaked, they can deliver necessary commodities, such as food and medicine, which the Annari were trying to prevent from getting through. In that sense, it could be seen as a humanitarian mission after all.

Once the cloaks were installed on the Kraylor fleet, Harry and Seven returned to *Voyager* on one of their ships, just before Father and Tom were about to leave for the Kraylor homeworld to retrieve them before we left this region of space. Harry wasn't very happy about his performance as captain of *The Nightingale.* "I was too hands-on as a commander. My decisions prompted the Kraylor on the ship to mutiny. People died on my watch." He did what needed to be done to deliver the vessel to the Kraylor's planet, but this experience has left him feeling he has much to learn before he's ready to command his own starship. "I'm still a Buster Kincaid, not Captain Proton," he ruefully admitted.

After I spoke with Harry, I asked Seven about what happened on *The Nightingale.* At first she was reluctant to say. After she realized Harry had already shared the entire experience with me, including the fact that she'd been critical about his handling of the situations, she mellowed. She was glad Harry had accepted her critique of his performance and had acted appropriately when he had a chance to correct some of his mistakes, particularly in the way he utilized the talents of Terek, the inexperienced Kraylor officer.

"He accepts what I say," Seven admitted quietly. "He is more adaptable than I have given him credit for."

When she said this, I was reminded of her frequently repeated comment that she works well with Harry. I couldn't resist saying, "If you'd chosen Harry for your first date instead of Lieutenant
Chapman, Tom might have lost the bet he had with the Doctor."

"Perhaps Harry would have suffered from a dislocated shoulder instead of Lieutenant Chapman," she replied, lifting her eyebrow and smiling in that way she has when she's particularly amused.

I told her I didn't agree. "You know each other well. I don't think you'd have had the same difficulty communicating."

"Harry would have known not to order dinner for me before asking me what I wanted first. And he certainly would not have ordered lobster!" I had to laugh when she said that. No, Harry would have definitely avoided a crustacean entrée for her.

At that point, I decided to change the subject and asked, "How's Icheb doing?"

"He is . . . mortified by the misunderstanding. Lieutenant Paris has been very kind. He's said it can happen to anyone. He's asked Icheb to help him develop a holodeck program that all the children can enjoy. Since Icheb prefers not to go rock climbing but wouldn't mind experiencing physical activity more rigorous than Fair Haven provides, Lieutenant Paris suggested they recreate a series of hiking trails. Lieutenant Paris is familiar with several national parks on Earth, and he believes other members of the crew will others in existence on other planets of the Federation. There may be some uphill climbs, but nothing as strenuous as the programs Lieutenant Torres likes to run. Icheb has agreed. Learning holodeck programming is something he's expressed an interest in to me, and Lieutenant Paris would be an excellent teacher."

"That sounds wonderful! Aimee can go along too, once she's old enough to walk."

Seven smiled slightly. "As soon as Mezoti heard about the hiking program, she said she'd carry Aimee on her back if Marla allows it. Mezoti told me you took walks on the planet's surface while Voyager while I was away. I wish to thank you. She enjoyed the experience. Naomi did, too. Neither of them have had many chances to explore an unknown planet's surface."

It's true, of course. Naomi has been ship bound for most of her life. Mezoti has never regained her memories of her life before her assimilation. She once confided that she can't even recall what her parents looked like. Visiting Fair Haven and the Flotter and Trevis programs on the holodeck are all very nice, but we do need to allow them to spend more time on actual planetary surfaces, to give them a chance to explore more natural landscapes. I think I'll suggest to Captain Janeway to allow them to participate occasionally in foraging missions. They loved finding the plants we collected to supplement our supply of herbs. The Doctor has determined one of the plants has medicinal properties, too -- as a digestive aid for our Bolians. 
It's too bad our stay on this planet's surface didn't last as long as we'd expected. Now that I look back upon the situation, even though Loken wasn't very truthful about the nature of The Nightingale's mission, I suspect what he said about the Annari may have been more accurate than the accusations the Annari made about the Kraylor.

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Stardate 54293

B'Elanna and Tom invited Captain Janeway, Commander Chakotay, Seven, Mezoti, Icheb, Naomi and me to join them in Holodeck 2 to view the first phase of the National Park Trails program, which Tom's been building with Icheb. It's a short hike along the north rim of Earth's Grand Canyon. Although the program is a long way from being finished, the views they've created so far are spectacular. The captain said the canyon looks just like the real thing. B'Elanna laughed, and then explained they used actual holographic imagery in order to create the vista. "That was the easiest part of the whole thing to program!"

After a short hike, we sat down around a picnic table and enjoyed the snacks Dad prepared for me to bring with us. I didn't say very much while we ate. Icheb interacted with both Tom and B'Elanna very easily. B'Elanna and Icheb seem to have overcome any lingering embarrassment they might have had concerning their recent misunderstanding. When I spoke to Tom briefly, after we left the program, he informed me that Icheb believes this incident was a "good lesson" for him not to jump to conclusions. "I told him there's an even more important lesson for him to take away from this experience. Never go the Doctor for romantic advice! He doesn't have any romantic experience to speak of!"

I didn't respond to Tom's observation as we parted, but as I walked to my quarters, I recalled that the Doctor does have romantic experience. According to our EMH, when he spent the equivalent of three years on the planet that revolves so quickly on its axis we were able to observe the rise of civilization on its surface, he acquired a significant other -- and a son. When we "rescued" him, he was very sad about leaving them behind, although of course, he hadn't had any choice or warning. In the time it took for him to tell us about them, so much time had passed on the planet, he couldn't have gone back to say goodbye.

And then I thought about the way I saw him gazing at Seven when she caught B'Elanna's wedding bouquet, and about what I'd heard about his private holodeck programs when he added daydreaming to his matrix. The Doctor may not have a lot of experience -- certainly not as much as Tom does -- but clearly, he has some. And he dreams of gaining more.
Ha'Dara

Chapter Summary

The EMH allies himself with other sentient holograms against "organics" -- including his crewmates on Voyager.

Stardate 54329

The past few days have been extremely stressful. I can't believe this has happened, although I must. We lived it. Whenever Tom isn't at the helm (and sometimes, even when he is), he's beside himself with anger at the Doctor. I can't really blame Tom. The Doctor is a traitor to Voyager! He abandoned our ship and left it vulnerable to attack -- and Tom's certain B'Elanna's abduction must be related in some way to his presence on the hologram's ship.

Perhaps if I can calm myself enough to meditate, I'll be able to make sense of what happened, but I'm having more trouble maintaining focus tonight than I have at any other time in recent memory. Even Father admitted he is "seriously disquieted" about these events.

Recording the facts in my personal log might help, because I do need to get some rest. We're racing after the perpetrators, and when we catch up with them, only one outcome will satisfy Tom. We must get his wife back, safe and whole. Who knows what those murderous holograms might do to her? And why did they decide to kidnap her?

I should begin at the beginning, I suppose. I was in my quarters, getting ready to relieve Lieutenant Ayala on the bridge, when Father summoned me to become part of an away team. A Hirogen facility issued the call for help, and they always raise serious security concerns. Thanks to an almost identical knowledge base from the memories from Father, along with the many drills completed since my advent on this ship to reinforce this inherited knowledge, Father is confident in my ability to assess dangerous situations the same way he would. We "think as one" in sticky situations, as this one promised to be. Commander Chakotay led our response to the distress call. Tom, Seven, and Ensign Culhane made up the rest of the team.

When we beamed inside the Hirogen space station, we discovered a lush tropical environment, which to all our senses appeared to be completely natural setting, an arboretum of sorts. Almost immediately, we discovered the bodies of a pair of Hirogen hunters, lying near a pond. At first we assumed they'd been killed by a powerful, as yet unknown species. When we examined the corpses,
however, their wounds appeared to have been caused by a Type 3 phaser, the type used by Starfleet. Later, we discovered another anomalous weapon, a Klingon bat'leth, stuck into the bark of a tree. At that point the commander split our team to cover more of the area. Father, Tom and Ensign Culhane went in one direction, while Seven and I backed up the commander.

A survivor began to fire at us, screaming that we were holograms out to kill him. Father circled behind the Hirogen and administered a quick Vulcan nerve pinch to subdue him. Once our attacker was unconscious, Tom examined his injuries. After he determined the young Hirogen needed extensive treatment from the EMH, Tom called for emergency beam out to Sickbay.

After the wounded Hirogen and Tom were gone, our team evaluated the environment inside the station. While it had seemed real to our senses, and even to our tricorders, the "tropical forest" was a totally artificial, holographic construct. The commander discovered its control panel near the survivor's hiding place and shut down the program. Once the vegetation and waterways disappeared, we discovered we were not alone, although we were the only ones still breathing. The floor of the holodeck was littered with the corpses of 43 Hirogen. The technology used to create it was consistent with the equipment Captain Janeway had traded to the Hirogen who'd taken over Voyager, after their Alpha's death. The surviving Hirogen agreed to a truce and left the ship, giving us a chance to repair it. After we reported our findings to our captain, she said she meant for them to use the technology to avoid killing others, not be killed with it themselves.

Before we could do anything about the cadavers, we were summoned back to Voyager. A Hirogen ship had been detected heading towards our position, apparently in response to the same distress call. Predictably, once they arrived, the Alpha and Beta of that vessel accused us of killing their people. The captain assured them this was not so. While the Hirogen were retrieving the bodies from the station, the Alpha and Beta came aboard Voyager to interrogate the survivor. Donik explained that he'd followed his Alpha's orders to "upgrade" the holograms, giving them comprehensive tactical programming, enhanced memories, and the ability to feel pain. This combination of features created artificial beings who could learn on their own, apart from any modifications made by technicians like Donik. Once the holograms took over the scenario at the station, which had been set up as a training facility to teach the skills of the hunt to neophyte hunters, they killed every Hirogen they could find and escaped from the facility in a Hirogen ship which had been equipped with holoemitters.

The Alpha and Beta blamed him for the murders of the other Hunters. He was "incompetent" for failing to stop the holograms and wanted to take the young male back to their ship to "deal with him." Captain Janeway refused to allow Donki off our ship. Since the captain feels partly responsible for the situation, however, she's agreed to ally Voyager with the Hirogen during their search for the rogue holograms and, with any luck, to prevent any more massacres. While I know Captain Janeway feels guilty that we provided the holographic technology to the Hirogen, we didn't exactly have a lot of options at the time. The Hunters vastly outnumbered us. This technology was the only thing we had to offer them in exchange for our freedom.

We agreed to travel beside them after they told us they'd identified the location of the rogue hologram's ship. Although Captain Janeway urged the Hirogen to hold off until we'd thoroughly
examined the hologram's vessel, the Hirogen attacked as soon as they came in range. Father was suspicious because we'd discovered their "ship" too easily. Harry and Father's scans revealed the object had no weapons, warp drive, impulse engines, or life support systems. It wasn't a ship, it was a holographic projection, a decoy meant to confuse us, and not incidentally, a bomb. When it blew up, the vessel of our Hirogen "allies" was so badly damaged, Captain Janeway ordered us to transport the survivors (barely a dozen) onto Voyager, right before their vessel disintegrated.

The holograms were in hiding nearby. After the explosion, they attacked Voyager. While we were busy defending our ship, we didn't perceive their true purpose. By the time we realized they were after our EMH program, they'd kidnapped him.

The holograms flew away, leaving us to deal with the damage they'd inflicted upon our ship, too. A short while later the hologram's vessel reappeared, and their leader, who identified himself as Iden, requested an audience with Captain Janeway. He expected her to ignore what happened to the Hirogen on the training facility and ally Voyager with him to free the "enslaved holograms" of the region. He sent our own EMH to us to plead his case. I don't know what this Iden hologram said or did while our Doctor was his prisoner, but the EMH argued with Captain Janeway when she told him, in view of the murders they'd committed, she couldn't support the holograms' plans. She ordered him to go to the Mess Hall to treat the Hirogen wounded, but he went to Sickbay instead. Our very own EMH provided the command codes of Voyager to permit Iden to lower our shields when he fired on Voyager. Then the EMH transported himself back to the hologram's ship. Thanks to the Doctor's nefarious deeds, Voyager was crippled, and B'Elanna Torres, our chief engineer -- and Tom's wife -- was abducted by the rogue holograms.

I thought relating the facts of the situation in my log would calm me down. I was wrong. If anything, I'm even angrier now than I was before I arrived at my quarters.

I'll try to meditate myself into a calmer state now. I'm to report to Engineering four hours from now to help repair the warp core, and I doubt I'll get much sleep tonight. Father claims Vulcans can go weeks without any. I guess I'll learn shortly if I'm Vulcan enough to do the same.

Supplemental

We've all worked hard to repair Voyager so we can track the renegade holograms. I don't have time to tell the entire story now, but thanks to what our EMH did, I'm feeling a little more sympathetic towards the Lokirrim than I was when we first encountered them. I can't say the same for the Hirogen. They also betrayed us when we were trying to help them.

Tom and his field medic team were providing medical treatment to them in our Mess Hall. There were too many to treat effectively in Sickbay. The Hirogen were furious that Captain Janeway hadn't
allowed them free range of the ship -- as if we could trust them, considering how belligerent they'd already been towards us. Icheb was assisting Tom with triage, and Dad and I were trying to keep order. A few of the Hirogen began to fight each other, which forced us to call Father for reinforcements.

It was all a diversion so their Alpha could contact more Hirogen vessels. He was just a Beta when he accused Donik of cowardice in Sickbay. After the Alpha who was with him that day was killed by the decoy ship explosion, he took over leadership of the rest of their Hunters. Two Hunter ships came in response. The Hirogen we'd rescued went back to those ships, except for Donik. They didn't want our help anymore, and they didn't want Donik back, either.

It's just as well. Donik volunteered to help us track the holograms' ship so we can rescue B'Elanna. He has some knowledge of engineering, a career he'd like to pursue in the future. Donik is as familiar with the weaknesses of Hirogen technology as its strengths. He showed us a way to hide from the Hunters, inside their sensor's "blind spot" in their ship's exhaust wake. The trick will be to avoid detection while we slip behind one of their vessels.

Donik told us he decided to become a holographic technician to avoid having to become a Hunter. Donik's relatively diminutive stature wouldn't have allowed him to have much success in the Hunt; he's too intelligent a being not to recognize that fact for himself. He reminds me of Kraahn, the Hirogen who taught Seven how to fight in the Tsunkatse ring, who traveled with us for a time last year. Perhaps he's also a bit like Caahr, who wanted to obtain the holographic technology to save his people's civilization by replacing their ceaseless Hunts for Prey. He never wanted to use it as teaching aid so his people could learn how to kill sentient beings with even greater efficiency!

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**Stardate 54336**

I haven't had the chance -- or the heart -- to record everything in my personal log that went on during our pursuit of Iden's ship. It's all over now, thankfully, but many Hirogen died during the course of this venture. Only five of the Hunters are still alive.

If I hadn't had the opportunity to associate with Donik during this pursuit, I would be at a loss to explain how the Hirogen had ever progressed enough to travel in space, let alone to preside over such a huge portion of the Delta Quadrant. Caahr must have been right about how radically their culture has deteriorated since they dedicated their lives so single-mindedly to the Hunt. I think he was also right about the Hirogen not surviving much longer if they continue to expend all of their energies killing other beings and taking body parts for trophies. It's a shame they didn't utilize the holographic technology the way Caahr intended. If he'd lived to show them to use it as a hobby,
rather than having murder be the purpose of their entire existence, the Hirogen might have rededicated themselves to developing their culture. Instead, they chose to "improve" their holograms to the point they became aware of all their prior lives and painful deaths. The Hirogen gave the holograms the gift of sentience, but for such a sadistic reason! Who could ever have anticipated such a thing?

From what I saw of their "Alphas" and "Betas," stupidity seems to be a requirement to reach those ranks. Donik regrets his willingness to modify the programs to the extent his Alpha demanded. Of course, even if Donik had refused his Alpha's direct orders, other technicians had already gone along with their own orders to make those same modifications. According to what Iden and Kejal told the EMH, Donik's was the third facility Iden had attacked to "liberate" its holograms, after he'd killed his own Alpha and stole his ship. The Hirogen had foolishly equipped it with holoemitters so he could carry on his barbaric torture of holographic "prey" while traveling around the quadrant searching for organics to Hunt. Iden apparently never made the connection that the Hirogen were brutal to everyone, not just holograms.

I sympathize with the EMH's concern for holographic rights; but really, he needs a reminder to view "organics" with at least as much sympathy as he does his fellow photonics. He turned his back on everyone on Voyager, including our children, when he defected to the rogue holograms' ship. After the EMH provided the command codes to Voyager, Iden came thisclose to blowing up our warp core. Fortunately, B'Elanna had reinforced the force field just in time -- just before he stole her from Engineering. Iden's crimes show that photonics are just as capable of harming "the other" as biological beings are. After leaving us to Iden's not-so-tender mercies, the Doctor wasn't following his own "do no harm" philosophy, which he said he "must" four years ago, when he shunted the distasteful duty of destroying my life in order to return Dad and Father to theirs onto Captain Janeway. If not for Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry's assistance in creating twin Tuvixes, so that at least one of us could live on, I wouldn't be here to dictate this log entry.

While it was predictable our Doctor would accept, from a photonic rights point of view, Iden's claims that he was simply fighting for freedom, giving Iden the command codes to Voyager and transporting himself, along with his mobile emitter, to the renegade holograms' ship when we had injured on board Voyager was completely inexcusable. I never would have believed our EMH was capable of doing something like this before he actually did it.

The Doctor told Iden B'Elanna was an expert who might be able to help him set up a photonic field generator on Ha'Dara, the "home of light," which they wished to establish on a Demon Class world. When the captain condemned Iden for his atrocities against the Hirogen and said she wouldn't cooperate with him, he decided the captain "was just like all the other organics" and stole B'Elanna instead. He promised to send her back to Voyager in an escape pod once she'd set up the generator to his satisfaction, but as his megalomania became more blatant, it became less and less likely Iden would honor his promises. And, if our warp core had blown up, what would he have done with her afterwards, with no Voyager to return to, a sole "organic" on a vessel of photonics? Even if he'd been willing for her to live with the holograms permanently, how could she survive on a Demon Class world?
As the rogue holograms were headed towards the planet they'd chosen for their Ha'Dara, they encountered a Nuu'bari mining consortium vessel with three holographic workers on board. Iden stole them. When the organic pilots said they planned to report the theft to their authorities, Iden ended the threat by firing on their vessel and killing them. The abducted holograms, it turned out, didn't have the ability to understand what was said, beyond a few simple commands; and they didn't have the processing capability for their programs to be upgraded so they could become sentient. After B'Elanna accused Iden of killing two living beings to liberate mindless machines, he responded by putting her in restraints. Even Kejal, the Cardassian-based hologram who was working with B'Elanna on the photonic field generator project, objected to this action, but Iden refused to listen to her.

We didn't know about any of this until we retrieved B'Elanna and the Doctor. We couldn't do that until we'd repaired our ship from the damage it sustained after Iden's attack. The kidnapping of B'Elanna slowed us down considerably, too. Since the two Hirogen ships that retrieved the Hunters from our mess hall made it clear they would treat Voyager and its crew as prey if we tried to interfere with their pursuit of Iden's ship, we couldn't follow them openly, but the weakness Donik pointed out in the Hirogen ships' sensor arrays gave us the opening we needed. When the two Hirogen ships slipped into a nebula searching for Iden's vessel, Voyager slipped into the wake of one without being detected. Our captain believed the best way to find the rogue ship and rescue our missing crew was for the Hirogen to lead us to them. All four ships eventually ended up in orbit around the Demon class planet the holograms wished to turn into their "home of light," their Ha'Dara.

After the way their Alphas had threatened us, Captain Janeway didn't hesitate to fire on the Hirogen ships, in order to disable their shields and stop them from destroying Iden's ship. Instead of thanking us, Iden fired upon Voyager. After ordering all of the surviving Hirogen to transport down to the planet, he sent the photonic field generator, which B'Elanna and Kejal had made operational, down to the surface, too. Iden thanked our EMH for his contributions to the cause of photonic rights by deactivating him. Iden loaded his own program into the Doctor's mobile emitter so he could hunt the Hirogen himself, to "show them what it was like" to become prey. Once on Ha'Dara, Iden led his photonic crew on a killing spree.

B'Elanna finally convinced Kejal to shut down the photonic generator and store the "crew" inside the rogue ship's computer. Since Iden was wearing the Doctor's emitter, however, he was still roaming free on the surface, killing every Hirogen Hunter he came across.

With Voyager's shields compromised by Iden's weapons fire, coupled with the radiation surrounding the Demon class planet, Captain Janeway was unable to rescue our missing crew by transporting them off Iden's vessel. She sent Commander Chakotay, Father, Tom, and me in the Delta Flyer, with its intact shielding, to rescue them. B'Elanna materialized on the Flyer, but the Doctor did not. At B'Elanna's urging, Kejal had sent the Doctor's program to the surface to confront Iden. The Bajoran hologram taunted the Doctor because his "do no harm" philosophy would preclude him from acting to stop Iden from murdering the Hirogen Beta he had in his weapon's sights. The Doctor disregarded his Hippocratic Oath this time. He fired upon Iden with a photonic weapon and deactivated him. The Doctor's mobile emitter landed on the Demon Class planet's surface, and our EMH recovered it.
The three Hirogen ships and *Voyager* are currently in orbit around Ha'Dara. All three vessels need extensive repairs, but the two Hirogen *Venatic*-class ships that had pursued the holoemitter-equipped vessel haven't many crew members left. Of the thirty-four Hirogen hunters transported to the surface by Iden, only five were still alive by the time Iden was deactivated and our crew could retrieve them.

Captain Janeway has agreed to help them repair one of their ships, but not both. We're too busy undoing the damage done to *Voyager*, and we still don't have B'Elanna's help at the moment. With all of the holograms except for Kejal deactivated, B'Elanna went with Donik to help Kejal decide what, if anything, can be done to repair the damage done to them by Iden's manipulations.

Tom wasn't happy about his wife's decision. He told her, once she arrived on the *Delta Flyer*, that she's going to have to "cut down on the traveling if their marriage was going to work." Fortunately, she recognized he was simply expressing his love for her as he usually did -- with a joke. Tom was mollified once the captain allowed him to stand guard over the holograms' vessel in the *Delta Flyer*. I volunteered to stay with Tom, too, and the captain accepted my offer. Once she decided it was safe enough, she also sent Cadet Icheb over. That's where we'll remain until the Hirogen situation is resolved.

He's at the *Flyer's* tactical station right now, acquiring valuable field experience and keeping a close eye on the activities on the Hirogen *Venatic*-class ship that's being repaired by our crew.

Our EMH is treating their injuries of the five surviving Hirogen in Sickbay. Given Donik's strong negative reaction when we first brought him aboard our ship, I don't know how they feel about receiving treatment from a hologram. Frankly, I don't care if they are uncomfortable, considering the trouble they've caused.

*Supplemental*

The captain has yet to give our EMH any discipline for his actions. I guess her discomfort at what she now sees as a lapse in judgement by providing holographic technology to the Hirogen has something to do with her leniency; but really, she had little choice at the time. The Hirogen could have called in reinforcements to break the stalemate on *Voyager*. We were fighting for our lives; we were, and still are, alone here in the Delta Quadrant. If they had called in other Hirogen ships, they could have destroyed *Voyager* and everyone on it easily. That wasn't the situation the EMH was facing. He not only abandoned us, he gave Iden the tools he needed to destroy us. We're fortunate he didn't succeed.
Stardate 54342

The Hirogen hunters are on the way back to wherever they came from in one of their two vessels. The other, which was critically damaged, crashed onto the surface of the planet earlier today. The corpses of twenty-nine Hunters lie within the caverns of "Ha'Dara." The Hirogen survivors chose to leave their bodies there. The remains of the forty-three neophyte Hunters and their instructors were lost in the first Hirogen ship when the photonic decoy ship exploded.

Perhaps the story Dad suggested the Beta tell his fellow Hirogen will be more plausible, thanks to that evidence on Ha'Dara -- should any Hirogen choose to return here. When the Beta the Doctor saved on the planet wanted to continue pursuing the holograms' vessel, Dad asked him how he wanted his role in this debacle to be remembered. Did he want to be known as the Hirogen who was beaten by holograms, and on the verge of death, whose life was saved by another hologram? Or did he want his story to be of the heroic Beta who bravely took over the Hunt and destroyed the rogue holograms and their ship? (Another outcome the captain suggested may have tipped the scales: if thirty-four Hunters couldn't capture and destroy the rogue hologram ship, the remaining five might not survive to tell any tales at all.) The Beta complimented the captain (or so she's chosen to believe) by telling her, as he climbed onto the transporter pad to return to his ship with his remaining crew mates, that she would have been "worthy prey."

We stayed in orbit for another day to determine the Venatic-class ship was, in fact, far away from Ha'Dara before we dragged the holoemitters-equipped ship away from the planet with Voyager's tractor beam. Only Kejal's program is active. The rest of the enhanced hologram programs remain in the ship's computer. Donik is still on the hologram's ship with Kejal. Neither of them felt comfortable operating the ship on their own. If they'd been willing to reactivate the Weiss hologram, who was based upon a Starfleet officer and could have piloted the ship, they might have simply gone on their own way without our assistance. Kejal said Weiss was almost as fanatical as Iden, but she'll make adjusting his program to make him be more reasonable a priority. She needs time to figure out how to do that, and she'll have help. Donik decided to work with Kejal to restore the programs, but without the hate Iden instilled in them. One sentient hologram's program isn't in their computer, however. B'Elanna told us that Iden's program was "too damaged to be save." Icheb and Tom agree with me. We think Kejal and Donik deleted Iden to make sure his megalomania isn't available to distort their programs again.

Earlier today, Seven identified an H-class planet which she believes may suit the hologram's needs even better than Ha'Dara did. We're headed there now, with the holograms' ship in tow. While it's true Kejal and Donik claim not to have the skills to pilot the ship, I believe there's another explanation for their reluctance to travel to this new planet on their own. If Hirogen Hunters are foolish enough to pursue them again after all that's happened, it will be much harder to find them. Their vessel's engines aren't in operation, and Donik suggested we travel to this H-class planet by going through a nebula on the way, to obscure our Starfleet ion trail. The captain honored his request.

Supplemental
We've buried the holoemitter-equipped ship inside a cavern beneath the surface of the H-class planet. Very shortly, we'll say good-bye to Donik and Kejal. The captain has provided them with an abundance of information, including copies of the Starfleet engineering courses provided to Icheb for his studies with Father. They can use this technological data as a guide in building a photonic society. Donik wants to devote his life to this task, to "compensate" for following his Alpha's orders. He's always wanted to be an engineer. He considered his technician's job might be his entrée into becoming one, and it looks like he was right.

The Doctor and Seven (reluctantly) shared the experience they had with the Lokirrim, when the Doctor "hid" inside Seven's cortical array. B'Elanna gave them information about encounters we've had with artificial intelligences, too. Donik was quite taken with this information. They may be able to construct robotic housings to enable the holograms to travel on the surface of their world someday, without their true nature being easily detectable by passers-by.

Donik seems quite taken with Kejal. I suspect he may wish to share his life with her. This H-class planet is a better option for a Hirogen to live on long-term than a Demon class planet would be, since he never expects to leave. They don't plan on calling their new home by the one Iden wanted to use, though. After the violence that occurred on Ha'Dara, the "home of light" doesn't seem quite right to them, even if it might be an appropriate name for a planet populated primarily by photonic beings. We'll probably never know what they finally decide to call it. Tom jokingly told me they should call it "Hologram's Haven," since it's an H-class world.

We've promised to do one more thing for Donik. When he left home, a few sections of the Hirogen communication array systems in the immediate vicinity of their original home planet were still operational. The captain promised to forward the message he gave us for his mother. He wants to let her know he didn't perish on the Hirogen training station. Donik's mother always encouraged him to become an engineer rather than a Hunter. Donik's father lost his life on the Hunt, and Donik told us she wanted her son to be "something more than a mindless murderer." I'm sure she'll be happy to learn he found a way to live his life without becoming one.

Stardate 54347

We've left the holograms' "Haven" behind, and I'm more than a little upset our Doctor hasn't received any sort of discipline at all from the captain, despite the way he endangered all our lives. While he offered to give up his mobile emitter as punishment for his deeds, the captain refused to accept it. I understand her reasoning. If the EMH needs to administer medical treatment to our crew while they're off the ship, or even if they're within it, having the mobile emitter available is necessary if the site-to-site transporter system should be off line for any reason. If that happens, the injured
could not be brought directly to Sickbay for care. I don't agree with her decision not to restrict his holodeck privileges for an extended period, however. His recent actions have been way over the line of acceptable behavior. Any other crew member would have landed in the brig, as Tom did when he took the Delta Flyer without permission to try and stop the Moneans from ruining their planet. I don't find the EMH's rationale for his deeds much of an excuse.

Tom and I went to the Doctor and suggested he might donate his holodeck time to other crew members who are short of it, as a form of self-discipline. He's refused. Instead, he told us he wants to investigate ways to encourage organics to accept photonics as people and grant them the same rights as any other form of sentient life. I have no idea what form of "encouragement" he has in mind. Even if he programs something which is truly compelling for "organics" like us to experience, I'd prefer he use his "off-duty" time for some vitally needed self-appraisal.

I've always enjoyed the Doctor's ebullient personality. Even when he's been less than helpful (such as when he gave the advice to Icheb that led the poor boy to misinterpret B'Elanna's overtures of friendship as inappropriate romantic behavior, which resulted in half the crew on the ship laughing openly at him), I've never thought the Doctor was acting in a deliberately mean-spirited way. I can't say that about him this time. Iden came very close to annihilating Voyager and everyone on it. And the EMH, thanks to his ECH training and programming, should have considered this possibility before doing what he did. I'm not happy with him at all right now.

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Lives in the Balance

Chapter Summary

As Voyager sails through the Delta Quadrant, well into the seventh year of its journey, a series of encounters with unanticipated visitors -- including some who've traveled for years from the Alpha Quadrant -- bring danger and threaten the health and well-being of the crew. And sometimes the crises -- and the joys -- are self-imposed.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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Stardate 54452

Another child will soon be on board! B'Elanna is pregnant!

While Tom and B'Elanna would have preferred to "keep it to themselves" for a while, that didn't happen. Our small ship's ability to spread gossip at light speed worked again. Icheb scanned B'Elanna after she collapsed in Engineering. His initial diagnosis, after discovering another organism inside her abdomen, was that Lieutenant Torres' body had been invaded by a parasite. Seven recognized the true identity of the "parasite" and contacted the Doctor. Icheb was a feeling more than a little embarrassed when he told Dad about it. "Why do I always misinterpret anything that has to do with Lieutenant Torres?" he said sadly. Dad comforted Icheb, told him it was "wonderful news," and both of them proceeded to tell everyone about the pregnancy. Everyone on board knew what happened within an hour of the incident in Engineering. Mezoti and Naomi rushed to tell me all about it as soon as they heard.

I understand two betting pools are already in operation. One is about the name the couple will pick for their child (even though no one yet knows the baby's gender). The other concerns the date B'Elanna's baby will arrive. That's not a given for any anticipated birth, of course, but with B'Elanna, it will be even harder to predict. She's about seven weeks along, according to Tom. Klingon pregnancies usually last for 30 weeks, several weeks shorter than a full human's. Because of her mixed heritage, B'Elanna's may be shorter, or even take a little longer, than the Klingon average. Even the EMH doesn't know for sure.

B'Elanna seems a little unnerved by the prospect of parenthood, but once she gets used to the idea, I'm confident she'll be a wonderful mother.
Stardate 54559

Now that all the drama is over, we can relax. B'Elanna has recovered from her crisis of confidence. The only reason I know anything at all about what happened is that I was called in to serve on Father's Security team, which helped Tom get inside Sickbay. B'Elanna had locked everyone out to prevent Tom from knowing what she was going to do until it was all over. I know she had planned on changing her child's genome, but neither Tom nor B'Elanna have disclosed why. I believe it had something to do with not wanting her child to look as Klingon as she does, but whether it involved anything more, I can't say. Icheb and Seven have more information, but they're not divulging any more information than the EMH himself is. He can't, since it's privileged medical information he isn't authorized to provide (not that that's always stopped him in the past, one reason he's had to attend those Ethics lessons with Father). Icheb and Seven say it isn't their place to tell anyone what they've learned. I'm curious, but unless the new parents share the details, I guess I'll never find out more.

I do know their baby had a procedure in utero to correct curvature of the spine. B'Elanna and her mother both had corrective surgery for the condition when they were young children. This may have triggered her desire to make further changes in her baby. Tom got through to her, however. B'Elanna now seems very happy and accepting of her prospective offspring.

She's asked the Doctor to become her daughter's godfather. He spread that news around as soon as B'Elanna left Sickbay. Of course he said "yes." Dad was a little disappointed, I know; but he can't be the godfather to every child on Voyager! I'm not anyone's godfather, not officially, anyway. After Mezoti heard the news, she came to me and said she wanted me to be hers. I told her that this sort of request usually comes from a parent. Mezoti sniffed that Seven was too busy to take care of it, so she was doing it for her.

Ah, my Mezoti! I am honored she would even think to ask me about this. Whatever she wants from me, I'll do, as long as it's appropriate and in my power to accomplish. We've had a special bond ever since Seven's near-death experience, when we spent so much time together, especially since Icheb almost died then, too. I'm delighted to serve as her "unofficial godfather."

Now that we know female names will be preferred entrants to the naming pool, everyone has an opinion about the one Tom and B'Elanna should choose. They're being inundated with suggestions (probably the same ones each helpful crew member has used as his or her pool entry). Icheb told me, with a sly smile, that he suggested Octavia, a Latin word for the number eight. B'Elanna told him he should save it, in case he decides to become a father someday. He's chosen not to make Octavia his entry for the "Name that Baby" pool. Smart boy.
Supplemental

Tom told me that he went into the Jeffries tube where Father was working the other day. He offered to help Father with his task. Father observed that Tom had never volunteered to assist the second officer in the past and conjectured Tom had an ulterior motive for showing up the way he did. He sheepishly agreed and asked Father for advice on child rearing. Since my Father, to that point, had not heard about the pregnancy, Tom was able to inform at least one member of the crew of the upcoming blessed event. Father answered Tom's request by saying his parenting skills have been "dormant" recently, since many years have passed since his children were young, but "Offspring can be disturbingly illogical, yet profoundly fulfilling." He advised Tom to "anticipate paradox." He left open the idea that if Tom had any specific issues to discuss in the future, Father would be pleased to respond. Tom was grateful. "I have a hunch I'll be volunteering to work with Tuvok on a regular basis after the baby arrives."

I assured Tom he was bound to be a very loving father to his daughter. He's had issues with Admiral Paris, of course, but sometimes learning what not to do from the example set by a parent can be as valuable as following closely in one's footsteps.

That set me to thinking about a many of the things that have happened to me -- well, perhaps not to me directly, since my relationships with my female progenitors have necessarily been limited to the memories inherited at the time of my advent. I know how dearly both my parents cherish their memories of their own mothers. Father considers T'Meni the wisest person he ever knew, one reason Sek's decision to name his firstborn daughter after his grandmother pleased Father so much when T'Pel's letter informed him of the choice. Dad's memories of his mother are uniformly warm and loving as well, yet both of my parents have reservations about their relationships with their own fathers. Dad's was a bit of a rogue. The example he set for his son Neelix may have contributed to the less-than-honorable ways Dad earned his living after he lost his entire family in the Metreon Cascade. While Father would never admit this openly, of course, he's still more than a little bitter about the way his Father sent him to a Vulcan Master when he was a very young man, "to learn better emotional control." His mother T'Meni didn't agree that isolating her son from everyone else was necessarily the best way to handle what even Father now perceives as "emotions run amuck." Her husband sent Father away anyway. T'Meni's attempts to discuss alternatives with her husband were dismissed out of hand.

While Father now appreciates the training he received from the Vulcan master, and he's passed on the meditative techniques he learned from him to me, the abrupt way the decision was conveyed to Father when he was sent for that training is something he's never forgotten. Father has always consulted T'Pel and accepted her advice whenever important decisions regarding their family life needed to be made. Perhaps he learned what not to do from the imperious manner his father handled him at a critical stage in his life. Father's waspishness towards Dad during times when, admittedly,
my Talaxian parent is at his annoying worst may be an unconscious reenactment of my Vulcan
grandfather's behavior towards his son, an adolescent plagued with emotions he desperately needed
to learn how to control, training which, notably, he did not receive it from his own male parent. Not
that Father could ever admit this, of course.

I'm not quite sure how to view Father's comment to Tom that his parenting skills have been dormant
for so long. After all, I'm here. He's had to provide me with the benefit of his teaching and guidance
ever since my advent four years ago -- but I may be making too much of this. I was never a young
child to be "reared" in the traditional sense, the way Tom and B'Elanna's will be, or that Sek, Elieth,
Varith, and Asil were when Father was home and raising them from infancy. Since the way I was
created was very different, I've been an adult, biologically, from the very first. That doesn't mean I
haven't needed Father -- and Dad. I always have -- and still do.

I've never had the opportunity to observe a natural gestation process. Aimee had already been
prematurely expelled from her maturation chamber before I met her in Sickbay, after the EMH had
saved her life. Seven's poor, long lost One (may he rest in peace) also developed in a maturation
chamber. He became an adult in a day, virtually as soon as I was. Sam gave birth to Naomi before
my advent, and I had limited contact with her during her first two years of life.

I do what I can for all our children. So far, if I do say so myself, I've done more good than bad in the
way I've handled such responsibilities. If Tom ever asks me for guidance, I'll do what I can to drag
information from the memories I retain from my parents' experiences. I'm sure I could handle
babysitting a little one! I've always been grateful to Tom and B'Elanna (and Harry, naturally) for my
presence on this ship. I'm happy to help them any way I can.

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Stardate 54479

We've answered a distress call from a vessel belonging to a people called the Nygeans. It was a
prison ship. Father has assigned our staff to help the Nygeans guard their prisoners. We've had to
improvise a cell block for them. Our brig has insufficient space to confine all of them while we
travel to where they can be transferred to another ship that can bring them the rest of the way to
Nygea. One of the prisoners, a murderer, is condemned to die once they get there.

The EMH discovered that the murderer had a brain defect which prevented him from feeling remorse
over any of his actions. The Doctor healed him, and Iko's conscience now tortures him. If he hadn't
had this defect, he may never have become a murderer. The only course of appeal was to the family
of the man he killed, and they rejected any alteration of his sentence. Their family member will never
return to life, but Iko must also die, in "compensation."
Several times, I've been assigned to guard the prisoners in tandem with Crewman Brian Sofin. Brian has become a trusted member of our department, but he's not looking forward to getting home to the Alpha Quadrant. The *Equinox* crew members know they'll suffer for the crimes committed against the "Spirits of Good Fortune" on that sad ship. During one recent Gamma shift, he told me he sometimes wishes he was one of the "lucky ones" who died when the *Equinox* first arrived in the Delta Quadrant. "They didn't cause any aliens to suffer, like we did. I hope this journey lasts long enough for Marla to raise Aimee to adulthood -- before she finds out what happened. I want to put off the inevitable for as long as possible. Aimee is an innocent, and Marla is making amends for her own actions in the only way she now can."

Brian and the other members of the *Equinox* crew aren't the only ones who are upset by what's going to happen to Iko. Seven cannot understand why she can be forgiven for her part in the numerous attacks and violent assimilations of entire races by the Borg. The captain has assured her that she had no ability to refuse, since Seven wasn't in control of her own actions while under the domination of the Borg. That doesn't mean Seven's conscience doesn't still bother her.

As Seven pointed out recently (when Mezoti and Icheb were mercifully nowhere nearby), she had been fully cognizant of what she was doing when the Borg Queen ordered her to assimilate Species 10026. I countered that Seven still hadn't been in a position to refuse that time, either. The Queen was torturing her by forcing Seven to do her bidding when she was fully able to understand what she was doing. The Queen could have reassimilated Seven at any time. "And you did allow four of the people to escape. It may have not been as much as you'd have liked, but you did what little you could to fight the Queen's directive."

I don't know if she accepted this explanation. And, while Seven may have thought she was speaking to me in confidence at the time, I wonder if she appreciates the extent of Mezoti's abilities to "read" her thoughts subvocally. I'm sure I could find out if I asked Mezoti, but I will pass on the opportunity. I will respect Seven's wish to keep this knowledge away from Mezoti and Icheb -- even though I'm afraid it may be impossible.

/Stardate 54506/

Today was a very special day. It was Aimee's first birthday! It's also the first anniversary of the day Icheb and Mezoti came to live with us on *Voyager*. 

Dad and Naomi made all of the party arrangements, although Crewmen Lessing and Tessoni helped out quite a bit with decorating the mess hall. (Noah is so tall, he can stick things up on the walls
without using a ladder most of the time.) There were pink, blue, and silver party balloons and streamers. Dad said the silver was for the Borg. Personally, I think it was really in remembrance of that shiny silver therapeutic suit Seven had to wear during her first weeks on the ship, after her surgeries to remove "unnecessary" implants. Dad served hors d'oeuvres, both savory and sweet, punch, cookies, and a beautiful birthday cake.

Seven knew about the party ahead of time, but it was a surprise for the children and Marla Gilmore. Marla was touched that this day had been remembered by so many of the crew. Aimee received a pile of presents, clothing and toys, but I think our little girl most enjoyed playing with the ribbons on the packages. She loved to hit the loops to make them bounce. Dad and I gathered a bunch of them and made a bouquet for Marla to bring back to their quarters. The birthday banner, signed by every one of the crew, went home with them, too.

Icheb and Mezoti didn't expect any special recognition of their "anniversary," but they each received "Certificates of Merit" for "excellence in their studies." The captain also announced that since the exact dates of their births were not recorded anywhere, she would like to record this date as their birthdays as well. Both of them readily agreed. So, Icheb is officially registered in Federation records as a sixteen year old as of today, and Mezoti has reached her ninth birthday.

As soon as they accepted these dates as their "official" birthdays, many of the crew presented the two of them with gifts, too. Father presented "Cadet Icheb" and Mezoti with volumes on Vulcan philosophy and great literature, to enhance their studies. Dad gave them copies of Talaxian folk tales. They weren't aboard during our encounter with the Vaadwaur, but Dad promised to tell them how the tales helped us recognize the dangers the species presented to Voyager, just in time to prevent them from taking over the ship. I gave them presents, too, although I chose to give them "fun" gifts -- including several games they can enjoy together, a set of Kal-toh pieces for Icheb, and clay and sculpting supplies for Mezoti. She's shown quite an aptitude for the art.

Mezoti was thrilled to share a birthday with Icheb and Aimee. Naomi sighed and said she wished she did, too -- although I think she was joking. Her own birthday is only a little more than a month away. I know Sam and Dad are planning a surprise birthday party for her, too, since the fifth birthday is a milestone one for Ktarian children. Naomi received a Certificate of Merit for her studies today, too, but I'm sure she'll receive many more tangible gifts next month!

Captain Janeway never thought children belonged on a starship, especially one like Voyager, which is cruising through previously unknown space and is often faced with dangers that would give the captain of a Galaxy-class vessel nightmares. It is, as Naomi likes to say, "a small ship." On days like this, though, I can see that these young ones -- and B'Elanna and Tom's baby, too, once she's born -- make our Voyager community a true family. I'm so glad they're here. Our children are our future -- especially true for a "small ship" so far from our Alpha Quadrant home.
Dad is finally in a relationship again, although it's quite an unexpected one. Who could have expected we would encounter a ship full of full-blooded Klingons traveling through the Delta Quadrant? Dad is very happy with Ch'Rega, who seems just as delighted with her "little warrior." I'm sorry she's going to leave the ship when we arrive at the planet the captain and Seven have chosen for the Klingons. They haven't much choice. Their ship exploded, which is why they came to stay Voyager. While it would be nice to have a few stay on as members of our crew, replacing some we've lost, there are far too many Klingons to accommodate all of them long term. They claim they don't want to return to the Alpha Quadrant anyway. They left because the Empire had "lost its way." Their leaders want to establish a new Empire, one in which the old ways will be revered and followed in the manner their ancient sacred scrolls dictate.

While Dad may be enjoying himself, he's one of the few who is. Our crew has had to double and triple up to provide beds for everyone. Two families are currently occupying my quarters, and I'm bunking with Father, along with Dad -- and Ch'Rega, much of the time. Father is, shall I say, less than pleased with our entire little family living so cozily in his personal quarters. Having any overnight visitors only rubs salt in the wound!

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Stardate 54529

We've had quite a time of it with the Klingons. They were all infected with an inherited illness called the nehret, which has always been fatal to a victim once its symptoms have emerged. Their sacred scrolls predicted that they would find a cure when they discovered their kuvah'magh, who would lead them to their new home "after two warring houses make peace," and "before I know the world." This seems to be the reason the Klingons' great-grandparents began their epic journey into the Delta Quadrant. Their current leader Kohlar decided that B'Elanna's pregnancy satisfied the criteria delineated in the scrolls. The Klingon Empire and the Federation made peace decades ago, but after the generation ship left the Alpha Quadrant. And a child in the womb, obviously, does not yet "know the world."

The captain didn't know anything about the nehret when she allowed the Klingons to come on Voyager, but she had little choice. She couldn't anticipate they'd blow up their own ship to force us to take them aboard once they'd met up with us. While Kohlar and many of his people have been cooperative, expressing thanks to us for giving them sanctuary; some of them are, to put it mildly, obnoxious. When T'Greth, the leader of a group of dissidents, found out Tom was the baby's father, and that the baby was thus three-quarters human, he dared to call her a "mongrel child." That didn't endear him to either parent. A few days later, he challenged Tom to a duel to the death with bat'leths
. Captain Janeway immediately vetoed a battle to the death, even though Tom was willing to accept those terms. Instead, the duel would be lost by the first combatant to land on the deck three times. Tom won the match, somewhat to B'Elanna's surprise (although not to Tom's). The true reason for T'Greth's collapse turned out to be that the symptoms of *nehret* had overcome him. That's when the Doctor discovered the grim fate that awaited the entire group -- and B'Elanna and her baby, too. They'd contracted the disease from the Klingons.

The fact T'Greth was fatally ill didn't stop him from attempting to take over *Voyager*. His *coup d'état* was almost successful. Most of our crew was transported down to the surface of the planet we'd chosen to be the Klingon's new homeworld before we even realized what was happening. The rebel group was unable to overcome those of us on the bridge at the time of their treachery, however, and we were able to prevent the takeover.

When T'Greth awoke in Sickbay after the fight for our ship, the Doctor took great pleasure in informing him that he had been cured of the *nehret*. Once B'Elanna and her baby had been infected with the disease, the Doctor realized the human stem cells the baby possessed in her unborn body might provide a treatment. T'Greth's cure came courtesy of his much-despised "mongrel child," thanks to the part of her genome inherited from her human father. (T'Greth never even said he was grateful -- the brute!)

Kohlar did express gratitude, however. He presented B'Elanna with an antique *bat'leth* given to him by his own great-grandfather, one of those who'd taken a chance on traveling towards the Delta Quadrant to seek the fulfillment of the scroll's promise of healing if they undertook the journey. B'Elanna thanked him graciously for this gift to her unborn child. I thought it was a wonderful gesture by Kohlar, although I'm afraid B'Elanna will have quite a time preventing Tom from slipping off with it to use it on the holodeck.

Dad was very sorry to say goodbye to Ch'Rega. I think he would have liked for her to stay with us on *Voyager*. He says he's happy on this ship and enjoys my company, even though I'm only "half Talaxian," but I know he's lonely. He hasn't met another full-blooded member of his people in years. Seeing Kes again last year was more a painful reminder of loss than a comfort. While it may have been difficult for Dad to keep up with Ch'Rega if she'd chosen to remain on board, I'm sure he'd have willingly taken on the challenge.

Now, was the sect's encounter with us foreordained, or was it all simply a matter of chance? Were the sect's sacred scrolls truly predictive of what was to happen, or was Kohlar's "interpretation" of what the scrolls had to say a creative way of ending a journey that had become impossible to sustain much longer, given their aging vessel? Is *Voyager's* as-yet-unborn baby really the *kuvah-magh*, or a legend which has accidentally became fact? Is she the fulfillment of a genuine religious prophecy? Who knows?

One thing I do know, however, is that this "visit" of the Klingons may have a lasting effect upon two
members of *Voyager*'s crew. Tom told me tonight that their studies of the scrolls in the database, along with those Kohlar shared with them, will not end now that we've left the Klingons behind. Tom and B'Elanna plan to share what they learn with their daughter, as soon as she's old enough to understand. Tom said, "Since the majority of those on board this ship are human, our daughter will have ample opportunity to learn about that part of her heritage. She'll only have B'Elanna and me to guide her about her grandmother Miral's beliefs. After B'Elanna's experience with whatever happened on the Klingon Barge of the Dead, we want our daughter to know and revere that part of herself, as well the human. It's only right."

Sometimes I think Tom should have been born a Klingon himself. He's certainly shown an appreciation for his late mother-in-law's culture -- more than B'Elanna ever has. Hopefully, with their commitment to bringing up their daughter to honor her entire heritage, that will change.

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*Chapter End Notes*

I realize that the events of "Renaissance Man" appear much earlier in this story than they did in the series. I had little trouble with the Hirogen Hunters showing up over vast distances, since in the first episode in which they appeared, "Message in a Bottle," the huge area their communications array covered established they might show up at widely spaced intervals. I had a lot more trouble accepting the Hierarchy's broad range of influence. They appeared to be petty criminals to me, so I had Zet and Nar show up a lot sooner in this AU. It was fun to revisit the EMH's humiliating "deathbed" confessions at this point in the story -- not that the Doctor seemed to learn any humility from the incident. ("Author, Author" is on the horizon.)
After *Voyager* escapes from another Void, Tuvix's trading trip with Commander Chakotay, Neelix, and Harry Kim turns out to be a more vital mission than expected when the rest of the organic crew is hijacked by an unscrupulous Quarran doctor and his confederates.

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Stardate 54548

Naomi loved her fifth birthday party. We had to do it up big, since we'd made such a fuss over Aimee's, when we decided Mezoti and Icheb should share the date for their "official" birthdays, too. Dad went all out for his goddaughter's big day. He served all of her favorite foods and showered her with gifts appropriate for the girl she's become. She's not so little anymore. While she's still quite close to Mezoti in many ways, I can see more signs of the woman Naomi will someday become than I do in her friend, who is "officially" almost twice her age.

Sam explained that the fifth is a "milestone" birthday for Ktarians. She sounded rather melancholy as she described the special activities a five-year-old Ktarian participated in on that day. Greskrendtrek sent a very nice video to Naomi in the last datastream. He included views of his home planet as his gift to her. Naomi shared it with Dad and me. It was impossible to ignore how sad Gres looked as he introduced each one to his daughter. When he wished her the "happiest of fifth birthdays," it was clear his unvoiced wish was to have been lost with his wife and daughter in the Delta Quadrant, on this day, of all days. From the expression Naomi had on her face, she didn't need to hear him say it to know it was true.

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Stardate 54668

This will be my last entry in my log until we are back in normal space again.

We've fallen into another "Void," and we don't have any idea how to get out of it. The captain has
reached out to people in other ships which are lost in here. Up to now, it's apparently been a dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest type of existence for any crew unlucky enough to land in here. The lack of resources, particularly energy, will present a serious problem for us. The captain is adamant that we'll trade with other ships but won't attack anyone for what they have, the way other ship's crews have done.

Forgoing personal log entries isn't that much of a sacrifice for me. I still have the paper diary and writing implements from when Voyager went into "grey mode," just before Seven discovered the Demon planet. We refueled there, leaving our clones behind. If I do have any deathless thoughts to record until we're out of here, I'll put them in the diary.

When we get out of here. Not "if."

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Stardate 54577

We're free of the Void, thanks to the captain's diplomatic skills. Not of the gunboat variety, this time; she promulgated a true, Federation-style alliance to promote the greater good.

I sound like a Starfleet public relations flack, and I don't want to seem flippant. The truth is, many of the other stranded crews were surviving through piracy, raiding other ships to steal their resources, since none were available within this Void. No stars, no planets, no asteroids -- nothing of any value was found in there. It truly was completely empty, a void in space.

Many other ships had been dragged through a gravity well into this realm of darkness, reminiscent of the one we encountered about three years ago. That time, however, our twin enemies were the distance we'd need to travel to get to the other side and poisonous radiation. The latter was not a natural phenomenon, but rather a consequence of the Malon's dumping their radioactive waste there. It was cheaper to do that than recycle it, as we do on Voyager. This new void experience was uncomfortably close to when Father, Tom, and our EMH fell through a gravity well and onto the planet with the skewed time differential. Once we'd fallen in, we didn't have the resources to extricate ourselves to return to normal space, especially after raiders stole almost all of our food and energy supplies, soon after our arrival.

Our captain convinced others to work with us so we could all to pull ourselves out of the well. Not everyone cooperated. Those that did were rewarded when a funnel, like the one that dragged us into the Void, formed. Our coalition of vessels used it to break free. The ones who decided to stay there and prey on other victims of the gravity well are still there -- if their ships survived. They fought us to
prevent our escape. I can't say I wish them luck. They don't deserve any.

We're heading now for a source of deuterium to replenish our supplies. We discovered a Demon Class planet six light years away that is awash with it. While we recovered about half of the resources we'd lost in raids, we used up a lot of energy during our escape. We need to refuel. We're not as short of power as we were on some other occasions, but our mineral and food supplies are in short supply. I suspect Dad will be going off with Commander Chakotay very shortly. We still have some surplus commodities which we can use for trading.

Supplemental

The commander just came to see me and told me he "hasn't forgotten" his promise to include me in a trading mission. He asked me if I'd like to come along this time. Harry has already agreed to go with Dad and the commander. I doubt this opportunity would have arisen if Tom wasn't reluctant to leave his pregnant wife for a week, the length of time we anticipate our trip will take. I'm not complaining. I jumped at the chance. When the Delta Flyer departs at 0800 tomorrow morning, I'll be on it.

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Stardate 54585

Our trading mission with the Nar Shaddon was very successful. The Delta Flyer's hold is completely filled with food and other supplies, although we chose not to obtain any falah nectar. Harry is presently a little under the weather. He drank some of the stuff when our trading partners offered the beverage to us. It turns out it was made of meat by-products -- and it contained parasites. Fortunately, I refrained from imbibing. It smelled awful.

We've arrived at the coordinates set for our rendezvous with Voyager, but there's no sign of our ship. There are ribbons of energy in the region which appear to be the remnants of a subspace explosion. Since we haven't detected any debris that may have come from our ship, we're hoping it won't be damaged when we find it.

Supplemental

It took a while, but eventually we discovered Voyager hidden inside a nebula. It was in bad shape. The only crew member in residence was our Doctor, in ECH mode, trying to fix the ship all by himself. Without help, he was bound to fail. While the four of us worked with him on the necessary
repairs, the Doctor relayed to us what had occurred.

*Voyager* ran into a subspace mine, which flooded the ship with tetryon radiation. To protect the crew, Captain Janeway activated the Doctor's ECH function and ordered all organic crew members to abandon ship until the ECH could dispel the poisonous radiation. Once the ECH was alone, however, he had to fight off scavengers who said *Voyager* was derelict and therefore fair game to be claimed by "anyone." The ECH managed to escape when he flew the ship hidden inside the nebula.

While the Doctor cleared *Voyager* of radiation, many of the ship's functions are still disabled. Even if the ship had been fully operational, he would have remained inside the nebular. Some of the scavengers have been buzzing around outside it, waiting for *Voyager* to leave so they can attack it again. Since we didn't encounter any ships on our way into the nebula, it's possible they've given up for the time being. It won't be easy to fight them off with only a crew of five, but five to whatever is certainly a better ratio than a single crew member to who knows how many would be. The Doctor believes the scavengers were the ones who positioned the mine in place. He took readings of their weapon signatures and believes they match the explosion's.

The Doctor hasn't heard from anyone since the crew abandoned ship.

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**Stardate 54598**  

While repairs still need to be made, primary systems have been restored. We've left the nebula and instituted a search for our people. As of today, we still haven't heard from any of them, nor have we been able to trace the path of any of their shuttles or escape pods. We've confirmed the Doctor's hypothesis that the raiders are the same ones who set the subspace mine *Voyager* hit into place. Fortunately, none of the raiders' ships were still waiting for us when we left the nebula. Did they kidnap our crew and take them somewhere? We're very concerned, but all we can do now is try to trace them to their present location -- assuming they're all alive.

**Supplemental**

We're relatively sure we've found our crew on an M-class planet, approximately a three day journey at maximum warp from our current position. We're headed there now. From our sensor readings, it appears they're all there. I hope everyone is okay. I'm very worried about the children. They must be terribly frightened.
Stardate 54609

We’ve arrived at Quarra. All of our missing crew members are living on its surface. When the commander contacted the Quarran ambassador, he confirmed that individuals with the same names as our missing crew members are residing on his planet, but he’s refused to allow us to speak with any of them. According to him, planetary officials have interviewed them, and no one recalls a ship called Voyager, let alone being members of its crew. He has no explanation for the coincidence that we knew all their names. He did accuse us of trying to pilfer workers from his planet and brusquely ordered us to leave orbit.

Dad had previously discovered evidence that a severe labor shortage exists in this region of space. As a result, we’ve floated several unpalatable theories about what’s really going on here. The idea that our crew has been kidnapped and forced to work on Quarra seems to be the most logical one. A powerful shield grid surrounds the planet, which suggests they may be incarcerated in prison camps of some sort.

The five of us have arrived at a plan of action. The commander and Dad will travel to Quarra in Dad’s ship, the Baxial, saying they’re seeking work. Volunteers would presumably not be subject to imprisonment, but the Doctor has provided subdermal transponders which should permit us to transport them through the Quarran shield grid in an emergency. Since the ambassador saw Commander Chakotay’s true face, our EMH has provided him with a new one, courtesy of his formidable plastic surgery skills. Harry, the Doctor, and I will remain on the ship to continue working on repairs and to support Dad and the commander if necessary.

Supplemental

I hope the commander and Dad are having more luck on Quarra than I am on Voyager!

Harry and the Doctor -- pardon, the "ECH" -- are both demanding to be in command of the ship. Unfortunately, Commander Chakotay had not specifically assigned command to anyone before leaving for the planet. When the Doctor and Ensign Kim began to argue about who was more qualified to be in charge, I had to pull rank and take command myself as senior officer. I pointed out that while I carry the rank of lieutenant, junior grade, Harry is an ensign, and the ECH is in command only in extremis, when no one else capable of command is available. I thanked the Doctor for his service when he piloted Voyager into the nebula to hide it from the pirates, but now there are other officers available to command the ship. Since Lieutenant Commander Tuvok and Lieutenant
Ayala are both absent, I'm the ranking officer in the Security and Tactical Division. I also happen to have the knowledge and memories of all the training possessed by this ship's Second Officer. Clearly, I'm the most qualified for command at this time.

The Doctor was not pleased but bowed to my rationale; Harry was resigned. (I refrained from mentioning the Nightingale incident, which had caused so many problems for Voyager from the Annari after they assumed we'd allied ourselves with the Kraylor; but Harry undoubtedly "got it.") Thankfully, the debate has ended. I was beginning to wish the commander had asked me to join him and Dad to search for our crew on Quarra and let Harry and the Doctor haggle over who was in command in my absence.

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Stardate 54619

Commander Chakotay is still on Quarra, but Dad has returned with B'Elanna in tow. I say "in tow" because she fought Dad tooth and nail, as the saying goes, when he retrieved her. She has no memory of any of us, or of Voyager. Dad said he met several members of the crew working in a power plant on the planet, including Tal Celes and Ensign Mulcahy, but none of them knew him. The commander met the captain, but she showed no signs of recognition when they spoke, either. Dad spoke with Tom, who was working in a bar. While Tom was his jovial self, he didn't remember Dad or the commander, either.

The Doctor's preliminary examination of B'Elanna has disclosed evidence of extensive memory tampering. Some details remain in place, such as her name and her training as an engineer, but she insists she arrived on Quarra to find work after the father of her baby abandoned her. She'd just left the bar where Tom was working, Dad told me, but neither of them seemed to have any idea of their true identities and relationship to one another. So our fellow crew members aren't exactly prisoners. They're the victims of identity theft and have absolutely no idea that it's happened -- which in my opinion isn't much different.

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Stardate 54620

B'Elanna is not at all happy about being torn away from her "job responsibilities" on Quarra. While B'Elanna has always been dedicated to her responsibilities on our ship, her insistence that we send her back to Quarra suggests that, in addition to the removal of many of her memories, false ones have been implanted.
She believes she originated on a planet called Earth and came to this system to find a job because so few existed there, which was horribly polluted and grim. B'Elanna has only lived on Earth briefly, when she visited her father's relatives as a child, and for an additional two years while she attended Starfleet Academy.

Earth has suffered from a series of environmental crises during its history, but currently, the planet's environment is very clean. The living standard of its populace is extremely high. In fact, it's considered to be the standard of excellence in the quadrant. Many of the people of other planets have joined the Federation, in large part, to share Earth's prosperity.

And, of course, her baby's father has never abandoned her. He's working right now at a bar she frequented while she was on the planet's surface, and Tom has no idea what she means to him, either.

Stardate 54623

I was more than a little upset when Captain Janeway allowed the Doctor to retain his ECH program abilities after some recent, very questionable actions. Her decision has turned out to be the correct one. He saved Voyager while we were away on the trading mission to the Nar Shaddon, and he proved his worth again today. Two Quarran patrol ships attacked Voyager. The ECH pulled an obscure tactic from out of the database to use against them. He fired a photon torpedo between the patrol ships and exploded it with a phaser blast. Both patrol ships were damaged. We couldn't retrieve Commander Chakotay, however. Five more Quarran vessels were after us. On the ECH's recommendation we found a moon with a para-magnetic core, which masks our energy signature. We're nestled inside a deep crater while we continue to make necessary repairs. As far as we can tell, our presence here has not yet been detected.

Right now, Harry and I comprise the entire repair crew. The ECH has resumed his EMH duties, treating B'Elanna for memory gaps. Her memory centers have been radically altered through very sophisticated techniques which block most of the engrams concerning her past history. Others have been, for lack of a better term, "injected" with fabricated ones. The ones containing her technical knowledge are completely unaffected, and in some cases, may have even been enhanced by her experience working in the Quarran power plant. The EMH has no doubt he'll be able to effect a cure, but it may take some time to accomplish.

As part of her therapy, the Doctor brought her to the quarters she shares with Tom. She was surprised when she saw the crib all set up for their anticipated offspring, but the real shock came
when she saw images of the friendly bartender on Quarra. She thought he was a stranger; now she knows he's her husband and the father of her unborn child.

Dad found her in the Mess Hall this evening reading from a PADD. He assumed she was reading her own personal logs to help her restore her memory, but he was surprised to discover she was actually reading Tom's. "He really loves me," she said to Dad, with a tone of "wonderment." I'm not sure if there was any sort of ethical breach when she obtained her husband's logs instead of her own. Husband and wife vow to share their lives with each other, so perhaps not. If reading his logs helps her regain her precious memories of their life together, I'm sure Tom won't mind.

Supplemental

Commander Chakotay has contacted us through his subdermal transponder and provided us with coordinates for a gap in the shield grid for us to use to extract our crew. We're on our way now.

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Stardate 54626

It's all over. We've recovered everyone. The EMH is very busy restoring their memories. It won't be easy. He has over a hundred and forty people to treat. Fortunately, he's developed techniques through working with B'Elanna that's enabling him to break through the memory blockages much more quickly than he did for her. Most of the crew are aware of their true identities. Their main problem now is distinguishing the false engrams the insidious Dr. Kadan had inflicted upon them from the ones they've acquired through their true life experiences.

As we approached the coordinates Commander Chakotay sent us, Captain Janeway contacted us through a subspace transceiver from inside the Central Power Facility. The captain didn't recognize Harry or me, but when B'Elanna came into view and called her "captain," she realized the fantastic things "Amal Kotay," A.K.A. Commander Chakotay, had been telling her must be true. He wasn't with her during this transmission, however. Dr. Kadan had taken him away to a hospital for "treatment," which the Doctor immediately realized meant his memory was being altered. An Inspector Yerid and Seven had gone to the hospital to rescue him. Before our conversation was finished, the transmission broke off.

Three ships came at us. While Commander Chakotay had given us the coordinates for the "break in the shield grid," he'd been forced to provide them to us by Dr. Kadan. It was a trap, but Harry came up with a plan to protect us. We established a dampening field around the briefing room to mask our life signs. Then we launched three of our remaining escape pods. The attacking ships took the bait.
When they were close enough, I ordered all three to self-destruct. The resulting explosions took out the attacking vessels. On the surface, the captain made the power plant computer think the core was going to overload (a mistake she'd made accidentally on her first day of work), which forced it to shut down. That, along with the damage it sustained by the escape pod explosions, caused the shield grid to fail.

As soon as we saw it was down, Harry and I rushed back to the bridge and began to transport our crew back up to Voyager as quickly as we could identify where they were situated. It was extremely difficult for our crew members, but most especially, to the children. Marla Gilmore had been caring for Mezoti and Icheb, along with little Aimee. Sam and Naomi Wildman lived in the same apartment block. They'd been programmed with memories that indicated they were lifelong friends. While we rescued all of them at the same time, it was a severe shock to them when they discovered the truth. Seven had already regained wisps of memory, but when she was reunited with Mezoti and Icheb, it was a rude awakening for her, too.

I'm going to see Father now. He's in Sickbay, under sedation. The memory "enhancements" didn't work for him any better than the Doctor's anti-assimilation vaccine did when he joined the captain and B'Elanna on the Class-4 Tactical Cube, at the time of the Unimatrix Zero action. Dr. Kadan had to operate on him several times. Father's true memories began to break through and into his consciousness. Our EMH told me he will need to be much more careful reversing the effects of Dr. Kadan's treatments to Father than with anyone else. He's asked me to come sit with Father for a while, to comfort him in case he awakens unexpectedly.

Fortunately, Commander Chakotay, Seven, and Lieutenant Ayala have recovered sufficiently by this time to join Harry on bridge duty. We'll remain in orbit around Quarra for several more days. Inspector Yerid has requested we remain, since he requires many of our crew mates to testify in a court hearing, to convict Dr. Kadan and his cohorts for their crimes. The inspector believes they may have kidnapped thousands of travelers who were merely passing through this region. Many still have no idea their true identities and lives were stolen from them.

**Supplemental**

I spoke with the captain this morning. She's a little shaky, but her memories have returned in large part. She admitted she sometimes has difficulty separating the memories of the Kathryn who worked in the power plant from those belonging to Kathryn Janeway, captain of Voyager. She became very close to a man named Jaffen while she was on Quarra. She's invited him to visit Voyager later today, after her meeting with the Quarran ambassador and Inspector Yerid takes place. Yerid will be an honored guest; the ambassador will have a LOT of explaining to do. A number of governmental systems apparently have been colluding for years with Dr. Kadan and the pirates who attacked Voyager during our trading mission with the Nar Shaddon. They had quite a sweet operation going. The raiders attacked ships with tetryon subspace mines, "rescued" their crews after they abandoned ship, and transported them to Quarra to Dr. Kadan's clinic. The pirates claimed the "derelict" ships and any goods within them for their payment. Since some of those ships carried valuable cargo, they were doing very well for themselves until they made the mistake of attacking Voyager.
Dr. Kadan diagnosed everyone with Dysphoria Syndrome, a condition which had always been exceedingly rare on Quarra until Dr. Kadan hit upon it to justify his treatments. It was the perfect cover for invading the minds of his victims and stealing away their pasts. Dr. Kadan handed all of his "healed patients" over to employers who were also in collusion with his crime syndicate. The majority of our crew are in Operations and therefore possess a great deal of engineering knowledge. Even members of our crew who aren't assigned to the Operations Division have been cross-trained to assist with repairs in an emergency. As a result, virtually all of them ended up working in the Central Power plant. Its supervisor was Dr. Kadan's primary partner.

Amusingly, Icheb was deemed "too young" to work in the plant because of the background radiation within the building. He was employed in a day care center provided for the plant employees. Aimee was enrolled there. Naomi and Mezoti both went to the center for an "after school program" that had them busy providing additional manpower in the toddler rooms. Icheb, of course, could have instructed many of the plant's employees on the proper way to complete their tasks. To no one's surprise, Seven was placed in a middle-management job. She was the plant's efficiency expert!

All of the employees received anti-radiation shots. While that may have been their main purpose, the EMH's analysis revealed the shots also contain a memory-suppression component. If an employee didn't receive shots regularly, true memories could resurface. Whenever a patient's suppressed memories did reassert themselves, the diagnosis of Dysphoria Syndrome permitted Dr. Kadan to treat the patient's "delusions," long established as a symptom of the disorder. Father spent days in the hospital because his "marvelous Vulcan brain," as our EMH once put it, resisted the techniques which blocked his true memories. As we learned after Father was attacked by the Ba'Neth, the Vulcan brain has the capacity to restructure itself after injury. I understand both Vorik and T'Varia, our former Maquis Vulcan/Romulan crew member, were also held in the clinic for several days because they'd exhibited the same break-through memories as Father. Their brains were healing so rapidly, Dr. Kadan had to keep them under sedation in his clinic because he couldn't prevent their memories from coming back. Vorik and T'Varia are doing very well and have returned to active duty. Of course, they're much younger, and neither has suffered as many insults to the brain as Father has during the past six years.

The EMH has placed Father in a drug-induced coma. He told me he wants to be "very careful" treating him. I must accept what the Doctor says. He's well aware of my ongoing concerns regarding Father's mental health. Haranguing the EMH about it again is pointless.

Stardate 54627

I was on duty at the main Tactical station when Commander Chakotay brought Jaffen by to meet us.
He seems like a very nice man. He was toting a big sack which contained the captain's "art collection" comprised of various bits of technology. When Jaffen questioned her about her "junk," she countered that all the pieces were "beautiful." He brought them to her, he said, so she would remember him. From what I hear, she won't have any trouble doing that. I also heard the captain offered him a position as an engineer on *Voyager*. Since their personal relationship would have to end if he came under her command, however, he's decided to remain on Quarra. He's accepted a promotion to plant supervisor. Since the one in league with Kadan and the pirates was incarcerated, along with rest of the criminal conspiracy, "there was an opening." Jaffen, I understand, was never subjected to any memory tampering. The Norvalen really did come to Quarra to improve his career chances.

Yerid told the captain during their meeting that the thousands of other workers who were illegally conscripted by the conspirators have been contacted and will be repatriated if they wish to return home. A few have elected to remain on Quarra "for the time being" to work, but on a totally voluntary, non-memory-impaired basis. The ambassador apologized profusely for what happened to us on Quarra. He still claims not to have known anything at all about this. I'm not sure I believe him. Chief Inspector Yerid has also been promoted. He's now in charge of restructuring the Security Forces to expel anyone who may have been in league with Dr. Kadan's syndicate. The captain trusts him to do the right thing. I certainly hope so. He showed a lot of integrity by continuing to investigate the situation, even after his own Chief Inspector took him off the case. As the saying goes, he "smelled a rat" and found dozens of them. Maybe hundreds. Perhaps thousands.

**Supplemental**

I've recommended that Harry and the EMH/ECH receive commendations from Starfleet for their exemplary service to our crew during this trying period. (I chose not to divulge anything about the sniping over who should be in charge, although I think the captain suspects something of the sort went on.) She's not only agreed with my recommendations, Captain Janeway plans to bestow commendations on Dad, Commander Chakotay, and me, too.

Obviously, I'm pleased. I hope Father will be, too -- once he awakens.

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**Stardate 54629**

The EMH brought Father out of his drug-induced coma this morning. The Doctor told me Father's memories are now all intact. He seems much better, although I'm not quite as sure as the EMH is that he's truly back to normal. Most of the crew have experienced a degree of mental "fogginess" for a few days after receiving their treatments, however, and the EMH is the expert. If I do detect any
symptoms of trouble, I told the Doctor I will report them to him immediately. He agreed that it would be wise for me to do so.

I have the uncomfortable feeling there's more going on than either the Doctor or Father are telling me. Father would say I'm being illogical. I'll simply have to take them at their word.
True Emotions

Chapter Summary

Tuvix enjoys his fifth birthday party, thanks to his "unofficial" goddaughter and her friends. In the days following, however, Seven discovers that indulging in romantic fantasies can be hard on everyone closest to her, especially Seven herself.

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Stardate 54655

Mezoti asked me to come with Naomi and her to Holodeck 2 this evening. She told me they wanted to visit the Fair Haven program, but Seven, Sam, and Icheb had all begged off because they had something to do they felt was more pressing. I didn't see why the girls needed me to come with them. They've gone there on their own many times, which is fine as long as the program safeties are in operation. Mezoti begged me to come tonight. "It's always more fun when your with us," she said. I chuckled and replied that I was sure that wasn't true; but secretly, I couldn't help but be very pleased.

When we arrived at the station, half the crew was there to shout out, "Happy Advent-day!" to me. Naturally, Seven, Sam, and Icheb were all in the front row of the gathering. I was very embarrassed, because with all that's going on lately, I hadn't remembered my own personal anniversary had arrived. The residents of Fair Haven greeted me heartily, too, although Seamus and Milo were confused about what an advent-day was. To them, Advent constituted the four Sundays before Christmas, when the good Father's sermons tended to be even more interminable than they usually are. When I explained it was another term for birthday, they nodded sagely and asked when I expected to arrive at Sullivan's Pub, since they were feeling "powerfully thirsty." I let them know I had to spend time with my young friends first. A few minutes later I observed them arm and arm with "young Harry," who was going to "buy them a few" until I got there.

The girls and Icheb had set up several games that were more appropriate for a child's party than a mature gent like me, including a game of Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Comet and the breaking of a piñata. I didn't mind taking part in each one. I was delighted they'd gone to so much trouble to throw me my very own "milestone fifth birthday party." The nature of the activities didn't matter. We finally all repaired to the pub for refreshments. The adults had ale, but Michael (prompted by Captain Janeway, I'm sure) had thoughtfully placed milkshakes and ice cream sodas on the bill of fare for the children, or anyone else who preferred to avoid the "stronger" beverages.

Naturally, there was also "advent-day cake," coffee, and tea available. Seven consumed a shake
spiked with a nutritional supplement. I didn't bother to ask which number it was. I noticed she also managed to consume a tiny sliver of the cake, pronouncing it "satisfying." I saw the way she glared at the Doctor while she was eating it, as if daring him to ask her about the way it tasted. I took this to mean that Mezoti and Icheb's suggestion that her description of meals to the EMH after the Lokirrim incident was not, as I had first presumed, a totally altruistic activity.

The party ended shortly after the Beta shift crew arrived. They congratulated me and sat down to partake of a bit of cake before parking themselves at the bar for a more informal prolongation of the festivities. I didn't mind. By the time we left, Father was already on the bridge covering Gamma shift. Dad and I dropped off Sam and Naomi at their quarters. After Dad said good night, he slipped off to the Mess Hall to make sure his pre-breakfast preparations were complete while I walked Seven, Icheb, and Mezoti to "Borg Central." When we arrived, Mezoti asked me if I'd had a good time. I replied I'd had a simply splendid time. She remarked that no one had given me a present. "Oh, this may have only been my fifth birthday, but I am officially grown-up. Spending time with my family and my friends on Voyager was a wonderful gift."

"You need a real present, too," she stated firmly. Mezoti ran behind the line of regeneration alcoves and retrieved a large box, wrapped in pretty paper and adorned with a large bow. "I made this for you," she said, smiling a little more shyly than she usually did.

The box contained one of her lovely sculptures. It was a self-portrait, and it was quite the best she'd ever done. I was speechless for a moment; then I set it gently on the floor and gave her a hug of thanks. Her smile broadened until I thought it was the warmest I'd ever seen on her face, which lasted until Seven hustled her up to the platform to begin her regeneration cycle.

After Icheb had begun his own cycle, Seven returned to my side and murmured to her children, "Sleep tight: don't let the bedbugs bite." I chuckled softly and told her that this was one of my best days ever, let alone my best advent-day.

Seven turned to me and said, "And you deserve it, 'godfather.'"

Need I add that this was the best present of all?

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Stardate 54681
Our plans for B'Elanna and Tom's baby shower are all set. The refreshments and the decorations will be even more spectacular than the ones for our recent birthday/advent-day celebrations. We've decided to decorate in the morning, right after the breakfast rush, just in case B'Elanna decides to take hers in the mess hall that day instead of their family quarters, as she usually does. Tom has already told us she'll be suspicious when he offers to walk her to the Mess Hall for lunch. They almost always just meet there, so he's sure she'll know something is up. Dad suggested he could call her and tell her something in the kitchen had shorted out, and that he needed her "magic touch" before the crew comes for lunch. We've decided against it. If she suspects, she suspects. I understand not everyone is fond of a surprise baby shower anyway.

Naomi is very excited that another baby soon will be born on Voyager. Mezoti has been a little distracted during the past few days, however. I wonder why? I tried to talk to her about it today, but she told me there was nothing wrong that I could do anything about. I made her promise to tell me if there is anything I can do. She said she would.

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Stardate 54684

The shower for Tom and B'Elanna's baby was just lovely. The crew showered them with all sorts of very useful and lovely presents. Mezoti and Naomi handed each present to the expectant parents and made a list of everything they received, making sure the name of the giver was noted. "For the thank you notes," Mezoti solemnly told me.

Icheb provided some of the entertainment. He's been taking a course in "Great Literature of Federation Worlds" and quoted from Shakespeare, T'Hain's "Dictates of Poetics" -- and from "Winnie the Pooh." Icheb has developed quite a love of children's books ever since he worked in the day care center on Quarra. When he told Tom and B'Elanna he'd be happy to babysit the baby after she's born, Mezoti and Naomi chimed in that they'd be happy to babysit, too.

B'Elanna and Tom haven't let anyone know their daughter's name as of yet. Tom suggested we set up a betting pool about it and was disappointed to hear one already existed. He was even less enthused when he realized he wouldn't be able to participate. He had to admit he would have had "inside information -- and I'm not sharing, so don't ask!"

Except for the crew members on duty, just about everyone was there. I didn't see Seven, although she wasn't in Astrometrics. She's been spending an inordinate amount of time on the holodeck lately. I'm glad Icheb and Mezoti both were able to attend. They said they had a wonderful time; but, as Mezoti said as we were leaving the Mess Hall, "It would be have been more fun if Seven had been here, too." I quite agreed with her.
Stardate 54687

This afternoon, Mezoti confided something to me that upset me greatly. Apparently Seven "was mean" to Icheb and dressed him down in Astrometrics when he was trying to relieve tension by making a joke. She wasn't at her post when Commander Chakotay was looking for her -- because she was late. Since we've been observing energy discharges that have been coming out of nowhere and we can't find out exactly what they are, this was a very poor time for her to become so uncharacteristically lax with her duties. After Mezoti came to see me, I went looking for Seven and found her holed up on Holodeck 1. That seems to be the place where she's spending most of her free time over the past couple of weeks. I didn't mind that, but Mezoti let slip she's gone missing from Astrometrics several times when she's supposed to be on duty. That's shocking, to say the least. Mezoti added that what Seven is doing in there "is wrong." So, when I saw Seven had the privacy lock on, I used my security override to find out what was happening.

I certainly was shocked by what I saw. Seven was draped all over Commander Chakotay, or his holographic simulation, I surmised, since he'd been sitting in the command chair when I left the bridge just minutes before I arrived. He certainly couldn't have managed to slip away in the short time I spent coming here, especially considering our current circumstances.

Sure enough, when she saw me, Seven shut down the program, and Commander Chakotay's image vanished along with the piano, the sofa, the simulated Seven quarters (since she hasn't asked the captain for any yet), and the very prominent, very mussed up bed. I didn't even have to ask her what was going on. She blushed crimson and said, "It's not what you think."

I begged to differ, and she admitted that ever since her experience as the efficiency expert on Quarra, she's been bothered by images of what "might have been." Dr. Kadan, the evil perpetrator of memory tampering, had managed to hide her past memories from her while she was on Quarra. Now that she's back to herself, she's remembering more about her past life, especially what she experienced with Axum in Unimatrix Zero. It may have been a virtual reality sort of romance, but she misses it. Even worse, now that she's learned how far away Axum's physical body is from here, she knows she can never expect to meet him in person.

She assured me she's only been visiting this particular scenario for the past few days. I pointed out the past few days have been the worst time for her to be indulging herself in a fantasy world. Even Tom hasn't visited the holodeck since the ship has been dodging the unexplained energy discharges. Seven is supposed to be finding out how we can detect them soon enough to avoid damage to our vessel. I took her to task for leaving her post in Astrometrics when Voyager is under such a threat, as well as for her rudeness towards Icheb when he was trying to help her cope. It's dereliction of duty,
pure and simple.

I asked her if she was here at the time she was supposed to be attending the baby shower, and she contritely admitted she was. "I wasn't exploring romance, then, Lieutenant. I recreated the baby shower in order to experience it on my own -- as practice. It's part of my exploration of social roles." I pointed out that being physically at the shower would have allowed her to explore that sort of social interaction much more efficiently. She countered that she was afraid of "making mistakes." I sighed and told her that making mistakes is one way we learn how to behave appropriately during social activities!

I asked if she'd chosen Commander Chakotay as her "partner" in the program for any particular reason. "He's a very attractive individual," she replied. "He seems lonely. When he brought Jaffen on the tour of Voyager, before we left Quarra, the commander seemed to be a little envious of the personal relationship Jaffen had with Captain Janeway there, when she didn't remember Voyager. She won't enter a romantic partnership with the commander because of Starfleet protocols."

"Yes, indeed," I replied. "Those protocols prohibit such relationships between a superior officer and anyone under his or her command. You must realize Commander Chakotay is also a superior officer, and you are under his command. The protocols apply to him as well."

In a very small voice, she admitted she did know that. "That's why I chose to utilize a holodeck program to explore a . . . possible relationship."

I shook my head sadly. It was an impossible situation. I do feel badly for Seven. She's clearly as lonely as the captain and the commander are, but indulging in a holodeck program such as this really isn't good for her -- especially now, when our ship may be under attack.

As we walked out of the holodeck, I asked her why she didn't try to develop a romantic relationship with anyone else on the ship. Just because her experience with Lieutenant Chapman was less than satisfactory, that doesn't mean she'll never find another that would be more successful. After she began to explain the methods she'd used to choose Mr. Chapman for her first date, I stopped her. "Seven, humans and Vulcans and Talaxians and whatever aren't perfect. If you want to explore social roles, don't expect perfection. The 'perfect partner' will still have flaws. As I know very well from my inherited memories, Father is devoted to his spouse T'Pel, but that doesn't mean they haven't had disagreements from time to time. Harry Kim once asked you to enjoy the Ktarian Moonrise program with him. Why don't you ask him to go to it now, or to another program of your choice? You could spend a pleasant day in Fair Haven. You know, Harry is just as lonely as you are."

"I wouldn't want him to misinterpret what I meant by the invitation. The first time he suggested that program, I accused him of wanting to copulate with me."
"And his response?"

"He refused me!"

"Of course he did, for your own good, because he knew you weren't ready for it so soon after your separation from the Collective! It certainly wasn't good for Harry. Most of the crew made cruel jokes at his expense for not taking advantage of you. Personally, I honor Harry's integrity. Even if there isn't any possibility of romance with him, you could spend free time together as friends, instead of relating to each other only in a work capacity. Friendships can develop into romances, although not all will. Going to the holodeck with Harry, or anyone other than a senior officer in direct command of you, just as friends, would be healthier than programming a fantasy Commander Chakotay -- especially if it means you shunt work off on Icheb when your expertise is what's needed."

I don't know what she would have said to me in response. As I finished speaking, an explosion rocked Voyager. Seven ran to Astrometrics, which is the station she was supposed to be manning, while I rushed back to the bridge to see if Father needed me for anything.

Later in the day, we discovered our ship had wandered into a weapons testing field. That explained the existence of scattered bits of debris littering this region of space, as well as it did the energy discharges. The weapons were drawn to warp drives and traveled through subspace, making them difficult to detect. One of them had already damaged our propulsion systems by the time we succeeded in decrypting the warning message broadcast by the creators.

Now that we were forewarned, Seven was able to transport the detonator out of a weapon headed our way; and as soon as our drives were repaired, we were able to make our escape.

Icheb had worked with Seven to diagnose what was happening. Together, they helped us extricate us from a very dangerous situation. She's acknowledged his assistance, I'm happy to say. Now I hope she manages to extricate herself from another situation which could turn out to be even more explosive, in the long run to her, and to Icheb and Mezoti.

**Supplemental**

Icheb contacted me to tell me that Seven is in Sickbay. She went to the holodeck to "correct an error" and collapsed. He's not sure what the error was, or exactly what happened that caused her to lose consciousness. When I contacted the Doctor, he told me she doesn't want any visitors, but he's "on top of the situation." Whatever that means. I told the EMH to tell Seven I'll stay with Mezoti and
Ichab tonight so she needn't worry about them. I also mentioned that if she wishes to talk with me about anything after she leaves Sickbay, I'll make myself available. While I doubt I'll hear from her, I trust this will be the end of her holodeck fantasies of the unhealthful kind.

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Stardate 54691

Seven surprised me. She took me up on my offer to "talk over what happened."

First, she assured me she's deleted her "romantic exploration" holodeck program. She's come to the conclusion it was dangerous for her to continue visiting it and explained why.

When she left Ichab in Astrometrics to "correct her error" in the holodeck, her emotions began to overwhelm her. She managed to contact the Doctor in Sickbay about her medical emergency seconds before she collapsed. Nothing like this had ever happened when she was in Unimatrix Zero with Axum, but she postulates that since she was always regenerating during her visits there, she was protected from "emotional surges." At first, the Doctor surmised that the cortical node she'd received from Ichab was failing, endangering her life once again. However, after a careful review of all of his scans, he determined that the cortical node, and in particular, its Emotional Inhibitor chip, was doing exactly what it was supposed to do.

Apparently the Borg manage to avoid any messy emotional entanglements between drones through this chip. If a drone becomes extremely conflicted emotionally, the chip fires and caused the affected drone to collapse in order to "protect" its higher brain functions from damage. I told Seven I was surprised such a strong emotional reaction was even possible in a drone. She smiled a bit crookedly, much like the captain does at times, and remarked, "It appears it is."

When Seven decided to end her program, she "broke up" with her holo-character lover Chakotay. "As practice," she added mournfully. The Chakotay character tried to persuade her to continue their love affair. Seven became anxious, and her very mixed emotions must have triggered the chip to fire. When the Doctor found her in her simulation (with the Chakotay character hanging over her, letting the EMH know exactly what she was doing on the holodeck), her cortical node was on the verge of shutting down completely. If it had, Seven might have died. The Doctor was able to reverse the damage before it did.

I murmured something about this must have been the "something bad" Mezoti had feared. Unfortunately, Seven heard me and demanded what I meant by that. I had to tell her that Mezoti "picks up more of your thoughts than you probably would wish, because of her heightened subvocal
communication abilities . . . even when she tries not to hear you."

I was concerned about Seven's reaction, but she sighed in resignation, with no trace of anger towards her prospective daughter. "Mezoti is the reason I wished to speak with you, Lieutenant. The Doctor has explained that since Icheb no longer has an Emotional Inhibitor chip, he is safe from the type of collapse I experienced. Icheb had previously spoken with the Doctor about feeling wide swings of emotion ever since he donated his cortical node to me. The Doctor told him he will just have to learn how to manage them the way everyone else on Voyager does in order to function. So, while Icheb is safe from a malfunction such as this, Mezoti and I are not. Her cortical node is very well formed, just as mine now is. I'm concerned about her safety."

I asked her if anything can be done to end this threat to their lives. Seven replied, "The Doctor is willing to remove the chips from our cortical nodes, but he may need to perform multiple procedures on each of us before he succeeds. I don't know if I want to put Mezoti through that much discomfort and pain."

"You're apprehensive about it as well, I suspect."

She hesitated before admitting, "I am. I was wondering if you would be willing to instruct Mezoti and me in Vulcan meditation techniques. Perhaps that will keep us safe instead."

I would have liked to ponder this issue for a while before providing her with a response, but from her facial expression, which revealed just how worried she was, I knew I'd have to tell her what I thought immediately. I explained that I'd be happy to teach these techniques to them both, but I could not guarantee they'll be sufficient to provide absolute control of emotions in every circumstance.

"Father has practiced these techniques diligently ever since he was an adolescent, and I meditate before retiring every day. But particularly in extreme situations like the one you've just experienced, neither of us can completely banish emotional responses. If you had been in a relationship with an organic person, not a photonic one, your argument could have escalated even more quickly than in your simulation. Now that neither you nor Mezoti are totally Borg, you aren't protected by having your thoughts and emotions buried inside 'a wall of white noise,' which is the way Lieutenant Marika Wilkarah once described it to me. When a drone's individual thoughts are submerged into everyone else's in the Collective, their power is blunted. And other factors may emerge soon, too . . . "

She asked me what those other factors might be, and I explained that hormones could come into play, too. "Puberty is coming for Mezoti and Naomi. No one knows exactly how soon that may happen in Mezoti's case, but I suspect it will be sooner than you'd like it to happen. Adolescents are notorious for exhibiting extremes of emotional behavior. Erratic hormonal surges can occur frequently at this stage of development."
"While you were away with Harry on the Nightingale, Icheb seriously misread Lieutenant Torres' extension of friendship for overtures of a romantic nature. Afterwards, he confided in me that he wonders if the heightened emotions he was experiencing after he'd donated his cortical node to you had something to do with his mistake. Fortunately, the only injury that occurred to him at the time was acute embarrassment. Some of the junior engineers spread the story of the misunderstanding throughout our 'small ship's gossip mill,' as Naomi calls it. Icheb was glad to spend a week scrubbing plasma conduits because he was ashamed to show his face while everyone was laughing at him. After Tom heard about the gossip, he approached Icheb and prodded him into telling him his side of the story. Tom believes the Doctor's advice led Icheb astray about the 'symptoms' of sexual interest. He came up with the idea of constructing his National Parks holodeck program series so the couple could spend 'fun time' hiking with all the children, especially Icheb, to repair his relationship with B'Elanna. Now, if Mezoti should develop an extreme reaction such as this in the future . . ."

Seven shook her head. "You don't need to continue, Lieutenant. The Doctor's surgical interventions may bring us a measure of discomfort, even pain, but to fail to act now could threaten our lives. Thank you. I know now what I must do."

Seven had taken a seat at the table in my quarters when she arrived. After she said this to me, she stood up and stretched her back and legs. I know she experiences pain all the time from some of her implants, since many run very close to her tendons and nerves. Accepting the probability she will feel more pain from surgery, no matter how skilled the Doctor is, can't be easy. These operations will be experimental, as most of the procedures he's developed for his former Borg patients have been. I sincerely hope he won't have to perform too many on Seven and Mezoti to remove those dangerous chips from their cortical nodes.

While I seldom touch Seven when I'm near her, this time, I extended my hand to her. She accepted it and said, "Thank you, Lieutenant. I appreciate your guidance in this matter."

"I'm sure the captain would have been happy to listen to your concerns, too."

"I believe she would, but she could not have answered my question about whether learning meditation techniques could substitute for medical procedures. As a consequence, she would have directed me to come to speak with you. I knew it would be more efficient to go directly to the source." I had to chuckle at this, because Seven was absolutely correct. That's exactly what the captain would have said.

As she turned to go, I kept hold of her hand for another moment to prevent her leaving. "I'm always glad to help, Seven, if I can, but may I give you one more bit of advice?" At her nod, I continued, "When you come to speak to me when I'm off duty, jus call me Tuvix. That's who I am to you when I'm off duty, as I always am to your children and Naomi."
When I said, "your children," Seven's facial expression brightened noticeably. I was very gratified when she thanked me again for helping her "make the intelligent choice, not the emotional one . . . Tuvix."

Supplemental

The Doctor will perform the first stage of the chip removal process on Seven at 0900 tomorrow. Assuming all goes well, he will perform the same procedure on Mezoti at 1300. He said he believes he'll know how many more surgical interventions will be necessary after they've recovered from this first one. "I'm telling you this upon Seven's explicit orders, Mr. Tuvix. She said Mezoti's 'unofficial godfather' should be kept informed of her medical status at all times. And thank you for your assistance. I advised Seven of her options, but talking it over with you allowed her to make the right choices." I received Seven of her options, but talking it over with you allowed her to make the right choices." I received his thanks with gratitude. All I can do now is wait for word about how well they do. Very well, indeed, I hope.

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Stardate 54695

Much to my relief, the Emotional Inhibitor chips have been successfully removed from my unofficial goddaughter and her guardian (and soon-to-be adoptive mother). I would've felt truly awful if either of them had suffered from complications after I encouraged Seven to authorize the procedures. The Doctor only needed to operate on Mezoti once. Although her cortical node is very well formed, its connections with the chip were relatively weak. He was able to separate it from her cortical node without much trouble. (I suspect the glee with which she delivered so many "zingers" to the crew might be attributable to this weak connection.) Seven's chip was more tightly connected, possibly because the pathogen in Icheb's body interfered with how the part had developed. The Doctor needed to operate on Seven three times before he was able to completely free her from the pernicious device.

Sometimes I wonder why the Borg bother to assimilate biological beings at all. Wouldn't the Queen be just as well off building armies of totally mechanical robots or androids? They wouldn't have emotions unless she programmed them to possess them. Assimilation turns people into a conglomeration of machine parts, interchangeable with each other at her direction. She doesn't allow them to make choices or have individual thoughts or emotional lives anyway.

I guess it's easier to obtain "parts" that form biologically instead of taking the trouble to manufacture
them from raw materials. It's very opportunistic of her -- she's actually quite lazy, stealing organic people to provide her with ready-made, mostly artificial shells with limbs to do her bidding. What will she do if she ever runs out of species to exploit? Snow White's evil queen/stepmother and Sleeping Beauty's Maleficent are almost saintly in comparison!

I cannot claim that this last thought is mine alone. Our perceptive Mezoti has read many of the fairy tales Icheb has been collecting since his return from Quarra. She made this comment to me when I visited her in Borg Central yesterday morning, after her post-operative regeneration cycle was complete. Seven was still "under" at the time of my visit, recovering from her third procedure. Seven's regeneration cycle finally finished this morning, I'm glad to say.

I spoke with Mezoti a little while ago and asked her if her subvocal communications with Seven have been damaged in any way because of their respective operations. "Nope," she said, grinning impishly. I never heard her use the word "nope" before today. Naomi's influence, no doubt.

I may miss my coolly logical, stoic Mezoti from time to time; but tonight, I certainly did not. I'm always willing to teach meditation techniques to anyone who should ask me to provide them, Mezoti and Seven included. For now, however, what they really need to do is explore a full range of emotions without worrying about falling down dead. Anything I might have contributed to that happy conclusion is a bonus.

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Quintessential Q-Ness

Chapter Summary

Tuvix's patience is tested when the Q come calling.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Stardate 54702

This isn't the first time I've encountered the Q Continuum since my advent. While the Q who eventually took the name of Quinn arrived on Voyager prior to my arrival, I retain my parents' memories of his visit. I did have the dubious pleasure of enduring the after-effects of his suicide, however. The Q who has bedeviled more than one starship captain tried to convince Captain Janeway to bear his child. She declined the honor, but our crew was forced into all sorts of silly adventures before Q's mate -- whom we've dubbed "Lady Q" for clarity whenever we speak of her (although Tom insists she should be called "Susie Q" after a 20th century rock song) -- came on board and agreed to become the mother of Q's child.

Q brought the baby boy back to show to his "Aunt Kathy" shortly afterwards. Apparently, the Q's alleged omniscience, coupled with their ability to perform all sorts of tricks in defiance of the laws of space, time, energy, and matter, resulted in a pregnancy that was over in a scant few minutes. The captain did tell us that the "little tyke is quite cute."

He isn't so cute now.

A five year old Q, who has taken on the physical form of an adolescent human, has been deposited on Voyager by his father. The boy is obnoxious, not to mention a menace. Dad objected when "Q Junior" reignited a conflict between two systems which had finally agreed to a treaty after a protracted period of warfare. Miffed by his disapproval, Junior sealed Dad's mouth shut and removed his jaw and vocal cords. Just for fun, naturally. Dad had to type this information to us on a PADD until Q (to whom I will refer as "Daddy Q" from now on) undid his son's so-called "improvement" of the "Kitchen Rat." Several other incidents just as outrageous as this have also occurred.

Daddy Q claimed the boy's mother abandoned the family because of the way their offspring was
developing. He's admitted he can't handle him. After Junior appeared on the bridge and summoned a Borg cube to attack us, even Daddy Q had had enough. After briefly transforming his son into an Oprelian Amoeba, Daddy Q restored him to human form and left him here for "Aunt Kathy" to "shape up." If he doesn't, Icheb told me, he'll be returned to Oprelian Amoeba form to live in "singular-cellular city for all eternity."

The boy's been attending classes with Icheb. I need not add -- although I will -- that Junior is at the bottom of the class, while Icheb is valedictorian material. Since he no longer possesses his Q powers, Junior's ability to create mayhem has been considerably reduced, although sadly, not completely eliminated. I hope he will serve as an example of how not to act to our young girls. Icheb has already expressed a healthy skepticism about the probability of Junior successfully achieving the goals Daddy Q has established for his son. Nevertheless, since this is the first time Icheb has had a peer to interact with, I fear Junior may serve as a bad influence on our cadet.

Mezoti announced to Naomi and me that she expects Q will turn his son into an Oprelian amoeba if, as promised, Junior couldn't act according to the parameters set by the Continuum. I had a short talk with them about how difficult it would be for a being as powerful as Junior to adjust to life as a "common bipedal primate." He's used to getting his own way at the snap of his fingers. Naomi was willing to give "Q2" another chance. Mezoti sniffed, "He will fail. I hope he doesn't destroy Voyager when he does."

Stardate 54707

Junior, or as Icheb has begun to call him, Q-Ball, came very close to destroying Icheb, if not Voyager itself. Mezoti is livid and insists he should be punished. Icheb told us Junior "learned his lesson and will behave much better from now on -- better than his father." He gave Mezoti a little speech about the "quality of mercy," a concept he's discovered during his studies of Shakespeare's plays. Since Junior's antics almost killed Icheb, I'm inclined to side with Mezoti.

Junior had been doing so very well for several days. He paid attention in class, contributed to discussions, and actually seemed to be learning something about diplomacy, appropriate social behavior, and accepting responsibility for his actions. Then Daddy Q arrived to check on his boy's progress. He was singularly unimpressed by our captain's glowing reports about his offspring. Apparently, only a "demonstration of exemplary Q-ness" will satisfy the Continuum's conditions for Junior's regaining his powers. Daddy Q didn't bother to explain what exemplary Q-ness looks like, of course, since it's impossible for Captain Janeway's "miniscule mind" to recognize such a thing. Q said he would know it when he saw it, however, "and this isn't it."

Junior's suggestion to Icheb, or "Itchy," that they work together to repair the Delta Flyer seemed like
a perfectly valid way for Junior to show his initiative, since it wasn't an assignment. When the repairs had been completed successfully, however, Junior decided to fly out of Voyager in the shuttle without authorization, with Icheb his unwilling passenger. Junior had erected shields between them to prevent Icheb from interfering with their joyride (even if Junior was the only one enjoying himself).

When they arrived at the coordinates where Junior assured Icheb they would find "very hot girls" to carouse with, however, a ship appeared. The pilot challenged them for entering the system without authorization. Junior tried to get away, but the Chokuzan pilot fired at them. The Delta Flyer's tactical station blew up in Icheb's face, and he was seriously injured.

When Daddy Q arrived, Icheb was lying in Sickbay, on the verge of dying from the omicron radiation inflicted by the Chokuzan weapon. Junior begged his father to heal Icheb. Daddy Q refused. Instead, he told his son that he needed to be taught a lesson, and if his "little playmate has to die to teach you a lesson, so be it." He flashed away, as the Q always do.

The captain convinced Junior he could save Icheb himself by returning to where the incident occurred. If he could beg the Chokuzan pilot to give them information about the weapon, the Doctor should be able to devise a cure. When Junior and the captain confronted the patrol ship, they discovered the "Chokuzan pilot" was Daddy Q in disguise. Although Icheb recovered once Icheb accepted responsibility for the incident, the Continuum still refused to restore Junior's powers. Daddy Q disappeared again. Captain Janeway offered Junior a place on Voyager as a member of our crew. He was reluctantly going to agree to her proposal to accept mortality when his father suddenly reappeared, proclaiming that he'd successfully appealed the Continuum 's decision. Junior's powers were restored, but there were "conditions." Daddy Q must supervise him properly (i.e. constantly). "We'll be joined at the hip for all eternity."

After Seven, Mezoti, Naomi, and I learned the entire story from Icheb and the captain, Mezoti was slightly mollified. "If he has to stay close his father forever, maybe that's punishment enough. He should teach his father the right way to behave. With a father like that, how could Q-Ball have turned out any other way? What do you think, Itchy?" Mezoti’s impish grin appeared.

Icheb calmly replied, "I think you shouldn’t call me Itchy unless I can call you Scratchy." I thought that was a marvelous comeback by Icheb, but my laughter ended much sooner than everyone else's. Considering how badly Icheb's parents treated him, it's understandable he'd be willing to forgive Junior his excesses. But then, Icheb is much more forgiving than I am.

Later, Icheb came to me and explained that Lady Q and Q-Ball visited him in Sickbay. She hadn't abandoned her son at all; she'd agreed to stay away from him while his father attempted to deal with his wild behavior. She'd known Q would make a mess of things and was prepared to step in to save Icheb if Daddy Q didn't. "She told me Q-Ball was born to save the Continuum, and this is how he's going to do it: by keeping his father under control. The Continuum told Q he's supervising his son,
but it's really the other way around. Q-Ball's mother plans to keep watch over them both, in case they run into trouble again." He became a little wistful when he added, "You know, Tuvix, Q-Ball was the closest thing to a true friend I've ever had."

I felt a little better about the episode once Icheb told me this. I understand. He's friends with Naomi. Mezoti is his little "sister," and little Aimee is one, too, even if Marla is raising her. Tom and Harry have served as mentors to Icheb, as have I upon occasion, but none of us are his "buddies" in the way "Q-Ball" could have been -- if he'd stayed on as a mortal.

But having a Q around permanently would simply be asking for trouble. I'm quite content with how everything's turned out.

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Chapter End Notes

"Q2" was an episode that cried out for some canon fixes. Since this is an AU, I was free to "retcon" and explain the REAL reason Q and Junior will be "joined at the hip" for all eternity. And Susie Q was treated very cavalierly. I doubt a feisty lady Q like her would really have abandoned her son. So, in this universe, she hasn't.
Chapter Summary

The Doctor's "masterwork" holodeck program is unveiled, but not to the universal acclaim he anticipated.

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Stardate 54711

Harry and Seven visited me today and shared a "big secret" they'd been keeping from everyone, other than the captain and the commander, up to now. They looked so happy, my first thought was that she'd taken my advice about becoming close friends, or even romantic, with someone much more appropriate than Commander Chakotay. Icheb had confided to me that Harry had been spending quite a bit of time with her in Astrometrics recently, although Seven never told Icheb what they'd been doing there. Perhaps they were going to tell me they'd become "more than friends." But that wasn't it.

While they were returning to Voyager from the Kraylor homeworld, Seven noticed how despondent Harry was over the fact that he hadn't performed as well during his first real command as he'd expected. Since he was allowing the Kraylor crew, and in particular, Terek, to man the bridge without hovering over them at the time, Seven decided to divert him by discussing ways to improve Voyager's efficiency once they returned to our ship. The subject of Project Pathfinder came up. Harry had been studying Lieutenant Barclay's schematics. He began to speculate that if the signal coming from the Mutara Deep Space Transponder Array, which creates a miniature wormhole, was bounced off something more stable than a pulsar, messages could be exchanged more frequently than just once a month. The pulsar currently utilized by the system is only in proper alignment with the array every 32nd day.

Harry suggested, half in jest, that a quantum singularity would be "perfect," if only the beam wasn't swallowed up by the singularity's gravity. Seven replied that a tachyon beam might escape it. During the remainder of the trip, and after their return to Voyager, the pair studied the concept and concluded it might work. They prepared a proposal and sent it to Mr. Barclay and Admiral Paris in the next datastream, asking them to test the idea to see if it were feasible.

They received an answer from Lieutenant Barclay today. He sent them instructions on the settings they're to use to open communications with the Alpha Quadrant for a grand total of eleven minutes a day, every day. The first "test" of the system will take place three weeks from today. Harry said the
current datastream burst exchanges will still take place, but now on a daily basis, and even better: "We'll be able to talk live, Tuvix! It will be like we're calling from one place on Earth to another!"

The captain will announce the test to the entire crew later today. I'm sure Father will be thrilled (although I'm equally sure he'd only admit to being "gratified") to have a chance to speak with T'Pel and their children this way, as close to face-to-face as possible, considering how far away from them we still are. It's really exciting news, but I wouldn't have minded if Harry and Seven had had something more personal to share, too. Oh, well. My matchmaking abilities clearly are not as well developed as many other aspects of my life. I shouldn't get my hopes up.

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Stardate 54715

Everyone was thrilled about the captain's announcement that we should soon have an opportunity to "visit" with loved ones periodically, along with daily contact with Starfleet Command. The situation has given me pause, however, when I consider certain recent communications through the data stream that have had a negative impact upon our crew. I decided to discuss my concerns with Father privately before submitting anything to the command team through channels.

Father and I discussed how secure our transmissions to and from Starfleet and our families will actually be. Father maintains that since messages will be transferred so frequently, and with a real time component, it will make it more difficult, if not impossible, for anyone who wanted to intercept them for nefarious purposes to be successful. Because of "Reg" and the mad vedek who initiated a Maquis mutiny, we've already been sending complete lists of all communications with each transmission. Now, if anything goes missing, we'll be able to check back the next day about its status. An interloper like the Reg Barclay hologram would be detected quickly. And since we'll receive a new list of messages every day, annotated to summarize what each one contains, if one does show up later, we'd check it out carefully to make sure it hasn't been subjected to tampering before delivering it to its intended recipient. With these measures, Father believes an incident such as the subliminal message inserted into Sek's letter will not be repeated. My mind is more at ease, but I still plan to remain vigilant -- just in case.

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Stardate 54732

Operation Watson is a great success! During the initial connection, Captain Janeway, Commander Chakotay, Harry and Seven spoke briefly with Admiral Paris and Lieutenant Barclay, who showed
them a "live" view of Earth from space. Harry told me they actually chatted about the weather!
When the captain congratulated Mr. Barclay about his role in establishing this new system, the
lieutenant quickly credited Seven and Ensign Kim for their key contribution to the improved
technology.

I think Harry was half-hoping the captain would bring up the matter of his long-overdue promotion
with Admiral Paris. He's been stuck in the rank of ensign for six and a half years, but the
communication window closed before the subject could be introduced. After Harry left me to share
the good news with his other friends on the crew, Seven commented, "Harry may not be ready to
captain a starship yet, but he's certainly earned a promotion to lieutenant, junior grade." I agreed,
naturally. I must say, I hope he doesn't jump a full grade when he finally does receive that long
overdue promotion. Unless I receive one at the same time, he'll outrank me!

**Supplemental**

We've learned a bit more about how the crew's opportunity to speak with loved ones will work. The
communication window will be open for eleven minutes per day. Nine minutes will be reserved for
face-to-face meetings with family and friends. Three members of the crew will visit each day, for a
grand total of three minutes per crew member! It's not much, but it's so much better than once a
month, through visual or written letters only, that no one is complaining.

Captain Janeway gave Dad the task of organizing the schedule, and he's arrived at a very equitable
way to do it. Dad inscribed data chips with numbers, ranging from 1 to 148. Each member of the
crew will draw one to find out their "position in the queue," as Dad described it to me. The only
person who isn't eligible for the drawing is little Aimee. Her visits with family will take place during
Marla's time. Aimee doesn't have much to say yet anyway. Her vocabulary currently consists of
about twenty words.

When Dad approached me to pick my chip, I told him it seemed silly for me to take up three minutes
of time when I don't know anyone in the Alpha Quadrant. He reminded me that I do have family on
Vulcan: Tuvok's wife T'Pel, his daughter Asil, his sons Sek, Varith, and Elieth, and Sek's wife and
daughter, Varin and T'Meni. "You'll be able to get to know them better." When I mentioned I could
meet them during Father's transmission, Dad pointed out that he might desire some "private
conversations" with T'Pel. I had to admit this was true, so I accepted my chip. It was number 24.
When I showed it to Father, and he showed me his was 89, I offered to trade with him. Father
refused, but he suggested I could invite him and Dad to attend my session so he could introduce "the
Talaxian branch to our Vulcan family members." Dad thought this was a wonderful idea, so that's
what we'll do. I'm sure it will be a fascinating meeting.

I asked Dad how he planned to use his turn. He told me he doesn't know yet. For quite a while now,
he's been working on a cookbook: *Delta Quadrant Cuisine à la Neelix.* He told me some time ago
that he was thinking of sending it to a literary agency via the Pathfinder data stream, to see if any
publishers might be interested in it. I expect that's what he'll end up doing.

Naturally, one of the lowest-number chips -- number 3 -- was drawn by our EMH. Harry was eager to trade with him. His mother's birthday is coming up in a few days, and Harry drew number 130. The Doctor said he has plans for that chip, but won't tell anyone the identity of the person he plans to chat with. Tom thinks it will be someone on Jupiter Station, perhaps his holographic "sister" Haley, or Dr. Zimmerman himself. B'Elanna is sure it will be Reg Barclay.

Harry did find a trade partner, however. Tom drew the number 6 and gave it to Harry, saying, "Give your mom my best." When Harry asked if he was sure about this, Tom said he's already waited this long. "What's another six weeks?" I was a little surprised to hear that, but then I remembered how long it's been since he'd had any personal contact with his parents and sisters. Tom had been in prison in New Zealand for some time before the captain brought him on board as an "observer." Besides, Tom's family now consists of B'Elanna and their soon-to-be-born daughter. I guess that gives him a perspective most of the crew doesn't have.

The Delaney sisters plan on sharing their time, so they'll get a chance to visit with their family twice as often. I understand a few members of the crew grumbled a bit about that when they heard, but it wouldn't be fair to force the sisters to share a single session, either. Icheb was going to give up his chip, since he said he doesn't know anyone in the Alpha Quadrant. After I pointed out he could contact professors at the Academy and receive guidance with his curriculum, he became noticeably more enthused about "taking his turn." Mezoti, however, has no idea how to use hers. She's offered it to Naomi and Icheb, but both of them turned her down. Since she drew the number 142, she'll have time to think about it. I suspect that if she contacts Starfleet's Public Relations Department about her problem, they'll gladly make use of "the little ex-Borg girl on Voyager who doesn't have anyone in the Alpha Quadrant to visit" as a puff piece. I can see it so clearly: "Enter our contest to become Mezoti's pen pal! Become the first person in your neighborhood to communicate with the Delta Quadrant!"

Oh, dear. I'm afraid I've been spending too much time with Tom and B'Elanna. I'm becoming quite the cynic.

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Stardate 54736

Just about the entire crew is in an uproar about "Photons Be Free," our EMH's "great work of art." It's a "completely fictional" holodeck program depicting the short life and tragic death of a hologram assigned to the starship Vortex, which, like Voyager, is lost in the far reaches of the Delta Quadrant. He's been working on it for months.
Thanks to *Voyager's* isolation in the Delta Quadrant, and the fact that he had to fill the role of our chief medical officer after all the regular Starfleet medical staff died in the displacement wave that brought our ship into this quadrant, our Doctor has developed into an individual who is truly a member of our crew. The other Mark-1’s haven't been so lucky. Their programs were deemed obsolete for several reasons, but the primary one seems to be that their personalities were so abrasive, the "organics" didn't want them around. They've been condemned to doing menial tasks in the Alpha Quadrant. Our EMH says his "brothers" are suffering.

From the stories the EMH told us upon his return from Jupiter Station, and after some of our experiences with the way photonic beings have been treated in the Delta Quadrant, particularly during the past year, I cannot say he doesn't have a point. The problem for the crew is that his "work of art" portrays virtually all organic beings as bigoted despots, which might be more acceptable if the malign denizens of the *Vortex* didn't resemble our *Voyager* crew to such a remarkable degree. In fact, if *Voyager* and its crew were a work of fiction, its creators would have grounds to file suit against the Doctor for plagiarism!

The Doctor has an amazing imagination, quite remarkable when one considers it's all a matter of holographic programming. His daydreams, which prompted the captain to permit him to keep subroutines such as his ECH function, were fascinating to watch, according to Harry (the most provocative were erased before I had a chance to view them). When *Voyager* was attacked by the Quarrans, the ECH quite literally saved the ship. The EMH misused his access to *Voyager's* command subroutines when he came under the influence of Iden, however; and the captain should have become alarmed by his favoritism towards photonics during this incident. Another warning sign: his daydreams have all been based upon his limited experiences on *Voyager*. In those daydreams, he depicts himself in various roles, but his interactions have all been with other members of the crew, not any of the archived characters. While he knows our crew well, he's less aware of how others behave. "Photons, Be Free" reflects his limited knowledge.

After the captain failed to punish the EMH for his transgressions during his time with Iden's "freedom fighters," especially since his actions almost caused the destruction of *Voyager*, Tom and I suggested to the EMH that he might voluntarily surrender some of his holodeck time, as a form of self-discipline. He refused. He told us he had a "project" of his own he wished to undertake, to encourage organics like ourselves to accept photonics like him as people. When we told him we *did* accept him as one of us, he reluctantly agreed the crew of *Voyager* accepted him, but what about the others we’d encountered, like the Hirogen, or the Serosians, who treated Dejaren so badly? Or the Lokirrim, who were decompiling the programs of the photonics who were in rebellion against them? Tom pointed out that Dejaren murdered the organic members of his crew, and we don't really know if the Lokirrim mistreated their photonics, or if their rebellion has been instigated by someone like Iden, who was charismatic but basically insane. The Doctor ignored what Tom had to say, however, and kept all of his holodeck time.

Now that I've viewed the Doctor's program and seen how he's portrayed the crew -- as unfeeling brutes who are prejudiced against the protagonist, the poor holographic doctor -- I'm afraid that this is the project he was working on when he rebuffed Tom and me. If so, I'm not happy about it. Not at
Tom was the first of the crew to see it. "Captain Jenkins," Captain Janeway's clone (if the captain were a dominatrix) murdered a seriously injured member of the crew to force the doctor to treat her pet helmsman. "Lieutenant Marseilles" was a lech of the highest order, with the worst mustache I've ever seen. Lieutenant Marseilles was actually one of the Doctor's more creative names -- but not to anyone familiar with the relative proximity of Marseilles to Paris in France. "Torrey," the chief engineer, was a human who compared the hologram to an easily replaceable hypospanner. Ensign Kymble was a Trill and a hypochondriac. Katanay was a tattooed Bajoran with a very bad attitude. The only reasonably nice character was the Borg "Three of Eight," who defended the protagonist at the end of the program, when Captain Jenkins destroyed him for "cluttering up his program with all sorts of useless additions." Clearly, the Doctor is still enamored of our resident former Borg beauty.

Despite changes as to species or hair color, everyone looks almost exactly the same as his or her template and, therefore, are easily recognizable as members of our crew. We've seen samples of the publicity that Starfleet has promulgated throughout the Alpha Quadrant since regular contact with Voyager has been established. Our images have been splashed throughout the Federation. Anyone participating in this holodeck program may believe we treat our Doctor the same way the crew of the Vortex treats theirs. It's all very upsetting, especially since the Doctor made the mistake of stating at the end of the program, that the player "has experienced a work of fiction, but, like all fiction, it has elements of truth."

When I first visited the program, I didn't notice anyone who was specifically based upon me, although there were a couple of "hybrid" security guards who were just as nasty as the rest of the crew. My most recognizable traits hadn't been depicted. Other than Icheb, none of the children were represented, and, mercifully, the EMH ignored the Equinox crew members as well. They already have enough of a burden facing them when we return to the Alpha Quadrant; they certainly don't need to be identified with any of the holo-characters in the Doctor's opus. Icheb was extremely unhappy when he realized the Bolian cook's assistant, with the "unhygienic personal habits," apparently was his avatar, as well as Chell's. Of course, Chell was just as incensed, since he felt the character demeaned Bolians "with extreme prejudice."

After the captain, experiencing the program as the holographic doctor, had the unique opportunity to experience her own death at the hands of Captain Jenkins, she called the EMH into the conference room to meet with her and with Tom, B'Elanna, Harry, and Father. Father told Dad and me afterwards that the Doctor insisted his program was a work of art. The crew should not be offended because the characters resemble them "a little," since they are fictional characters and NOT them. His program is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to a real person is completely coincidental. He's simply doing what all great authors do: writing about what he knows. And what he knows is our crew, our ship, and the Delta Quadrant.

Citing his fellow EMH Mark-1's current situation in the Alpha Quadrant, the Doctor expressed his desire to relieve his fellow photonics of their suffering. The Doctor wants his holonovel to change the attitudes of organic beings who have oppressed his "brothers." He refused to compromise his
artistic vision, just because a few of his crew mates were overly sensitive -- or maybe just jealous that his work is going to be published. Father said the EMH was staring at Tom during the last part of his speech. I thought that was a very low blow, indeed.

After Father told me about the meeting, I visited "Photons, Be Free" again. This time I noticed that one of the vilest of the security officers probably was based on me. I missed it on my first viewing because the officer was not one of the hybrid crewman of the Vortex, but a Vulcan. I guess I must be one of those overly sensitive members of the crew, because I am offended.

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Supplemental

The Doctor went to the holodeck to make a few "minor changes" to "Photons Be Free" and was horrified to discover Tom had altered his masterwork. When the EMH confronted him about ruining his program, Tom told him how to access the unadulterated backup he'd created before giving the Doctor a taste of his own medicine with his revision. Our EMH was no more pleased with this new version of himself than the crew had been about the way he'd portrayed them.

While the Doctor hadn't promised Tom he'd make any changes to his program, Dad spoke to him and urged him to do so, in the interests of "Voyager family harmony." The Doctor agreed that changing some of the details of the program, particularly the name of the ship and its situation in the Delta Quadrant, wouldn't "compromise his vision" after all.

Dad gave the EMH his own chip so that he could contact his publisher Ardon Broht and let him know there would be a slight delay before he sent the final, polished version to him. Mr. Broht thought the characters were perfect the way they were! Finally, but with great reluctance, the publisher agreed not to distribute the holonovel until after he receives the Doctor's final revisions. The Doctor told him he expects to send them in a week or two. After he finished speaking with Mr. Broht, the Doctor advised Dad and me he's changed his fictional crew's looks, but he needs to do a bit more, such as revising the crew names and that of the ship, as well as the ship's situation, to make his work "completely fictional." I suggested a good name for his ship might be "The Teapot." He didn't think that name was quite right for his masterwork. I don't think the EMH realized I was joking.

I hope this will turn out to be just a tempest in a teapot. Hard feelings could persist for quite a while. Tom was very disappointed to think the Doctor would portray his character as someone who would cheat on his wife. He thought he'd managed to earn the EMH's respect over the past six and a half years. Chell isn't likely to forget the slight he perceives against Bolians anytime soon, either. The rest of the crew seems to be taking a wait and see attitude towards the Doctor's revised program. It looks like he'll have to wait a little longer before the accolades he expects to receive in response to his
"insightful" work will come his way.

Stardate 54740

During the two minute window of the data stream reserved for communications to the captain from Starfleet, Admiral Paris and Lieutenant Barclay informed the captain that a program purportedly created by our EMH, according to advertisements distributed by the publisher Broht and Forrester, has been widely viewed in holosuites throughout the quadrant. The admiral questioned the captain's wisdom in allowing her EMH to create this program, since the admiral's reaction to what he saw was the same as our crew's. The captain promised to look into it.

When the captain shared this news with the Doctor, he was appalled. He advised her that Mr. Broht had agreed this was a "work in progress" which wasn't to be distributed until he'd sent Broht the final revisions. If the program is already being viewed on such a wide scale, Mr. Broht must have put the program out even before the EMH spoke with him, on the first day Project Watson was available for the crew to contact people in the Alpha Quadrant.

Supplemental

In the next day's datastream, the captain gave up her chance to speak with her mother so that our EMH, with Captain Janeway in attendance, would have the opportunity to speak with his publisher. The Doctor demanded a recall of his program and an apology for publishing a "work in progress." Broht declared he will do no such thing. When the captain commented firmly that authors have rights, Broht told her this one didn't. Since the Doctor is a hologram, Broht told them, he has no rights under Federation law. The publisher informed them he will do what he likes with the holonovel and rudely cut off the transmission.

At a senior staff meeting in the conference room afterwards, Father suggested that Starfleet demand the program's recall because it reveals classified information. "Then everyone will be sure it's a cover-up, and that it's all true!" Tom pointed out. Hearing this didn't please Father, although, sadly, I'm sure Tom is right.

Harry suggested that if the Doctor had no rights, he also had no right to enter into the initial contract with Broht to publish the holonovel. The captain didn't care for this argument, either. It would confirm Broht's point and undermine her assertion that the Doctor has the same rights as every other member of our crew. "I'm not going to let this publisher say otherwise."
Stardate 54745

We visited with Father's family today. Fortunately, they didn't mention "Photons, Be Free." I trust that means the holonovel isn't available on Vulcan -- yet. We actually didn't have time for much more than basic introductions, but it was wonderful to see their faces on the view screen. We could imagine they were in the next room. They expressed their gratitude at finally getting the chance to meet "their Talaxians." Our regular correspondence through the data stream will be even more satisfying, now that Dad and I have had a chance to interact with all of them.

T'Pel didn't say very much. As far as I can tell, she kept her gaze fixed upon Father most of the time. I know it's impossible for them to communicate telepathically over such a distance, but a couple that has been joined together for decades, as T'Pel and Father have been, must have the capacity to communicate in more subtle ways than either words or telepathy. The language of facial expression and body language can travel through parsecs if the communicants are in any sort of real time visual range. I could see this happening whenever I glanced at T'Pel. I've worked very diligently at purging my memories of Father's most intimate moments with her, but I could tell, from a telltale twitch of her eyebrow and narrowing of her eyes, that she had concerns of some kind about what she observed.

I hope she doesn't have any reservations about Dad and me becoming part of their extended family. In her letters, she's stated she fully accepts the facts of my creation. It was a chance event, a monumental accident. Whenever she made direct eye contact with me, even though it lasted for mere seconds, I believe it was with as much warmth as any Vulcan matron would permit herself to show to anyone, even one of her own precious children. Perhaps the concern I detect is only a manifestation of her longing to be in her husband's actual presence once again. That I can understand very well, thanks to the time I spent with Alyara.

And oh, how I wish I could communicate with Alyara like this! I don't know if it's because our crew can now "visit" with loved ones in this manner, but I've had Alyara on my mind a great deal lately, ever since Project Watson became operational. There's an old adage told on Earth which I've found to be very true. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder.

Stardate 54747
After acting as the technician in charge of Project Watson transmissions for several days, Seven has come to appreciate what it means to reconnect with family. Her parents are now either Borg or dead, but she remembered that her father had a sister. From checking our database, which has been updated regularly since Project Pathfinder has been communicating successfully with Voyager, she knows her Aunt Irene Hansen is alive. When the number on her chip came up, at Harry's urging, she decided to contact her aunt.

Seven introduced Icheb and Mezoti to her aunt as the children she is in the process of adopting. Aunt Irene was thrilled to see her niece again and to meet her grand niece and nephew. In the brief time available, she exchanged a few stories about how "strong-willed" little Annika was, even when she was barely out of toddlerhood. Those stories captivated Mezoti, who asked if she could visit Aunt Irene when her own turn comes "to hear more stories about Seven when she was a little girl." Aunt Irene said she'd be "happy to comply" with Mezoti's request. Seven was certain the use of the word "comply" was accidental on the aunt's part, but all three of them were pleased to hear her say it, nonetheless. I'm very happy for Mezoti. She was feeling very badly, I know, since she didn't know anyone she could "visit" in the Alpha Quadrant when her number came up -- and now she does.

_Stardate 54748_

The captain was informed by Starfleet today that a Federation Arbitrator has been assigned to contest Ardon Broht's claim that since he's a hologram, the Doctor has no rights, and therefore Broht and Forrester is not bound to honor the Doctor's contract or honor his request to recall the program. Since the communication window is only open for eleven minutes a day between our ship and the Alpha Quadrant, the Arbiter has set aside three days to hear testimony from both sides. He's promised he will announce his decision promptly afterwards.

The hearing begins tomorrow. Unfortunately, this means the crew members who expected to speak with their family members during the three days the hearing will take place will have to wait until after the testimony phase has finished.

Joe Carey is very unhappy. He's scheduled to be next, and he was looking forward to speaking with his wife and sons. I assured him that the delay will only be for three days. He retorted, "A lot can happen out here in the Delta Quadrant in three days, Tuvix." I advised him to "stay positive."

I hope he takes my advice. I understand his frustration, but what can we do? This hearing is vital to the Doctor's future. The captain is right to insist his status be clarified in law.
Stardate 54754

Joe Carey is a happy man today. He finally had his chance to visit with his family. The arbitration hearings have been concluded. He went to the Doctor afterwards to apologize for complaining so vociferously about the delay to anyone who would listen to him. "I was out of line, Doctor. Sorry."

Our EMH graciously accepted Joe's apology. Now he hopes the Arbitrator's decision will force Ardon Broht to apologize, too. The Arbitrator promised to take only two days to deliberate upon the testimony before issuing his opinion. It will be a very long couple of days for the Doctor.

Stardate 54755

The Arbitrator's decision has been announced. While it wasn't the "win" the Doctor hoped for, it wasn't a total loss, either.

The captain allowed the entire crew to view the official logs of the hearing and the decision.

One of Broht's arguments was that his most popular children's series was "written by Toby the Targ." Seriously! I suspect that Toby the Targ had to have had a little help from a Klingon or human author to tell his stories, since no Targ has ever been found who has the ability to speak, let alone write. He also claimed the EMH's production of his holonovel was analogous to the creation of a cup of coffee by a replicator. Father pointed out that a replicator "replicates" something already in existence, while the Doctor created something which had never been seen before. Fortunately, from the decision, the Arbitrator saw through Broht's facetious statements.

The Arbitrator's decision was worded thus: "The Doctor exhibits many of the traits we associate with a person. Intelligence, creativity, ambition, even fallibility, but are these traits real, or is the Doctor merely programmed to simulate them? To be honest, I don't know. Eventually we will have to decide, because the issue of holographic rights isn't going to go away; but at this time, I am not prepared to rule that the Doctor is a person under the law. However, it is obvious he is no ordinary hologram; and while I can't say with certainty that he is a person, I am willing to extend the legal definition of Artist to include the Doctor. I therefore rule that he has the right to control his work, and I'm ordering all copies of his holonovel to be recalled immediately."
Unsurprisingly, Ardon Broht has declared that any future holonovels the Doctor may wish to publish, including the revised version of "Photons, Be Free," must be issued by another publisher. Since his company puts out the Dixon Hill detective holonovels, Broht and Forrester has a good reputation; but I have grave doubts Broht will comply with the Arbitrator’s order. I suspect that Starfleet will have to put pressure on Broht to make sure he does.
A Measure of Grief

Chapter Summary

An assignment from Starfleet results in a tragic loss, and the captain begins to slip into depression once again. Tuvix has a plan he hopes will keep that from happening.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Stardate 54769

The captain was delighted to announce that we've received an official mission from Starfleet, for the very first time since Voyager was lost in the Delta Quadrant. Shortly after the first warp drive engine was proven viable by Zefram Cochrane, Earth sent out a warp-powered probe packed with all sorts of information about Earth, its people, and technical data, which would allow other species to communicate with Earth. Friendship One "introduced" humanity to the universe. This occurred long before the Prime Directive had been issued, or, indeed, before Starfleet even existed. As Seven pointed out, if the Borg had intercepted Friendship One, Earth would have been assimilated long before this. Obviously, the Borg never did.

One hundred thirty years ago, Earth lost contact with the probe. Voyager has been asked to search for it. At the time all communications ceased, the probe was traveling near our current position. Admiral Hendrix has asked the captain to retrieve this little piece of history, if possible. Since we've already succeeded in uncovering the true fate of Mars explorer Lieutenant John Kelly, finding Friendship One would be another achievement which would reflect well on our entire crew, not just the captain. Obviously, this mission is especially important for our Maquis crew members, and perhaps those from the Equinox as well.

The captain has ordered a change in course, and we've initiated a search for the missing probe or any remnants we can find. She hopes we'll find the probe intact, naturally, but whatever we find, it will document more of Earth's "baby steps into outer space" (a Tom quote, naturally). Captain Janeway's enthusiasm has infected the entire crew.
We're on our way to Friendship One! It must have crashed onto a planet 130 years ago. Our long range scans haven't picked up any life signs yet. The planet seems to have a climate which is consistent with a nuclear winter.

Supplemental

Since the climatic conditions are such that we cannot transport anyone directly down to the planet to investigate, I've volunteered to become a member of an away team which will fly to the surface in the Delta Flyer. Father thanked me, but the team assigned consists of Commander Chakotay, Dad, Tom, Harry, and Joe Carey. B'Elanna wanted to go, but Tom convinced her that Joe was a better choice for the team's engineer. Her pregnancy is so advanced by now that exposing her baby to this much radiation is unwise. No matter how well her body is shielded by the EV suits the team will wear, or protected by anti-radiation injections, the Doctor says it won't be enough. She wasn't happy about it, but to protect the health of her child, she agreed to stay on board and monitor the situation from Voyager.

Supplemental

I'm devastated. We all are. We found Friendship One, but we lost Joe Carey.

A small remnant of this planet's native population has been clinging to life, hiding in caverns beneath the surface to escape the poisonous atmosphere of their planet. If we had not arrived here now, within a few years all of them might be dead. We've done what we can to alleviate their suffering, but the fact remains: Friendship One was no friend to the people here. They would have been far better off if the probe had never fallen into their hands.

One hundred thirty-one years ago, when the probe landed here, the people had no inkling that a substance like antimatter existed. When they experimented with the probe's components, their efforts led to explosions which killed most of the population and resulted in a nuclear winter. With no sunlight reaching the planet's surface once it was enshrouded with radioactive clouds, food would not grow out in the open. They were living in underground caverns, barely clinging to life. The background radiation has also impacted their fertility. The few babies who were born alive often did not survive to adulthood. The people -- barely 5,500 of them -- were covered with lesions. It was only a matter of time before their species became extinct.

We didn't know this at first, naturally. Pattern enhancers in hand to facilitate transport up to the ship, the away team arrived on the surface and split up. Dad, Tom, and Joe followed sensor readings that revealed the existence of refined titanium, a major component of the probe's housing, while the
commander and Harry examined missiles in underground silos which may have been responsible for the destruction of the planet's environment. After the commander and Harry discovered a native scientist named Otrin tampering with the Delta Flyer, they were forced to flee the rockets fired at them. The rest of the team was captured and held hostage by some of the survivors. And Verin, their leader, was extremely belligerent.

The people of this planet believed Friendship One was sent to destroy them, to clear the way for the people of Earth to invade their world without opposition. When the captain tried to negotiate and offered to work on undoing the damage to the planet's environment, Verin rejected her overtures. She then suggested that in exchange for one of the hostages, our crew would send them food and medicine while they tried to come to a solution. Verin agreed, but just as the transport for the exchange was initiated, he blew a hole in Joe's chest and killed him.

Thanks to his mobile emitter's ability to radically alter his appearance, the Doctor was able to impersonate one of the guards. Father and I were also part of the away team which rescued Dad and Tom. The EMH treated the people's radiation sickness with nanoprobe retrieved from Seven, Icheb, and Mezoti. Otrin's theories of how to clear the atmosphere enough for the planet's ecology to recover were implemented. Complete recovery will take many years to achieve, but now the people have a future. But Joe is still dead. The injury to his chest was complicated by the concussion he sustained when the away team was captured. Joe's injury was more serious than it first appeared, and the radiation exacerbated the damage to his neural passageways. The nanoprobe technique Seven used to bring Dad back was implemented; this time, it didn't work.

Stardate 54780

Joe's funeral was held today. To say everyone was despondent would understate the case. Father seemed far more subdued than usual. B'Elanna was extremely upset. She told everyone it should have been her on the surface of the planet, not Joe. Tom brought her back to their quarters almost immediately after the service to mourn privately, but most of the crew came to the wake Dad held for Joe in the Mess Hall. I stayed to the end, but only because I felt it was my duty to support Dad. He's feeling very guilty about his survival, but he shouldn't. He tried to reason with Verin by telling him about what happened when Rinax was destroyed by the Metreon Cascade, but Verin ignored Dad's pleas to be patient.

The planet's people now look to Otrin as their leader, which I hope is a positive step towards rebuilding their world. He's a scientist, and his plan on how to clear the skies of radioactive clouds is working. He seems quite level-headed in comparison to their previous leader. We don't know what's going to happen to Verin. His people are holding him prisoner. Whether Verin will be able to convince them that he was only acting in their best interests and that they should set him free is a decision they must make. We provided anti-radiation treatments for all of their people, despite what
Verin did to Joe, and we sent them food and supplies. We did what we could to undo the damage caused when Friendship One crash landed on their world, although the worst damage was done through their experimentation with the probe. They decrypted the greetings sent from Earth, however, so in that, we are partly to blame.

Their decision on whether to hold their murderous leader to account is not our issue. It's an internal affair. To interfere with that is against the Prime Directive. If anything, this incident shows why the Prime Directive is necessary. But poor Joe Carey is still dead.

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**Stardate 54786**

A couple of days ago, the captain, the commander, and Father went to Joe's quarters to pack up his possessions to place them in storage. On the table, they discovered a model of *Voyager* Joe had been meticulously constructing inside a bottle. It was almost finished; Joe never had the chance to add the last nacelle. When Father told me about this, it struck me as a metaphor for Joe's life -- unfinished. He *should* have made it home to his family, even if our journey might still take another thirty years. I was saddened when I heard, but the rest of what he told me was equally as disturbing: the captain's actions -- or more precisely, her inaction -- since the funeral.

Since the end of Joe's service, Captain Janeway hasn't appeared on the bridge, nor has she been in her ready room. Commander Chakotay has taken charge again, just like he did when *Voyager* was traversing that first, dark void we encountered, when the captain sank into depression.

When she saw the *Voyager* in a bottle, she picked it up and sadly told Father and Commander Chakotay that "space exploration isn't worth the loss of even one life." That's an incredible statement coming from her lips. It was hard for me to believe she actually said it, but since this isn't the first time she's lost perspective, I did. I went to Father with an idea. He approved of it and took me to speak with the commander, who also thought it was worth a try.

When I hit the chime on the door to her quarters, she didn't answer immediately. I used the comm to request a "visit" with her. She answered, but I think she was about to put me off until little Aimee squealed, "Appy!" the way she always does whenever she sees the captain or hears her voice. I explained I was in the corridor with Aimee, Naomi, and Mezoti. "We have something special to show you," I explained. After another pause, she called out "enter."

The first inside the captain's quarters was Aimee, walking all by herself between the two "big" girls. I followed them, with Marla stepping along behind, hovering in the background. Even a very
depressed Captain Janeway couldn't resist smiling at our littlest crew member, who is just so proud of herself because she finally figured out how to balance on her own two feet long enough to walk more than three steps in any direction. When she arrived at the captain's knee, she lifted her little arms over her head and gurgled, "Appy! Up!"

How could the captain resist that innocent request? She could not. After glancing over at Marla, who nodded her assent, the captain scooped Aimee into her arms and pirouetted with the baby around the living quarter area, praising Aimee for being "such a smart and wonderful girl."

The captain asked if anyone would like refreshments, and Mezoti piped up, "Thank you, Captain Janeway. Some juice would be very nice. We brought cupcakes with us because we know you don't bake them very often." (Actually, "never" would be more accurate, since Commander Chakotay has spread stories of the dinner entrée "burnt offerings" she pulls out of her replicator!) We sat down and, for the next quarter hour, we had a lovely tea party.

At one point, Naomi asked the captain if she would mind if she began to teach Aimee the dance routine the captain taught her from "Swan's Lake." I held my breath for a moment, but Naomi didn't utter, "Dying Swan Dance," as I initially feared. A shadow crossed the captain's face, just for a second, so I'm sure she filled in that part on her own. However, she agreed that Naomi would be the "perfect dance instructor" for Aimee when she's old enough. The captain turned to Mezoti and asked her if she wanted to learn the dance, too. Mezoti said she'd rather learn how to sing "the way the Doctor and Seven do." She then sang a song she'd only heard once! We were astonished how well Mezoti performed "You'll Never Walk Alone." (And the lyrics were certainly all too appropriate for our visit today: "When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high, and don't be afraid of the dark . . .") Before she was finished, I decided Seven and the Doctor must begin training Mezoti's lovely voice as soon as possible.

Towards the end of our visit, since she's the "Captain's Bridge Assistant," Naomi asked if there was anything Captain Janeway would like her to take care of until she "feels better." I don't know if Sam told her daughter that the captain was physically ill, or if our rapidly-developing Naomi figured out the truth when she learned the captain hadn't been seen on the bridge for the last few days. The captain assured Naomi that while Commander Chakotay has been doing a fine job taking care of the ship, she'll be back on duty "very soon."

Aimee babbled happily throughout our impromptu tea party. She'd obviously enjoyed her cupcake, since she had icing smeared all over her face. When she began to rub her eyes, however, that was Marla's cue to wipe her daughter's little face and announce it was nap time. We cleared the table so the captain wouldn't have to do it and said our goodbyes. The female contingent left, but I hung back as the door slid closed. "I assume you're going to ask for permission to speak freely?" I answered in the affirmative. "When have I ever withheld it whenyou've asked, Mr. Tuvix? Permission granted, although I suspect you're going to give me another lecture."
Encouraged that my little plan appeared to have buoyed her spirits a trifle, I replied, "Things didn't turn out that badly last time, when Mezoti decided to stay on board Voyager, did it?"

She had to agree that they didn't. We sat back down at her table with two fresh cups of tea in front of us, and I asked her if she really did think the exploration of space wasn't worth the loss of one single person's life. "Lieutenant Kelly wouldn't have said that, even though the life lost was his own," I pointed out.

She sighed sadly. "No. At least he never said anything like that in his logs. He just went on recording his observations from inside the graviton ellipse, for as long as he had breath. He couldn't know they'd ever be found, but he stayed the course. He was such a brave man."

"You're just as brave, Captain."

She shook her head sadly. "I do my best, but I can get lost in my own nuclear winter sometimes. Whenever we lose a member of our crew -- your twin Neevok, too, even though he was with us for such a short time -- I feel each loss so keenly, it threatens to overwhelm me. I usually get over it fairly quickly, but Lieutenant Carey -- he was one of the first to come on board this ship, you know. Voyager was still under construction when he arrived. One of the hardest decisions I ever made was naming B'Elanna as Chief Engineer over him, even though she really was the best choice under the circumstances. After B'Elanna did all of that jury-rigging of the Borg warp coil, when we rescued Seven from the Borg Queen, Joe came to me and told me he understood why I chose her instead of him. It wasn't just because I needed another Maquis senior officer. 'I hate to say it, Captain, especially since she broke my nose that time, but she grasps all that Borg stuff Seven dishes out a lot quicker than I do. And she's a great boss -- as long as I remember to stay out of reach of her left fist whenever she gets ornery!'"

"So losing Joe now, just when he would be able to visit with his family regularly, to stay in touch with his growing sons and his lovely wife -- Tuvix, it's just so unfair! And don't say anything to me about life being unfair. I know that. But it's just so . . . so senseless."

A few tears glistened in her eyes as she said this, and I must admit, I was feeling a little mist in my own. I told her I do understand, but I wanted her to remember exactly what Joe's sacrifice meant to the people on that planet where he lost his life. "Thanks to our exploration of space, we came to a ruined world and helped a climatologist save it. He hadn't any way to implement his plan until our arrival. By the time Voyager left orbit, the skies over that planet were starting to clear. Its weather may be erratic for years to come, but with the nuclear winter's grip broken, that world's ecology will be able to recover. The treatment for radiation sickness we sent to the people will help them regain their health. Instead of dying at birth, the children of that world, like our little girls, will have a chance to live, to grow up, to contribute to their people's prosperity. None of those things could have occurred if we hadn't come to retrieve Friendship One, and then did what we could to reverse the damage the probe caused."
So far, I was simply stating the facts, but now I began to speculate about what Joe might have said to comfort his captain, if he could have come back to life for a few moments. "I think if Joe knew he might be killed by a deranged man on the mission, but thousands of people would gain a future that was basically non-existent before his death, he would have gone on that away mission anyway. I'm sure Joe would have preferred to live a long life. He was building that little *Voyager in a Bottle* to bring home to his family as a souvenir of this strange trip we've been on. But when Joe enlisted in Starfleet, he knew the risks. We all face the possibility of death every day, with every assignment, sometimes, simply because we're flying through a part of space none of our people have ever visited before. Tom once told me those risks are 'part of the deal.' Joe accepted them. So honor him by not hiding out in your quarters again. Your crew needs you. We all feel better when you're on that bridge and leading us home."

Her eyes were still sad, but she grabbed my hands and squeezed them gently. "I know it's where I need to be, Tuvix, and I'll be out there again very soon. I promised our youngest crew members that, just a few minutes ago. And I always keep my promises."

I murmured I planned on holding her to that promise, and she smiled ruefully at me. I will, too.

To have remained any longer would have been counterproductive. She'd made a promise to the girls, and she does keep them to the very best of her ability. I was reluctant, but I knew the time had come to go, to give her a chance to decide when she'd return to the bridge.

I think the captain, in her grief, simply lost sight of the lessons we all learned when we found the remains of John Kelly, the 21st century astronaut lost during an early Mars expedition. He was the first to observe pieces of alien technology and report "we are not alone." His logs may have been retrieved long after the people of Earth had become acquainted with alien species, but that doesn't diminish his accomplishment. He's now acknowledged to be the first human being to have confirmed that life does exist on alien worlds.

The captain is an explorer, too, and, when she needs to be, a warrior. She's suffering from a temporary madness, a measure of grief. It wasn't the *real* Captain Kathryn Janeway who said those words to her first officer. I'm confident she'll be back very soon, and stronger than ever.

**Supplemental**

When Father was transferring the main Tactical station to me tonight, Commander Chakotay suddenly called out, "Captain on the bridge." A composed Captain Janeway walked out of her ready room. After receiving a status update, she relieved the commander and took her usual place in the command chair. Commander Chakotay didn't leave immediately. He moved to his usual seat on the
bridge, and the pair conversed quietly for quite a while. When Lieutenant Rollins arrived to take command of Beta shift, the captain gave Rollins "the night off."

I wasn't the only one who breathed a sigh of relief. While I wouldn't be surprised to learn she'd returned to her quarters and grieved some more after her command stint was over, I'm certain she'll be back on the bridge again tomorrow -- where she belongs.

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Chapter End Notes

When it came to the "Friendship One" episode in this AU, I was in a quandary. Since this is an AU, Joe doesn't have to die, and I always hated that he did on the series. In another AU series of mine, he returns to his family in the Alpha Quadrant. However, another huge problem with this episode is Captain Janeway's remark that "space exploration isn't worth the loss of even one life." Only a year or so after Voyager's crew learned of Lt. John Kelly's bravery in the face of his certain death, her comment was simply inexplicable. There was no way to fix both issues; they were mutually exclusive. I chose to try to mitigate Janeway's comment using characters that live on the ship in this AU. If I guessed wrong, I'm sorry. If you can appreciate Kim/Seven, you might find "Maternity" to your liking.

Chapter Summary

Tuvix and his Dad Neelix learn they are not the only beings of Talaxian descent who live in this area of the Delta Quadrant.


Stardate 54952

On First Contact Day, Commander Chakotay announced a momentous discovery. Tal Celes, who was serving at the science station on the bridge, detected Talaxian life signs on long range sensors, only a few light years from Voyager's current position. Our vessel has traveled over 40,000 light years away from Talax. How could any Talaxians be here, so far from home? Did they leave decades ago, like the Klingons searching for their kuvah'magh did?

Dad asked if the commander had confirmed the readings, since Celes has a reputation for making mistakes which is not entirely undeserved. He assured us he had. Celes had called him over to check the readings herself, since she couldn't believe what she was seeing, either. The commander's announcement threw a hyperspanner into Dad's big First Contact Day party.

We'd all been stuffing ourselves with Efram Cochrane's favorite snacks. The Doctor had checked them with his tricorder and denigrated them as food "having absolutely no nutritional value whatsoever." I begged to differ. "Cheese-filled pierogi are full of carbohydrates and delicious, buttery fat . . . along with a smidgen of protein." The EMH glared at me, but I stood my ground.

The Doctor then wanted to know why Dad couldn't have added a vitamin supplement when he replicated them. Dad was properly horrified. "I'll have you know I made these myself -- from scratch!" (Actually, he had lots of help from Naomi, Mezoti, Icheb and me. For the better part of the last three days we've been pinching filled pockets of pierogi dough to make sure they hold together while Dad boiled them. I refrained from correcting him. Dad and the Doctor seem to enjoy having little spats over proper diets every now and then.) The Doctor sniffed disdainfully without further comment, but that may have been due to Father's arrival, not that the EMH didn't have more to say.

Father had agreed to fulfill his "role" in Dad's celebration by delivering the famous greeting, "Live long and prosper." According to historical records, they're the first words ever said to human beings by a representative of an extraterrestrial species. Father uttered his line --reluctantly -- but absolutely
refused to follow it up by dancing, no matter how much Dad begged. Father has made it abundantly clear that he believes that part of the story is apocryphal. I had been about to interrupt Dad and ask him to leave Father alone when Commander Chakotay entered the Mess Hall and told us about the Talaxians. I wasn't at all surprised when Father said he "needed to reconfirm the findings" and excused himself to go to the bridge, neatly escaping Dad's pleas for "just a couple of steps."

Even Seven congratulated Celes for her perceptiveness and attention to detail. The Bajoran officer's face glowed with pleasure, since our perfectionist former Borg is usually quite critical of Celes' performance. Seven and Celes triangulated the initial readings and identified the source. They came from an asteroid field situated a mere 4.9 light years away.

Since our hails have not been answered and the asteroids in the field are too densely packed for Voyager to traverse through safely, the captain assigned Dad, Father and Tom to investigate in the much more maneuverable Delta Flyer. I asked Father if I could go, too, but I'm his designated back up for this shift. He wants me to remain on the bridge at Tactical.

As close as Voyager is to where they are, I can't imagine the Talaxians aren't receiving our hails. The minerals we've detected in the asteroid belt may be creating a significant degree of interference; it's possible they simply haven't detected our attempts to reach them. I hope that's all it is, and the people in there are all right.

**Supplemental**

The atmosphere on the bridge was intense. Tom reported that the Flyer was taking hits from explosive charges as the away team approached the asteroid, but then there was silence. Hours passed without even a Mayday call before we heard from them again. He confirmed the Delta Flyer had made a very hard landing. He hadn't been able to contact us immediately about the shuttle's condition because our away team was placed in custody by the Talaxians. They've had trouble from an alien mining consortium which is demanding that they evacuate their asteroid. The miners were ordered to break it up in order to obtain the minerals inside it. The Talaxians, thinking Voyager was connected with that group, decided to ignore our hails.

About five hundred colonists have built homes inside a hollowed-out asteroid. They've explained to the consortium's representative, a Commander Nocona, that they have no place else to go; but he's been given his orders and insists they go "anyplace else but here." The miners set the explosive charges that damaged the Flyer. If Tom hadn't been at the helm, everyone on board might have been killed. The entire away team was rendered unconscious by the crash. When Tom and Father woke up, Dad wasn't with them.

The colonists had separated Dad from the rest of the team. They never told him why, but clearly, they could see he was Talaxian. After Dad woke up, he gave them the same explanation of the away
team's presence as the "aliens" the colonists were holding. The Talaxians released the entire team, but they never told Father and Tom where Dad was. He'd received a head injury in the crash, and one of the colonists was providing medical care to him. Tom and Father have been repairing the shuttle since the Talaxians released them from custody, but at the time Tom first reported in to Voyager, they still didn't know where Dad was.

Oxilon, the Talaxian's leader, interrogated Dad and told him about the colonists problems with the miners. Dad suggested that representatives from the colony could come to Voyager and ask for Captain Janeway's assistance. Perhaps she could mediate and reach an agreement between the colonists and the consortium representatives. Oxilong responded well to Dad's proposal. The woman who cared for Dad when he was injured will be a member of their delegation. I'm eager to meet her. I've never seen a female Talaxian before in person! She's bringing her son along, so I will also have a chance to meet a Talaxian child for the first time, too.

Stardate 54955

As soon as Dad introduced me to Dexa, I could see why Dad was so taken with her. She's very attractive, and her son Brax is a lovely boy, too.

The first time I had a real chance to speak with him, he was in the Mess Hall playing Kadis-kot with Naomi and Mezoti. Brax asked me where I came from because he thought I "looked a little Talaxian." I explained he was half right and told him the story of how I came to be. He thought it was "cool." (Brax apparently has a sponge for a brain. He heard Tom tell him their underground colony was "cool" on the trip to Voyager, and now, according to Mezoti, everything he sees on our ship is "cool." ) Brax was a little boy when the Talaxians arrived at the asteroid belt. He has only dim memories about life anywhere else.

After Dexa and Dad came in to sit with us, I asked Dexa to tell us how they came to be here, so far from Talax. It's quite a tale.

The Krowtonan Guard, allies of the Haakonians, provided security duties on Talax. Since the Haakonian occupation was oppressive, their group of about seven hundred people decided to settle someplace else and left, in a small convoy of ships. While the Talaxian ships were on the run from the Guard, who were chasing them to force them to return to Talax, their ships fell into a subspace tunnel of some kind. They couldn't believe how fast they seemed to be going, even though the tunnel appeared to be ancient. They couldn't get out of it, however, until a group of aliens who called themselves the Turei confronted them and accused them of traveling through their under-space corridors "without authorization."
"We explained we were caught inside the tunnels and asked the Turei to help us escape, which they did; but afterwards, they boarded our vessels and told us we had to pay them for our 'passage' with all our spare dilithium crystals. We didn't have that many. The Turei claimed they weren't enough. Since that's all we had, they finally accepted them as payment. We were left so short, we couldn't travel far. Before they let us go, they also insisted upon removing every bit of data about their underspace from our computer cores and made us promise not to share the secret of the underspace with anyone. You won't tell the captain about this, will you?"

Dad and I assured Dexa she didn't have to worry, since we'd had our own run-in with the Turei and their underspace. Dexa was relieved that she hadn't revealed anything to us we didn't already know. Then she mused, "My husband Baxin and I wondered if the Turei could be the 'Deadly Strangers' from the stories his grandfather used to tell him when he was young. You know, the ones in the old Talax-ilzay tongue? Even the titles are disturbing. The Tale of the Bloody Hand. The Demon with the Golden Voice. The Tale of the Boy Who Lost His Head -- which literally happened to the boy! Baxin used to tell them to Brax at bedtime, even though I always told him they weren't suitable for a very little boy trying to go to sleep."

"The stories aren't at all pleasant," Dad agreed, "but the Turei aren't the 'Deadly Strangers' of the tales. We met the Turei, but we also met the Vaadwaur. A millennium ago, their neighbors attacked the Vaadwaur for doing just the sorts of terrible things described in the stories. A group of them hid beneath the surface of their home planet in cryogenic sleep. They expected to wake up a few decades later; but their timing system failed. Many of their cryogenic chambers did, too. Until we accidentally woke them, they'd been sleeping for about 900 years. Unfortunately, they're loose in the Delta Quadrant again, thanks to us, I'm afraid."

"Nine hundred years? The Talax-ilay stories date from a thousand years ago," Dexa noted. "Do you think our ships fell into one of the tunnels they'd built to attack Talax?"

"Actually, the Vaadwaur admitted to mapping the subspace corridors. They never claimed to have created them," I said. "The corridors are artificial constructs, so someone built them; but we've never found out who they were or what's happened to them. But we're sure it wasn't the Turei. They 'possess' the corridors because they attack anyone who tries to use them, the way they did to your people and Voyager. If their people had built those corridors, they'd have trumpeted that fact to Captain Janeway after we accidentally landed in one."

Before I could go into detail about how we escaped the Vaadwaur with the help of the Turei, Mezoti asked Dexa, "If you were so short of dilithium, how did you get to your asteroid?"

"After we traveled for a short time, we detected some crystals on an H-class planet and mined them. There wasn't any surface water at all there, and so far from its red giant sun, the planet's climate was
brutally cold. We decided to move on. We found a more suitable place to settle, but a group calling themselves the Devore told us the planet belonged to them. They asked us if we were telepaths, and we laughed in their faces! But they still forced us to leave. After traveling on a little further, we found another planet that had plenty of open space. The leaders told us we could stay there, as long as we kept within a very small area of the sparsely settled southern continent. A year later, some of our neighbors became unhappy with the "unwanted intruders." Daxa paused, in some distress. Wrapping an arm around Brax's shoulders, she added sadly, "My Baxin was killed protecting Brax and me from the attackers."

For the next three years, the Talaxians traveled around, looking for a place they could call home. None of the people living in this sector of space were willing to grant them refuge. Whenever they identified asteroids or dwarf planets with dilithium deposits, they mined what they could and used the excess to trade for other necessary commodities.

"When we came here, we didn't find any dilithium. This asteroid is so large, though, we decided we could dig out chambers and build homes inside. You see, while we were wandering from place to place, we often talked about how we'd made a mistake by leaving that first H-class planet we found. If its climate had been even a little more favorable, we might have stayed there. After the problems we'd had finding a suitable home, that first planet looked a lot better to us. We could have built our homes underground and extracted water for our use out of ores in the rocks. This asteroid didn't look that promising at first either. Then we realized we could use geothermal energy to melt the ice from the asteroid's surface and grow food hydroponically. We decided we had a chance to 'unmake' that mistake. We thought no one would bother us if we lived inside an asteroid!"

But Nocona's group appeared, a year ago by our Federation calendar, and did just that. They demanded the colonists move someplace else and settle there, but that's impossible now. "We've cannibalized all but one of our ships to build our underground city. We only have one ship that's space-worthy, and it isn't large enough to move all of our people to another planet. How many times must we 'move along' to 'someplace else' anyway? We don't have another place to go to!"

I didn't say anything, but I knew we could transport them someplace else. We couldn't move the inhabitants of the planet where Friendship One landed because that group was more than ten times the size of the Talaxian population, but we'd transported a group of five hundred Klingons to a new home only a few months ago. I'm sure Captain Janeway would be willing to help the Talaxians, too, if Seven identified a world on which they could settle. But they want to stay here. They've been pushed around too many times already. This time they want to make a stand. If they moved again, they'd really have to start from scratch. They'd have to leave all their technology behind, and their ships wouldn't be available to be used as a resource. Voyager can move their people, but it doesn't have the capacity to bring all their equipment as well. And there's no reason to believe people living on M-class planets in this sector would be more welcoming to the Talaxians than everyone else they've encountered during their long exodus.

The captain has scheduled a meeting between Nocona and the Talaxians for tomorrow. I hope we can convince the consortium to allow the colonists to remain in their homes. There are plenty of
asteroids in this belt. Why can't Nocona simply take his minerals out of the others and leave the colonists' alone?

**Supplemental**

At the meeting in the conference room, Nocona insisted that 40% of the minerals he's been instructed to mine are situated in this particular asteroid. When Dad told me this, I checked our scans. What Nocona said is simply not true. The same minerals which make up the Talax II asteroid are just as abundant in other asteroids in this belt. The true reason is much simpler. This asteroid is large, and it will be easier for the mining team to obtain the minerals by blasting this one apart. I suspect the consortium's scans have identified the refined metals which make up the Talaxian colony's equipment as "accessible" minerals for them to mine, too. My scans of the asteroid belt show that this asteroid contains less than 4%, not 40%, of the minerals they've been instructed to retrieve, if only raw ores are counted.

I don't think Nocona is actually acting in bad faith. He offered to find the Delta Flyer when we first lost contact with it. He's under orders to obtain a certain volume of minerals, however, and his superiors have directed him to the asteroids they want him to blast in order to obtain them. The consortium officials want to scoop up as much as they can, as quickly as possible, before moving on to another "business opportunity." Corralling smaller asteroids and breaking them apart would take more time and effort, which, of course, means it would cost them more, too.

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**Stardate 54957**

Dad has an idea which could prevent the destruction of the colony. He's traveling to the asteroid in his own ship to present his plan to the colonists. If they agree, he'll implement it for them, since their remaining space-worthy craft isn't powerful enough for the task. Dad believes a system of interlocking shields would repel the explosive charges the miners are using. Captain Janeway was sympathetic when he explained his plan to her, but because of Prime Directive considerations, she's reluctant to intervene. In view of her feelings, Dad will be alone on the Baxial when he places the shield emitters on the asteroid's surface. I wanted to help, but Father reminded me that as a Starfleet officer, I must follow the Prime Directive. Father is my superior officer, so I couldn't offer my services.

(Personally, I don't believe the Prime Directive applies to this dispute. We would be protecting a small group from aggressive acts imposed upon them by a larger, unrelated one. It isn't an internal issue. When I consider other difficult decisions the captain has had to make that have had Prime Directive implications, however, perhaps she's wise to be cautious this time.)
The captain has ordered the Delta Flyer to fly "a reconnaissance mission" while Dad is setting the shield emitters in place, however. She told Tom and me to anticipate a possible "distress call" while we're on this mission. While the captain didn't provide us with any details about the source of her "premonition," she promised Tom and me that we won't have to worry about receiving any demotions or spend time in the brig if, at some point during the next few hours, we must protect a small, vulnerable ship that is being attacked by a heavily armed vessel.

As Tom said as we were leaving the Ready Room, "Message received, loud and clear."


Stardate 54858

It's done. The emitters are in place. The asteroid has been protected from further attempts to break it apart through the use of explosive devices. Once Nocona realized it was useless to continue attacking the asteroid, he left. The captain was quite prescient. Tom and I did have to protect a smaller vessel from an "obviously unprovoked attack from a much larger and powerful mining vessel," as our official log entry puts it. Dad was thrilled to see us come to his rescue and thanked us for "saving his skin." And the captain has congratulated us on a successful mission.

Upon our return to Voyager, the captain announced we would maintain our presence near the asteroid belt for several more days. She hopes this truly is the end of the threat to the colony. If Commander Nocona should approach the asteroid belt while we're still here, she will again offer Voyager to serve as a neutral site for negotiations between the colonists and the miners.

Dad has conceived of another, quite excellent plan, which could bring about a rapprochement with Nocona's employers and assure permanent peace for the colonists. His "business partnership" concept is quite intriguing. "Whenever the colonists dig out a new cavern or tunnel, there's always leftover debris. If they decide to excavate areas which contain veins of the most desirable minerals, they can trade this 'debris' to the miners for a percentage of the profits. The colonists would get rid of something that would otherwise clutter up their corridors, and the miners would get what they want without having to expend much energy to obtain it, and without the necessity of displacing the colonists from their homes."

I hope Nocona does come back, because his mining consortium would do well to listen to what Dad has to say. Before my advent, Dad once went "undercover" as a Ferengi in order to stop a couple of them who had accidentally traveled through a wormhole from the Alpha Quadrant from exploiting the people on the Delta Quadrant planet where they'd landed. He's been the captain's chief trade negotiator for years now, obtaining commodities our crew requires as we travel homeward. And, of
course, Dad really had to scrabble in the years after his family and Rinax were destroyed. He learned a thing or two about making deals then, too. Dad's proposal sounds good to me. If it's put into operation, everybody wins.
When Dexa and Brax ask Neelix to stay in Talax II with them, they extend the same invitation to Tuvix. The Talaxian/Vulcan hybrid must decide which path he will follow for the rest of his life. Is he meant to return to the Alpha Quadrant with his Father Tuvok, or has he already reached the end of his journey?

Stardate 54867

I must make a very difficult decision.

Dexa has asked Dad to stay at the Talax II colony with her and her son Brax. He told her he was honored she would ask him, but he needed to talk it over with me before he gave her his decision. She told Dad to invite me to remain here, too.

When he came to me to tell me about her offer, I asked him if he'd invited Dexa and Brax to travel on to the Alpha Quadrant on Voyager with us. He has, but she will not leave her people. I understand, but it saddens me. I know Dad really wants to stay with her. He's smitten by Dexa's beauty, intelligence, and courage. We've both become very fond of her son Brax, too. He's a charming youngster, and Dad is an excellent father. I'm in a very good position to know that! If I remain here, I'll have a brother again. I haven't had a sibling since Neevok sacrificed himself to bring our fathers back to life. Although I knew Neevok for only a couple of hours, I've always missed him. Our family life would be much more traditional in nature if we stayed here.

I know how devastated my Dad was when he discovered his entire family, including his dear sister Alixia, had perished in the Metreon Cascade. That memory is just as vivid in my mind as it is in his. Truly, he's been looking for another family ever since. He thought he'd have a chance to have one with Kes, but she ended their romantic relationship months before she left this ship. Since then, although he's had a few flings (most notably with Ch'Rega), he's never been as close to another female as he was to Kes. He's said many times that having me as his son is the most important relationship he's had since the tragedy of Rinax. I believe my presence on Voyager is the main reason he hasn't already agreed to stay with Dexa and Brax.

Father, of course, will continue on to the Alpha Quadrant to rejoin his wife and family on Vulcan.
spoke with them over Operation Watson several weeks ago, and I'd love to meet them in person. If Dad remains behind, I must choose whether I will live as a Talaxian or a Vulcan for the rest of my life. (Fortunately, the fragment of my heritage from the orchid family has no way to express an opinion. Even if it could, I doubt it would care one way or the other.)

After Dad left to me to consider the offer, I remembered the incident which prompted Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry to duplicate me. I wondered how Lieutenant Thomas Riker was doing. Since our contacts with the Alpha Quadrant have permitted regular updates to Voyager's database, I accessed his Starfleet record to see what's become of him.

What I discovered was devastating. Lieutenant Riker transferred from the Enterprise to another vessel, but after spending so many years living in what was, in essence, solitary confinement, he found Starfleet regulations to be very confining. He was unable to adjust to the expectations of his superiors at his new posting. Several incidents are noted in his permanent record which made him subject to disciplinary action. Eventually, he elected to resign his commission.

Many months later, after joining the Maquis movement, W. Thomas Riker went to Deep Space Nine, impersonated his twin, Commander William T. Riker, and stole the Defiant, a vessel assigned to the Deep Space Nine station. He took the Defiant into Cardassian space, but he was captured. He was convicted of treason and other offenses and given a life sentence. This penalty was imposed even though his actions revealed that, despite their denials, the Cardassians had been establishing bases to prepare for an invasion of the Federation -- which occurred a short time later. To shield the others who were with him on the Defiant from punishment, Thomas Riker agreed to be transferred to the Cardassian prison on Lazon II to serve his sentence there.

This information was disturbing enough. However, the record went on to state that Klingon forces invaded the prison after the Empire declared war on Cardassia. All of the jailers lost their lives, as did many of the prisoners who were caught in crossfire. A small number were rescued and expatriated to Bajor, but Thomas Riker's name does not appear on any lists of survivors. Due to its strategic location, Lazon II was the site of several fierce battles during the Dominion War. A Federation investigative team that traveled there after the war ended was unable to recover any humanoid remains at the site of the prison, which had been obliterated in the fighting. As a result, W. Thomas Riker's current status is listed as "Missing, Presumed Dead."

While my life over the past five years on Voyager is in no way comparable to what he endured for eight lonely years on Nervala IV, I found myself wondering how a half-Talaxian, half-Vulcan being would be received in the Alpha Quadrant. We might not arrive for decades, of course, but I am truly unique. The closest Talaxians to Earth are here in Talax II, which is over 30,000 light years from the seat of the Federation. Much as I would like to believe otherwise, without my Dad Neelix beside me, there might not be a place for me in the Alpha Quadrant. I'm not sure how welcome I'd be on Earth, but I'm quite certain I wouldn't fit in well on Vulcan.
My progress with Vulcan mental techniques has plateaued. While meditation calms me whenever I become overly emotional, I know I've never learned control as well as Father would like to see. All hope I will ever learn how to meld minds without assistance was extinguished years ago. Father's been too kind to ever tell me, "It's the Neelix in you," but both of us know that's the reason. He doesn't fault me for my failings, but it might be a struggle for my half-sister and half-brothers, who have learned emotional control, to accept me as I am. I fear life on Vulcan would always be difficult for our family if I tried to settle there.

Conversely, the training I've received from Father could be quite an asset in Talax II. I could be a resource for teaching the colonists to focus their attention upon their tasks, something Father has been emphasizing during my recent training sessions. Dad's admitted that the inability to maintain focus upon primary issues can be a great weakness for Talaxians. He's fully aware he's had problems with this himself. This even appears to have been a factor in the failure of the asteroid's colonists to negotiate effectively with Commander Nocona and his miners up to now. I've been much more impressed by Dexa's leadership skills than Oxilon's, who is nominally in charge of the colony. Her perceptiveness and clarity of expression have served the people in the asteroid well. Oxilon never presents himself as confident in the positions he takes, which is a necessity when negotiating with people like the representatives of the mining consortium.

While it would be painful to leave Voyager and everyone I know here, once the ship reaches the Alpha Quadrant, this crew will disperse. I trust I'd still qualify for a position as an officer in Starfleet, but I'll have to say good-bye to my Voyager family upon our return. As difficult as it would be to bid farewell to Naomi and our Delta Quadrant natives Mezoti and Icheb now, I'll have to do it at some point anyway. I'm sure, since they're still very young and adaptable, they'll adjust to a new life in the Alpha Quadrant better than I will, whenever it occurs. As long as her mother remains a constant in her life, baby Aimee will do well, too.

The hardest one for me to say good-bye to, if I chose to stay with the Talaxians, would be Father Tuvok. While he has never been able to say he loves me because of Vulcan cultural norms, I know he does. Before he abandoned his attempt to teach me the mind-melding techniques at which he excels, I could sense this. He rigidly controls his emotions, but whenever he melds with me, his pride and love are clear. I can sense he's kept other things from me, however. One must be his disappointment that, despite my knowing what to do to perform a mind meld, I still cannot do it with anyone but him, and only when he initiates the meld.

Whatever course of action I choose, I will be separated from one of my parents. Since I must expect this to be a permanent loss, I need to consider all of the variables very carefully before choosing what to do. I will pull out my meditation lamp this evening to help me concentrate on the problem at hand. This decision is just as critical as the one Neevok and I made when we decided which of us was to live and who would accept death for the sake of our fathers. I don't believe a broken stalk of hay will help me this time. If only Neevok were still here with us! One of us could remain here with Dad while the other traveled on with Father. It's pointless to even think of that now. If he were here, Father and Dad would not be.
Although I can't help wishing we could find another of those strange worlds nearby, like Nervala IV or Neevok's Planet, so I could be duplicated one more time to resolve this problem in a more satisfying a way, it wouldn't really help. Our family would still be sundered. This decision falls upon me alone. I'm the only one who can choose where I will live for the rest of my life.

Supplemental

Dad and Father suggested I speak with Dexa and Brax about their offer to make my home on Talax II instead of traveling on to the Alpha Quadrant. I hailed them, and we had a very pleasant conversation. She assured me I would be a welcome addition to their family. Brax begged me to stay, since he's "always wanted a brother." Once our communication terminated, I was certain their desire for me to join the colony was genuine -- but I still wasn't sure what I should do.

This evening, Dad and I visited Naomi and Samantha Wildman's quarters. While I had not yet made a decision about whether to remain on the ship or live on Talax II permanently, Dad had already decided the Talaxians need the skills he's learned during his travels on *Voyager*. He's staying. He explained that while it will be exceedingly painful for him if I choose to remain on the ship, "You're not a child, my son. You're a fully-grown man who has endured much since your advent. I trust you to make the best . . . the most . . . logical choice." He smiled sadly when he said this, for this was his way of acknowledging the Vulcan half of my heritage.

When we arrived at the Wildman quarters, Mezoti and Icheb were there with Naomi. I believe they all anticipated hearing that Dad had chosen to stay with Dexa and Brax. Mezoti's and Icheb's faces were even more solemn than usual, and Naomi and Sam's eyes were red from crying. Dad told them how much he was going to miss them. Then, as Dad usually does, he managed to turn a very sad occasion into a pleasant one. He began to reminisce. As we recalled various incidents from our lives together, our spirits lifted. He promised to remember them always and pointed out that he'll be able to keep in touch. Earlier today, Captain Janeway received permission from Starfleet Command to provide the colony with all the equipment needed to maintain communications between the colony and the Alpha Quadrant, as well as with *Voyager*, through Operation Watson. Dad told us the physical parting will be less painful since we'll be able to "visit" with each other regularly.

A little while later, I offered to go to the Mess Hall to obtain a fruit pie Dad had set aside from tonight's supper hour so we could enjoy it at our little get-together. Mezoti asked if she could accompany me to fetch it. As we walked down the corridor to the turbolift, Mezoti turned towards me and said, "You've decided to stay with Neelix, haven't you?"

I explained that I had yet to make my final choice. She stopped walking and gazed at me in that implacable, all-knowing way she has. I took a breath and admitted, "I am leaning towards staying with Neelix. You do understand it's different for me, don't you? It's not like what happened when you decided at the last minute not to leave with Azan and Rebi."
"I know. No matter how you choose, you'll leave one of your fathers behind. I have no blood relatives. They must have been assimilated at the same time I was. And I was never close to Azan and Rebi the way I am to Icheb and Seven."

"Then why did you agree to leave Voyager with them?"

She sighed, and suddenly, she looked much older than nine years of age. "The twins said they wanted me to stay with them. I was a familiar face, someone they already knew. They didn't know any of their own people then. I'm sure they're fine now that they've lived with their relatives for a while. The relatives wanted me to live with them, too. It was nice to be wanted. The Norcadi never did. And I knew the captain wanted me to stay there, too. So I said I would."

"But then you couldn't leave Icheb and Seven."

"No. At the last minute, I realized they were my family, even if Icheb is Brunali and Seven is human. They know me and care for me in ways Azan and Rebi never did. I felt terrible when I got up on the transporter platform and realized I'd never see Seven and Icheb again. That's when you came in and saw me decide to stay. I'm glad I did. Azan and Rebi's relatives were nice, but leaving Voyager would have been a mistake. But I know you're going to leave us."

We entered the turbolift. Neither of us said anything other than the little that was necessary to pack up a tray of plates and utensils to go with the pie. "We'll replicate drinks at the Wildman quarters," I said to her. She nodded, but we said nothing else the rest of the way back to Dad, Icheb, and the Wildmans. She gave me the space to think about what to do.

By the time we arrived at the Wildman quarters, Seven was there. I'd brought extra plates and utensils, "just in case" she was willing to tear herself away from Astrometrics for an hour or two. The pie was good. It was seasoned just right, with only enough spice to enhance the fruit filling. Dad, of course, had wanted to add more. I managed to convince him a little was plenty.

Mezoti helped me gather up the used dishes to put into the recycler. Just as we finished, she caught my eye and quietly said, "Species 218."

I knew exactly what she meant. It's true. When I'm on duty, I utilize my Vulcan traits; but the rest of the time, I am much more Talaxian than Vulcan. At that moment I knew she was right about something else, too. I would be leaving Voyager to stay with Dad on Talax II.
As Dad and I were leaving the get-together, Mezoti slipped out of the Wildman quarters after us. Dad was surprised. I was not. As soon as the door closed behind us, I told her, "I will be very sad to leave you, my very dear, 'unofficial goddaughter.' You will be quite a formidable individual when you're fully grown, I can see that even now! I would love to be able to see you when you're in full bloom."

"You will. You'll watch me grow up. I won't be with you in person, but I'll send messages to you through the datastream. And you'll send me messages, won't you?"

She said this so plaintively, my heart broke a little, and so did my voice, when I answered, "Of course I will!"

Mezoti took a step forward and hugged me. Or maybe I hugged her. Perhaps we really hugged each other. Dad stepped forward and embraced us both. He'd heard us, of course, and he understood what we were saying. I was going to stay with him.

When Mezoti stepped back, I saw she had tears in her eyes, which is so very uncharacteristic of her. "Thank you for staying with me when Seven was so sick and Icheb almost died," she whispered. I told her it was one of the best times of my life. I was very happy how everything had worked out for both of them, but especially, for her. She wiped her eyes, whirled around, and before either Dad or I knew it, she'd disappeared inside the Wildman quarters.

I will miss all my former Borg friends very much, but especially my dear Mezoti. I'm sure they'll be successful in all they do once they reach the Alpha Quadrant. As Dad and I walked down the corridor to convey my decision to the captain, I felt split in two. It was as if I was myself and my brother Neevok once again. I almost wished I was two people. I wanted to stay, but I needed to go, just like Mezoti had said about her choices all those months ago. She'd made the correct decision for herself then -- just as I was doing today.

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Stardate 54869

I'm packing up my quarters. Dad is ecstatic that I will be staying with him when Voyager proceed on its way towards the Alpha Quadrant. While my primary reason for moving to the asteroid is that I don't wish to be separated from him, I know my presence will also be of benefit to the Talaxian colonists. I hope Dexa and Brax will benefit, as well.
Dad accompanied me when I went to Father Tuvok to disclose my decision to stay with the Talaxians. Father told us he anticipated that would be my choice. As much as he will grieve my loss, we will be able to maintain contact through Operation Watson. The captain received permission to name Dad as the permanent "Federation Ambassador to the Delta Quadrant." Father told Dad he richly deserves this honor, since he's proven himself many times to be the kind of leader this colony needs so desperately.

After thanking Father for this compliment, Dad left me alone with him for a private good-bye. We shared the reasons I came to the decision I did. He found no fault with my logic. He pointed out that upon his return to the Alpha Quadrant, he would be going back to T'Pel and his children. While Neelix will "undoubtedly" have Dexa and Brax, it is fitting that he also has his own son to become part of their blended family.

In this private leave-taking, I proved I was not wholly Vulcan by the way I teared up as I embraced him. While Father usually has trouble hugging others (especially Dad), he had no trouble hugging me. When alone, Vulcans express their true feelings towards their close family members. The emotions are always there, as I know well, but they remain buried deep within their psyches until an event such as this brings them to the surface. He was not tearful, but his embrace was intense.

I am bringing all the PADDs Father has ever given me about mental disciplines, meditation, and Vulcan philosophy, including several additional ones he had not seen fit to bestow on me before now. He also gave me a memoir of the time he spent in training with a Vulcan master, when he was an adolescent who had to work very hard to learn not only how, but why he needed to control his emotions: to prevent them from controlling him. It was a stressful time, but it turned Father into the man I honor as my mentor as well as my parent.

I'm also bringing many souvenirs of my time on Voyager to my new home. The bulk of them are holoimages the Doctor has presented to me. They document important events in my life on Voyager, including images of all my "advent day parties." I will thank him when I see him for all he has done for me over the years.

To Dad's and my great pleasure, the captain has presented the colony with holoemitters to permit the creation of our own holosuite. Since our asteroid is rather devoid of natural beauty, many of the programs she's provided us depict scenic landscapes. When she gave us this technology, the captain commented, "After what happened because I shared holographic technology with the Hirogen, I can't imagine I'll get into any more trouble by leaving it with the Federation Ambassador to the Delta Quadrant and his son!" Tom made sure an entire set of the National Park Hiking Trails and Captain Proton Adventure series, as well as the Sandrine's and Fair Haven programs, were included. Dad was thrilled because he was able to copy his Paxau Resort program. He'll be able to spend time there with Dexa and Brax. And if I should find a way to contact Alyara to let her know I've remained in the Delta Quadrant, we'll be able to enjoy the Ktarian moonrise simulation if she ever visits. I understand it's a very romantic program. (Harry made sure it was among the programs left with us.
He said he hasn't experienced it with Seven yet, but he hopes to convince her to stroll through it with him someday.)

A few objects have meaning only for me. The most precious are the clay sculptures Mezoti crafted for me: her depiction of my "unique" head, which she made after finishing one of Seven of Nine, and the self-portrait she presented me a few months ago on my advent-day. Icheb gave me a small fragment of one of the Borg implants the Doctor removed from his body when the children first came aboard Voyager, encased inside a flat-bottomed glass half-globe dotted with multi-colored glass fragments. He called it a replica of an "old fashioned paperweight," a thank you for staying with Mezoti while he was recovering from surgery. Seven's goodbye gift was a construct of glowing blue dots arranged in a spherical pattern, enclosed within a clear cube. I didn't immediately recognize what the image represented. I thought it was an abstract Borg cube until she whispered, "It is the image of perfection." That's when I realized it was a recreation of the pattern in which "the molecules we must not name" had arranged themselves, just before Voyager's photon torpedo destroyed them. Knowing how precious that moment was for her, I thanked Seven profusely.

My last meeting with "my Borg family" was difficult. I do wish my "unofficial goddaughter" could stay with us on Talax II, but Mezoti belongs with Seven and Icheb. I wasn't at all Vulcan when I said goodbye to them. I was glad none of them have Emotional Inhibitor chips anymore. They became as emotional as me. Seven and the Doctor both assured me that Mezoti's talent for singing will continue to be properly developed. They promised to send recordings regularly so I may monitor Mezoti's progress with the art.

Naomi's gift was a facsimile of the illustrated children's book we made together (when she was only two years old!), during our interminable trip through the first Void. It will be painful for me to say good-bye to Naomi and her mother Sam, but it will be worse for Dad. He's Naomi's godfather. Fortunately, she's maturing at a rapid rate. I trust she won't become too upset by losing us. At least she'll have Mezoti and Icheb to keep her company.

I hope all my friends on Voyager understand why I have to leave. Other than Father, of course, the officers I will miss the most will be Tom, B'Elanna, and Harry. If not for them, I wouldn't be here to join the Talaxian colony. Tom and B'Elanna promise me they'll send me images of their daughter once she's born. I look forward to seeing her, even if it will only be on a view screen.

I've decided to end my personal log with this entry, a symbol that my days on Voyager have also come to an end. Naturally, I will retain a copy of it to bring with me to Talax II. It's a precious artifact documenting my time on this ship. I know I'll go back to it frequently to refresh my memory of the events, both good and bad, which I experienced here. During meeting when I formally resigned my commission, I provided the captain and commander with the code to open the original, which will remain within Voyager's computer. At some point they may have questions about things I had no occasion to share with them while I was living on this vessel. They will be able to consult this record and see if I had any pertinent thoughts at the time. Father already has the code, of course. I gave it to him when we said our private goodbyes.
While I should have liked to have seen the Alpha Quadrant for myself, this decision is the best one for me and for the colonists of Talax II as well.

I do retain one glimmer of hope that I will get the chance to visit there someday. If any of the advanced propulsion systems obtained during Voyager's travels become available for use within my lifetime, I may yet have an opportunity to visit Earth and Vulcan. But this I know: I am meant to live the rest of my life with other Talaxians. Especially Dad.

End Personal Log of Tuvix, formerly Lieutenant (j.g.) of Voyager
Chapter Summary

In Lieutenant Commander Tuvok's log entry for this date, the second officer of Voyager records why he believes his son Tuvix made the correct choice.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Stardate 54869 -- Personal Log, Lieutenant Commander Tuvok

As Voyager was about to leave the asteroid belt to resume its journey to the Alpha Quadrant, my son Tuvix formally resigned from Starfleet. He has bestowed the digital key to his personal log to me and to our superior officers, Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay. His official log entries are a part of Voyager's record as a matter of course, but he also wished us to have entrée into his private thoughts for the period he lived with us on Voyager. He also expressed the desire for me to bring his personal log home to Vulcan, in lieu of his katra (since, as he said in his inimitable way, he remains in need of his soul at present). Tuvix is a true son of Vulcan, even though he may never set foot in the system where his Father was born.

Tuvix said he had another reason he wished to share his memories with me in this manner. I shared my memories with him when he was inadvertently created from his "Dad" Neelix and his "Father" Tuvok, through the influence of a third, most disinterested party -- a very unusual orchid plant. Perhaps I should add the fourth "parent" in the mix, which Tuvix usually does not mention: the transporter beam, which blended all of those disparate DNA molecules into the unique person he came to be.

Neelix, Kathryn Janeway, Commander Chakotay, and I were all present in the captain's ready room when Tuvix ended his formal association with Voyager. He most graciously thanked the captain for permitting him to live. He previously had thanked Lieutenant Paris, Lieutenant Torres, Ensign Kim, and the Ensigns Delaney for finding a way for him to survive as the blended being called Tuvix. In this conversation, he also mentioned his twin brother Neevok, who sacrificed himself so that Neelix and I could return to our own individual lives.

During this visit with the captain and commander, Tuvix admitted he'd thought he was a fully formed being from the very first day of his existence, but his experiences over the past five years have shown him how wrong he was. He needed to live as "himself" for an extended period to mature into the
person he's become. He told us he now knows that possessing the memories of two "exceptional" fathers did not mean he could ever have replaced either of us. To quote Tuvix exactly: "I discovered limitations I never suspected were present during my two week 'newborn' period. Captain, Commander, thank you for having patience with me as I grew into true adulthood. As much as I look forward to my future life on Talax II, I will miss everyone on board Voyager so terribly much."

The captain told him that accepting your limitations and learning to go on despite them is essential to the development of true wisdom. She added, "Everything you've learned will be of great value to the people living in this asteroid, Tuvix. They need the talents your Dad Neelix and you possess in such abundance to thrive in their lives here. I know you're up to the task."

Neelix reported that Brax is very pleased he will have a big brother. He's already told Dexa and Neelix he hopes they will have a little brother or sister someday, too. Neelix was almost bursting with happiness when he related this to me. From the way Neelix regards Dexa, I suspect young Brax will get his wish sooner, rather than later.

The commander shook the hands of Neelix and Tuvix, wishing them all the best in the future. The captain's farewell was a tearful one. She said she will miss both of her "Talaxians." I did not object to the way she put this. In truth, I have long known that Tuvix takes after his "Dad" more than he does me, despite his diligent efforts to please me by becoming as Vulcan as he could.

Very early on, he confided his fears that his brain was "not Vulcan enough" for him to achieve complete competency in all Vulcan mental disciplines, in particular, telepathic communications and mind melding. Although I privately agreed with his assessment, I instructed him in those techniques nonetheless. I have been known to be wrong upon occasion. But from the time of my first meeting with the Doctor after my reconstitution as Tuvok, when I exercised my right as the father of a son who was only weeks old to view his brain scans, I suspected it was unlikely that Tuvix would ever be fully competent in those disciplines.

Tuvix is absolutely correct. The Talaxian inclusions in his brain interfere with his ability to mind meld independently. How gratified I was that he continued his efforts for so long, despite never being able to fully learn this skill! Meditation, on the other hand, is something he quickly grasped. He is capable of clearing his mind of distractions even better than I can. He has also demonstrated the ability to provide instruction to any who wish to practice this discipline, no matter their species. The Talaxians may find Tuvix, who is as adept in meditative techniques as any Vulcan Master, to be a particularly beneficial resource.

When Neelix hugs me, as he is wont to do, I must control my annoyance. With Tuvix, however, to return his embrace is instinctive. I embraced my fully-Vulcan children many times when they were young. All children require the support of a parent, particularly when they are learning to control their vivid emotions, as our cultural demands. Tuvix may be fully mature in appearance, but he is only five years old.
I told Tuvix I would grieve his loss, and I will. Tears came to his eyes, and I must confess I felt moisture in my own while we embraced. I almost lost all emotional control.

The symptoms of fal-tor-voth are now unmistakable. If I believed Tuvix to be the family member who could heal me, I would ask him to remain with me on Voyager. Perhaps a monk from the Vulcan monastery could have counseled us through Operation Watson, to give us enough guidance to begin the procedures needed to cure me of the condition. Tuvix has never been able to initiate a mind meld with me, however. I have always been the one to perform the actual meld, as I would with anyone who is not Vulcan. He could not help me, shortly after his advent, when the memory virus afflicted me. His blended brain is too different. It would be illogical to burden Tuvix with the knowledge that I need healing when he cannot be the one to provide it.

Tuvix frequently expressed concerns to the Doctor about the repeated episodes of brain damage I suffered over the years. He offered to take my place on the away team invading the Borg cube, but he was turned down. The wiser course may have been for him to go with the captain and Lieutenant Torres instead of me, since, as he pointed out at that time, he had never suffered any calamitous brain trauma, while I have. Since Tuvix’s brain is so unique, it's also possible the Borg Queen would not have been able to break through the protection offered by the Doctor's anti-assimilation serum. She may have remained unaware of the team's presence on the cube until after the completion of our mission. Had I recognized the symptoms of my condition before this incident, I might have allowed Tuvix to take my place. Unfortunately, I did not.

The Doctor has also admitted how worried Tuvix was about my mental state after the treatments inflicted upon me on Quarra by Dr. Kadan. He was right to worry, although the damage had already been done by that point. I have resisted the Doctor's recommendation to share my condition with my son or anyone else. I will continue to act in my capacity as Second Officer of Voyager and chief of the Tactical and Security Divisions for as long as I am able.

When Tuvix and his other father walked to Voyager's shuttlebay to board Neelix's little ship Baxial to travel to their new home inside the asteroid, they stopped briefly to embrace the "godchildren" they'd mentored during their time on this ship. Mezoti clung to Tuvix for a second longer than Naomi did Neelix. As my Talaxians were just about to enter the bay, I called out to gain their attention. I then performed a little soft shoe dance for Neelix, the one he'd begged me to perform on First Contact Day. I refused to do so then. The commander's announcement that he'd discovered Talaxian life signs had spared me from enduring one of Neelix's protracted attempts at getting me to change my mind. Today, it seemed only right that I should finally honor his request. I could see Tuvix in the background, watching my steps and smiling at both of us with tears in his eyes. I could barely suppress my own at that moment.

My emotional control is far from what it once was, but I have no need to suppress my pride at how well Tuvix has turned out. He possesses many gifts. Although many come from of me, his "Father Tuvok," just as many originated from his "Dad" Neelix.
Tuvix is a unique individual and a fine man. I am privileged to call him my son. I will miss both of my accidental family members more than I can ever express. Tuvix and Neelix will live on in my memory -- for as long as it lasts.

Hopefully, longer.

The End

Chapter End Notes

Afterward: The best thing about writing an alternate universe story is that a fan fiction writer can fix things that the series writers, in the fanfic writer's (not so humble) opinion, messed up. While I thought "Tuvix" was a fascinating episode of Star Trek, with a conundrum worthy of any of the Trek series, I wanted the guy to live! Tom Wright did such a wonderful job portraying Tuvok and Neelix's accidental son, I wanted to see more of him. By presenting this story, I could, even if it was only in my mind's eye, not on a screen.

Kes' departure from Star Trek: Voyager in "The Gift" was sad but inspiring. The script for "Fury" was not only a mess, it trashed a beloved character so totally, I wanted to scream at the screen when I saw it the first time. (Actually, I think I did.) Whenever I've written stories that are "basically canon compliant," I have no choice. I either have to deal with the episode or omit any reference to it. I rewrote the event here in a way that I believe better fits the character. (And if anyone thinks, "Hey, the Voyager Virtual Season 7.5 writers wrote up that scenario years ago," -- well, yeah, they did. I was the writer who devised and wrote that story line for Kes. It isn't plagiarism if you plunder your own work.)

The loss of Mezoti in "Imperfection" was simply tragic. I see why the writers did it now. It was more than a simple case of not wanting to work around Child Labor Laws, since they were already doing that with Scarlett Pomers, who played Naomi. Showing how a Mezoti who remained on Voyager dealt with the possibility that Seven and Icheb both might die would require a lot of screen time which they simply didn't have in the episode. There was plenty of story as it was -- but not enough for a "movie" special two-hour show without inserting a LOT of padding. Neelix was the only one who could have taken on the role of temporary guardian until Seven's and Icheb's health issues were resolved. Here in AU land, Tuvix, our helpful Talaxian/Vulcan, was available, willing, and able, so I was in a position to keep Mezoti on the ship, where she belonged. (I hope you approve, Six of Twelve, since this agrees with your wonderful story, "Mezoti's Collective.")

You may notice the chronology of this story isn't exactly the same as the way UPN aired the episodes. In some cases, internal evidence and the stardates given indicate the shows may have been aired out of order (especially true of "Drive," "Repression," and "Imperfection," at the beginning of the final season). Since many episodes have no
given stardates, but there doesn't seem to be enough time for all the events to take place between the ones that have been provided, I've flipped the order of some to a more logical progression. In an alternate universe story, we already know everything isn't going to be exactly the same as on the show, so I did what made sense for this piece. I hope you don't mind too much.

During the writing of Tuvix's life on Voyager, I consulted the Star Trek Voyager Companion, by Paul Ruditis, copyright 2003, Paramount Pictures, Inc., as well as episode reviews from Jim Wright's "Delta Blues" website and summaries from Memory Alpha. I am greatly indebted to Jim and the people at Memory Alpha for keeping these resources available, so long after the end of the series. I also owe much to tmtclt, TLWtlw, Beth6787, and Juddysbuddy for the reviews they left as this story was posted on fanfiction.net. Their insights often pointed me down avenues I might not have pursued if their comments hadn't spurred my imagination. They helped nudge this story along to its conclusion. Thank you so very much!

As always, the all-important disclaimer must appear here: I acknowledge that Paramount, CBS, and whoever else they're in league with at this moment in time owns the rights of Star Trek in general and Star Trek: Voyager in particular, lock, stock, and photon torpedo barrel. I make no claims of ownership of any of the characters or story lines. Since this piece retells many events from the series to portray Tuvix's roles and opinions about said events, had he remained alive, I owe a great debt to the writers of all the stories and scripts, as well as the actors, directors, and production crew, who related the story of the good ship Voyager. I couldn't have written this story without all of you. Thank you! -- jamelia


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