

STAR TREK: VOYAGER

"FORAGERS"

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Registered WGAw

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER (OPTICAL)

She APPROACHES US at an angle. She has entered a close orbit around a very large gas planet, much like Jupiter, which looms in B.G.

INT. BRIDGE

PARIS at the helm, glancing at both his console and the O.C. Main Viewing Screen.

PARIS

Ten minutes to perijove, Captain.

JANEWAY is in her command chair, CHAKOTAY at her side. KIM and TUVOK at their stations. Janeway activates shipwide com.

JANEWAY

All hands. This is the Captain. Ten minutes to commence standdown.

CHAKOTAY

This still takes a little getting used to, Captain. We usually standdown after we leave a system.

JANEWAY

When human space exploration was in its infancy, our deep space probes used The Grand Tour to work their way out of our solar system. There's nothing in the rulebook that says a starship can't use the same approach to work its way into another solar system.

(to Chakotay; smiles)

And it's a proper window for standing down. We maintain sufficient impulse power to adjust our trajectory. We have plenty of time to repair and recalibrate... take inventory... and let Torres and Kim install some of their system upgrades. We might even get in some exploration on the side.

TUVOK

All the same, Captain, I recommend launching a probe to investigate the other side of that sun. May I suggest the pole of the ecliptic as its target?

CHAKOTAY

Mister Tuvok, I'm no astrophysicist, but I sometimes dabble. I think we'll reach that sun before the probe gives us the pleasure of the view.

TUVOK

That may be true. I nonetheless recommend a probe as a precaution, if not as a necessary supplement to Mister Kim's scans... as he will be busy with his upgrades.

JANEWAY

Gentlemen, we are not in a race with the sun... And, I am not in a race with myself. Launch the probe, Mister Tuvok.

TUVOK

(fingers console; we  
HEAR the sendoff)

Probe away...

JANEWAY

Mister Paris, maintain course and log all corrections, manual or otherwise.

PARIS

(faces Janeway)

Captain, if you like, I can easily program a subroutine to do that more efficiently.

JANEWAY

Alright. But I want an eyeball scan of the log done periodically. Your eyeball, Helmsman.

PARIS

(smiles and works on  
console)

Aye, Captain.

(as much to himself,  
aloud)

Did I ever introduce you to my Delta VEE-jah billiards shot? I named it after the trajectory. The table moves the ball. If it bounces off my opponent's ball at just the right speed and with the just right amount of spin, it prevents my opponent from doing what he wants with his next shot. And maybe even the shot after that.

We glimpse a highly skeptical Kim at his console.

PARIS  
(continuing; doesn't  
look, but figures as  
much)

And it works every time... When I  
want it to.

CUT TO:

INT. SICKBAY - DOCTOR'S OFFICE

A quiet study of the DOCTOR. He sits at his desk and studies the hidden desktop display. We linger on this long enough to notice that only his eyes move. He grunts in satisfaction at some revelation, and that's as much a cue for a power outage. FULL LIGHTS and B.G. DISPLAYS GO OUT. Strangely enough, Doc does not, and his form is eerily outlined by the EMERGENCY LIGHTING.

Doc emits a loud sigh, looks around, then TOWARDS US.

DOCTOR  
Splendid.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. BRIDGE

Tuvok at his station, examines his console readout.

TUVOK

Shields up, Captain... A moment...

We glimpse Janeway and Chakotay, expecting a quicker tactical analysis.

TUVOK

(continuing;  
genuinely puzzled)

Shields down. A microwave burst.  
Moderate intensity. Well within  
safety parameters.

JANEWAY

Source?

TUVOK

Off starboard, Captain...

(fingers console)

I am trying to trace its origin, but  
I fear it was much too brief for a  
successful trace.

CHAKOTAY

Like trying to read a handlight beam.

JANEWAY

Background radiation from the planet  
we're orbiting?

TUVOK

The burst was far too coherent for  
that, Captain...

(shakes his head in  
seeming resignation)

And the trace is simply not good  
enough for me to provide a more  
thorough explanation. I am sorry,  
Captain.

JANEWAY

Ops status, Mister Kim?

KIM

(similarly puzzled)

No damage. Some power outages, but everything's coming back online...

(surprised)

Except for Sickbay.

JANEWAY

Check it out.

KIM

Aye, Captain.

Kim EXITS.

CHAKOTAY

We continue, Captain?

JANEWAY

I see no reason not to.

(smiles)

It comes with the territory.

CUT TO:

INT. SICKBAY - DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Doc remains seated behind his desk, in front of and behind the darkened displays. He drums his fingers and again sighs audibly.

Kim ENTERS, holding a PADD. Doc turns in his seat and faces Kim with a forced smile.

DOCTOR

(cold)

Ah... Thank you for checking up on me.

KIM clinically studies his PADD readout as he walks around the office and Sickbay.

KIM

We'll have your systems back online in a few minutes.

DOCTOR

You come right to the point. I like that. And, while we're on the subject, could you kindly explain why, in the middle of a comprehensive system outage, my projection remains at full integrity? Mind you, this is not my attempt to simulate humility. It's strictly professional.

KIM

It's part of our upgrade to the  
Emergency Medical programs.

DOCTOR

An upgrade? Your upgrade?

KIM

It's a temporary improvement, but  
you're patched into more auxiliary  
emergency power than Starfleet design  
originally provided. It's our way of  
saying we want you to stick around.

DOCTOR

That is thoughtful of you, Ensign.  
However, I should be allowed to do  
more during a power outage than  
merely dispense medical advice in a  
darkened room.

KIM

You can, Doctor, but only in an  
emergency.

DOCTOR

This is not an emergency?

KIM

Not if we say it isn't.  
(Doc's nonplussed)  
We're working on it. One upgrade at  
a time...

FULL LIGHTS and B.G. DISPLAYS return.

KIM

(continuing)

I also deliver.

Doc shows some surprise and muted pleasure. He studies the  
hidden desktop display as Kim makes an entry on his PADD,  
then notices Doc's studying with his arms folded across his  
chest.

KIM

(continuing)

By the way, when was the last time  
you touched a keypad?

DOCTOR

(short)

I don't recall...  
(suddenly thoughtful)  
Just a moment... I genuinely don't  
recall.

KIM

Good. You're making progress.

DOCTOR

I'm making... Progress at what?

KIM

You've been accessing and controlling your system displays with your eyes. It's an old approach, but it's only recently occurred to us that your eyesight is much better focused than ours. In fact, if you want to get technical, you don't have eyes at all.

Doc looks at Kim: Who's the doctor here?

KIM

(continuing)

It all saves time and system resources, even if the difference is measured in nanoseconds. Too many of them become milliseconds. Can't have that.

Kim starts to exit, but we catch Doc's genuine response.

DOCTOR

Thank you... Mister Kim.

The irony of a computer system's display of gratitude for an upgrade is not lost on Kim, who's both proud and bemused.

KIM

It's nothing, Doctor.

Kim EXITS. Doc returns to his study and sits noticeably straighter in his chair.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Chakotay mans Kim's station and studies the console readouts.

CHAKOTAY

Results in from the planetary probe, Captain... M-class. Evidence of runaway glaciation. No signs of life, at least not on the surface. We'll have to get closer.

PARIS

(at helm)

I can lay in the course, Captain.



JANEWAY

No, Mister Paris. We proceed with the standdown. The planet will come to us soon enough.

CHAKOTAY

Something else, Captain... The sun is cooling. It may be inconstant. Too soon to tell whether within safety parameters.

JANEWAY

(faces Tuvok)

Could that have been the source of the microwave burst?

TUVOK

From what little I could tell from my trace, that is not likely. Unless the burst was deflected, or somehow rerouted towards us...

JANEWAY

By?

TUVOK

Unknown, Captain...

CHAKOTAY

There's not much else out there. And that's starting to bother me.

JANEWAY

How so, Mister Chakotay?

CHAKOTAY

I've surveyed the sun's outer comet belt and Trojan and Lagrange points, and they contain very little mass. But there's more than a little terrestrial debris orbiting the M-class planet. We'll probably see signs of planetary impact when we get closer...

JANEWAY

Possibly the sun's inconstant gravity.

CHAKOTAY

That wouldn't explain the planet's orbital debris. And there's nothing in its gravimetric or magnetic signature to make it the center of attention for the solar system.

JANEWAY

You dabble well, Commander.  
(faces O.C. Main  
Viewing Screen)  
And I do love a mystery.

CHAKOTAY

But can we afford to solve one while  
standing down?

Janeway pauses, then taps her comlink.

JANEWAY

Captain to Engineering.

TORRES (V.O.)

Torres here, Captain.

JANEWAY

Add your analyses for full systems  
reactivation to your standdown status  
reports... Set up a shipwide signal  
when we reach the point where it  
would take us just as long to bring  
everything back online. And, copy  
Helm on everything.

TORRES (V.O.)

Aye, Captain.

Paris looks at Janeway: Does she plan to make him an  
engineer, too?

JANEWAY

I'm ensuring you get an answer  
when push comes to shove.

PARIS

(smiles, but still  
puzzled)  
Thank you, Captain.

JANEWAY

The classic definition of an  
optimist: You don't know where  
you're going, but you're glad to know  
you're on your way...  
(looks around)  
And we know where we're going.  
(points to main  
display)  
We'll turn left after that sun.  
(faces Tuvok)  
Shields remain on automatic, Mister  
Tuvok. I'll be in my quarters.  
Mister Chakotay, you have the con.

Janeway EXITS. Chakotay studies the O.C. Main Viewing Screen with some bemusement.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Some time has passed. Janeway is in her evening dress, as she prepares for her own "standdown" and sleep.

She has finished a hot beverage and places the cup and saucer on her nightstand. Glances at the framed portrait of her husband. Sits on the edge of her bed.

JANEWAY

Computer...

(the responding BEEP)

Sleep.

LIGHTS DIM. We HEAR the ship alive. She pulls the bed covers over herself. Takes a deep breath. Lies still... but does not close her eyes. They, and the rest of her face, are briefly studied. We glimpse a hint of worry that the night's rest will not, and possibly never will, completely ease or relieve.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER (OPTICAL)

She MOVES FROM US towards the distant but noticeable alien sun, much like ours.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD

Ensign DELL holds a PADD and walks among tiers of color-coded containers. He conducts a routine inventory, which to this day resembles the task performed in a supermarket aisle. He also looks just as interested. He taps his comlink.

DELL

(taps comlink)

Hey, Suss... You copy?

MORAD (V.O.)

Still do, He Who Takes Store.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD - ANOTHER ANGLE

Ensign MORAD performs a similar task in another part of the Bay.

MORAD

I must say that I especially look forward to our sitting down after the swift completion of our rounds and allowing the bio-neural net to make sure our PADDs have stayed in touch throughout. That should take all of... oh, half a second. Maybe two halves, if we make an error.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD - ANOTHER ANGLE

Dell in progress. He nears Morad's location.

DELL

We can do that right now... Lay in a course for two-zero mark zero. Range...

Morad rounds a corner and confronts Dell.

DELL

(continuing; subdued)

Ambush.

MORAD

How much longer?

DELL

As long as it takes. Not too much.

MORAD

Fine by me. The more I look at this thing...

(raises the PADD to his face)

The more I see Sickbay in my future. I hope I see better after Sickbay.

They both walk along and past aisles, glancing around, pointing their PADDs, which BEEP when gathering input, touching keypads to verify and correlate...

DELL

Some personal dee-time looks better and better. But the standdown covers the holodecks, too.

MORAD

Not all the time. We just can't surf off Bentatus Quay... not with that monster of a standing wave... unless you want to share a board.

DELL

No thank you. The simulation  
safeguard keeps reminding me to learn  
how to swim... um, swim much better.

They pass the end of an aisle, the other end of which is set  
against the bulkhead. As they EXIT our view...

INSERT OPTICAL

A man-sized container MATERIALIZES, with VERY LITTLE NOISE.  
It is grey, cylindrical, and featureless.

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD - ANOTHER ANGLE

Dell and Morad finish their round and face each other.

DELL

Done?

MORAD

Well done.

DELL

Verifying...

They each hold their PADD next to the other's, producing a  
DOUBLE BEEP of acknowledgement.

MORAD

Let's call it a morning.

They head back the way they came...

DELL

Let's do something different. Call  
the on-core shift for a nasty game of  
poker. They owe us some holodeck  
credit, and I want more time to learn  
how to swim at a pool of my own  
choosing...

Dell notices what's at the end of the aisle.

DELL

(continuing)

Nuts. I missed that.

He approaches the alien object and holds his PADD up to it.  
The hidden display quickly informs him that nothing like that  
should exist in the ship's stores. Morad is puzzled, but not  
as immediately fearful as Dell, who taps his comlink.

DELL  
(continuing; quick)  
Security. Intruder alert. Cargo Bay  
Six. Sector Bravo.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - TUVOK'S CONSOLE

TUVOK  
Security. Detail to Cargo Bay Six.  
We do not have the intruder on-screen.

DELL (V.O.)  
I do, Security.

TUVOK  
(curious)  
Are you in danger, Ensign?

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD

DELL  
I don't know...

MORAD  
(points PADD to  
object)  
It's not there.

DELL  
(laughs with some  
fear)  
I'm not here, either.

MORAD  
No, it's not registering. Look.

Dell points his PADD at the object and can't quite believe what it does not display. Two Security guards, ALTAN and BECKETT, run up behind the ensigns and stop short, phasers ready.

BECKETT  
(taps comlink)  
Mister Tuvok, we've located the  
intruder.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - TUVOK'S CONSOLE

Tuvok at his post. Chakotay approaches him.

BECKETT (V.O.)

A cylinder. About two meters in height. It looks like a large... fuel slug.

TUVOK

(fingers console)

Position.

BECKETT (V.O.)

Stationary at three meters in front of me. End of Aisle Bravo Five. At the bulkhead.

TUVOK

I'm setting up a shield at that fix. I'll contain all of you in another shield. On my way.

(to CHAKOTAY)

Alert the Captain.

Chakotay mans the console as Tuvok EXITS.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD

Same location. Dell and Morad stand further behind the Security guards. Altan in defensive stance, phaser ready. Beckett takes readings with a tricorder. Tuvok approaches them from behind, and HIS PERSONAL SHIELD BLENDS INTO THEIRS as he works his way between them to face the slug. A moment of sheer curiosity, but duty quickly takes over...

TUVOK

Still no readings, Mister Beckett?

BECKETT

None. It simply isn't there.

DELL

It was there, Mister Tuvok.

(which is nonsense)

My PADD couldn't identify it. I sounded the alarm because it didn't look like anything lost I ever found.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD - ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

The slug glows brighter and changes color to something hotter. The portion of the floor and bulkhead behind it quickly follow suit.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - HOLD

TUVOK  
Get out... NOW!

Dell, Morad and Altan run. Beckett draws his phaser and stays with Tuvok, who taps his comlink.

TUVOK  
(continuing)  
Hull breach, my position!

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

Dell and Morad stand in the corridor. Altan mans the door control panel. VERY QUICKLY, Beckett is literally thrown into the corridor, a BANG and FLASH OF LIGHT come from within the Cargo Bay, and a SHUTTING-OFF SOUND signals the automated systems' sealing the hull breach.

Beckett pulls himself up to the doorway.

BECKETT  
Mister Tuvok...

Tuvok appears in the doorway, dazed and bloody, but more concerned for the others' safety and the near-fatal puzzle he's just confronted.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE



## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Conference. Janeway, Chakotay, Tuvok, Kim, TORRES. Tuvok wears a head dressing.

TUVOK

We had sufficient warning, Captain...  
But without witnesses the intruder  
would not have been detected.

JANEWAY

A guess, Mister Tuvok.

TUVOK

(it's starting to  
bother him)

I would like a great deal more to  
work with. Logic... and, I will admit,  
hindsight... would seem to dictate the  
conclusion that it was a bomb. If,  
however, we establish that that  
was not the purpose for which it was  
designed, I would say it was a probe.

JANEWAY

From where?

CHAKOTAY

We scanned for vessels or objects  
that could serve as launch sites.  
We're only now approaching the  
nearest asteroid, but that was well  
beyond our transporter range when the  
intruder arrived.

TORRES

Then it could have come from anywhere.

CHAKOTAY

Yes. From ahead or behind us.  
Somewhere.

JANEWAY

(to everyone)

Where do you suggest we start looking?

TUVOK

Captain, I first suggest we maintain  
our shields at maximum. I do not  
understand why you have not raised  
our alert status, or at least sounded  
General Quarters.

JANEWAY

For a very simple reason, Mister Tuvok... I don't know if we've truly been attacked.

Tuvok registers a Vulcan's surprise.

JANEWAY

(continuing)

Where did the intruder come from? Was it trying to communicate with us? We're still not near enough the planet ahead to identify life forms, let alone prove power generated there by artificial means. We just don't know any more about the intruder, or who might have sent it, than before it arrived.

KIM

Yes, we do, Captain... A little more. I reviewed the Ops deck status logs for the period just before Ensign Dell's alarm. The intruder registered for three seconds before it disappeared. Except we have witnesses that it did not disappear.

CHAKOTAY

And a hole in Voyager as further proof.

JANEWAY

(to Kim)

How did it register?

KIM

(wishes he had a better answer)

As an inert solid object.

CHAKOTAY

A large fuel slug.

KIM

Yes.

CHAKOTAY

Captain, for some reason I'm beginning to agree with you. But seeing its ability to cloak in plain sight, it would help if we knew why it would want to disguise itself as part of our propulsion system.

PARIS (V.O.)  
Helm to Captain.

JANEWAY  
Go ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - HELM

Paris studies his console and the O.C. Main Viewing Screen.

PARIS  
We're approaching the nearest Trojan  
point in this system. Shall I put  
more distance between us?

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

JANEWAY  
Maintain present course and speed,  
Mister Paris. Security, raise  
shields to maximum until we are the  
same distance from the Trojans as we  
were before the intruder boarded us...

(looks around)

A good way to determine range. We'll  
still let the Universe do our work  
for us.

(to Tuvok)

Then I'll decide about our alert  
status. For now, I want you to  
presume that any other intruders out  
there can cloak... I know that all  
we have to judge how well they can  
cloak is Starfleet records and our  
own experience. It's illogical...  
but most new things are.

(to Torres)

What is your estimate for completion  
of all standdown tasks?

TORRES  
One cycle, Captain. I added some  
time for review. Do you want us to  
continue?

Janeway pauses, realizing she's about to ask everybody to  
walk the same tightrope she feels she's on herself.

JANEWAY

Yes. Call it intuition, but I don't feel we've been threatened. And until we know a great deal more about what we're facing, I want us to get used to being prepared for any and all options. But...

(not a command)

I'd like opinions, not second guesswork.

TORRES

(looks around; pauses)

We can do it, Captain.

JANEWAY

(smiles; she needed that)

Thank you. That's all I need.

All except Torres and Kim EXIT. They look at each other, and recognized they've recommitted themselves.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER AND ASTEROIDS (OPTICAL)

She travels AWAY FROM US. The B.G. alien sun has grown closer but the view is partially obscured by a swarm of asteroids.

ANOTHER ANGLE on Voyager, APPROACHING US more slowly. Some asteroids pass above and beneath her, their sunward faces cratered and lit in stark relief.

ANOTHER ANGLE, as Voyager moves AWAY FROM US. From the dark side of an asteroid which Voyager passes A FLASH OF LIGHT detaches and follows Voyager more slowly than its apparent quarry.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - ALIEN SPACECRAFT (OPTICAL)

An insect-like spacecraft APPROACHES US. It is dark, battered, weathered and obviously very old, but it's functional and moves with purpose. It gives no hint of harboring lifeforms, or ever having harbored any.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGINEERING - TORRES'S CONSOLE

Torres stands at her console, poised over a display, and flanked by LEMKE and OTHER PERSONNEL in B.G.

TORRES

(to all)

We are in Reduced Power Mode,  
Captain's Orders... And I've given  
the Captain my word this will be the  
quickest R.P.M. in Starfleet history.  
The only exceptions I've been told to  
make concern the sensor arrays and  
deflector systems. Mister Lemke...

Lemke steps forward.

TORRES

(continuing)

You conduct the Level Five systems  
analysis. I want that on-screen and  
final in thirty minutes. And I want  
you to improve on that.

LEMKE

(smiles at the  
challenge)

Aye.

TORRES

All hourly energy budget and  
consumption reports are to be made  
every fifteen minutes. You can  
safely assume we're in a race with  
Mister Tuvok and Security with their  
crew status survey. You know the  
rest... It's by the book... not the  
condensed version... and it will be  
read yesterday, when the Captain asks  
for it. Let's go.

The other personnel MOVE O.C. to their stations. Lemke  
remains.

LEMKE

(approaches Torres)

Lieutenant...

TORRES

(faces him)

Yes.

LEMKE

With sensors and deflectors on full,  
should the backup fusion systems  
remain offline?

TORRES

(a beat)

Yes. Keep them on standby, but I want them online without my having to say so...

(faces console)

Computer.

We HEAR the ACKNOWLEDGING BEEP.

TORRES

(continuing)

Program activation sequence for backup fusion systems on my tactile signal. Two taps...

Torres taps her comlink badge twice, and we HEAR TWO ACKNOWLEDGING BEEPS of another tone.

TORRES

(continuing)

Delete sequence on my voice command.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

Sequence order confirmed.

Torres faces Lemke and nods her approval. Lemke goes to his station and Torres faces the console, a glimpse at her private acknowledgement of the tightrope.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER AND ALIEN SPACECRAFT (OPTICAL)

Voyager in B.G. pulls SLOWLY AWAY FROM US. The insect-like spacecraft in F.G. slowly gains on Voyager.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Tuvok at his console.

TUVOK

Captain, we have an object bearing towards us. Off starboard. Range...

(doesn't quite

believe this)

Captain, it is... no longer registering. Scanning for cloaked transit.

(surprise again)

I have it again. It leaves an ionized trail. Rudimentary cloaking. Maintaining course and speed.

JANEWAY

Is it pursuing us?

TUVOK

It is not gaining on us.

JANEWAY

Mister Paris, let's see it.

PARIS

(at helm)

Aye, Captain. On-screen.

CUT TO:

MAIN VIEWING SCREEN (OPTICAL)

The stars RECEDE FROM US, but the view is normal...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Chakotay and Janeway stand near Paris. All face the Main Viewing Screen.

CHAKOTAY

Well, it's improved its cloak.

JANEWAY

(faces him)

You think it sent the slug?

Chakotay nods, then shrugs.

TUVOK

(at his post)

Something is wrong.

(studies console)

Mister Paris, kindly enhance the display with Tactical input.

PARIS

(touches console)

Done.

CUT TO:

MAIN VIEWING SCREEN (OPTICAL)

Concentric circles or boxes focus on the center of the display. Data scroll at corners, but no other visible change.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

JANEWAY

I don't understand.

TUVOK

Captain, with any cloaking device I know of there is distortion of surrounding space and subspace. My Tactical readout tells me this in fact occurring. But the enhanced visual display shows nothing. I must conclude that the cloak somehow affects the display more completely.

CHAKOTAY

Selective cloaking. That is an improvement.

JANEWAY

Has it come nearer?

TUVOK

(studies console)

No. It is maintaining range.

JANEWAY

All stop.

PARIS

Aye, Captain.

Janeway approaches Tuvok at his post and glances at the Main Viewing Screen.

JANEWAY

Maintain shields. Do we have anything else to go on besides its cloaking ability?

TUVOK

We do not.

CHAKOTAY

Captain, I suggest we pull away.

JANEWAY

Not yet. I don't want to wait for it to decide to follow us. Mister Kim, let's hail it...

We HEAR the ACKNOWLEDGING BEEP of Kim's work.



JANEWAY

(continuing)

This is Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation starship Voyager. We are hailing the vessel off our starboard. Please identify yourself and your intentions.

TUVOK

(quick)

Captain, it's closing in.

JANEWAY

Weapons at full. Hold your fire.

(urgent)

This is the Federation starship Voyager, hailing the alien vessel. Identify yourself.

(to Tuvok)

Any powering-up of weapons systems, deflectors, on that vessel?

TUVOK

I cannot say. It remains cloaked.

A glimpse of Chakotay looking at Janeway, who is showing genuine and quite uncharacteristic command indecision.

CHAKOTAY

Captain, we can't hail it forever.

TUVOK

(also noticing)

Captain?

JANEWAY

(to Tuvok)

Arm a photon torpedo and set for proximity.

(faces screen)

Alien vessel, this is the captain of the vessel you are pursuing. You have ten seconds to identify yourself.

CUT TO:

MAIN VIEWING SCREEN (OPTICAL)

No change.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

JANEWAY  
(a mental count; a  
quick breath)

Fire.

TUVOK  
Torpedo away.

CUT TO:

MAIN VIEWING SCREEN (OPTICAL)

A blinding light, then a scattering of DEBRIS from what could only have been the cloaked alien spacecraft.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

A glimpse of Janeway looking hurt and lost. She glances at Chakotay, silently seeking support for her decision.

A glimpse of Chakotay, turning TOWARDS US and the O.C. Main Viewing Screen. He is curious, puzzled, concerned--and quite possibly afraid.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Janeway sits, but has the same look we glimpsed earlier in her quarters. Chakotay and Tuvok stand.

JANEWAY  
I kept wishing it was a holographic  
projection until it started closing  
in on us.

(closes her eyes;  
kneads her brow)

I don't mind dealing with the  
unknown. It just doesn't make things  
easier when it does everything  
possible to stay unknown.

CHAKOTAY  
Perhaps not completely unknown. What  
more do we... suspect after this  
latest encounter?

TUVOK

It was a larger vessel than the slug. It approached us from behind. Unless it possesses a transdimensional capability... to which, I should add, we lack any effective defense... I can only guess its launching point as among the asteroids. And... that is all I can hazard a guess at.

CHAKOTAY

There is no sign of life on the major planet ahead of us. You should not presume the vessel we destroyed was manned. I'm certain we're dealing with an automated defense system.

JANEWAY

(pauses)

Gentlemen... Do we pose a greater risk to ourselves by maintaining our present course?

TUVOK

That would logically depend on an analysis of the risks we would face if we exited the system.

CHAKOTAY

We owe nothing to the unknown, Captain... except, under circumstances such as these, a little respect.

TUVOK

(to Chakotay)

I would add a little curiosity to that.

Janeway manages a tired smile.

JANEWAY

I have demons for senior officers... But they're occasional demons. Gentlemen, we maintain present course, speed and operational status, with one exception... Voyager comes back online now.

(taps comlink badge)

Engineering, this is the Captain.

TORRES (V.O.)

Captain, we have a problem.

JANEWAY

What is it, B'Elanna?

CUT TO:

INT. ENGINEERING - TORRES'S CONSOLE

Torres studies her hidden displays. Lemke studies same over her shoulder.

TORRES

All ship environmental systems control programs have been accessed and restored without authorization.

JANEWAY (V.O.)

When did this happen?

TORRES

Ten minutes ago. We had done a random batch check with backup files for the systems analysis. Everything seems to work, but I can't vouch for the environmental systems without a full program check.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Janeway looks at the men. Her face reveals yet another puzzle they must all confront: Does Voyager remain under attack?

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ENGINEERING - TORRES'S CONSOLE

TORRES  
(addresses console)  
Computer... verify file comparison  
analysis.

COMPUTER'S VOICE (V.O.)  
The specified files are identical to  
the Gamma cycle backup files.

TORRES  
Who authorized the Gamma cycle backup?

COMPUTER'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Lieutenant Torres.

Torres sits back and looks directly at Janeway, flanked by  
Chakotay and Tuvok. Lemke stands in B.G.

TUVOK  
I believe it is standard procedure  
for the Chief Engineer to provide the  
necessary authorization.

TORRES  
Correct. Only I did not provide it.

JANEWAY  
But you had set up a manual switch  
through your comlink.

TORRES  
Yes. And I did not access it.

TUVOK  
The system says you did.

TORRES  
The system is wrong.

CHAKOTAY  
B'Elanna... Did you program a  
subroutine to your link that would  
override the automated backup cycle?

TORRES  
(has just about  
enough of this; to  
Janeway)  
Captain, I have an excellent memory.

JANEWAY

Lieutenant, a simple yes or no will suffice.

TORRES

(seething; faces  
Chakotay)

No. I did not plan to override any of the automated systems. And I executed no plan to override.

JANEWAY

Thank you, B'Elanna.

(to Chakotay and  
Tuvok)

I say we replace all current environmental systems files with the Gamma cycle backups.

(to Torres)

How long will that take?

TORRES

(no sarcasm)

Not as long as I what I was going to suggest.

Torres silently fingers her console. We HEAR the computer beeps, but she does not look at anyone else until she finishes.

TORRES

(continuing)

It's standard procedure to safe the operating system before replacement or upgrade. We don't have that luxury right now, so I must turn it off before I can turn it on again.

JANEWAY

Can you selectively minimize the effects?

TORRES

Optimal minimization would involve all decks, but I don't think you want that. We're going to have to move some people around...

(faces Janeway)

And it's going to get a bit warmer around here before it gets cooler. We need time.

JANEWAY

Time we do not have, Lieutenant. Do it.

TORRES  
(facing console)  
Aye, Captain.

JANEWAY  
Let me know when it's complete.  
(to Chakotay and  
Tuvok)  
Standdown's over. And we're leaving.  
(taps comlink)  
Captain to Bridge. Mister Kim, I  
want a survey of all backup system  
power routing. Double-time, and  
report directly to me. Have Mister  
Paris assist you, but do not place  
helm under bioneural control.

KIM (V.O.)  
Aye, Captain.

JANEWAY  
(to all)  
I'll be in the Ready Room. When  
Lieutenant Torres is finished, I want  
a briefing on how to exit this system  
as quickly as possible and with as  
much of our ship and crew as possible.

Janeway EXITS. Chakotay and Tuvok glance at each other;  
Tuvok EXITS. Chakotay glances at Torres with a glimpse of  
sympathy, but Torres purposely avoids eye contact.

CHAKOTAY  
That's what they say about the  
future: It's coming soon.

To which Torres looks directly at Chakotay: Her eyes say,  
"Don't." Chakotay just as quietly gets the message.

TORRES  
(faces console)  
Mister Lemke, we have a lot of work  
to do. Again.

Lemke dutifully approaches Torres and observes the console  
displays. Chakotay realizes he won't get any further just  
now, and EXITS.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE JEFFERIES TUBE

Kim and Paris near the tube's entrance. Kim carries a metal  
toolkit; Paris holds a PADD.

PARIS  
This is the place.

KIM

I want this quick. There's another power drain on Deck Eight, but I figured we'd get there quicker through the tube.

Kim enters the tube first; Paris follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEFFERIES TUBE

A horizontal passage. Side-by-side. Kim looks straight ahead; Paris glances at the PADD.

PARIS

Deck Eight drainage steady.

KIM

If it goes red, I'll send Hawthorne's team in there. We'll meet them at the deuterium tankage.

Kim stops. Paris looks in Kim's direction; they both see something we don't...

A slug sits in the middle of the passageway in front of them, SILENTLY blocking their progress.

They unselfconsciously speak softly.

PARIS

Tell me this doesn't get easier.

KIM

How does it read?

PARIS

(studies PADD)

It hasn't figured out how to cloak a power drain.

KIM

So it can create a Faraday cage, and it can't shield itself from that. That's good to know.

PARIS

Knowledge is better shared, Harry.

KIM

(taps comlink)

Captain... We've located another slug. Visual contact. The constant power drain is another clue.



JANEWAY (V.O.)

Thank you, Mister Kim. What's your status?

KIM

(thinks)

Um... indeterminate.

PARIS

(winces)

We're running short of nice thoughts at the moment, Captain.

TUVOK (V.O.)

I recommend you withdraw. Slowly.

KIM

(nods)

Agreed.

PARIS

Slowly.

The two crawl backwards, away from the motionless slug.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE JEFFERIES TUBE

Paris's legs appear first. He helps Kim out of the tube. Both back away slowly from the tube entrance, then together audibly let out the same deep breath.

KIM

(taps comlink)

Mister Tuvok... Have you set up a shield around the slug?

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - TUVOK'S CONSOLE

TUVOK

I have indeed, Mister Kim. And I am purposely ignoring my tactical displays, which inform me, no doubt incorrectly, that the shield surrounds empty space.

Janeway approaches the console.

TUVOK

(continuing)

It shall remain in place until the power drain ceases. I suggest you proceed to Deck Eight.

JANEWAY

(taps comlink, calm)

Belay that, Ensign. Torres has completed the environmental systems reboot. Report to the Ready Room. I want that briefing now. Mister Paris, return to the con.

Janeway looks at Tuvok and EXITS. Tuvok glances at the O.C. Main Viewing Screen and raises an eyebrow in an attempt to understand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Chakotay, Janeway and Tuvok stand. Torres paces at close quarters. Kim is on the edge of his seat, his hands folded in front of his mouth. An intentionally tighter fit than the Briefing Room...

JANEWAY

(nearest Torres)

It's getting warmer already.

CHAKOTAY

Our proximity to the sun has something to do with that...

(Tuvok glances at him)

No doubt.

TUVOK

The evacuation of Decks Seven and Eight is complete.

JANEWAY

We have a bomb onboard Voyager.

TUVOK

(Vulcan surprise)

Captain, that is still not a logical conclusion without further...

JANEWAY

(angry)

Mister Tuvok, it is a logical precaution, and I don't need anything further to prove my concern.

CHAKOTAY

(to Kim)

Are there any other suspicious power drains?

KIM

(rubs his hands  
together)

No. And Deck Eight's reading was a  
malfunction in the readout...

(glances at Tuvok)

I mean... That's what the diagnostic  
called it.

JANEWAY

(calmer yet direct,  
to Tuvok)

Call it a bomb in the metaphorical  
sense, Mister Tuvok. And whoever's  
planting it gets smarter by the  
minute.

(taps comlink)

Helm...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - HELM

PARIS

Aye, Captain.

JANEWAY (V.O.)

Do you have control?

PARIS

(raises hands  
confidently)

Helm answers.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

JANEWAY

(to Torres)

Engineering?

TORRES

Warp drive's back on-line. We're  
ready.

JANEWAY

Very well, Mister Paris. Use impulse  
to break away, and maximum available  
warp at heliopause. I want this very  
gradual, but very noticeable. We are  
leaving this system on our own terms.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - HELM

PARIS  
(fingers console)  
Aye, Captain, I can give you a slow  
hard right turn to the nearest...

The console BEEPS in seeming disapproval.

PARIS  
(continuing)  
Captain, I read blockage in impulse  
fuel supply. All mains and  
subsidiaries. Minimum impulse. And  
it's getting slower.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Janeway and Torres, side-by-side, both on comlink. Janeway  
faces Torres.

TORRES  
Mister Lemke...

CUT TO:

INT. ENGINEERING - TORRES'S CONSOLE

Lemke faces the hidden displays in disbelief.

TORRES (V.O.)  
Have you traced the blockage?

LEMKE  
No blockage. And no frozen  
deuterium. We're empty.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Janeway and Torres in quiet dread.

LEMKE (V.O.)  
We've only line residue. Primary  
tank. Auxiliary tanks. They've been  
completely drained.

JANEWAY  
When did this happen, mister?

LEMKE (V.O.)  
(on the spot)  
I... I need a file check...

TORRES

(unusually calm)

Now. Stop whatever else you're  
doing, and run the check right now.

LEMKE (V.O.)

(weak)

Aye.

Torres sits. She suddenly looks like she's been tackled.  
The weight of a starship sits on her shoulders, and she well  
knows everybody's eyes focus on her. Janeway knows this  
feeling; she speaks more calmly.

JANEWAY

B'Elanna. We have options.

TORRES

(a measured voice;

she does not look up)

Yes, Captain. We do. But we do not  
have impulse power. And we do not  
have microwave power from the electro  
plasma system unless we engage warp  
drive.

CHAKOTAY

The propulsion systems were safed.

TORRES

Yes. Standard procedure for  
standdown and shutdown. Fuel flow  
was fully valved off.

CHAKOTAY

And the deuterium was readily  
accessible.

KIM

(realizing)

On Deck Eight.

TUVOK

While we shielded an intruder on Deck  
Seven... that masked another power  
drain as a malfunction.

No one knows what to say. Janeway sits behind her desk. She  
looks very sad.

JANEWAY

We have a little more time after all.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER (OPTICAL)

Voyager approaches the B.G. sun, which looms larger. We glimpse a bright point near the sun: The M-class planet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Paris at his station. Chakotay stands behind him and studies the console. They talk among themselves. Janeway sits in her command chair.

PARIS

There's plenty of what we need in interstellar space, but we'd have to go to warp to get there. Warp Point One would give us two days... But any warp too close to the sun risks a slingshot effect.

CHAKOTAY

We can bleed antimatter into the impulse reaction chambers, but that's that much less antimatter available for power taps into the warp reaction core.

PARIS

We do have a little fuel left for impulse. I'd keep it for course corrections and just try to avoid getting us trapped in solar orbit. We can "Grand Tour" back to the gas-giant planet, or possibly the M-class, and search for processable materials. I'd even risk lowering an electrodynamic tether into either planet's atmosphere... But...

(to Janeway)

I'm not sure I'd want to linger in this part of the neighborhood at night.

Janeway does not respond. She gazes intently at the O.C. Main Viewing Screen. Chakotay turns to face her, then comes to her side.

CHAKOTAY

Captain?

JANEWAY

(does not look at him)

I'm right here, Commander.

(now she does,  
managing a smile)

JANEWAY

(continuing)

I've just been wondering who's been extending the invitation for us to stay.

CHAKOTAY

Stay? On the M-class planet?  
It's barely habitable.

PARIS

(faces O.C. Main  
Viewing Screen)

But it is cooler.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HYDROPONICS GARDEN

SUDER, alone and holding a PADD, walks between rows of plants, studies them intently.

He reaches the end of a row, and walks back the way he came, recording his observations on the PADD... and walks unknowingly into a motionless slug that blocks the path.

His reaction puzzles... He certainly has no idea what this item is, or who put it there--only that he had nothing to do with it, and it does not belong in his ordered world. But, after a pause that reveals a growing anger, he suddenly kicks the slug, which remains impassive.

This would be funny if we did not also glimpse something frightening and desperate in his behavior. He glares at the slug, steps back a few paces, and hurls his PADD at it. The PADD bounces off the slug harmlessly.

He breathes noticeably louder. Tries to form words, but does not, possibly cannot speak. Reaches for a gardening tool, throws it uselessly at the slug. A phial of liquid. An empty plastic tray. A fistful of solid nutrient or earth. All while backing up slowly against the bulkhead. (The slug remains out of view, an unseen menace.)

When he reaches row's end, he places his back flat against the bulkhead and arches his head skyward, eyes jammed shut, with a grimace of pain that devolves into uncontrollable sobs of anguish. He sinks to the floor, curls into a fetal position, covers his ears with his arms. He whimpers, cries, and mutters to himself through clenched teeth...

SUDER

Leave me alone... Get out!

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SICKBAY

Suder lies motionless on a bed. KES silently scans him with a handheld medprobe. Tuvok stands next to Kes, and it's obvious that he is both curious and pensive about knowing the truth.

KES

(completes scan)

He's resting. Mild trauma. A  
Betazoid form of shock.

TUVOK

But no physical injury...

KES

None.

Tuvok silently moves to stand at the foot of the bed, where Doc has also kept quiet vigil.

DOCTOR

You suspect the intruder?

TUVOK

Yes. But I only have a localized  
power drain as a clue. I can safely  
assume from what was left of the  
garden that the ensign was trying to  
protect himself.

DOCTOR

Why not mind-meld with him?

TUVOK

I do not want to place him at further  
risk. I would prefer him conscious  
for that... and willing.

(looks at Suder)

What do you intend to do with him  
when Sickbay shuts down?

DOCTOR

Keep him in low-level stasis and have  
him taken to his quarters.

TUVOK

The security detail will physically  
relocate him. Will you still monitor  
him?



DOCTOR

Kes will. She will have access to my program through the room monitor...

Doc moves next to Kes, who still watches Suder.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

I'm rather looking forward to what Ensign Kim describes as my remote dispersal. It's part of my upgrade, you know... Saves power, and I'm told the only substantive change will be less of me to see on your personal displays. But I'll be there in spirit... So to speak.

TUVOK

Please inform me of any change in his medical condition. A security detail will remain outside his quarters.

Tuvok EXITS. Kes and Doc enter his office.

DOCTOR

After they move Ensign Suder, I'll have a little time left before I become a mere shadow of my usual self.

KES

Would you like me to stay?

DOCTOR

No need. I am more than confident in your abilities. When they turn off the power to this deck, the environment won't be so accommodating to warm-blooded lifeforms. Besides, I'll be safe in my temporary buffer.

He sits at his desk.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

And I'll remain available for any emergency... Unless Ensign Kim says it isn't one.

KES

(smiles)

I shall miss you, again, Doctor. I'll prepare the Ensign's quarters.

She EXITS. Doctor glances at Suder, then faces his desk display, folds his arms, and studies. Suddenly, quietly, his form RIPPLES like an interrupted television signal, then reverts to his original form.

He looks around, stands, and gazes at the B.G. displays as one would study an art exhibit. He touches some of them.

He FACES US and the op theater, his mouth uncharacteristically open. He walks to Suder's bed, then turns to face a slug in the middle of the theater...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MESS HALL

Tuvok dines alone, the STARS behind him and LIGHT coming only from the kitchen.

NEELIX observes from the kitchen. He at first thinks the better of disturbing Tuvok--knowing it's easily done--but yields to his own compulsion to lend an ear. He approaches Tuvok.

NEELIX

I apologize for the cold plomik soup.

TUVOK

(not bothered)

I can overlook its temperature. It is much improved. And I am grateful you chose not to season it further to compensate for its temperature.

NEELIX

(warmed by that)

I've always admired your constitution, Mister Tuvok. Then again, I've always admired anyone with a healthy appetite... May I join you?

He does not wait for a response, but sits across the table from Tuvok and keeps a respectful distance. Tuvok continues eating.

TUVOK

You need not attempt to flatter me as a precondition to dining with me. In fact, you need not flatter, or even offer mild praise... Survival is a logical process, even if the logic does not reveal itself under the most rigorous scrutiny.

TUVOK

(continuing)

Further, I have learned that accepting the inevitable serves only to make it less so... And so I have my supper.

NEELIX

Stress makes the better cook as well, Mister Tuvok.

TUVOK

(puts his spoon down)

Stress?

NEELIX

With all due respect, you look quite puzzled.

TUVOK

(pauses, then direct)

I am indeed puzzled.

NEELIX

Over something you can talk to me about... over supper?

TUVOK

(folds his arms)

I have tried to rationalize a hypothetical situation: The intruder's attack on Ensign Suder. This is, of course, based on the possibly faulty assumption that it was in fact the intruder that attacked him.

NEELIX

Then let us assume that it was.

TUVOK

(a logical Neelix?)

I still cannot determine its motive. And, I still cannot discern the logic in any of its appearances onboard our ship.

NEELIX

It appears a very capable thief.

TUVOK

Indeed...

Tuvok mouths another spoonful, but realizes he cannot entirely ignore Neelix's innocent attention. Tuvok stops in apparent thought and puts his spoon down.

TUVOK

(continuing)

May I ask you a hypothetical question?

NEELIX

(genuine)

I would be honored.

TUVOK

You were a salvor of interstellar...  
items... when we first met.

NEELIX

(proud)

I was the best salvor I knew of in  
the entire Delta Quadrant. And I  
didn't know I was in a quadrant until  
I found this wondrous vessel.

Tuvok is somewhat taken aback by this description of their  
introduction.

TUVOK

If you had to salvage Voyager, what  
feature would you value most?

NEELIX

(a sly smile)

A complete lack of resistance... But  
I quibble. A good salvor... a superb  
salvor, such as myself... knows  
precisely what to salvage. Now let  
me see... The propulsion system, if  
it's an improvement... but only if it's  
controllable...

TUVOK

Weapons?

NEELIX

Only if they're salable. And there's  
that wonderful replicator of yours,  
which...

(points to Tuvok's  
soup)

Still has its drawbacks.

TUVOK

(glances at his soup,  
but realizes  
progress)

And if the technology is not known to  
you?

NEELIX

No technology is not known to me, Mister Tuvok. It's just not fully known. That's especially important if any salvor wishes to remain alive for very long... And if I had to salvage Voyager, I wouldn't have to salvage anything else for a very long time.

(sly smile)

I'm revealing my business side... You're not making me an offer... Are you?

Tuvok rises; somewhere he must go.

TUVOK

I am only drawing an analogy.

He walks around the table to exit. Neelix swings around in his chair to look after him.

NEELIX

Do I share the credit?

TUVOK

Only if I am incorrect.

NEELIX

(laughs)

My Vulcan friend, you have a sense of humor after all.

TUVOK

I indeed possess a sense of humor, Mister Neelix. I merely lack the humor of those who perceive the absence of one.

Tuvok EXITS. Neelix grins broadly, laughs to himself, then stops, puzzled into silence by Tuvok's revelation.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

Tuvok walks briskly TOWARDS US. We HEAR his comlink BEEP.

COMPUTER'S VOICE (V.O.)

Security Alert. Sickbay.

TUVOK

(taps comlink)

Tuvok. On my way.

He breaks into a run.

CUT TO:

INT. SICKBAY

Doc stands in the middle of the op theater. Nothing in the surroundings appears disturbed, Suder remains on his bed, and the slug is gone.

Altan, Beckett and Kes surround Doc, Kes closest. He looks directly at her, but does not recognize her. He tries to speak, but cannot. Tries to touch her face--almost does--and suddenly reverts to form.

DOCTOR

Ah, good. Ensign Suder is ready.

KES

Doctor, are you all... Are you functioning?

DOCTOR

(are they bereft?)

Within normal parameters. And I'm supposed to ask you that.

Tuvok ENTERS.

KES

(to Tuvok)

The Doctor did not recognize me when I entered Sickbay.

TUVOK

(to guards)

Remove Ensign Suder to his quarters.

They go to his bed and move it O.C.

TUVOK

(continuing)

Doctor, upload a personal summary of your program log for the past ten minutes to Operations. Encrypt it, and tell us the access password.

DOCTOR

Done. The password is Aesculapius Fourteen.

TUVOK

(quick)

Change it in five minutes, and tell no one the new password.

DOCTOR

You can't program me to do that.

TUVOK

Doctor, I am your patient, and I suffer from an occasional lapse of memory. Keep that in confidence.

(taps comlink)

Mister Kim... Please join me in Engineering.

Tuvok quickly EXITS. Doc and Kes face each other; he with surprise, she with gratitude.

DOCTOR

But he's going to know the new one anyway... Won't he?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Tuvok stands before the table. Chakotay, Janeway, Kim and Torres sit.

TUVOK

The file check revealed a subroutine that had copied all programs without alteration, then recopied them to their original location.

CHAKOTAY

What had taken their place in the main program sequence?

KIM

Nothing. We still don't know if an alien program took over the Emergency Medical Program, but this is the only clue that something took over for the duration of the Doctor's outage.

TORRES

(somewhat morose)

The Doctor's personal summary noted the substitution as an unscheduled backup. The master summary did not.

KIM

The personal summary was part of his upgrade. We caught it in time, while it was buffered, before the Doctor created a new password, and before it was scheduled for deletion.

TORRES

We thought about doing that with Engineering system logs, but the Doctor was our testbed.

CHAKOTAY

So we have proof that something entered our systems and ran them, but we still don't know why.

TUVOK

I do, Commander.

Janeway rises slowly and approaches Tuvok.

JANEWAY

Your theory, Lieutenant.

TUVOK

(she's right)

We have understandably busied ourselves with clues. What we have literally not had the time to consider is motive. I conclude we are not under attack, but under survey. And the intruder is not a conqueror, but a prospector.

CHAKOTAY

A prospector of what, Tuvok?

TUVOK

Of Voyager.

Janeway returns to her seat, stands behind it.

TUVOK

(continuing)

We have been penetrating a systemwide network of devices that are programmed to forage.

JANEWAY

For whom?

TUVOK

Presumably, the inhabitants of the planet ahead.

KIM

Assuming they're still inhabiting, what do we have for them to forage?

TUVOK

That depends on our determination of their needs. And, to do that, Captain, we need to contact them directly.

JANEWAY

I don't think we speak the same language.



TORRES

Yes we do, Captain.

(rises, a little too  
direct)

We entered this system to repair and  
explore, but also to forage for our  
own survival. We know what we need.

CHAKOTAY

(angry)

If they know what they need, then why  
do they need our frozen deuterium?  
Or a piece of our bulkhead?  
Or Ensign Suder?

KIM

Or a medical hologram?

Focus for a moment on Torres. Part of her wants to lash out  
in self-defense; another part wants to retreat. Perhaps she  
does both; she quietly sits, and studies the tabletop in  
withdrawal.

Again, all eyes are on her--Janeway's in particular--but  
Tuvok sees the need to resume his advocacy...

TUVOK

The foragers are machines. We must  
presume a logical explanation for  
their actions. That does not mean it  
must be obvious.

JANEWAY

It would help a great deal to know  
who on the planet to ask.

TUVOK

We must ask the foragers themselves.

KIM

I think we can safely assume they  
would understand us. They know a  
great deal about us already.

JANEWAY

Only if we give them what they want.  
And that appears to be our ship.

TUVOK

Precisely, Captain.

Janeway sits, pauses...

JANEWAY

I commend them for outthinking us.

TUVOK

They have not been outthinking us, Captain. Again, the foragers are logical devices. And, they are self-reproducing automata. They are built simply and functionally, to survive in deep space and on their own, yet to support a system. Each forager's programming is meticulous and highly specialized. I suspect there are many different types of foragers.

TORRES

(mutters; no eye contact)

We built them, Captain...

KIM

(glances at Torres; covers for her)

They helped us colonize our moons and Mars... Mined the asteroids in our own solar system... Probed interstellar space...

TUVOK

We must look for parallels here. And we must keep in mind that they have had the time to examine physical obstacles, and overcome and utilize them for their own purposes through adaptation.

CHAKOTAY

Evolution, Tuvok?

TUVOK

I would not put it quite that way. They adapt quickly. But they are... bacteria. Plants. And... ourselves. They demonstrate the basic design of any organism larger than a virus.

JANEWAY

And make us feel very small.

TUVOK

Captain, they are not smarter than us. They require control and coordination, from a higher level. What we have so far confronted is merely simpler than us.

JANEWAY

(a weak laugh)

Thank you, Tuvok. You surpass your gift for understatement...

JANEWAY

(continuing; serious)

But I do not intend to give them  
Voyager. She's the only starship we  
have.

TUVOK

Not only may you not have the luxury  
of denying them our ship... I fear  
they may already possess her.

A close look at Janeway: She has just lost everything dear  
to her.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER (OPTICAL)

The B.G. alien sun and planet grow larger and more detailed  
as Voyager hurtles towards them.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. TORRES'S QUARTERS

DARKENED, with LIGHT only from a recess in the wall and the STARS outside her window. Torres sits comfortably, her back to the stars. She moves only to assure us that she is in full possession of her senses, and where she really needs to be just now...

We HEAR the entrance chime.

TORRES

Enter.

Chakotay stands in the doorway.

CHAKOTAY

Not foe.

He enters quietly. Stands next to her, observes her.

CHAKOTAY

(continuing)

You are missed.

TORRES

Not by this ship.

CHAKOTAY

Cold comfort, I'm sure, but it wouldn't miss me, either. In fact, if you let it, the Universe has a nasty habit of going on without you.

He squats, now at eye-level with her. She is calmer, but only because he hasn't asked her to snap out of it...

TORRES

I am beginning to dislike anything mechanical.

CHAKOTAY

So you come here, to escape?

TORRES

I just want to... disown things for a while. Before they decide to disown me for good.

CHAKOTAY

And you include us among the enemy?

She pauses, looks away from him.

CHAKOTAY

(continuing)

Well, a holodeck wouldn't suit you right now. You probably couldn't find one that works anyway.

TORRES

You look serene. But you haven't made me more confident. I could use some of that right now.

He stands, looks out the window. A pause to recollect...

CHAKOTAY

Though much is taken, much abides;  
and though we are not now that  
strength which in old days moved  
heaven and earth; that which we are,  
we are.

TORRES

A saying of your people?

CHAKOTAY

A distant cousin. Alfred Lord  
Tennyson. Writing of Ulysses.  
There's a lot more to him than you  
see on Voyager's dedication plaque.

TORRES

Remind me to read all the classics  
when we reach home.

CHAKOTAY

Remind me to tell you all about them.

He returns to her level. She faces him.

TORRES

This is not like you.

CHAKOTAY

And this is not like you. I guess  
only machines are allowed to change.

TORRES

(a deep breath)

We're just not allowed to quit.

CHAKOTAY

(nods)

It's not in the contract. Or the  
blueprint.

(faces her)

You sound better already.

She turns away from him again, hiding a smile. She knows better than to suspect a taunt from him.

Their comlink badges BEEP.

JANEWAY (V.O.)

This is the Captain. I want all senior officers to join me on the bridge.

TORRES

(pauses, taps comlink)  
Captain... Request permission to man my station in Engineering.

JANEWAY (V.O.)

I want you here with me, B'Elanna. We'll patch in what you need.

Chakotay and Torres exchange puzzled looks, which turn into knowing smiles.

CHAKOTAY

(taps comlink)  
On our way, Captain.

They rise to EXIT together.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRIDGE - HELM

All at their stations. Torres stands next to Kim at his console. Janeway stands behind Paris.

PARIS

Ten minutes to perihelion.

JANEWAY

Mister Kim, on my signal, broadcast the data package to Mister Tuvok's coordinates. Tuvok, on the same signal, launch the records probe for insertion into permanent orbit around the planet. All stop until we reach the breakaway point. Then raise shields to maximum. And, Mister Paris, give it everything you got left and get us the hell out of here.

Paris smiles on this.

JANEWAY

(continuing)

If anybody out there wants us that badly, let's give them a run for their money.

TUVOK  
(studies console)  
Unnecessary, Captain. We are being  
approached head-on.

Janeway focuses on the O.C. Main Viewing Screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - FORAGERS (OPTICAL)

Three similar ships, larger and of advanced design, APPROACH  
US in formation and at great speed.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

PARIS  
At least they're gentlemen about it.  
They're meeting us halfway.

JANEWAY  
Do not scan them, Mister Tuvok.

TUVOK  
Captain?

JANEWAY  
They're not cloaked. We won't fight  
them.

CHAKOTAY  
They're expecting us.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER AND FORAGERS (OPTICAL)

The three alien craft rendezvous with Voyager and match her  
course and speed. Two attach themselves to the underside of  
the command module. The third fixes itself on top of the  
lower portion of Voyager, between the warp nacelles.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - HELM

PARIS  
(watches O.C. screen)  
Captain?

JANEWAY  
Does the helm respond?

PARIS

Well, yes, it does, but...

JANEWAY

Then don't just sit there, mister.  
Steer!

Paris fingers his console, then watches the O.C. screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER AND FORAGERS (OPTICAL)

They accelerate and speed around the alien sun, their combined thrust enabling Voyager to easily break out of solar orbit.

ANOTHER ANGLE, as the merged craft approach the M-class planet, its frozen surface gleaming in greater detail.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN HOLODECK

A large white room, ceiling and floor equally white, and non-glare mirrored walls. There are no furnishings. It gives the impression of a site still under construction.

INSERT (OPTICAL)

The Away Team MATERIALIZES IN TRANSPORTER FASHION: Chakotay, Janeway, Kim, Paris, Torres, Tuvok. They dress warmly.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Doc MATERIALIZES IN HOLOGRAM FASHION. He wears the usual uniform, and stands just a little taller...

DOCTOR

Thank you for accepting my invitation.

JANEWAY

And thank you, Doctor.

PARIS

Why do I feel I'm on a holodeck?

DOCTOR

Because you are on a holodeck. My holodeck. More precisely, a much improved version of the holodecks used by the previous inhabitants of this planet.

TUVOK

Improved with our technology.



DOCTOR

Yes, Mister Tuvok, it would appear that I provided it to them.

TUVOK

That would appear a logical assumption.

DOCTOR

For which I fully intend to reciprocate.

JANEWAY

Where are they, Doctor?

CHAKOTAY

Who are they?

DOCTOR

As far as I can access, they are nameless. They left no personal memorials of their existence besides their machines. I suspect they just didn't want anyone to know where they had gone.

CHAKOTAY

Why did they leave?

DOCTOR

Their sun is a mature, main sequence star, slightly hotter than Sol. They were warned by major magnetic fluctuations, then outright geomagnetic storms, which affected the planet's radiation belts. That in turn played havoc with their power generation and distribution systems. They placed their factories in orbit, beyond the belts, in relative safety.

(to Chakotay)

Yes, Commander, that's what's in the orbital debris. Industry. And it all awaits their return.

KIM

But the fluctuations couldn't last long enough to force them to leave the system.

DOCTOR

The solar activity was but a prelude to inconstancy and flares many times the size of this planet. Hence the exodus. They had no time to build a planetary shield.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

The sun is calmer now, and this planet is in something of an environmental holding pattern.

TUVOK

(approaching Doctor)

Explain the attacks upon Voyager.

DOCTOR

They were not attacks. They were probes.

TUVOK

That nearly resulted in the loss of life.

DOCTOR

The foragers were programmed to maintain and replenish this world when their builders returned from the stars. Their probes did not seek lifeforms. Only raw or processed materials that fell within specified program parameters. Which, you doubtless noticed, became more selective with each probe... And that deuterium packed a real wallop. There was actually plenty of it to make right here, but why pan for gold after you find the mother lode?

(notices Tuvok; more serious)

Yes, Mister Tuvok, I do feel for Ensign Suder. But he reacted instinctively. As, I might add, did all of you. And before my input.

JANEWAY

You don't have to apologize, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Captain, with all respect, you say that because you have survived. But, in fairness, you have allowed this planet to survive. Honesty gets you nowhere with machines. Integrity, on the other hand, counts for a great deal, but only if they know how you're coded. They got the measure of me rather quickly... and I got the measure of them just as quickly.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

The data transfer from Voyager enabled them to improve their assembly capabilities, and their program goals are, in a word, satisfied. You have returned from the stars, and they are very busy.

JANEWAY

No, Doctor. We are not the inheritors of this planet.

DOCTOR

You are if I tell them you are.

(looks around)

Although it still needs a little work.

PARIS

Carpeting, for starters.

DOCTOR

With time, I might even compensate for the sun. But that very much depends on whether you decide to stay.

JANEWAY

You're very kind.

DOCTOR

Thank you, Captain... Are you surprised I know what that means?

JANEWAY

As strange as this may sound, I am more concerned about abandoning you.

DOCTOR

There's nothing to abandon. But, it's the thought that counts, I suppose. And, a thought that I expected from you. I've programmed the foragers to replenish your fuel supply and repair your systems. I'm healing Voyager. I rather like that.

KIM

So do we, Doctor.

TUVOK

Captain... May I speak with you in private?

JANEWAY

Excuse us, Doctor.

Doc nods silently, folds his arms across his chest, and DISAPPEARS IN HOLOGRAM FASHION. The humans cluster...

TUVOK

We have violated the Prime Directive.

JANEWAY

And we didn't even know it. Do you want to undo this?

Tuvok is speechless.

JANEWAY

(continuing)

As far as I'm concerned, the Doctor remains a Starfleet officer. And now he's also an emissary of the United Federation of Planets.

TUVOK

But he is not the Doctor.

CHAKOTAY

He sure fooled me.

KIM

Maybe they all looked like him.

The others' collective glare makes him regret having said that.

TUVOK

How do we know he will not adapt further, and to our detriment?

DOCTOR (O.C.)

I guess you'll need a little faith in the integrity of my programming.

Tuvok turns to face the Doctor at his side.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

I'm sorry. This is my holodeck. And that did seem the logical thing to say.

JANEWAY

(to Doctor)

There is one precaution we can take.

CUT TO:

INT. SICKBAY - DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Doc stands near his desk, studies a wall display.

INSERT (OPTICAL)

Planet Doc appears on his desktop monitor.

PLANET DOC

Doctor?

Shipboard Doc stops, turns, and sees himself on-screen...

DOCTOR

Is this a random diagnostic  
subroutine?

PLANET DOC

No, Doctor. I am merely an  
undigested piece of beef from your  
bedtime gruel.

DOCTOR

Mister Kim should have notified me  
that he had proceeded with the remote  
dispersal. However, I detect no loss  
in computing power. Mister Kim does  
good work.

PLANET DOC

And he is pleased you feel that way.  
Commencing uplink.

Shipboard Doc's mouth opens, but briefly. He closes it, and  
it's back to business.

DOCTOR

We should stay in touch.

PLANET DOC

We shall. Calm seas and prosperous  
voyage, Doctor.

The monitor display GOES BLACK.

DOCTOR

(pauses, to himself)

I'm a virus. I didn't know I had it  
in me.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN HOLODECK

Doc stands nearest Janeway.

DOCTOR

I appreciate your backing me up,  
Captain. Come back some time and pay  
me a house call.

JANEWAY

I'd like that. I wish more planets  
had a sense of humor.

The Away Team regroups and prepares to return to Voyager.

PARIS

Doc, I think I know what to name this  
world.

DOCTOR

(stern)

It already has a name, Mister Paris.

Paris doesn't quite know how to react, then smiles  
disarmingly and gestures farewell. Doc returns the gesture,  
in character.

Paris joins the Away Team, which DEMATERIALIZES IN  
TRANSPORTER FASHION.

Only when they've gone do we see Doc no longer suppress what  
we have only suspected: He laughs...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - VOYAGER (OPTICAL)

At full warp speed, AWAY FROM US, to the stars and its next  
discovery.

FADE OUT:

THE END