

## The Road Not Traveled

"Anything else?" Captain Janeway asked, taking a sip of her ever present coffee.

"Nothing unusual," Commander Chakotay answered, scanning down the list on the PADD he held. "Mild grumbling about Neelix's cooking from a few folks, two complaints from Seven about Engineering's 'inefficiency', and seven complaints from the Doctor about a member of the crew refusing to attend checkups." He managed to keep a straight face when he looked up from his list and focused on his captain.

Janeway looked mildly embarrassed. "Yes, I'll look into that."

"You aren't going to ask who it is?" Chakotay asked with a twinkle in his eye.

She was saved from answering when the ship shuddered slightly. The computer automatically signaled a yellow alert.

"Tuvok to Captain Janeway. Captain to the bridge," they both heard from the perpetually calm Vulcan.

"On our way," Janeway responded as she and her first officer stood and took the five steps from the ready room to the bridge.

"Report," she snapped.

"Sensors didn't see it coming," started Harry. "A disturbance in subspace pulled us back into normal space. I'm also reading gravimetric fluctuations and unusual levels of alpha, gamma, and omicron radiation."

"Unusual how?" asked Chakotay, already tapping through information on his chair screen.

"It's too high for the location. There's nothing here," answered Harry. "We're one and a half light years from the nearest star. There's nothing of note for at least fifty light years in any direction."

"We hit a speed bump in the middle of nowhere?" queried Janeway.

"Essentially correct," confirmed Tuvok.

"Tom?" asked Janeway.

The helmsman's hands had been drifting over his board the entire time, and he now turned to report. "No damage to any propulsion systems. The computer automatically pulled us out of warp due to the disturbance. It's also very localized. Two minutes at impulse and we can go back to warp with no problem."

"Seven of Nine to the Captain," came over the intercom.

"Right on time," commented Chakotay quietly. Harry grinned and Tuvok's eyebrow rose.

"Janeway here," the captain answered.

"Report to astrometrics. There's something I believe you should see."

"On my way," agreed Janeway.

"Commander Tuvok as well," added Seven.

The Vulcan security officer raised an eyebrow, but silently joined Janeway in the turbolift.

"Deck eight," ordered Janeway. She thought for a moment before turning to Tuvok. "Naturally occurring, or a directed event?"

He looked at her with a calm expression. "I am sure that Seven of Nine will be answering that question for us momentarily."

She smiled at him. "Logical as always, Mister Tuvok."

He nodded his head in what could be construed as accepting a compliment when the turbolift doors opened. The two friends walked together down the hallway and entered the large astrometrics bay.

"You rang?" asked Janeway.

Seven of Nine hardly glanced over her shoulder at the two new arrivals. "Yes. I have determined that this phenomenon is NOT naturally occurring."

"It was deliberately placed here?" Tuvok wanted confirmation. At Seven's nod, he asked, "By whom?"

"Unknown," she answered curtly, hands still flying over the controls. "However, it is such a localized event that whoever did it knew our exact position and heading."

"That means a possible security hazard, but I cannot fathom a reason for it. We are stopped, but nothing else has occurred. No ships are waiting for us nor have we received any messages."

Janeway was about to respond when the console in front of Seven began beeping frantically. Seven looked down at the computer and frowned. "Another ship," she reported at the same moment that red alert was triggered.

"Chakotay to the captain. Please return to the bridge immediately. We've got company."

Janeway was out the door before he finished his first sentence. She was nearing the turbolift by the end of the second. "On my way. Bridge," she added to the turbolift. "That answers my previous question," she muttered as the turbolift started back upwards.

"Indeed," agreed the unflappable Vulcan.

The turbolift doors snapped open and Janeway catapulted out of the lift. She looked first toward the viewscreen and stopped in her tracks. It was like looking at her own bridge. On the screen Harry, Tom, Tuvok, and Chakotay were all at their regular stations, all looking at her in various states of shock. The only thing different between the two bridges was . . .

"Kathryn?" asked the other ship's commander. She was a short redhead, wearing a maroon uniform and the three pips of a Starfleet commander.

Janeway slowly walked toward where her Chakotay had stood, behind Tom Paris's right shoulder, and continued to stare at her counterpart. Chakotay gladly made way for his captain, letting her try to make sense of this crazy scene.

Janeway's hands made it to her hips, a sure sign of stress. "Who are you?" she demanded.

"Commander Dana Scully of the Federation Starship Voyager," came the calm answer with an eyebrow that was trying to crawl off the woman's face.

Janeway smiled ironically. "That's funny, I believe I'm standing on the Federation Starship Voyager, and I'm sure I don't know who you are." She looked at the other crewmen on the other Voyager, scrutinizing them all. They all looked remarkably similar to her own people, and every one of them were still staring at her. Janeway turned back to Commander Scully and said, "I don't know who you are or what you want, but this is not amusing."

"Captain," interrupted Tuvok, "I believe I have a partial explanation. The other Voyager came out of the anomaly in precisely the same manner that we did, one hundred and fourteen seconds later. By all scans, that ship is USS Voyager."

"Confirmed," added the Other Tuvok. "Both ships are perfectly identical, from the astrometrics bay to the Delta Flyer."

"Theories?" asked Commander Scully.

"Split realities?" offered Other Harry.

Harry closed his mouth with an audible click. Both Chakotays smiled.

In a strangely stereo effect, everyone on both bridges heard, "Astrometrics to the bridge. I believe I have an explanation, Captain." The only thing marring the effect was that Other Seven finished with, "Commander," instead.

"Go ahead," chorused Janeway and Scully. They looked at each other. Scully smiled and Janeway's ire ratcheted down a few degrees.

Chakotays' smiles grew a fraction. Tuvoks' eyebrows rose.

"The anomaly could be a trans-dimensional wormhole," announced both Sevens.

That announcement sunk in for a few moments before Janeway and Scully once again chorused, "You mean -" They both broke off, and Scully gave a sudden laugh. "Go ahead, Captain," she deferred with a wide smile.

Janeway smiled slightly herself. "You mean that really COULD be another Voyager out there, just from a different reality?"

"Crude but accurate," answered Seven.

"I concur," Other Seven agreed smoothly.

Both Harrys and both Toms were fighting smiles by this point.

Scully smiled. "Why don't I beam over to your ship, Captain? I know that you and I have a LOT to discuss. Scully out." Janeway could see Other Chakotay open his mouth to begin arguing.

Chakotay said, "That may not be a good idea."

Janeway brushed aside his concern. "Good idea or not, you must admit this is certainly fascinating."

"There is that," he agreed, "but we don't know that that Voyager is genuine."

"Look at it from their point of view, Chakotay," volunteered Tom. "They don't know that WE'RE genuine."

Tuvok almost grimaced from the warped logic. "Still, I urge caution."

"Noted," Janeway said curtly. She headed for the turbolift and kept talking. "Let's keep a lid on this information for the moment, gentlemen. Tuvok, secure conference room 2. I'll meet Commander Scully and take her there. Everyone else, figure out where that speed bump came from."

A round of, "Aye, Captain," came from her senior staff as the lift doors closed behind her and her security chief.

Tuvok tapped his combadge. "Commander Tuvok to Lieutenant Miller. Report to the transporter room. Captain Janeway will brief you there." After the security guard acknowledged his orders, Janeway turned a glare upon the Vulcan. He defended himself, "Having a security officer present would be prudent. Must I keep reminding you that we have no guarantees of how they will react, nor if they are indeed who they appear to be?"

She sighed and gave up the argument. "Janeway to Seven," she said instead, tapping her own combadge. "Report to conference room two and set up a terminal with the crew roster and log entries."

"Acknowledged."

Tuvok raised one eyebrow. "She is the next most objective person on the ship," Janeway explained. She knew she needed that objectivity right now.

When the turbolift doors opened, the two officers went their separate ways. Janeway entered the transporter room three steps ahead of Lieutenant (jg) Mark Miller.

"Captain," he greeted her.

"Lieutenant," she absently replied. "Ensign," she addressed the Bajoran transporter operator, "dismissed. We won't be more than a few minutes."

The female Bajoran was confused but quickly left.

"Captain?" Miller asked.

"We're trying to keep this quiet, Lieutenant," Janeway answered, moving to the transporter controls herself.

Still having no idea about what was going on, Miller settled beside the door in an "at ease" stance.

Janeway opened a channel to the other ship. "Ready to transport."

"Acknowledged," said a voice surprisingly like that of the Bajoran who had just left. "Three to beam over. Energizing."

Miller watched as three columns began to shimmer into being. About two seconds before the process finished, he began to feel the slowly "phasing in" feeling that he always received when another Immortal was beamed into his presence. Narrowing his eyes in suspicion, he brought his hand to the grip of his sidearm, but did not draw. When the process finished materializing the three figures, he saw what looked like Seven of Nine, Commander Tuvok, and . . . His eyes widened in surprise even as his hand fell away from his phaser.

On the transporter pad, Commander Scully felt precisely the same sensations. she mused to herself. Once she was totally solid, she stepped forward with a hand outstretched to Captain Janeway. "Kathryn, you don't know how -" She stopped abruptly in place, her hand still hovering in mid-air when she saw the security guard. Her hand slowly dropped to her side as she continued to stare at the slightly frowning guard. "MULDER!?"

Janeway was confused. "No," she slowly answered, "this is Lieutenant Mark Miller. Commander Tuvok and Seven of Nine are waiting for us in the conference room. If you'll all follow me?"

Scully and Miller ignored her. Scully slowly stepped forward, one hand hesitantly reaching upward to touch Miller's cheek. "Is it really you, Mulder?" Her voice was hardly above a whisper.

Mulder shot a glance sideways at the frowning Janeway and tapped his combadge. "Miller to Danell."

"Danell here. What's up?" came the answer.

In Commander Scully's voice.

Scully's jaw dropped. Other Tuvok's and Other Seven's eyebrows rose. Janeway's eyes went wide. She looked back and forth between her security guard and Commander Scully, a question written all over her face.

Commander Scully took an abrupt step backwards, her hand going to her mouth.

"Hey, Mark. Still there?" asked Danell humorously.

"Invite her," Scully whispered.

Frowning in confusion, Janeway said, "Doctor Danell, please join us in conference room two."

"Yes, Captain," responded a surprised Danell.

"What's going on?" asked Janeway when Danell closed the communications link.

Mulder was staring at Scully. He answered absently, "We'll explain once my wife shows up."

Scully gave a small gasp and then a watery smile. "I'm glad for you," she whispered once she had control over her voice again. She took a deep breath, visibly pulling herself back together. She turned to Janeway and said, "Kathryn, I believe you know Tuvok and Seven, here. Why don't we go to your conference room, and I'll explain everything there."

Taking her at her word, Janeway nodded and waved everyone out. Mulder, shaking himself back into his security guard persona, led the way.

Once inside, Mulder took up station next to the door, his eyes riveted on Scully. Janeway took the chair at the head of the table and waved everyone to seats. "I believe everyone knows everyone," she said dryly.

Mulder and Scully both grinned.

"Indeed," chorused the Tuvoks.

Janeway's grin joined Mulder's and Scully's. She turned to the wall computer outlet and said, "Computer, initiate security level 1, but admit Doctor Danell when she arrives."

"Acknowledged."

Janeway turned to Scully. "First, how do you know me? You've called me by my name several times, but I don't know you."

Scully smiled slightly at her. "We've been friends for years. From my point of view, I was your first officer when Voyager left Utopia Planetia. Unfortunately, when Voyager got dragged into the Delta Quadrant by the Caretaker, you were killed."

"Instead of Lieutenant Commander Cavit," Janeway murmured.

Scully and Mulder both felt another Immortal approach, but neither tensed up. The door opened, and someone who looked exactly like Commander Scully walked in the door.

Doctor Danell stopped in her tracks at the sight that greeted her when she entered conference room two. Two identical Tuvoks, two Seven of Nines, Captain Janeway, and . . . herself?

Commander Scully smiled at herself and said, "Hi, Dana."

"This is Sarah Danell, doctor of theoretical astrophysics," corrected Seven of Nine.

Other Seven frowned slightly and corrected her counterpart, "This is obviously the Immortal Dana Scully from your dimension."

Doctor Scully and Mulder stared at Other Seven.

Commander Scully frowned at them and said, "Well, she's right, isn't she?"

Doctor Scully and Mulder glanced at each other and assumed a subtly defensive posture. Tuvok frowned ever so slightly. Other Tuvok raised an eyebrow.

"Immortal?" asked Janeway into the resulting silence.

"Yes, didn't you know, Kathryn?" Commander Scully asked absently, still studying Mulder and her counterpart.

"Scully, don't," Mulder pleaded quietly.

Commander Scully's frown deepened. "They don't know," she stated.

Doctor Scully shook her head.

Commander Scully sighed and leaned back. "Ah, hell," she muttered.

"What's going on?" Janeway asked with a gathering frown, getting fed up with not knowing what everyone was talking about.

Ignoring Captain Janeway, Commander Scully stood and slowly approached Mulder and Doctor Scully. Once she was close enough, she dropped her voice and said, "Immortals aren't known in your universe?" At the dual headshake, she grimaced. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize. Immortals are known and accepted in my reality."

Mulder's interest was piqued. "You managed to escape persecution? How?"

Doctor Scully deflected his curiosity with a raised eyebrow. "I'm sure we'll have time to talk about that later, Fox. For now Captain Janeway, Commander Tuvok, and Seven need to get an explanation."

Commander Scully's mouth twitched. "Fox?" she asked, fighting a grin. "I\* never got to call him Fox."

Mulder almost smiled. "Kinda weird to call each other by our last names after we were married."

Commander Scully nodded. "You're going by Miller and Danell right now?"

"Mark and Sarah to our friends, though Fox and Dana would seem to be more appropriate from you," Doctor Scully added with a smile. She turned to Mulder and said, "It'll be easier to give everyone the truth, Mulder. We can just swear them to secrecy like we did with the Doctor."

Mulder sighed in resignation when both Scullys turned their identical piercing stares at him. "I have a hard enough time dealing with ONE of you. Two is going to be the death of me."

Commander Scully grinned as Doctor Scully mock punched him in the shoulder. "I've missed you," Commander Scully whispered, staring at Mulder.

"What happened to him?" Doctor Scully asked quietly, having read all the signs.

"He was mortal," her counterpart answered with a soft sigh.

Mulder didn't hesitate. He pulled her into a tight hug and kissed her on the top of her head, letting her curl up in his arms for a moment of long overdue comfort.

Seeing that both her counterpart and husband were doing well, Doctor Scully finally approached the table and took a seat between Janeway and Seven. She leaned back and adopted her "lecturer" mode. "Immortals," she began, "are a genetic mutation of humans. As a race, we've existed on Earth for thousands of years. For a whole host of reasons, we have tried to maintain our secrecy. Unfortunately, during the Eugenics Wars dozens of Immortals were forced into hit squads for a time and then slaughtered by their governments since they weren't genetically 'pure'. After that point, we managed to erase all records of our existence from the world's computer systems. We've remained in hiding ever since."

Other Seven nodded and took up the tale. "In our Earth's history, the survivors of the Eugenics Wars didn't force Immortals into hiding, but rather encouraged them to become leaders. Their long lifespans makes some of them the best researchers and leaders."

"Immortals? Long lifespans?" asked Janeway, staring from Danell to Miller to Scully. "How old are you?" she asked Danell.

"Closing in on four hundred," she answered calmly. She made a mental note to later discuss erasing the existence of Immortals from the ship's logs.

"Fascinating," commented Tuvok.

Losing interest in the conversation, Other Seven placed a PADD onto the table in front of her counterpart. "I suggest we compare crew rosters and logs."

"Agreed," Seven said, swiveling the terminal that she had set up around so that Other Seven could read it. Taking the other's computer notes, both Sevens began looking through the history of the other ship.

"I think that this is a wonderful opportunity for both of our crews," Janeway said reflectively as Commander Scully finally left Mulder and sat back down.

"Perhaps," agreed Tuvok, "but there are bound to be differences."

"Yes, but this might also be a peek into the road not traveled for many of them."

"Lieutenant Paris, for instance," volunteered Other Seven without looking up. Everyone could see the barest hint of a smile on her face as she continued to read.

Before anyone could question Other Seven's comment, the computer allowed a communication through. "Chakotay to Captain Janeway. Please come to the bridge. We have another visitor."

"On my way," Janeway said, giving Other Seven a frowning appraisal.

Two minutes later, Janeway and Tuvok strode onto the bridge. "Report," she snapped, tired of all the strange happenings in one day.

It only got worse. "A ship with a Federation warp field approached us at warp twelve from the binary star system at 149 mark 2," Lieutenant Paris reported.

"Warp TWELVE?" asked Janeway.

Paris nodded. "It's employing what's called a Splinter Field. It's a modification of a standard warp field that allows you to go to higher warp speeds. It's been a practical possibility for years, but the interior of the field has massive amounts of theta radiation. Something about the interaction of their warp field with subspace, if I remember correctly. The ship has a fast drive, but the field will destabilize any organic molecules within minutes. I've heard of it being used in the construction of long range probes, but that means letting the computer drive something at least the size of the Delta Flyer."

"This ship is bigger than that," Harry said, studying his console. "About twice as long."

Seeing a flashing light on his workstation, Tuvok said, "The ship is hailing us."

"Open channel," invited Janeway, expecting to speak with an artificial intelligence. "This is Captain Kathryn Janeway of the starship Voyager."

The viewscreen winked on with a head and shoulders shot of a familiar face. The screen immediately split in half as Other Chakotay joined the conference call. The newcomer smiled and drawled, "Well, well. There are TWO Voyagers here. Isn't that amusing? You're early. Oh, for the record, I'm Deep Space Scout Mulder of the retrieval and supply ship Samantha."

Eyebrows went up all over both bridges.

With one exception. "Retrieval and supply?" Other Chakotay asked, frowning slightly and studying Mulder intently.

"Yes, us poor slobs who have to go chasing to the ass end of the universe with nothing but a computer for company. I'm sure you've heard of us."

Janeway and Other Chakotay shared a mutual look of confusion. "I'm sorry, but I haven't," Janeway said pleasantly. "What are you doing out here in the Delta Quadrant?"

"Setting up a rendezvous with you," Mulder said sourly. Seeing the blank looks on the two ships, he knocked down the sarcasm a notch and asked, "You really don't know what I'm talking about, do you?"

"I might have an answer," Other Harry volunteered. "I ran phase resonance scans of all three ships, plus some of the free hydrogen around us. Both Voyagers are slightly out of phase with the surrounding space. Not enough to matter on a macro scale, but it proves that only Scout Mulder is still in his native universe."

Silence met his announcement for five seconds before Mulder drawled out, "Someone care to explain that to me in words of one syllable or less?"

Ignoring the biting sarcasm that had come back into Mulder's tone, Janeway offered, "I'll beam you over to my ship in a few minutes, and we'll explain it."

Mulder shrugged agreeably. "I could certainly use the company."

Janeway nodded and continued, "I'll have our doctor meet you and check you over."

Mulder waved that off. "Oh, don't worry about me. I'm immortal, after all." His emphasis on "immortal" almost made the word into a vulgarity.

"Still," Janeway persisted.

When Mulder shrugged his acceptance, she signed off with him and turned to Other Chakotay who was still on the main viewscreen. "Commander, could you please send over any data files you have on immortals? You apparently know more about them than we do."

He looked confused for a moment. "Certainly," he answered, nodding over his shoulder to Other Harry to do so.

Seeing the uncertainty on his face, Janeway held up a hand. "Commander Scully will explain it to you when she gets back to your ship." Getting Other Chakotay's grudging agreement, she terminated communications between the ships. Next, she tapped her combadge and said, "Janeway to the Doctor. Please report to my ready room." Getting his acknowledgement, she headed that way herself. She had barely settled behind her desk when her door chimed. "Enter," she called. When the Doctor was standing before her desk, she asked, "Doctor, are you aware of the other Voyager?"

He almost smiled. "Did you know that the only thing that breaks warp ten is rumors?" he answered indirectly.

Janeway chuckled tiredly, leaning back in her chair. "They exist, and it seems that the crew is mostly identical. Their Commander Scully is our equivalent of Doctor Danell. It seems that they are both four hundred years old, and call themselves immortal. You'll find a new data file on immortals in the ship's computer."

The Doctor nodded. "I'm aware of Doctor Danell and her husband's unique physiology. I wasn't aware of what they were called, but I discovered it during their first physical."

Janeway leveled a stare at her ship's doctor. "You didn't think to tell me?" she asked frostily.

He looked slightly miffed. "Break patient - doctor confidentiality? It's not as if they're dangerous or contagious, Captain. If the fact were ever to become important, then I would have told you. As it was, as long as we treat them as normal humans, nobody will be the wiser."

Conceding the logic, Janeway leaned back in her chair and rubbed her forehead. "Coffee, black," she told the replicator, almost by reflex.

The Doctor looked at her in concern. "Headache?" he asked.

"Stress," she answered shortly. "It's been a hell of a day so far," she added ironically. Retrieving her mug and taking a sip before depositing it on her worktable, she continued the briefing, "We were just approached by another Federation ship." The Doctor's eyes widened slightly as she continued, "Their warp field is designed to be faster than ours, but emits more theta radiation than can be survived. The pilot of the ship freely claimed to be immortal. He's apparently the local equivalent of our Lieutenant Miller. Harry ran scans and determined that all three ships are in this scout's universe."

"I begin to see the source of your stress headache," said the Doctor dryly. He put his medical case down and opened it up. Pulling out a hypospray,

he began tapping its controls. "I can suppress the headache, but there's little I can do about your stress level."

As he administered the drug to her neck, Janeway said, "Actually, we're going to beam the scout pilot onboard. I would like you to meet him and bring him to conference room two once you determine that he's healthy and not a danger to anyone else."

He nodded his acceptance. "Theta radiation wouldn't bother him. Immortals, as they apparently call themselves, regenerate too quickly for almost any radiation levels to matter to them," he explained as he closed up his medical case.

"See you in the conference room," Janeway said, waving him on his way.

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The Doctor was on hand five minutes later when Scout Mulder beamed aboard. "Welcome to Voyager," he said brightly.

Mulder frowned at him. "You're the EMH. How are you outside of sickbay?"

The Doctor tilted his left shoulder to display his mobile emitter. "This wonderful little piece of technology allows me unlimited freedom." As he continued to explain its function to Mulder, he ran a medical tricorder around the scout. "You're healthy," he announced a minute later, "and not emitting enough radiation to be a problem. Please come with me to the conference room."

Mulder nodded and waved one arm toward the door. "Holograms before Immortals," he offered.

That pulled a smile from the Doctor. "This is a pleasant surprise. Usually I end up being ignored by the crew until I'm needed."

Neither noticed the look of utter confusion on the transporter technician's face as they exited the room.

Responding to the Doctor's comment, Mulder said, "Then we have more in common than I first thought. We're both second class citizens."

"Second class?" the Doctor queried with a frown.

"A long story," Mulder deferred. "I'll tell you about it before I leave, but I believe we're expected in the conference room?"

"Indeed," agreed the Doctor, still looking at Mulder in concern.

As they approached their destination, Mulder felt a Buzz and turned to the Doctor with a raised eyebrow. "You've Immortals onboard?"

"That is another long story," was his answer, "and I believe part of the reason I'm bringing you to the conference room is for you to get the answer to that question."

As the doors opened in front of the pair, Janeway saw their arrival and said, "Scout Mulder, please come in. I expect you know some of the people already here."

Scout Mulder stopped at the threshold to the room and just stared at the people it contained. In addition to Captain Janeway, he saw two identical Commander Tuvoks, two identical blondes with some sort of cybernetic implant over their left eyes, and the three Immortals. It was a strange experience for him to be looking at himself, but one of the Immortals was him, just wearing a mustard uniform of the security department and Lieutenant (jg) pips. The other two Immortals, though . . . "Scully?" he choked out, staring back and forth between the two women.

"Mulder," Commander Scully greeted with a bright smile. She stood and approached him, wrapping him in a tight hug when she got there.

He reflexively hugged her back for a moment before prying her away and holding her at arm's length. "You can't be here. You're dead," he said in shock.

"Our two ships got pulled into your dimension by some sort of artificial construct less than a thousand kilometers from here," Seven reminded the scout.

It took Scout Mulder a few seconds to process that. He looked back down at the Federation Commander he held and said, "So you're not MY Scully, but you're A Scully from another dimension?"

"More or less," agreed Doctor Danell with a slight smile.

Scout Mulder pulled Commander Scully back into a crushing hug, rocking her gently and repeating, "Scully," like some sort of mantra.

Commander Scully returned the hug gladly, rubbing his back, and whispering, "It's me, Mulder," over and over.

The Sevens continued their research, and the Tuvoks continued discussing mutual crew visits, all politely ignoring the pair standing at the doorway. After a moment, the Doctor realized that his staring was probably rude and went over to Janeway. "Scout Mulder mentioned something on the way here that bothered me, Captain. With your permission, I'd like to talk with him again before we leave."

She nodded. "That's fine. We're likely to be here for a while."

Doctor Scully had tried to be interested in the tabletop for the privacy of the couple, but her husband unabashedly watched them with a smile. "Get a room," he called to the two Immortals.

That brought a startled laugh from both of them and a poke in the ribs from his wife.

Scout Mulder looked down at Commander Scully and asked, "If I were to kill him, would that be murder or suicide?"

Commander Scully laughed aloud, holding onto Scout Mulder for support. Doctor Danell grinned widely.

Now that the coast was clear, Janeway addressed herself to Scout Mulder, "Mister Mulder, you said earlier that you had been sent out here by your Starfleet to rendezvous with Voyager?"

Laying a light hand to Commander Scully's back, he helped her back to the table, each sitting across from their counterpart. "Yes, the retrieval and supply branch of Starfleet has the thankless job of shuttling back and forth to the furthest points of the Federation. On board, I have various materials that Voyager requested. I also have three cryogenic tubes to transport the prisoners back to the Federation."

"Prisoners?" Janeway asked blankly.

"The Cardassian Seska, Ensign Suder, and Crewman Jonas," Seven spoke up from beside Other Seven. "They are only a few of the examples of the differences we have uncovered from our research."

"I'm looking forward to a report," Janeway said.

"At your convenience," Seven replied, standing up and clasping her hands at her back.

"And yours, Commander," Other Seven mirrored to Commander Scully.

"I will be in astrometrics," they chorused. Neither seemed the least bit disconcerted by their synchronous actions.

The Tuvoks caught each other's eyes and each gave a subtle nod. Standing as well, the each addressed their respective superior officer. "We must return to duty as well. We can find no reason why the two crews should not be allowed to intermingle," they said.

"What, no security concerns?" asked Janeway with a slight grin.

"They are all Starfleet personnel, are they not?" both Tuvoks retorted.

"They've got you there, Kathryn," Commander Scully grinned.

Janeway raised one hand in surrender. "Very well. Commander Scully or I will draft a message to give to everyone soon. Until then, try to keep the rumors to a minimum."

The Tuvoks nodded and left the room, one heading to the bridge and the other to the transporter room. The Sevens followed after each placing a PADD beside their commander and saying, "Here is a comparative crew roster. Personnel may wish to review it before requesting to visit the other ship."

The Doctor had quietly left at some point, and Janeway turned to the four Immortals in the room. "I'll be in my ready room, preparing a brief for the crews." Getting up with one of the PADDs in her hand, she almost made it to the door before stopping and turning to Commander Scully. "If I may ask, why didn't you take the rank of captain?"

She grinned. "Why haven't you promoted yourself to admiral?" she asked rhetorically. "Only our superiors can promote us, Kathryn. I felt it would be presumptuous of me to promote myself."

Nodding at the logic, Captain Janeway left the Immortals alone.

All four of them stared at each other nervously for a few moments before Doctor Scully started giggling. "It isn't like we don't know each other," she commented.

That comment brought smiles from everyone.

"How about you two?" asked Commander Scully.

Her counterpart smiled and openly took Miller's hand. "We were killed trying to sneak out of a Department of Defense installation that the Gunmen thought was housing a Grey. It wasn't, but that's another story. We had to leave the X-Files eventually since we weren't aging. Our careers weren't progressing," this brought grins from her audience, "so there wasn't any point in even trying to stay. We moved out to California under new names where Fox started practicing psychology and I became an obstetrician."

At this point, Scully interrupted and addressed Miller, "I still can't get over the fact that you let her call you Fox."

He smiled. "'Mulder' and 'Scully' ceased to exist when we left the X-Files. In California we were living together, and everyone assumed we were married. We just kinda settled into that lifestyle from there on out."

"But calling you 'Fox'?" Scully persisted.

"I would have let Scully if she ever wanted to," Mulder commented, staring off into space. His gaze refocused on Scully and he said, "I only let a few people call me 'Fox'. By about '97 she would have qualified."

Scully frowned. "But you told me - I mean he told me . . . Ugh! You know what I mean." Everyone grinned, and she continued, "Mulder told me that only his sister ever called him 'Fox'."

Both Mulders nodded. Scout Mulder continued, "I did say that, but my parents also called me 'Fox', and YOUR mother did as well. I only accepted it from people whom I loved." This last part was said staring directly into Scully's eyes.

These two hadn't seen each other in nearly four hundred years, but that did not diminish their ability to read each other by one iota. She read the naked honesty and implied statement in his comment and her jaw nearly dropped open. "You mean to say that as far back as 1997 that you loved . . ." She trailed off, incapable of completing the sentence.

Danell nodded. "He did, just as you loved him." Both Mulder and Scully swallowed hard, but neither disputed the comment nor tore their eyes from each other. "Assuming, of course," Danell went on, "that everyone's history is identical up to that point." She looked back and forth between the two who were staring at each other and quietly added, "And I think it is." When neither looked up for a full minute, Danell discreetly cleared her throat. Gaining everyone's attention again, she said, "Why don't we continue this conversation tomorrow? Commander, Scout, you're officially invited to dinner tomorrow in our quarters. We'll finish our stories then."

Lieutenant Miller nodded and stood. "Meanwhile, I believe you two would be more comfortable somewhere other than a conference room." He waved toward the door and said, "As a local security officer, may I escort you two to the transporter room?"

Mulder and Scully glanced at each other and quickly looked away again.

Danell stood and walked around the table to lean behind her counterpart's back. Whispering into her ear, she said, "I know what Mulder means to you. Here's another chance for you. Don't let it slip away."

Scully chewed on her bottom lip for a moment before nodding slightly. "Fox?" she tried out the name. When she had Mulder's full attention, she stood and held out a hand, helping him to his feet. "Let's go to my ship. I have a holodeck program I'd like to show you."

A hesitant smile appeared on Mulder's face, and he laid his hand to her back again, following Miller out of the room and toward the transporter room.

Back in the conference room, Danell nodded smugly to herself.

The three Immortals silently arrived at the transporter room moments later. Mulder and Scully ascended to two of the transporter pads and waited patiently.

Miller nodded to the transporter technician. "Please beam those two to the other Voyager, Ensign."

"Yes, sir." Her hands flew over her console for a few seconds before the two Immortals faded out of existence. "If I may, sir, what's going on?" asked the confused tech.

Lieutenant Miller grinned at her and said, "I do believe she just invited him to her cave to view her etchings." Seeing that she did not understand the colloquialism, he just shook his head. "Don't worry about it. Captain Janeway will be making an announcement to the crew about the other Voyager soon."

"Yes, sir," answered the unenlightened Bajoran to a retreating back.

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Captain Janeway's ready room door chimed. "Enter," she invited.

Harry and B'Elanna entered. "You wanted to see us, Captain?" queried the engineer.

Janeway nodded. "Have a seat." When they were both sitting, she rounded her desk and half-sat on it, facing her two officers. "B'Elanna, have you heard about the other Voyager?" At the half-Klingon's nod, Janeway continued, "Commander Scully and I have agreed to let the crews meet. With the approval of both Tuvoks, incidentally," she added with a twinkle in her eye. "My first thought was that anyone who wanted to should be allowed to visit the other ship. However, it might be better for all concerned if we just threw one large party. Since neither ship can host anything close to that many people in one place, I was wondering if it was possible to tie all the holodecks together on both ships so that no matter which holodeck you were standing on, everyone would be in the same virtual location."

Harry tilted his head slightly as he thought it through. B'Elanna slowly nodded. "We'd need to set up a secure data channel from each holodeck on each ship and to a central computer, but it should be possible."

Kim nodded his agreement. "Instead of computer driven characters, the computer would project the crewpeople on the other holodecks."

Janeway said, "B'Elanna, set up the internal data links. Harry, you set up the intership link with your counterpart and program the simulation."

"What motif?" asked Harry.

"We'll let Mister Neelix make that decision," Janeway deferred. "I'll be announcing all of this to the crew once you two can give me an estimate on when we can have the party."

Harry shrugged agreeably. "The data link won't be a problem. Deciding which computer will be the central information hub will probably be the toughest part for me."

Lieutenant Torres added, "It'll only take my crews a couple hours to install high speed data connections from each holodeck to the central node."

Janeway asked, "Computer, what time is it?"

"The current time is 15:25."

Janeway turned back to her officers. "Can we open it up for business at 08:00?"

Harry nodded, and B'Elanna said, "Easily."

Janeway ordered, "Okay, B'Elanna, you start your crews getting those connections in place. Harry, you start work on your end, but don't contact the other Voyager yet. I haven't floated this idea past Commander Scully yet. I'll have your counterpart contact you when he's ready."

Harry grinned. "Pretty sure she'll go for it, aren't you, Captain?"

"I prefer to think positively, Harry," Janeway answered with a smile.

Harry smiled back. "I'll be waiting for contact from the other Voyager, then."

Janeway nodded and waved the two on their way. Before they made it out of the room, she opened another communications link. "Mister Neelix, please join me in my ready room."

"At once, Captain," the Talaxian agreed.

It took nearly five minutes before he entered her ready room. "I'm sorry, Captain," he said before Janeway could say anything. "Your Captain's Assistant was beating me in a game of Kadis-Kot."

Janeway smiled. "And how is Naomi?" she asked, propping her head on one fist.

"Doing well," Neelix assured her. "What did you wish to see me about, Captain?"

Janeway waved vaguely toward the bridge. "You've heard about the other ship?"

Neelix nodded. "There are several variations on the rumor floating around. Anything from a damaged Delta Flyer to another Voyager the size of a Borg cube."

Janeway shook her head. "We've been in contact with them for only a few hours and already the rumors are multiplying," she mused in amusement. Shaking her head one last time, she said, "The truth is somewhere in between. There is another Voyager out there, almost identical to us. Greater than eighty percent of the crew is the same. Harry and B'Elanna are tying together all of the holodecks so we can get everyone together in one place for a get-together starting at 08:00 tomorrow."

"That's a smashing idea, Captain," Neelix agreed.

"I'm glad you think so, Neelix, because YOU'RE in charge of the party."

The Talaxian brightened considerably as he considered the prospect. His face suddenly fell. "But, Captain," he objected, "wouldn't the other Neelix feel left out if I did all of the planning?"

Janeway shook her head and tapped the PADD in front of her. "There is no other Neelix on that ship."

Neelix blinked rapidly several times before wondering aloud, "I wonder what happened to him."

"Ask Seven," Janeway suggested. "She's reviewed the logs of the other ship and can tell you what happened."

"I'll do that, Captain," answered a subdued Neelix, studying the tabletop with a downcast expression.

"I'm sure it's okay," comforted Janeway.

"Of course you're right, Captain," Neelix agreed with absolutely no conviction. "If I may be excused, I have a party to plan."

"Dismissed," said Janeway, knowing there was nothing more that she could say to comfort the ship's cook and morale officer.

Once the dejected Talaxian left, Janeway addressed the computer. "Computer, connect me to the bridge of the other Voyager, please."

Her terminal screen blinked on a few seconds later. She saw everyone on the Other Voyager's bridge, still amazed at the similarities between her crew and the one she was looking at.

Other Chakotay looked up from the PADD he was reading. "What can I do for you, Captain?"

"With your approval, I would like to connect all of the holodecks on both ships, so we can have a single virtual location for a party," Janeway said, getting straight to the point. "Harry assures me it is very possible to tie the holodecks and the two computers together to do this and is standing by to get an intership link established."

Other Chakotay thought about it for a few seconds and then nodded over his shoulder to Other Harry. "Sounds good," he said to Janeway. "Who's hosting it, and when?"

"I've asked our ship's morale officer, Mister Neelix to do the setting. As to the time, how does eight o'clock tomorrow sound?"

Other Chakotay glanced at Other Harry again. Other Harry nodded with a slowly brightening expression on his face. "We can be ready in a couple hours," Other Harry commented. He cocked his head and asked, "Neelix?"

"The Talaxian scavenger we had on board for a few days when we were first brought to the Delta Quadrant. He apparently stayed on board Captain Janeway's Voyager," Other Chakotay answered the question. He turned his attention back to Janeway and said, "If we get the holodeck program done early, we could let the senior staff try it out first." A slight grin told Janeway that he was looking forward to such a possibility.

Janeway nodded. "Sounds good, Commander." She held up her PADD slightly and smiled. "I've been reading your crew roster. It'll be interesting to see the differences between my crew and yours."

Chakotay's smile widened a fraction and turned mischievous. He raised his own PADD slightly and said, "Me, too. I won't tell if you don't."

Janeway's smile matched his. "Deal."

"Dare I ask?" queried Other Paris.

"No," chorused Janeway and Other Chakotay.

"Uh, oh," said Other Harry with a grin. Sobering quickly, he said, "I'll get on that interlink right away, Captain."

Janeway nodded. "I'm sure you'll get it done in record time, Harry."

Other Kim started slightly and then smiled.

Janeway smiled back and said to the screen full of people, "Oh, and spouses and significant others will be invited to the earlier gathering, gentlemen. The later one is open to anyone who wants to attend, and I had planned on letting it run for at least a full day so all the shifts can have a shot at it."

"Agreed," said Other Chakotay. "Anything else, Captain?"

"Did Commander Scully make it back to your ship?"

Other Chakotay nodded. "She and Scout Mulder beamed over. She told me she was taking the rest of the day off, and not to bother her unless we were attacked by a giant mushroom or glowing green bugs." He paused and cocked his head slightly. "Do you have any idea what that means?"

"Not a clue, I'm afraid," responded Janeway. "I'm sure it would be a great story if you could get it out of her. I may ask our Doctor Danell."

Other Chakotay shrugged. "Good luck. If she's anything like our Commander Scully, she'll only tell you what she wants you to know."

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Neelix smiled around at the holographic scene that he had created. Knowing of his crewmates' fondness for Earth, he had found a representation in the ship's database of Starfleet Academy's main entrance hall. It was a grand hall, glassed in on one side with a gorgeous view of San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. The opposite wall held a huge map of the galaxy with a control panel in front of it. Harry had told Neelix that the panel could be used to find a particular planet, zoom in on astrometric phenomena, or simulate a "stellar cruise".

The opposite two walls of the real hall led to the maze of hallways, offices, classrooms, and labs that this building contained on Earth. For the sake of the party, Neelix had had Harry replace the multiple entrances with two standard holodeck doors in each wall, one for each of the holodecks that will be in use. Above each door on an apparent plaque was which holodeck exit that door led to. Since everybody had to exit the actual holodeck where they were standing, the computer projected a virtual force field over all exits except the one that the individual had entered.

Other than the map and the doors, the room was done in dark oak trim around the windows, and the floor was partitioned off into several areas. All along the window were clusters of chairs and small couches which Neelix had placed there, hoping that the crew would use them for small conversational groups. In the other two corners next to the map, Neelix had set out two buffet tables with delicacies from Earth and all of the other home planets of the crews. The center of the massive room was left open.

Turning a slow circle, he nodded to himself in satisfaction. Finally making it back to Harry, who was in front of the stellar map, he called out, "Mister Kim, one last opinion, if you would?"

Harry turned from the simulated cruise through the Sol system that he was watching. "What's up, Neelix?"

"Would you make sure that the view out the windows is not only accurate, but pleasing?"

Kim nodded. That was why he was here, after all. In addition to being able to program the computer more quickly than Neelix, he had the joint advantages of having actually been in this location and knowing what his Human crewmates would like better than Neelix would. "Computer, for the exterior environment simulate cloudless conditions in late spring. Set apparent time by the ship's time."

With a confirming chirp from the computer, the scene outside altered abruptly. The sun was suddenly lower in the sky, simulating late afternoon. The sky turned a brilliant shade of azure, and the grass turned deep green.

Harry sighed, a touch of homesickness suddenly making itself known in his throat.

"Very beautiful," Neelix complimented. Harry merely nodded.

"One last thing and then I think we can call the others in," Neelix clapped his hands together. "What do you think of a access terminal so we can look up what happened on the other Voyager?"

"That's a good idea," interjected a familiar voice coming from a new direction. Harry and Neelix looked over and watched Other Harry look around the scene in obvious admiration. His eyes lingered on the still running Sol tour before continuing their scan and stopping at the windows. He stared out in thought before turning to Harry with a smile. "Late spring?"

Harry grinned. "Let me guess; it's your favorite."

Other Harry's smile expanded to match Harry's grin. "How'd you guess?"

They shared a chuckle before Harry turned to Neelix. "Your idea is good, Neelix. What made you think of it?"

Neelix's smile fell fractionally. "I don't know what happened to me on the other Voyager. I'm sure there are several others who want to find out about loved ones and friends as well."

Both Harrys nodded. "Computer, put three display screens between each set of holodeck doors. Erect partial privacy screens between the monitors. On the screens between the portals to Captain Janeway's ship, download all publicly accessible log entries and the crew roster from that ship into a searchable database. Repeat procedure on screens between Commander Scully's ship's doors, downloading the same criteria from her ship."

"Acknowledged. Time to completion: two minutes."

All three of them strolled to the windows overlooking San Francisco Bay and watched a holographic pelican fishing.

"Download complete," announced the computer a short time later.

Neelix hurried off toward the terminals at Commander Scully's ship.

Harry watched the Talaxian scurry off and smiled around at the scene one last time. Turning to his counterpart, he said, "I think this is about ready. Shall we call in everyone else?"

Other Harry waved at Harry's communicator. "Be my guest."

Harry tapped his combadge. "Kim to the captain. The party's ready to go, Captain."

"Well done, Mister Kim," came Janeway's voice. "The senior staff and I will be joining you shortly. Janeway out."

Harry absently listened to Other Harry's similar report to Commander Chakotay as he saw Neelix come hurrying back toward him wearing a smile. "It must be good news, Neelix."

"It's better than what I was concerned about," the Talaxian confirmed. "I left the ship shortly after Voyager destroyed the first Caretaker array with a hold full of water and Kes by my side."

Harry smiled and clapped Neelix on his shoulder. "It's good to hear that you're doing okay in that other universe, Neelix."

All three of them heard a holodeck door open and turned just in time to watch Captain Janeway enter. She looked around slowly before approaching the three men with a smile. "Well done, all three of you."

"Thank you, Captain," all three of them said. Other Harry shuffled slightly, uncomfortable in front of a real Starfleet Captain.

Neelix and Other Harry drifted off quickly after Janeway walked over toward the stellar map, leaving Harry to take a nearby seat and stare pensively out the windows. Within a minute, Other Harry nudged a nearby seat to face out the windows as well and seated himself. He placed a large plate on the arm of Harry's chair within his easy reach. Harry looked down and began to laugh. "Carrots and orange slices?"

Other Harry grinned. "Hey, they're your favorites, aren't they?"

Harry raised one hand in surrender. "I can't win an argument with you, so I won't even try."

"Now why doesn't this surprise me?" asked a hauntingly familiar voice.

Both men looked up. Harry's eyes nearly bugged out, and his mouth fell open. Other Harry smiled and held up a hand, leading the woman to a seat on his lap.

Harry finally found his voice. "Lindsey?!"

Ensign Lindsey Ballard gave him the same quirky smile that he remembered. And had missed for most of the past four years. "Yes, Harry?" she asked as she swiped a handful of carrots from the plate.

"You . . . But . . ." He took a deep breath and started again. "Did you two go on an away mission searching for dilithium on stardate 51563 and get ambushed by the Kazon?"

They both winced in remembered pain. Other Harry nodded.

Harry went on, "That attack killed Lindsey and almost killed me . . ." he trailed off.

Lindsey reached forward and laid one hand on Harry's forearm. "I'm sorry to hear that, Harry." She continued to rub his arm as he visibly pulled himself together.

When he'd recovered himself, he smiled shakily at his counterpart. "NOW I envy you." Other Harry smiled and rubbed one hand on Lindsey's back. Coming fully back on track, Harry asked, "How long have you two been together?"

As Lindsey enthusiastically told Harry that they had started dating shortly after the incident in question and were now starting to talk about marriage, Other Harry's eyes traveled around the sparsely occupied room and stopped in astonishment and growing amusement as he watched two people enter from Janeway's ship.

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Tom Paris and B'Elanna Torres-Paris entered the holodeck and stopped to examine the scenario.

"Very nice," commented B'Elanna, admiring the view out the windows.

"Just so long as I don't run into my father," Tom commented.

She smacked him playfully in the arm. "Go sit with Harry. It looks like he's found his equivalent. I'm going to get something to eat, and then I'll join you."

"Yes, ma'am," he jokingly replied before sauntering over. "Harry," he casually greeted the Ensign Kim who DIDN'T have anyone in his lap.

"Tom," Harry acknowledged, with his attention still on Lindsey.

"And you must be Ensign Kim," Tom continued, smiling at Other Harry charmingly. When Tom focused on the woman sitting on Other Harry's lap, the grin faltered. "Ensign Ballard?"

Lindsey nodded and raised a hand. "Harry's already explained that I was killed on your Voyager."

Tom looked down at his friend. "Are you okay, Harry?"

"Yeah," Harry said softly, continuing to stare at Lindsey.

Assured that his friend would be okay, Tom smiled down at Other Harry and Lindsey. "I'd like you to know how lucky you two are that you have each other. Harry was a mess for weeks after Ensign Ballard left."

Other Harry squeezed Lindsey just a little tighter and said, "Oh, I know how lucky I am, Lieutenant."

B'Elanna walked over and handed Tom a glass with a synthahol beer in it. Taking one of the nearby loveseats, she waved Tom down and then reclined on the couch, using her husband as a backrest. Only when she was comfortable did she greet the others. "Harry. Harry. Lindsey?" the last was said with a raised eyebrow.

Other Harry and Lindsey fought down grins. "Lieutenant Torres," greeted Lindsey politely. She cocked her head slightly and then asked, "Or do you go by Paris?"

Other Harry's smile widened fractionally.

Tom grimaced in mock aggravation as Harry and B'Elanna laughed. "No, she refuses to give up Torres," Tom answered. Seeing Lindsey's and Other Harry's nods, but their grins not reducing, he asked, "What's so funny?"

Other Harry tried to wave it off. "Oh, it's just that you two aren't married on our ship."

Everyone stared at him except for Lindsey who buried her face in his shoulder, trying to fight the case of the giggles that was threatening.

"What aren't you telling me, Starfleet?" demanded B'Elanna.

"What? Nothing," Other Harry denied, completely unconvincingly.

"Have you ever tried to play poker, Harry?" Tom asked Other Harry in an apparent non-sequitor.

"Once," Other Harry answered with a slight frown. "You and Chakotay cleaned me out."

Harry nodded agreement. The exact same thing had happened to him.

Tom nodded and turned to Harry. "What did I tell you then, Harry?"

"That I had a poker face that not even my mother would believe."

Lindsey and B'Elanna broke into grins as Other Harry flushed scarlet. So far, the stories were striking entirely too close to home for his comfort.

Fighting back the grin, Tom turned to Other Harry and commented, "Your poker face hasn't improved any. What aren't you telling us?"

He shifted uncomfortably for a few seconds before addressing Lindsey. "Aren't you going to do something to help me?"

"No way, Harry. You're on your own."

"Traitor," he muttered. He was saved from further embarrassment by the arrival of a superior officer.

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Other Chakotay entered the holodeck scenario with his wife on his arm. After moving through the buffet line far enough to get a plate and drink each, they surveyed the room, trying to decide where to sit.

"Seven is never my idea of a good tablemate," his wife commented.

"So that leaves Harry and Lindsey," Other Chakotay agreed, spotting the ensigns in question over by the window. As they approached, he recognized the Harry from Janeway's Voyager and one of the Tom Paris's was sharing a couch with someone. He couldn't tell who it was, because she was reclining against him and he could only see her hair.

As they approached, Other Harry spotted them and smiled widely at their approach. "Commander, Lieutenant," Other Harry greeted them. "I believe you know everyone."

B'Elanna Torres looked up from her reclined position to see Chakotay standing beside a woman who was a scene straight out of her past.

Torres dropped the plate she was holding once she saw the face of the woman seated on the couch.

Tom swiveled his stare between the two women several times before he asked, "B'Elanna?"

Chakotay stood calmly, studying B'Elanna.

"I told you," Other Harry muttered.

Finding her voice, the completely human Torres-Chakotay stammered out, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to stare . . ."

"It's all right," answered B'Elanna, finding her voice as well. "I think I know who you are, but just to be sure: Vidi'ans, Phage, Doctor Sulon?"

Torres nodded, her eyes widening. "How did the Doctor re-integrate you?" She shook her head immediately. "No, WHY?"

B'Elanna sighed. "I didn't have a choice. Sulon had shot my Klingon half, and my human half was going into chemical imbalance. How did YOU survive?"

Torres shrugged and knelt down to start picking up the spilled finger foods. "Gene therapy. The Doctor had a more complicated name, but that's what it boiled down to." She stopped suddenly as she looked up and noticed something about B'Elanna. "You're PREGNANT?!?"

"Yep," Tom confirmed, shaking off the shocking scene. "Due in four months or so."

"Congratulations, Lieutenants," Other Chakotay offered calmly. He put his plate and drink down on an end table and knelt with his wife to help her clean up the slight mess. When they were done, he steered her into one of the chairs, promising to get her a replacement plate.

As Other Chakotay headed back to the buffet line, Tom extricated himself from under his wife and followed. B'Elanna was too busy chatting with "herself" to notice very much. "You're married?" Tom asked Other Chakotay once he was close enough.

Other Chakotay spared him a glance. "Three years now," he confirmed.

"Good for you," Tom offered. When Other Chakotay's stare snapped up to him, he took an involuntary step back and raised one hand. "I just mean that it's nice that B'Elanna is happy in your universe, too."

Other Chakotay shook his head slightly. "Her name is Lana now. And thank you. I just didn't expect to hear it from you."

"Just not me? What about me?" Tom asked guardedly, folding his arms.

"The Tom Paris I know isn't married," hedged Other Chakotay.

"I already knew that. There's something else, isn't there, Chakotay?"

"Nice to know that no matter WHAT universe I'm from, I'm still questioning you, Chakotay," another voice from behind them commented smugly.

Tom turned and found a duplicate of himself. Same hairstyle, same uniform and rank. "Oh, I only question him when he's hiding something from me," Tom commented to his counterpart.

Ignoring Tom, Other Chakotay said to Other Tom, "Lieutenant, you'll be interested to know that the Tom Paris from Janeway's ship is married." Other Tom's jaw fell open. "To B'Elanna Torres," finished Other Chakotay in obvious relish.

Other Tom's jaw fell further. He turned an incredulous expression onto Tom. "Married? To B'ELANNA TORRES!?"

"Yes," Tom answered in growing annoyance. "We're expecting a daughter in four months."

Other Tom rubbed a hand over his forehead. "Tell me this is NOT happening," he murmured to himself.

"What the hell's wrong with you?" Tom demanded.

Other Tom's head snapped up. "B'Elanna Torres? That arrogant, short tempered, half-Klingon chief engineer, right?"

Tom's jaw tightened, but he nodded without saying a word.

"HOW COULD YOU DO THAT?" demanded Other Tom. "What about Jenny? Sue? Kimberly?"

Tom frowned in confusion. "Ensign Delaney and Crewmen Nicoletti and Moss?"

"Yes, Ensign Delaney and Crewmen Nicoletti and Moss," Other Tom mimicked scathingly.

"What about them?" Tom asked in exasperation.

"HOW COULD YOU DENY YOURSELF TO THEM?" Other Tom demanded at just short of a shout that drew several glances from around the open room.

Tom stared at his counterpart for several seconds before turning on his heel and returning to his wife without a word.

"If I had to guess, I'd say that he's happier with his life than you are, Lieutenant," said Other Chakotay, fighting to keep his tone even.

"Oh, shut up," snarled Other Tom, reaching for a synthahol beer and stalking over to a quiet corner.

Other Chakotay just grinned. The tone certainly was not something he should have used with a superior officer, but that man already had so many marks in his record for insubordination that one more would not matter. Besides, he had probably deserved that one, Other Chakotay acknowledged to himself.

Finishing loading up his wife's plate, Other Chakotay re-joined the small gathering.

Once he seated himself, Tom looked over at him while absently running his hand over B'Elanna's protruding stomach and asked, "Have I always been such an unmitigated ass?"

Harry's and B'Elanna's eyebrows shot through the roof.

Other Chakotay and Other Harry flatly chorused, "Yes."

Tom sighed and dropped his head onto the couch back.

"You weren't so bad at first," offered Other Harry. "When we were brought to the Delta Quadrant, you and I were starting to become friends. That slowly changed, though. When I tried to tell you what a hotshot, playboy image you had, you told me that that was exactly what you WANTED. When I started spending more time with Lindsey, you slowly drifted away." Other Harry shook his head and corrected himself, "I mean HE drifted away."

"I know what you meant, Harry," Tom absently responded, lost in thought. Based on his expression, they were not pleasant thoughts.

"Hey," B'Elanna said quietly, rubbing one hand over his leg. "You aren't like that anymore, Tom. You've become a better person over the last few years."

"But that's what I COULD have been," he returned, waving one hand toward where Other Tom was trying unsuccessfully to shoo away Neelix.

"But you AREN'T," stressed B'Elanna.

"Well," said Lindsey sharply, clapping her hands and looking to B'Elanna with a wide smile. "Tell me all about the wedding."

Tom and Harry broke into laughter. B'Elanna just grinned in embarrassment.

"You," Lindsey pointed a finger at Harry, "take notes. You'll need them someday."

"Yes, dear," teased Other Harry.

Turning on her boyfriend, she started to tickle him before he retaliated by pinning her arms together and pulling her into a kiss.

"Jeez, get a room, Harry," Tom said just loudly enough to break into the little bubble that they had started to form around themselves.

Other Harry and Lindsey looked up in embarrassment for a moment.

Taking pity on them, B'Elanna answered the previous question. "There isn't all that much to tell about our wedding. It started when Tom and Harry got into this race . . ."

Other Chakotay had read the story in the logs earlier, so he tuned the recital out as his eyes roamed the room. Captain Janeway was in quiet discussion with both Sevens, the Talaxian Neelix was trying to coax his Tom from sulking, and everyone else at the party was in his little group. Once B'Elanna finished telling about how she and Tom had had a civil ceremony in Janeway's ready room just after the Antarean Transtellar Rally, Other Chakotay asked Harry, "Where's your Chakotay?"

"Tuvok was coming to relieve him on the bridge when I left," Tom answered instead. "He should be here soon." Chakotay chose that exact moment to enter the scenario. "Speak of the devil, and here he comes," Tom commented just loudly enough that Chakotay heard him.

Chakotay broke off his scan of the room and gave Tom a long suffering look. Walking over to the group, he addressed Other Chakotay, "Do you have this much trouble with Lieutenant Paris?"

"Apparently more," offered Harry, fighting a grin.

Rolling his eyes at his friend's "help", Tom said to Chakotay, "Meet Lindsey Ballard, Harry's girlfriend."

Chakotay's eyes flickered in recognition, and he smiled charmingly at her. "Ensign," he greeted her.

"And Chakotay's wife, Lana Torres," Tom finished the introductions, studying the reaction.

Chakotay's eyebrows rose rapidly as he recognized the woman sitting with Other Chakotay. Quickly recovering his composure, he smiled his most charming smile and said, "Ma'am."

"Ooh, he IS a charmer," Lana said to B'Elanna. Lindsey covered her mouth with a hand.

Swinging into another overstuffed chair, Chakotay said to Other Chakotay, "Did I hear correctly that you captured Seska?"

Janeway's crew perked up in interest.

Other Chakotay nodded. "We captured her after we retook Voyager from the Kazon, yes."

"Did you blow her out the nearest airlock?" asked B'Elanna coldly.

"No, but it was tempting," Lana answered smoothly. "She's in the brig. What happened to her in your universe?"

"She died in that attack," Chakotay answered, staring at his hands.

B'Elanna leaned over and placed one of her warm hands over his, rubbing gently. She knew the full history between the two of them, and it was not all bad.

He took a deep breath and slowly let it out. Regaining his composure, he smiled softly around at the group and said, "I'm going to get something to eat. I'll be right back." So saying, he stood and headed over to the nearest buffet table.

Everyone's eyes tracked him. "Is he seeing anyone?" Other Chakotay asked quietly.

"No," B'Elanna answered equally softly.

Other Chakotay grimaced and sighed.

"So how about your wedding?" B'Elanna asked of Lana.

Lana and Lindsey smiled widely. "It was GREAT," Lindsey enthused. "We held it in the holodeck on one of the Hawaiian Islands during sunset. It was gorgeous."

"We?" Harry asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Lindsey was my maid of honor," Lana answered with a smile.

"You two are close?" asked Chakotay, joining the group again with a small plate of food.

Other Chakotay nodded. "Yes, the four of us are good friends," his circling finger included Other Harry in that group.

Harry's eyebrows rose slightly.

Chakotay nodded. "Good. I'm glad you've found some friends." He quickly scanned the room again before turning back to Other Chakotay. "Where's Commander Scully?"

Lana's, Other Harry's, and Harry's mouths twitched.

Other Chakotay managed to keep a straight face. "I wouldn't expect her to come today. Maybe tomorrow."

The rumors had already made the rounds among most of the senior staff, so nobody had to ask where she was.

"Who is this Mulder guy?" Tom asked instead, leaning forward.

Dana's FBI partner when she was still mortal," Other Chakotay answered.

Tom, Harry, and B'Elanna blinked. "Mortal?" Harry asked.

Other Chakotay frowned. "That's right, you don't know about Immortals, do you?"

Blank stares met his question.

"Immortals," Lindsey started to lecture, "appear to be normal humans, but are actually a genetic fluke. Their bodies have the ability to absorb electromagnetic radiation and turn it into usable energy. It's manifested as super fast healing, and actual revival from most forms of death. They can age indefinitely, and the oldest known Immortal is well over five thousand."

Tom stared at her. "Five THOUSAND years old."

She nodded firmly. "Over. He doesn't remember his early life very well, so an exact year is impossible to determine. Five thousand five hundred is based on his earliest datable memories."

Janeway's crew digested that for a few moments before Harry muttered, "Wow."

Scully's crew chuckled. "Don't sound so surprised, Ensign," Other Chakotay said. "Something like Immortals was bound to happen. Think of all the other alien races we know about. Why is this so different?"

"I guess," Harry agreed absently, still trying to wrap his mind around the idea.

Neelix came over to the group and dropped into a chair. "I'm glad you didn't turn out like that, Tom," the Talaxian announced.

Harry and B'Elanna muffled their laughter. Tom winced.

Fighting his own smile, Chakotay introduced the Talaxian. "Mister Neelix, this is Lana Torres, and that one on Harry's lap is Lindsey Ballard. I believe you know everyone else."

"Indeed I do, Commander," Neelix said with a smile.

"Neelix is our chef, trade negotiator, morale officer, and sometimes ambassador."

"Chef?" Lana asked incredulously.

"Yes. I can make just about any dish you could describe," Neelix beamed.

"He makes a really mean Leola root soup," Tom deadpanned.

Neelix glared at Tom, catching the sarcasm. "Just see what happens next time you forget a big date with B'Elanna," he threatened.

"NEXT time?" B'Elanna asked sharply.

"Uh, oh," Harry said sotto voce with a wide grin.

"It was only the two times," Tom tried to defend himself.

"Four, but who's counting?" Neelix said dismissively, gaining some grim satisfaction in watching Tom squirm.

Chakotay's mouth twisted into a smile despite his best efforts.

Lana waved off the discussion. "Why do you need a chef? Can't your replicators keep up with everything?"

"If we had the energy, sure," B'Elanna answered, still giving her husband a withering stare.

"Energy?" Lana asked incredulously. "But the effi -" she cut herself off and stood, striding over to the computer interfaces on Janeway's side.

"What's going on?" Harry finally asked, staring after Lana with a frown.

Other Harry grinned. "I think you're about to get a present."

"What are you TALKING about?" B'Elanna asked as Lana made a disgusted noise from the computer station and crossed the room to the ones representing Scully's ship.

"Oh, just a little trick that Immortal Technologies came up with just before we left Deep Space Nine," Other Harry answered vaguely.

Harry and B'Elanna traded confused looks before B'Elanna shrugged.

"So how is the party?" Neelix asked into silence that followed.

"Full of surprises," Harry said, smiling slightly at Lindsey.

Hear, hear," Chakotay seconded.

"I, for one, am happier where I am," Tom opined.

"Good answer, flyboy," B'Elanna said, settling back against him again.

Tom made an exaggerated wiping-the-sweat-from-his-eyebrow motion that set everyone else to chuckling.

Lana came back over to the group, carrying a PADD that she handed to B'Elanna. "You're the chief engineer, right?" she asked, dropping back onto the loveseat with her husband.

"Yes," B'Elanna answered, studying the PADD with rapidly growing interest.

Lana waved at the PADD. "A present from one former Maquis turned Federation chief engineer to another."

Harry could not stand the suspense any longer. "What is it?" he asked.

"Schematics to make our replicators five times more energy efficient," B'Elanna said in wonder. She stood and walked off to an empty area, Harry close behind.

"There goes our spare time together," Tom said, watching his wife walk away with her head bent over the PADD.

"Cheer up, Tom," Chakotay tried to console him. "You'll have more time to work on your Camaro."

"I finished the Camaro. I'm working on a '69 Mustang now," Tom answered, becoming more animated when the talk turned to one of his pet projects.

"What's with B'Elanna?" Janeway asked, approaching the group and saving them all from an over-enthusiastic Tom Paris.

"An early Christmas present from one chief engineer to another," Lana answered from her reclining position against her husband.

Janeway accepted that answer with a nod. "Whatever it is, thank you, Lieutenant Chakotay."

Lana blinked. "You're welcome, Captain, but I still go by Torres."

Janeway smiled. "Of course. B'Elanna does the same thing."

Tom turned to Other Chakotay and said, "She is stubborn that way, isn't she?"

Janeway laughed along with everyone else. "The reason I came over was that Seven and . . . Seven," she said with an ironic grin, "have discovered what caused that speed bump we hit. I was going to make sure it was Scout Mulder who placed it here for his Voyager. Do any of you know where he is?"

"With Commander Scully," Other Harry said with a mostly straight face.

When he didn't volunteer any more information, Janeway said, "I was more interested in why they aren't here."

"Ensign Kim and I contacted them before tying the holodecks together, Captain," Neelix answered. "She didn't volunteer where they were going, but she sounded . . . distracted," he finished tactfully.

It took about two seconds for that to sink in with Janeway. "I see," she said, fighting an impending grin. "I'll contact her tomorrow, then. Meanwhile," she said, changing the topic, "does anybody see any problem with running this program for the next twenty-four hours to allow the crews to mingle?"

"No, Captain," came from several throats, not quite synchronized.

With a brisk nod, she said, "Very well, then. I'll make an announcement on my ship. I suggest you do the same, Commander," she directed at Other Chakotay.

"I'll do that, Captain," he agreed.

She turned and headed toward one of the holodeck doors, throwing a "Good night, everyone," over her shoulder.

"So that's Captain Janeway," mused Other Chakotay.

Neelix nodded. "That's right. Finest captain anyone could ask for."

Other Chakotay looked over to Chakotay for his opinion only to find the commander still staring after his captain.

Seeing the direction of her husband's gaze, Lana looked over at Chakotay and came to the same conclusion. Smiling slightly, she said, "Chakotay, meet us here tomorrow at 15:00, and the three of us can talk?"

He tore his eyes away from the door Kathryn had exited and smiled at Lana. "Certainly," he agreed.

Lana stood and stretched. "I just got off of a long shift. I'm off to bed." She held out a hand down to Other Chakotay and asked with an impish smile,

"Come tuck me in?"

"Uh, oh," Tom said with a grin.

"Enjoy yourselves," Chakotay said with a wisp of a smile.

"Whatever do you mean?" Lana asked Chakotay, batting her eyes in exaggerated innocence.

Chakotay just looked at both Lana and Other Chakotay with an expression that spoke volumes.

Laughing, Lana and her husband left.

"Chakotay," B'Elanna called, hurrying up with a bright smile and Harry hot on her heels. "Harry and I have finished going over these files. It's a clever little design change that should make the replicators much more energy efficient. It'll solve our replicator rationing problems overnight!"

"How long will it take to implement?" Chakotay asked.

"Twenty-four hours or so," B'Elanna answered, clearly anxious to get started.

Chakotay held up a hand. "Give your entire department tomorrow off, B'Elanna. Yourself, too. Only enough people to keep the core online. With this program running, I intend for all of us to get as much R & R we can get."

"But these modifications -" she started, only to stop at Chakotay's shaking head.

"Will they keep for twenty-four hours?"

B'Elanna frowned. "Yes."

"Then put it down and take the next twenty-four hours off, Lieutenant."

Since B'Elanna looked like she was going to continue to argue, Chakotay turned to Tom and said, "Lieutenant Paris, you have the first officer's permission to make use of any and all means at your disposal to keep your wife from working until the day after tomorrow. Is that clear?" he asked, looking at Tom but directing the comment to B'Elanna.

"Yes, sir," Tom said with a wide smile. "Come on, B'Elanna. You heard the commander."

She stared back and forth between the two men for a few seconds before threatening, "I'll get you two for this."

"Ooh, a threat," Tom said, sounding not at all intimidated.

B'Elanna sighed in defeat. "Fine, I'll leave it for a day." She turned an enigmatic smile onto her husband and said, "Now what exactly are you planning on doing to ASSURE that I don't work, Lieutenant Paris?"

Standing and offering his hand with a dazzling smile, he replied, "I'm sure we can think of something. Good night, Neelix, Harry, Chakotay," he offered distractedly as they left hand in hand.

"I'm beginning to feel left out," Harry said to Chakotay as he took a seat.

"I know what you mean," Chakotay agreed.

From the open air, everyone heard, "Attention, all hands. This is Captain Janeway. As many of you have no doubt heard, there is another Voyager here from a different dimension. We've established contact and determined that there is over eighty percent similarity in the two crews. With the cooperation of Commander Scully of the other Voyager, we have linked the holodecks on both ships to project one space for everyone. I'm giving everybody a day off beginning next shift to attend the party I'm sure is about to begin. Only maintenance crews in essential parts of the ship. See the head of your department for shift assignments, but otherwise, enjoy your day off. Janeway out."

"I'm sure there's cheering amongst the masses," said Chakotay mildly. Harry grinned in agreement.

Other Chakotay came over Scully's intraship communication channel and repeated the announcement almost verbatim.

"And the crowd goes wild," said Other Harry, deadpan.

Harry grinned again. "I'm sure this place is about to become overrun. Do you two want to come over to my quarters and we can talk?"

Other Harry glanced at Lindsey, and she nodded back. "We'll beam over. Deck two, starboard?" she asked.

Harry nodded and stood. "See you in a few minutes."

Other Harry and Lindsey stood and headed in the other direction after a short goodbye to Chakotay.

Chakotay stood as well and lazily headed toward the doors. "Commander," Neelix called. When he turned, Neelix said quietly, "If B'Elanna makes the replicators more efficient, then Voyager won't need me any longer, will it?"

Chakotay raised his eyebrows at the Talaxian. "Just because we won't necessarily need a chef doesn't mean that you can't continue to be the host

of the mess hall, Neelix. And you're still morale officer, supply officer, and ambassador. Don't worry; Voyager still needs you." The two turned as the holodeck doors opened and admitted five crewmen from Commander Scully's ship. Chakotay turned back to Neelix with a smile. "You're still the party coordinator, Neelix. I believe there's a full day party about to begin."

Neelix smiled. "Indeed, Commander. You will come back in the morning, won't you?"

Chakotay nodded. "Of course. Just have some breakfast items available." With one last smile, Chakotay exited the holodeck, stepping aside at the last moment to permit two crewmen entry into the holodeck.

Neelix stepped forward to begin his hosting duties.

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Fox Mulder floated upward, out of the most enjoyable dream he had had in quite some time. By the time he was approaching consciousness, he realized a number of things. One, he was close to another Immortal. Two, the bed he was in was NOT his bunk on the Samantha. Three, there was a warm body along his left side with its head on his chest.

His analytical mind churned over those three facts combined with the contents of his dream.

Almost afraid to open his eyes and find out that the dream had indeed been just a dream, he cracked his eyes open and stared downward into a mass of red hair.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dana Scully was jolted awake by somebody wrapping himself around her and holding on as if for dear life. Survival instincts started her hands into motion toward a series of nerve junctions before her senses identified the man who was now sobbing into her hair.

Twisting around within his embrace enough that she was no longer in imminent danger of suffocation, Dana wrapped her arms around her partner and started soothingly rubbing his back and whispering reassurances to him. They had worked together for seven years once upon a time, and she was well aware of his insecurities. It hardly surprised her that he was so emotional this morning.

Reassured by her voice and still solid presence, Mulder slowly pulled himself back together. Once he had settled back in the bed, she propped herself up on one elbow and studied his face.

"Good morning," she offered with a slight smile.

"For the first time in recent memory, I'll have to agree with you." He cocked his head in thought and continued, "Come to think of it, that goes for the not so recent memory as well." His impending smile dissolved, and he said, "I'm sorry."

"What for, Mulder?"

He waved vaguely at her and answered, "For grabbing you like that. When I woke up, it seemed almost like a dream that you'd be there. Yet you were."

A small, mischievous smile appeared on her face. "For what it's worth, you're welcome to grab me in whatever fashion suits you." She knew she was inviting all sorts of comments, but she knew that he would know what she meant. She also knew what he would most likely do.

As predicted, he gave her one of his patented leers. "Oooh, was that an invitation, Agent Scully?"

"That's 'Commander', and yes it was."

Ensign Samantha Wildman happened to be walking past her commander's door approximately one and a half seconds later and heard a high pitched squeal. She was about to slap her communicator to call Commander Scully but she heard male laughter mingling with female laughter. They both abruptly cut off.

Smiling, Ensign Wildman continued on her way.

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Scully finally convinced Mulder to get out of bed and take a shower while she tended to ship's business. In her message queue, she found a text version of Chakotay's message from the previous evening. Though he had done several things in her name without her knowledge, she agreed with the plans. It was not the first time her first officer had done such things without official sanction, but all the others had turned out well. She saw no reason to question this one.

As she was paging through her daily report of the ship's readiness, Mulder came out of her head, followed by a cloud of steam. "Do you have any idea how long it's been since I've had a real shower?"

"I wouldn't hazard a guess, Mulder," she said, appreciating the view of her partner wearing only a towel.

"Entirely too long," he answered, not bothering to do the mental math. He took in her casual pose, leaning back in a chair and wearing only a robe. He also noticed the direction of her attention. "Keep looking at me that way, young lady . . ." He left the threat hanging.

Her nearly invisible grin widened. "Or what?" she challenged. She cocked her head and asked, "Or was that an order, SCOUT?"

In one smooth motion, he pulled the towel from his waist and threw it at her. By the time she got the towel off of her face, he already had his boxers on. She pouted.

He grinned at her. "Shoo. Go take your shower."

"Yes, SIR," she returned. At the door to her head, she stopped and looked back over her shoulder at him. "I would offer to share, but you've already taken yours."

He growled and made a move toward her. Laughing, she entered and let the door close behind her.

He smiled and picked up his communicator. Pressing it, he said, "Mulder to Sam."

"Please specify," requested Voyager's computer.

He rolled his eyes. "Supply and Retrieval Ship Samantha's main computer."

"Hello, Fox," his ship's computer responded one second later.

"Hi, Sam. How're you doing?"

"Everything's fine, but I'm getting bored. There are only so many sensor sweeps I can do, you know."

He grinned. In addition to giving the computer his sister's voice, he'd also programmed it to have a personality. It made for more interesting conversations. "I'm sorry to hear that," he consoled her.

He received an electronic raspberry in response.

"Who taught you manners, anyway?" he asked, his grin widening.

"Have you checked a mirror lately?"

He laughed. "Okay, okay. You win. Have you tried talking to either ship's computer?"

"Are you kidding?" Sam asked in disgust. "Those two are standard ship's computers. They have about as much personality as one of your sunflower seeds. Unsalted."

Fighting the grin back down, Mulder said, "Seriously, I'll come over later today. There's someone I want you to meet."

"Dana?" Sam asked, sounding interested.

He frowned. "How'd you . . ."

She made another rude noise. "It didn't take an FBI investigator to figure that one out, Fox. As a matter of course, I queried both ship's computers for a crew manifest and schematic. When you spent the night in the room marked 'Captain's Quarters', and the highest ranking officer on that ship is 'Commander Dana Scully,' it didn't take a genius to put two and two together and get greater than three but less than five."

"Smartass."

"Butt-munch."

He laughed again. "I never should have given you my sister's personality."

"You're stuck with me now. Any specific orders other than to hang loose and cool my nacelles?"

"Yes. Query this ship's holodeck for program 'Scully Omega Five'. I do believe I want a copy of that one. And download 'Mulder Omega Seven' while you're at it."

"Will do, but I can't until the ship's holodeck is turned off. It's kinda busy right now."

"Huh?"

"It's explained in one of your messages. The two ships tied the holodecks together to throw one huge party. All available bandwidth is being used for that shin ding."

"Fair enough. Just do it when you can."

"No problem. Two other messages. You've been requested to contact Captain Janeway at your convenience."

"Why?"

"Don't ask me; I'm not your secretary."

"Oh, you're funny."

"I'm not bad. I'm just programmed that way."

He shook his head and smiled. "Keep that up and I won't tell you my OTHER surprise."

"Oh, be still my throbbing core," Sam said sarcastically, though he could hear a touch of curiosity as well.

"And my other message?" he asked.

"Voyager contacted me," she answered. "OUR Voyager," she added as an afterthought. "They got delayed. They plan on being at the rendezvous point in two days."

"Fair enough," Mulder muttered, frowning slightly in thought. Shaking himself a little, he said, "See you later, Sam."

"Bye, bye."

Chuckling, he finished getting dressed before Scully emerged from her sonic shower. Grinning widely, he made a great presentation of taking a seat at her workstation and propping his feet up on the table surface.

"Comfortable?" she asked in amusement. She knew he was trying to embarrass her by changing in front of him. She retaliated by letting the robe drop where she stood and walking slowly over to her closet.

"Very," Mulder said slowly, his eyes tracking her as she leisurely pulled out a uniform. Once she was fully clothed again, he shook his head and snapped out of his daze. "Are you trying to kill me, Scully?"

One eyebrow rose in an expression that he had known well four hundred years previously. She put one finger to her mouth in thought. "That does sound like an interesting way to die, doesn't it?"

He grunted uncommittally and shifted in his seat slightly.

Covering up her smile quickly, she said, "What're your plans for the day?"

"Janeway wants to talk with me, and I heard that there's a party in progress in your holodeck. I'd also like to introduce you to Sam sometime."

She stared blankly. "Sam?"

"My ship's AI," he responded with a slight shrug. "I programmed her with Sam's voice and personality. She wants to meet you."

Scully smiled slightly. "So I finally get to meet your sister. I'd say it's about time."

He gave her a sour look. "What're your plans?"

"I need to check in with the bridge, but then I think I would like to take a certain Scout from another dimension to that party you mentioned."

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Tom caught Harry yawning again. "What's the matter, Harry? Late night?"

Harry glared at his friend's teasing tone. They were alone on the bridge. With the party in full swing, nobody was expected to work more than a half shift, and then only in critical areas.

"If you must know, I spent most of night with the other Harry and Lindsey."

"What'd you talk about?" Tom asked, turning from the helm position. With the ship at automatic station keeping, there wasn't anything for either man to do.

"A little bit of everything. Their personal history, the differences in the two ship's history, some of the crew. I don't think they believed my story about when Lindsey came back to Voyager, though."

"Really?" Tom asked. He tried to sound politely interested, but Harry knew he was dying for more information on his own duplicate.

"Really," Harry confirmed. "Actually, Commander Scully sounds a lot like Captain Janeway. Both scientists, both determined to get their crews home."

Tom nodded. "Anything else?"

Harry was enjoying tormenting his friend. "Lana Torres- Chakotay is well liked. Her engineering team runs at high efficiency but isn't petrified of her."

Tom grinned. "Just don't tell B'Elanna."

Harry grinned back. "Chakotay mellowed out even more after he married Lana. Seven is still Seven. Tuvok and Scully weren't friends in their past, so their Tuvok is even more by-the-book than ours is."

"I find that hard to believe," Tom remarked dryly.

Ignoring the interruption, Harry went on more softly, "You met the other Tom Paris. You may find his history interesting. I read some of it last night."

Something in Harry's tone held Tom's tongue. Instead of voicing the glib response he had in mind, Tom turned to one of the auxiliary screens on the helm console and pulled up his counterpart's service record. After ten minutes of reading, Tom shut down the display and leaned back, shaking his head. Other Tom had never gotten demoted over the Monean world ocean fiasco because he never made his opinion known. He was still a Lieutenant because he was chronically insubordinate. Tom read between the lines and concluded that he never had someone to ground him like B'Elanna had done for him, and it showed. He had projected the arrogant, playboy pilot for so long that he was actually living it now. "Poor guy," Tom eventually said.

Harry nodded agreement. Much as his own counterpart's circumstances were better than his own, Harry realized that the same could not be said of everyone's "road not traveled".

The hiss of the opening turbolift doors broke the somber mood that was overtaking the two men. Tuvok and Seven stepped out, the first heading toward the command chair and the second to tactical.

"You are relieved, Mister Paris," Tuvok said formally.

Tom stood. "Aye, sir. All three ships are in station keeping mode. Nothing else to report."

"Acknowledged," the Vulcan said.

"Enjoy the party," Seven offered in a monotone.

Harry stopped in his tracks. "Have you been there?"

Seven looked up at him. "There is no need. I assimilated all the relevant information from my counterpart before the captain agreed to the party."

"That's not the point, Seven," Tom said. "It isn't only learning the facts of the other person's life, but to listen to them tell it. I'm willing to bet that there are things you two can teach each other. I can't believe EVERYTHING about your lives is in the logs."

Seven looked at Tom for a few seconds without saying anything. "Perhaps you are correct," she allowed before returning her attention the board in front of her. "I will give your recommendation some consideration."

"That's the best I can hope for," Tom agreed. He joined Harry in the turbolift.

Once the doors were safely closed, Harry commented, "She didn't deny it."

Tom grinned. "I noticed. Our Borg drone may have a few secrets after all. I wonder what she's hiding," he mused aloud.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chakotay was watching the party in progress from the seclusion of an oversized chair that afternoon when Lana approached him with a plate and a bowl.

"Here you go, Commander," she said, handing him a plate filled with snack items that she knew he would like.

"Commander?" he asked with a grin, taking it from her hand. "Why stand on formality? As I recall, we're married."

She smiled and took a chair facing him, balancing her bowl on the arm of her chair. "Chakotay and I are married. You and I are not."

"Semantics," he said with a dismissive wave.

One of her eyebrows rose. "Does that mean you expect a hello kiss from me from now on?"

He laughed. "I would say yes, but I'm afraid your husband would likely not appreciate that."

"Probably," Lana said with a smile. Her gaze turned serious as she continued to study him. "He told me of his feelings for B'Elanna Torres as far back as the 'Liberty,'" she said suddenly.

Chakotay nearly choked on a bite of melon.

"He said that he could have fallen in love with her, but preferred someone a little . . . calmer than B'Elanna." She looked down at her plate and gave an ironic little snort of amusement. "That must be why we get along so well."

"You have all of the personality with none of the temper?" Chakotay asked, trying to lighten the moment.

Lana's sad smile widened slightly. "Something like that. I'm getting better, but I still have trouble . . . All of my assertiveness left me when B'Elanna and I parted ways, so to speak."

"I can't believe that," Chakotay disagreed. "Anybody who can keep a whole gaggle of engineers in line HAS to be made of pretty stern stuff."

She waved that off irritably. "They all listen to me because of who I married."

Chakotay snorted in derision. "They listen to you because you're the best engineer in the Delta Quadrant."

She blushed and ducked her head in embarrassment.

Chakotay reached over with one hand and gently tilted her head back up until she was looking at him again. "You need to learn to take a compliment, Lana," he said, using her name for the first time. "You're smart and gorgeous. I envy you husband a great deal."

She smiled genuinely at him. "Thank you."

He nodded. "You're welcome," he said softly, letting his hand softly caress one cheek.

She took a deep breath to pull herself together, and Chakotay let the spell be broken. This was another man's wife, after all. He leaned back in his chair and started nibbling on his fruit again.

"According to the computer, you aren't seeing anyone," Lana said, spooning up some ice cream with chocolate sauce.

"That's right," he agreed when she didn't continue.

"Why haven't you asked her out?" she asked nonchalantly.

"Her who?" he asked guardedly.

"Captain Janeway," Lana answered.

"What makes you think -" he started.

She waved her spoon at him, cutting off what he would have said. "Don't give me that. I know you better than you know yourself, Angry Warrior. And I saw how you were looking at her last night."

He opened his mouth to argue, but then closed it at seeing her implacable expression. There really was no point in denying it to her. Instead, he collapsed back into his chair with a soft sigh. "Is it that obvious?" he asked quietly.

"Only to some," Other Chakotay answered, taking a seat next to his wife.

"You, too?" Chakotay asked, eyeing his counterpart warily.

"Harry and Lindsey can probably see it since they know me so well," Other Chakotay said, reflectively. "I don't know if you have any friends that close to you."

Chakotay's mouth twitched into a smile, and he looked at Lana. "B'Elanna maybe."

Lana grinned and propped her head up in one fist. "Good to know that you have friends."

Chakotay nodded. "Kathryn is a good friend, too, but I can't believe that she knows."

Other Chakotay shrugged. "It's your choice, of course. But I highly recommend married life. Trust me, it'll agree with you."

"And if I can't trust you . . ."

"Who can you trust?" Lana finished Chakotay's phrase.

All three of them laughed.

"Good to see you having fun, Commander," Captain Janeway said, walking up to the threesome.

Both Chakotays stood. "Kathryn," Chakotay greeted her. Waving at a nearby chair, he invited, "Please, join us."

Lana and Other Chakotay studied Janeway closely as she settled into a chair that Chakotay steered her into. She noticed their attention as her first officer seated himself.

"What, do I have a food stain on my uniform?" Janeway asked the couple with a slightly self-conscious smile.

Lana blushed slightly and looked down at her bowl. Other Chakotay shook his head. "No, Captain. It's just that we never met Captain Janeway. Tuvok and Dana have told us a great deal about her, but we never had the chance to know her."

Janeway nodded in understanding. "From your point of view, I was the evil Starfleet Captain sent into the Badlands to catch you and haul you back to the Federation in shackles."

Other Chakotay grinned wryly. "Not precisely, but close enough."

"Oh, she's not all bad," Chakotay disagreed. He tilted his head and added, "As long as she stays properly caffeinated."

As Other Chakotay and Lana fought their smiles, Janeway mock swatted Chakotay's shoulder.

He gripped his shoulder as if hurt before his face dissolved into a smile that matched hers.

"I hate to break up such a tender moment, but you wanted to see me, Captain?" asked Scout Mulder as he walked up, leading Commander Scully with a hand to her back. Both Chakotays politely stood but settled back into their seats as Mulder helped Scully into another loveseat.

Janeway nodded. "Yes, Scout Mulder. I have a few questions for you. We hit something that my bridge crew called a 'speed bump' just before you approached us. That's what brought us to your universe and out of warp. Did you place it there?"

He nodded. "It's little more than a trick with a deflector dish and a nearby pulsar. I don't understand the physics behind it, but it's routinely used to pull ships out of warp. I knew where Voyager was going to be, so I just set up a net in front of them."

"Small net," Lana remarked.

He cocked his head. "It was easy enough to set up. I just picked an appropriate point, set up the 'speed bump', and went off to scan that binary system. That's why I wasn't right there when you came out of warp. I wasn't expecting Voyager to show up for several more hours."

"Now that we're here, how do we get back to our universe?" Other Chakotay asked.

"Seven thinks she can reverse the operation if she can get the exact frequencies you used."

"Sure," Mulder said with a slight shrug. "Query my computer. She'll give you what you want to know."

"She?" Chakotay asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Sam's an AI," Mulder explained. "Without someone else to talk to, these deep space runs can easily cause severe psychological damage. Therefore, Starfleet authorized each long range ship to have an AI computer."

"Artificial Intelligences have had some problems," Other Chakotay commented delicately.

"Yes, they have," Mulder agreed. "But we go out of our way to make friends with our ships. They're more likely to not become a problem that way, not to mention how much easier they trip goes." His face twisted into a grimace. "And if one of the ships goes crazy . . . Well, it was only an Immortal."

Everyone stared at him. "What do you mean, Mulder?" Scully asked.

"We're second class citizens at best," Mulder said flatly. "We aren't quite used as slaves, but our career choices are so limited that it doesn't really matter."

Janeway objected, "I can't believe Starfleet would do something like that!" Chakotay laid a hand on her arm in a vain attempt to calm her down.

"After the Triple-K Rebellion, it was hardly unexpected. I can't blame Starfleet for not trusting us, but it still does hurt," he said with a resigned sigh.

"Triple-K?" Lana asked.

"Three Immortals tried to topple the governments on three separate worlds at the same time. It was later learned that there were several more than that, but these three came closest and killed the most people before they were stopped. Kalas, Kronos, and Kern, I think." Deliberately shaking off the mood that was threatening, Mulder looked at Janeway and asked, "Any more questions, Captain?"

She shook her head.

He clapped his hands once and rubbed them together. "In that case . . ." He leaned over to Scully and whispered into her ear for a few seconds before standing and heading to one of the computer terminals.

"Should I ask, Dana?" Other Chakotay asked his blushing commander.

"No," she stated firmly, her eyes still tracking Mulder.

After a few seconds with the computer, Mulder walked back toward the group with a hopeful expression. Out of the air came a musical selection that soothed the 24th century audience, though only their 20th century colleagues could name it.

Scully laughed aloud at Mulder's selection.

Seeing her reaction, he smiled back and stopped in front of her. Without saying a word, he offered his hand and indicated the open floor space, just as he had done the last time they had danced to this tune.

Gracefully accepting, she took his hand and allowed him to lead her to the improvised dance floor.

"What was that?" Lana asked the group at large.

Two shrugs answered her. However, Other Chakotay had further plans. He stood and repeated Mulder's silent invitation to his wife. Smiling demurely, she accepted. They joined the quickly growing number of dancers.

Chakotay stood as well. "You realize that we can't let the command staff of the other ship outshine us, Kathryn," he said seriously.

She looked up at him and managed to keep a straight face as she asked, "What did you have in mind?"

"I would like to dance with the best looking red-head on the ship," he answered, looking steadily into her eyes.

Suddenly wishing she could sidetrack him, she indicated the floor with a tilt of her head and said, "Sorry, but they're both already dancing."

Chakotay glanced over his shoulder only long enough to see that Danell and Miller had joined the party and were dancing near Mulder and Scully. Refocusing on his captain, he said, "Only one of them is on OUR ship, and she's the SECOND best looking red-head."

Blushing slightly at the blatant compliment, Janeway bowed to the inevitable and allowed her first officer to lead her to the dance floor.

Across the room, Neelix was keeping an eye on the gaggle of children. Taking a quick look around, he noticed Janeway and Chakotay pressed together so closely that it was difficult to tell where one uniform ended and the next began. As he watched them, Chakotay said something to Janeway that caused her to bury her face in his chest to muffle her laughter.

Smiling at the miniature scene, Neelix turned back to the children. Naomi was telling Scully's ship's six children the story about how Neelix stayed with the Borg children during a power shutdown eight months previously. Though it had not been a big deal to Neelix, Naomi took a few creative liberties and kept her audience spellbound.

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"They do make a nice couple, don't they?" Lieutenant Mulder asked his wife during their third dance.

She blew out a soft breath of amusement. "Who? Captain Janeway and Commander Chakotay?"

"Them too," Mulder agreed. "I was referring to Scout Mulder and Commander Scully."

"Almost like they've been together for hundreds of years," she commented wryly.

His smile widened. "Now who do they remind me of?"

Scully stopped moving as the music stopped, swatting her husband slightly. She merely laughed at his wounded look. Grabbing his hand, she dragged him toward the buffet tables. Laden with food, the couple worked their way across the dance floor toward the few unoccupied chairs left.

Scully detoured slightly. As she passed just behind Chakotay, she whispered, "About time."

Mulder did not hear her comment, but he did hear the response. Chakotay laughed out loud. When Mulder turned to see his wife regarding him with a look of pure innocence, he could see Janeway bury her face in her dance partner's shoulder again. Her face was close to the color of her uniform.

Easily imagining what Scully had said, Mulder merely shook his head and turned back to the chairs. Once they had seated themselves, he said, "You should be ashamed of yourself."

Her raised eyebrows and hand to her chest clearly said, "Who, little old me?"

He looked at her sternly. "Embarrassing the captain like that," he clarified, though he was sure she knew exactly what he was referring to. "Remember, they're just children."

Doctor Scully laughed. Commander Scully, with Scout Mulder being willingly pulled along, took a seat across from their duplicates. "What's so funny?" Commander Scully asked, plucking a stick of celery from Doctor Scully's plate.

"Fox is just picking on the youngsters," Danell replied.

Scout Mulder grinned. "Just because everyone in the room is at least two hundred and fifty years younger than we are . . ."

". . . Doesn't mean that that protects them from being picked on," Miller finished.

Danell's and Scully's eyes locked for a moment before they both broke into identical grins. "Men!" they chorused before breaking into giggles.

Miller and Mulder shared a look before saying, "Uh, oh. We're in trouble now."

When the chuckling and laughter had died back down, Mulder said, "I know we agreed to have dinner at your place, but I have someone I would like you all to meet. If you could be in the transporter room in ten minutes, I'll call you then, okay?"

Miller and Danell shared a mutual look of inquiry before Danell shrugged in agreement.

Mulder stood and offered Scully his hand. Taking it, Scully allowed herself to be pulled upward. Coming to an abrupt stop against Mulder's side, she made no move to put any more distance between them. She smiled down at Danell and Miller. "I think I know what he has planned. Don't worry. I'm sure we'll all enjoy it, especially you, Mulder," she said, looking at Miller.

"Fox," he corrected with a smile.

Scully ducked her head in mild embarrassment for a moment before daring a glance at Mulder. His expression of open love was more than she could bear, and she ducked her head again.

Bringing one bent knuckle up under her chin, Mulder slowly brought her gaze up until she was looking him in the eye again. Bringing both hands to cup her head, he said, "Don't you ever be embarrassed around me, okay? I love you, and I'm never going to let you go." He slowly bent forward until he caught her lips with his own.

After thirty timeless seconds, they heard someone clearing their throat. Scully pulled away from Mulder and turned to find her first officer smiling widely at her flushed appearance.

"As first officer," he said formally but with no degradation of the smile, "it is my duty to recommend that the commander remove herself from the holodeck before I'm duty bound to summon Commander Tuvok and have you two arrested for lewd displays in public."

Danell and Miller grinned widely. Scully blushed crimson and ducked her head again.

Mulder leaned back in and whispered into her ear, "Now what did I just tell you about being embarrassed around me?" Without waiting for an answer, he turned to Other Chakotay without releasing Scully. "I'm terribly sorry, Commander," he said without any hint of penitence. "If I promise to restrict our lewd displays to private locations, do you think you can see your way clear to let us go with only a warning?"

Scully turned a darker red. Danell, Miller, and Lana all broke into laughter.

Other Chakotay appeared to give this a moment's thought before saying, "Just this once, Scout."

Mulder nodded and continued with a perfectly composed expression, "Thank you, sir. Now with your permission, I'm going to kidnap your commander, take her to my ship, and engage in more of the same."

Lana collapsed into a chair, tears streaming down her face.

Other Chakotay nodded formally. "Granted, Scout. I'm sure we can muddle through without Commander Scully for a while."

Nodding back politely, Mulder started to walk away but came to a halt when Scully didn't move. Taking the one long stride back to her, he whispered loudly enough for all four members of their audience to hear, "Either you walk out of here with me under your own power, or I'm going to throw you over my shoulder and carry you out."

Her head snapped up to stare at him incredulously. "You wouldn't," she stated.

"He would," Danell returned before Mulder could say anything. "Believe that threat. Fox has done that to me more than once."

"Not that you were complaining," Miller noted.

"At the time I was," Danell corrected. "It was when you were making it up to me later that I wasn't complaining any longer."

Lana appeared to be having trouble breathing.

Scully looked from the intent expression on Danell's face, to Miller's smile, to the expectant grin on Mulder's face. Mustering what was left of her dignity, she turned to Other Chakotay and said, "Commander, the ship is yours."

"Aye," he acknowledged, fighting to keep his own smile in check.

Mulder was gracious in victory. He merely offered her a smile and his arm. When she took it, he led her back to her ship.

Other Chakotay shook his head slowly as the couple left the holodeck. Miller stood and said, "Commander, on behalf of Scout Mulder, I must apologize for that. I hope that your opinion of Commander Scully doesn't suffer due to -"

He broke off when Other Chakotay waved a hand dismissively. "Dana and I are friends. It would take a lot worse than that to damage my opinion of her." He focused a stare onto Miller and continued, "He had just better not hurt her."

Danell stood and wound an arm though her husband's. Easily reading the protective nature of the words, she said, "If he's anything like my husband, then you have nothing to be concerned about, Commander."

Miller nodded agreement and added, "Don't worry about that. He's been in love with her for a very long time."

Studying Miller for a few seconds, Other Chakotay read what he needed to know in the other man's face before giving a firm nod. Helping his recovered wife back to her feet, he said, "Very well, then. Enjoy the party."

He and Lana moved off toward the newly arrived Tom and B'Elanna as Danell and Miller slowly made their way to the holodeck doors.

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Laughing like a couple of raw cadets, Mulder and Scully made their way to the transporter room. Stepping onto the platform, Mulder said, "Beam the both of us to my ship, please."

Wisely refraining from commenting on his commander's wide smile, the technician silently beamed the two of them onto the scout ship.

"Hi, Sam," Mulder said casually once they finished materializing on the Samantha's small transporter platform.

"Hi, Fox. Welcome aboard, Commander Scully."

"Dana, please. It seems only right between me and Mul-" she corrected herself quickly, "Fox's sister."

"Naw, I'm not his sister. I'm just a ship's AI that he programmed with her voice and personality."

"Still, it feels like meeting the family for the first time."

"Does that mean we're dating?" Mulder asked with wagging eyebrows.

"Oh, behave yourself," Sam chastised.

Scully grinned and took a seat in one of the few auxiliary seats in the main area of the ship. "Nice to see that someone's keeping him in line."

"Before I came online, the only one he'd admit that could keep him out of trouble was his FBI partner. I'm sure I don't have to name that poor lady."

"Hey," Mulder objected while flopping down into a seat that bore a striking resemblance to a recliner. "Why are you picking on me?"

"Because I have an ally?" Sam wondered aloud.

Mulder mumbled something as Scully laughed aloud.

"I'm afraid that would be impossible without reprogramming and extensive modifications to the ship, Fox," Sam said sweetly.

"Business for a minute before you two start ganging up on me again," Mulder said, totally ignoring Sam's comment. "That Borg astrometrics officer of Scully's will probably contact you and ask for how the Warp Break works. You're hereby officially given permission to give her the technical specs to the process."

"Aye, aye, Captain Mulder, sir."

Mulder rolled his eyes at Scully, who grinned.

"Shall we invite our guests?" Mulder asked Scully.

"Who?" Sam asked.

"It's a surprise. Would you care to do the honors, Dana?"

Scully's eyes narrowed slightly. "Sam doesn't know," she questioned as a statement.

"Nope," Mulder grinned.

"I'm dying of curiosity here," Sam commented. "Invite them, whoever they are."

Shrugging her acceptance, Scully tapped her combadge and said, "Scully to Doctor Danell. If you and your husband would like to beam over, Mulder and I would like to visit with you for a while. Scully out." She intentionally closed the communication link before Danell said anything. She knew Mulder was trying to surprise Sam, and she was not about to do anything to jeopardize that.

Not that it helped much. "Doctor Sarah Danell," Sam recited. "Doctorate in warp physics, on Voyager originally with her husband, Lieutenant Junior Grade Mark Miller." She paused for a few seconds before continuing, "Okay, why am I supposed to get excited about these two?"

Before either could answer, the telltale whine of a transport sounded. Once Danell and Miller finished materializing, Sam said, "Tell me I'm not scanning double."

"Nope, we're them," Miller said with his trademark quirky grin, easily sorting through the ship's convoluted comment.

"God help me, I have to deal with TWO of you?" Sam muttered.

"Nice to meet you too, Samantha," Miller returned, not at all insulted by her comment.

They heard a sigh from the speakers. "I already know you. It's Dana that I hardly know outside of what Fox's told me."

Danell seated herself primly on one of the available seats while Miller poured himself into another.

"Then ask away," Danell offered.

"You go by Sarah Danell?" Sam asked.

Danell nodded. "I understand that the history of our three universes is different, so I'll tell you that in my universe, Immortals aren't publicly known. For our own protection, we take a new identity every fifteen years or so."

"Sounds like Pre-Exposure days," Mulder said. Scully nodded agreement.

Miller cocked his head at them. "Immortals are known in both of your universes, then?"

Scully nodded again. "I already told you that Immortals have been known since the Eugenics Wars."

Mulder added, "After that point, we were merely tolerated. We were given the dirtiest jobs available and treated little better than slaves."

"I'm not sure which is worse," Danell said reflectively. "Us having to hide our nature, or you who are ostracized because of it."

Mulder shrugged negligently. "I'm used to it by now. The first two centuries are rough, but then it gets easier," he quipped.

Miller frowned at him slightly. Both Scullys glared.

"What?" Mulder asked, seeing all the looks.

"The three of them know you better than anyone alive," Sam said mildly. "They know that the treatment Immortals put up with bothers you, no matter how much you may deny it."

Mulder grimaced and seemed to shrink further back into his chair. "Not that I can do anything about it anyway," he muttered.

Miller broke into laughter.

"What's with you?" Mulder grumped.

"Come on. I can think of a time when we DID buck the system. At times, it seemed as if the whole world was against me."

Mulder's mouth twitched into a smile despite his best attempts. He looked over at Scully and added, "And then a certain young, naïve red-headed agent was assigned to spy on me."

"Lucky for you, I never DID take instructions well," Scully returned with a smile.

"Woman, make me a sandwich," both Mulders chorused.

Each Scully threw a handy object at "their" Mulder. A PADD in one case, and a coffee mug in the other.

Both Mulders ducked the projectiles and said, "Have I not made myself clear?"

Danell blew Miller a raspberry. Scully jumped across the intervening space and landed on top of Mulder. With the element of surprise on her side, she quickly pinned Mulder in place.

He leered up at her. "Oh, I didn't know you were into bondage, Scully. Kinky."

"There are a lot of things you don't know about me, Mulder," she returned with a sweet smile.

His jaw dropped open. Across the room, two eyebrows went up.

"Ah, HA!" she crowed. "I finally rendered the famous Fox Mulder speechless!"

Realizing that he had been had, Mulder growled, "Why you little . . ." Subtly twisting under her, he got enough leverage to twist out of her hold. Seizing the advantage, he scooped her up and levered himself upright. Gripping her tightly, he held her arms and legs immobile.

"Okay, now what?" Miller asked in amusement.

Scully answered the question with action. Stretching upward slightly, she raised her chin from where it was pinned against his collarbone and started nibbling and licking her way up his neck.

Danell stood and offered her husband a hand up. "I think that's our cue to leave. Have fun, you two."

Mulder was trying valiantly to stay on his feet as he headed toward the back of the ship, bouncing off the walls all the way. Scully had worked one hand free and had grabbed the back of Mulder's neck. Neither even noticed Danell and Miller.

"Can I leave with you?" Sam asked plaintively.

Miller finally made it through the doorway. Everyone heard a crash just after the doorway slid shut behind him.

"Please?" Sam added.

"Sorry, Sam, but I don't think we have the room," Miller said with a smile.

Sam sighed. "Sure, leave me alone with THOSE two," she muttered.

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"Are we ready to try this?" Janeway asked her senior staff the next afternoon.

"Yes, Captain." "Aye." "Affirmative." The answers overlapped from around the bridge.

In the end, the procedure to get back to their universe appeared to be ridiculously easy. Set up the speed bump in exactly the same place in

relation to the binary system and the pulsar can then fly into it at the same speed from exactly the opposite direction. The timing was crucial, though. They had to hit it when it was at the same energy level.

Taking her seat, Janeway looked over her shoulder at her chief engineer. "B'Elanna, if you would do the honors."

"Initiating deflector pulse," the half-Klingon acknowledged.

After a few seconds, Seven reported, "Warp Break forming as predicted."

"Agreed," Samantha said over the open com channel. "Smooth sailing, Voyager."

"Indeed," Commander Scully seconded. "Smooth sailing and well met."

"And you, Commander," Janeway offered. "Good luck on getting your crew home."

Scully smiled in response.

"You know your job, Tom," Janeway said.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, hands flying over his console. Voyager veered away from the other two ships and jumped into warp, slowly turning a circle to hit the exact point, at the exact angle, at the exact speed, at the right moment.

"Fifteen seconds," Harry reported.

"All hands, brace for a little turbulence," Chakotay warned over the ship wide intercom.

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On the other bridge, Harry was counting down the seconds. "Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Mark." Everyone watched the sensor reading disappear.

"Did they make it?" Scully asked.

Seven checked several more readings before looking up. "It would appear so, Commander."

Chakotay released a breath that he didn't even realize he was holding. "There's our way home, then."

Scully nodded. "It would appear so," she agreed. She turned to where Mulder was lounging beside the tactical station. "Anytime you're ready, Mulder," she invited.

Mulder smiled at her. They had discussed this at length the previous night and came to the conclusion that he should join her rather than the other way around. After all, she had more going for her in her universe than he had going for him in his. Grinning at the confused bridge crew, Mulder tapped his combadge. "Mulder to Sam. The main shuttle bay doors will be opening soon. Come on in."

The silence from his ship's computer matched the silence on the bridge.

"You are accompanying us?" Tuvok asked finally.

Mulder nodded. "Scully and I discussed this last night. There's nothing for me in this universe. I'm dead in yours, so it doesn't hurt for me to jump dimensions with you."

"I'm still waiting for those bay doors to open," Sam said happily.

Seeing the stubborn set of his commander's jaw, Tuvok bowed to the inevitable. Tapping his communicator, he said, "Tuvok to Lieutenant B'Elanna. The Samantha will be joining us. Secure her in the shuttle bay, then assign quarters for Scout Mulder."

"Aye," growled his Klingon assistant security chief.

Turning back forward and grinning widely, Chakotay said, "Mister Paris, once the Samantha is safely aboard, please take us back to our own universe."

"Yes, sir," answered the subdued helmsman. He expertly repeated his counterpart's flying a minute later, hitting the mark just as smoothly.

When the subtle rumbling underfoot ended, Seven reported, "Based on resonance scans, we are back in our home universe."

Nodding at the information, Commander Scully said, "Set a course for home, Mister Paris. Warp six."

Paris didn't bother to respond. He merely carried out his orders. The ship was headed toward Earth again quickly.

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Mulder was settling into his new quarters on Voyager less than an hour later. They were not nearly as nice as those on his ship, but then he was not expecting to spend all that much time in them, either.

Noticing the blinking light on the computer console, he said, "Computer, play message."

"Forwarded from Supply and Retrieval ship 'Samantha', time delayed by three hours," the computer informed him.

"Acknowledged," Mulder said. "Play message."

"Hey," he heard Miller say. "For your sake, I hope you decided to stay with Dana. Either way, it was interesting to meet you and hear your story. Take care of Sam for me. Fare well and Godspeed. Oh, and if you ARE staying with Voyager, I'll tell you a secret. There's a spot just behind Dana's left ear that you really should check out. Miller out."

Grinning widely, Fox got ready to go to Dana's cabin for dinner.

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Safely back in their own dimension, Voyager was once again heading toward home. Chief Engineer B'Elanna Torres and her crews were modifying all the replicators to be more energy efficient per the information given to her by Lana Torres.

After helping the engineering crews for a shift and a half, Harry Kim took a break and read from a PADD the message that he had downloaded from his terminal earlier.

Harry,

I was sorry to hear what happened to Lindsey. However, you shouldn't let that keep you from enjoying life to the fullest. Harry and I enjoyed spending the past few days with you, and we wish you all the best.

Lindsey

PS: Harry suggests you ask Megan Delaney out. Something about being the "right" one?

He was smiling as he read through it the third time.

"May I join you, Ensign?" Seven of Nine asked.

Harry looked up and found her looking to him in polite inquiry. "Certainly," he agreed, waving at the empty seat across the table.

Seven put down her mug of nutritional sludge after a quick sip. Seeing him reading and smiling again, she asked, "Is something amusing?"

He held up the PADD slightly. "Just some dating advice."

"I was unaware that dating advice is considered to be amusing."

"It's ironic when you're giving yourself the advice," he said, thumbing the display off and laying the PADD down. "But you didn't come here to hear about my dating habits. What's up, Seven?"

"I believe we overlooked something regarding Scout Mulder."

He cocked his head in concern. "What's that?"

"He said that he had been in contact with Voyager. That implies Starfleet is as well, otherwise they would not have sent him out to meet them."

He nodded slowly. "I suppose you're right," he agreed, not knowing where she was going.

"I queried the Samantha's computer and learned that they were in fact in daily communication with Starfleet. I believe that we can use a similar method."

Harry brightened considerably upon learning that there was a potential communications link available to them. "Did you get the specs?"

Seven nodded. "It involves bouncing a subspace link off of a singularity . . ."

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Reading through crew reports in his office, Commander Chakotay was surprised when his terminal chimed at him. "Time delayed message from Lieutenant Lana Torres-Chakotay," it announced.

He smiled. Leave it to her to get in the last word. "Play message," he invited the computer.

"Chakotay," Lana's voice came over the speaker, "I know you. I know that you're working right now, trying to forget all about us and what we represent. Well, I won't let you. You're entirely too good a man to be that lonely."

Chakotay smiled sadly. She was right. He didn't want to think about what he could have had.

Lana's voice continued, "Because I love you so much, I'm going to give you some advice that I would never have expected to give you. I'm encouraging you to date someone," she said in a tone that managed to be both serious and playful simultaneously. "You know who I'm referring to," she went on, more seriously. "Life's too short to pay that much attention to what the crew MIGHT think of you. Just give it some thought. And if you don't believe me, ask your spirit guide. I'm sure he agrees with me."

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"Commander," Janeway greeted in surprise upon finding him at her door just after midnight.

"Kathryn," he responded politely. "I was wondering if we could talk."

"Of course," she said, stepping aside so he could enter. "Come on in. Can I get you something?"

"Herbal tea would be fine, thanks," he said, taking a seat on her couch.

Sitting beside him moments later, Janeway handed him a mug and then wrapped her hands around her own steaming mug. "What can I do for you, Chakotay?"

He shifted nervously, trying to choose his words. "I received a time delayed message from the other Voyager a few hours ago. Lana sent me a message and gave me some advice."

Janeway suddenly started fiddling with her mug.

"Kathryn?" Chakotay asked. He recognized the signs of nervousness but could not for the life of him figure out why SHE would be nervous.

"I received a message, too," Janeway answered after a fortifying sip. "It was from Commander Scully. And it was . . . personal," she finished after a delicate pause, still not looking up.

"Do you want to talk about it?" he offered.

"Was your message . . . personal as well?" she asked instead. At his quiet affirmative, she continued, "Do YOU want to talk about your message?"

"I've always been willing to talk about it, Kathryn. Are you?" he asked softly. The multiple meanings behind the words were crystal clear between the two of them.

Kathryn Janeway finally pulled her eyes from the mug in her hands and to the man sitting next to her. "Yes, I think I am," she whispered.

Chakotay's face slowly broke into a smile.