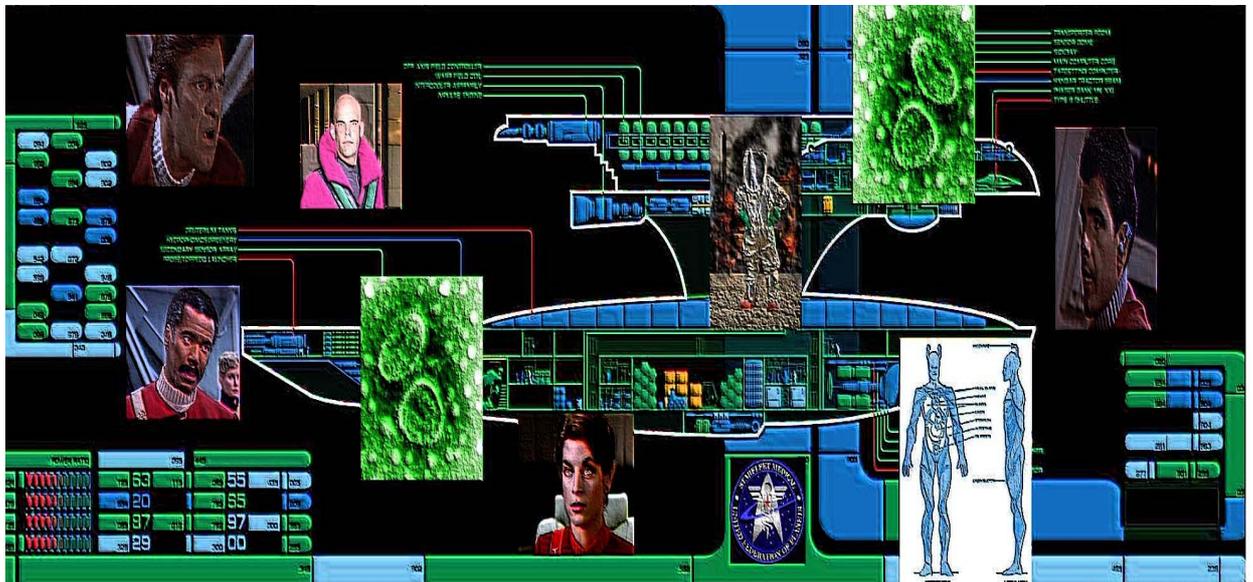


## Star Trek: Grissom Chapter 9: “Lacus Somniorum”



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Star Trek: Grissom website: <http://startrekgrissom.com/>

## **U.S.S. Grissom-Crew Lounge**

Specialist Liisi Tamkivi had started her career late in life. Not that she was old - heck no. The fit condition she was in was the result of 5 years of intense personal discipline and training, starting with rock climbing; no, not in her native Estonia where the average heights are just about as high as the Grissom is long. It was in places like Switzerland, Wales, Table Mountain near Cape Town and even a same-named place in California, and ending with Yosemite, where she could be found every free weekend while attending Starfleet Academy. At 22, she was not the oldest Specialist in all of Star Fleet, but that is how she felt and she had so much to do to catch up to everyone on Grissom.

But Liisi was not going to be held back. She took every situation in hand, and showed them that she could excel in any position. As she was sitting here, talking to Lt. Lars Thorsen about the events of the past week, she was also planning out her future. I've been on Grissom for three months, a science ship that was not supposed to be the center of the 'action', she was thinking to herself, but it had been lately. So she was applying 110% to every task, in what was proving to be an action packed mission!

Her attention snapped back as Lt. Thorsen, wearily, said "We had some close calls over the past few days - and the entire situation with the Alcyonians, Brixtin's actions on the Lycus moon, it has left the crew emotionally drained. Which is why we must be vigilant, because when people are low, things can go wrong".

Liisi's voice was almost defeatist. "I can't believe that the Alcyonians could round up all the Tarellian survivors and beam them all out into space, on wide dispersal. Including their own soldiers involved in the roundup so they could be sure to destroy the disease. Gruesome act." "And ultimately, an act which resolved nothing" said Thor "The Tarellian plague has returned, and the entire system is quarantined".

The reality of the situation settled in on them both, making for an awkward silence. With a look between them, uncaring of the other people in the Lounge, they rose and headed for the door. As they entered the hall, Liisi's voice became a little upbeat, once again. "I would like to schedule some hand-to-hand combat training for the Security Teams, commencing with 2nd shift tomorrow. And then phaser target practice at the end of each session."

"Your rationale for this?" questioned Thor. "If we have another firefight like the other day with the Tholians, well," replied Liisi as she let the words sink in, "it can happen at any time, and if at the end of a long shift, they'll be tired but still need to perform." Thorsen could see that she was thinking ahead all the time. "I agree with your idea, just wanted to be sure of the reasoning. Go ahead. Talk to

Casas about his handling his own shifts though. He may suggest some modifications in schedules, and you should incorporate his needs overall. After all, he is the chief of shipboard security. And you know” Thorsen raised his voice, “if you keep trying to think ahead of me like that, I’ll have to transfer you.” “HA HA”, came her response. “The rewards of this job just never stop.” And with that Liisi adjusted her uniform and took her leave ‘Later boss’ she said as she left.

“Sounding pretty friendly, Thor. Am I hearing you moving on from Gerber now?” came the voice of Commander Stephanie Ottair. Thor winced, she may technically have been his best friend, but she could be SO annoying sometimes. “No, no. That was Tamkivi. She’s real nice, very pretty; but I’m not really interested.” “Too bad” laughed Ottair, “ I think the two of you have a real connection.”

“Yea, but...” Thor has been down this road with her before, but, well, no sense going there. “However if she were to transfer to another section, she” Ottair interrupted and continued the taunting, “You’d be all over it, I know. Sure. More talk, no action - again. Keep this up and you won’t be getting anything for the entire voyage.”

He wanted this conversation to end, but sometimes letting the feelings out was best. “Don’t remind me. Starting to feel very friggin’ lonely up here.” “ Up here? You’re not that tall” Ottair’s retort was sarcastic. NOT what he wanted to hear. May as well play along thought Thor. “Yea. You do realize I’m the best catch on the ship, don’t you?” “Well, you can talk the talk tall guy!” Ottair was really enjoying this now but Thorsen was uncomfortable with all this talk of romance. “I’m going to have to go Commander. Duty calls.” “ Game, set and match” Ottair called after Thorsen as he headed around the corner.

### **U.S.S. Grissom – gymnasium**

It had been several days now since the Tholians had shot Aabin, delivering a serious thoracic wound, and his cardiovascular system was recovering nicely, *despite* his blood loss. He wasn’t up to being on Duty yet, and had progressed from bed rest in his quarters to a small exercise regime. But even this workout was causing extreme discomfort, forcing the use of his pheromones to lessen the pain, and improve his concentration. Dr. S’Raazh had prescribed the exercise regime to allow Aabin to gradually ‘get back up to speed’. Aabin had been using the treadmill for several minutes at a time today, then resting. Nurse Murphy had supervised him for the first 10 minutes, and then left him, satisfied he could cope with the treadmill alone.

A few people who were in the gym waved at Aabin, glad to see him back on his feet after their recent losses. But pretty soon the gym was empty and he was on his own. He had to get better, and get better soon. He was lost in thought and failed to hear the far gym door open behind him. He disobeyed Murphy’s instructions and increased the speed on the treadmill and fell backwards. But

strong arms caught him and held him tightly. "It's all right Aabin, I've got you, and I won't let go" came the voice of Christopher Chattman in his ear. Aabin turned around "You are obviously becoming used to my pheromones now Christopher, you seem able to cope". Chattman laughed, "It's about the only thing going right in my life right now Aabin, my career is in tatters, so BRING IT ON". Aabin sat down on the edge of the treadmill "I feel this is my fault Christopher, I have cost you your Command status". Chattman sat down beside Aabin "Hey, hey, this is where it all began for us, here at the treadmill. Do you remember?" Aabin smiled "I do. Of course I do. And I don't regret it". Chattman put his arm around Aabin, again enjoying the rush of pheromones "and neither do I". Aabin looked into Chattman's eyes "I love you". Chattman tightened his hold on Aabin. "I know".

### **USS Grissom-corridors deck 3**

"Rachel Wood was such a fool", thought Na'nerd. Her personal music selection was full of Earth "jazz", and to Na'nerd it was simply a jumble of musical "runs" and odd juxtapositions of one instrument over another. "Now Andorian Blues - that was music!" But Na'nerd couldn't change the selection as long as someone could pop into Wood/Na'nerd's quarters at any time. Thoughts like these kept running through his head, as he wandered the hallway in the guise of Rachel Wood. Humans, thought Na'nerd, are not very pretty, but they are pretty useful. What Na'nerd now carried would kill him in a few minutes, with the genetically modified virus hiding in his salivary glands, but he had taken an injection before the procedure for protection against this death he was now spreading through Grissom, but he also had a vial of antidote in Wood/Na'nerd's locker, just in case. Na'nerd didn't want to stay human forever, either. The viral agent he had picked up on his last visit to Cinera was very effective. Terlis had always managed to come up with the goods, viral pathogens being his big seller. Pity that he had had to die. His unknown backers had obviously felt he had outlived his usefulness.

The DNA transformation to assume the form of Rachel Wood was painful - to pose as another and kill had never had to hurt before, but the ability to wipe out dozens of the Grissom crew to cause a distraction to allow him access to the Genesis data was worth the pain. It also was worth the price. The Klingons were paying enough to buy a small planet for this job. Small? No, maybe Earth itself could be had for this bounty. And yesterdays Tarellian plague outbreak would feed into the paranoia and fear aboard Grissom, leaving a Chameloid shape shifter like Na'nerd with plenty of opportunity to take what he needed of the Genesis material and hijack a shuttlecraft. Then it would be onto Pacifica and a very well earned rest.

His thoughts came back to the task at hand - infecting Grissom's crew, causing chaos, and causing slow, painful death. Here comes my first victim he thought and - "AHH-CHOOO", he sneezed practically in the victims face and the poor fool would be contagious within minutes, but more importantly, causing a distraction

within sickbay and the ship at large. "Bless you," said Chief Petty Officer Sohrab Saberi to the sneezing Wood/Na'nerd, as he wiped the saliva from his face.

Give me an island of humanoids, and I will fill Vulcan's Lake Yuron with them!

### **USS Grissom-crew quarters**

Christopher Chattman was very pleased with himself. He was practically giddy as he carried some laundry down the hall. But someone wasn't having as nice of a day - he heard coughing around the corner, and called out "You OK?"

As he approached, someone was bent over, almost covering their face; then they turned. It was Rachel Wood. "Hey, Ensign! Was that you coughing? You look a little ill - better get to Sickbay and have Dr. S'Raazh check you out," said Chattman.

Wood/N'annerd had other ideas "If it keeps up, I'll do that; but I was down in a Jeffries Tube and opened the wrong valve - got a shot of coolant." Chattman reacted quickly. "That stuff is dangerous. You need to get checked right away." However Wood/Na'nerd was on a mission and would not be deterred, and responded as casually as if talking about the sun in the sky. "Oh, I did already. Doc says I'm fine. But I think it's going to ruin my singing voice." "I heard from Childers you sing a mean Ballad" said Chattman. Wood/Na'nerd was in a hurry, and had no time for this idle chatter. He hadn't, in fact, stopped to talk, but brushed past Chattman in a manner that was strangely flowing; almost a dance. "You heading to laundry Lt.?" Wood called back. "Someone said the Captain's Steward, PO Jensen, is in there getting a little of the Captain's stuff done. You know he hates company."

"Personally, I can't wait to see what today's tasks will be for me from Lt.Gravv!" said Chattman in conversation. But Wood/Na'nerd had moved on.

By now it was just a few more meters to the Laundry Bay. "Hi Absalon" said Chattman as he entered the laundry, but he didn't get an answer, other than a fit of coughing. "You didn't go with Wood and breathe in coolant, did you?" enquired Chattman. Still, Petty Officer Absalon Jensen didn't answer, he just coughed violently, holding up a hand asking that Chattman wait for him to catch his breath before responding. Chatty pressed on. "What's wrong, anyway?"

PO Jensen had never felt this bad this fast in his life. Even the worst flu had taken all day to settle into his lungs like this. And his HEAD! But he tried to "be a man" about it. "I don't know. I'm getting a headache is all. Just started a few minutes ago. I'm going to see if Dr. S'Raazh can give me something for it." With nothing more to go on, Chattman could only go about his business. "Doesn't sound like much, then. Think I can get my laundry slipped in between your stuff? Things are getting a bit cramped in my new quarters, so I need to keep ahead of the game."

Well, it wasn't just the number of people in the room; it was what we are doing thought Chattman to himself, who had recently entered into a sexual relationship with the Deltan specialist Aabin. "Yes Sir, no problem. I heard you were bumped from your room, AND your command position."

Chattman was not particularly pleased with the direction of this talk, and Jensen had just opened the door to a world of hurt. "That's ENOUGH, Petty Officer."

"Aye, Sir. Sorry" and he coughed a little again. "I think I better get to sickbay, I'm really feeling very rough".

### **USS Grissom-Sickbay**

Dr. S'Raazh was not her usual effervescent self today. The entire incident with the Tarellians weighed heavily on her mind; especially since she had misinterpreted her own data in relation to the Tarellian plague. Nothing major was going on in sickbay. Chief Petty Officer Sohrab Saberi had just come in, but he only had a mild cough and Murphy was attending to him. So when Petty Officer Jensen entered, she was tired and if she was honest with herself, disinterested "Yes? What can I do for you, crewman?" Jensen was miserable, but still tried to put on a front. "Dr. S'Raazh, I've got a headache is all, and a little cough. Started about a half hour ago, but it is getting worse fast. Getting dizzy too. Anything you can give me?" He tried to cover the pain, but to a trained Physician like Vindi, he was as open as any book could be. "For a simple headache, yes. But let's take a longer look to find out the reason, OK?" As Jensen had started to describe his ailments, Vindi had started connecting dots in her mind and the fresh spectre of the Tarellian plague arose in her mind. Her concern rose and she shook the veil of weariness off her aura and got to work.

The Steward took, at this point, any excuse he could to get off his feet. Not that he was going to drop the appearances, though. "If you say so; but I do have a shift to complete. I was really looking to get back..." but he could not finish. The coughing that came from him rattled not just his chest, but also the Sickbay walls. It certainly did nothing good for his head either; he pressed his palms against the sides so hard that he thought it would spew brain matter across the room like a melon smashed with a hammer. "I expected to only be gone from my duties for a few minutes. I have to notify the Captain". Vindi called up her most reassuring voice. There was even a little 'lilt' in it. "Yes, yes. However, for now you are mine until I release you. Lay over there on the second bio-bed and I'll be there in a moment. I'll call the Captain in a minute to let him know you are here, on MY orders." She was fearful of where her thoughts were going. Dr. S'Raazh handed a data pad to Nurse Murphy with several notes on it. None of them good.

### **USS Grissom-Mess Hall**

'Rachel Wood/Na'nnerd' was back "on duty". Star Fleet humiliated its crew with

such tasks! But she would use every opportunity to set about her work. "God" has no holidays.

As she entered the Lounge / Mess Hall, she looked around and noticed Specialist Liisi Tamkivi at the replicator. She approached the replicator and placed an order. "Coffee, French Roast, dark, 1 sugar; with milk." As the machine went about its job, so did Wood/Na'nnerd. "Hi, Specialist Tamkivi, that's a coffee you have there?" Tamkivi smiled, "Oh, hello Wood, I'm working on a training schedule for tomorrow. How's your firing arm? Would you like to get in on it? There is also going to be phaser practice."

Wood/Na'nnerd tried a little humour, "Sounds like fun - NOT. My arm is fine, but no, I'm helping Dr. Marcus and Drs Liebmann and Saunders AND Lt. Saavik when she isn't on the Bridge, and have no idea what I'll be doing from minute to minute. As you see, they have me running for snacks; I also run tests for growth rates of plant species I've never heard of."

Tamkivi was truly interested. "Never a dull moment at least".

"Yea, but if they turn me loose, I would like to do the phaser practice. That's always handy." Wood/Na'nnerd leaned in close to Tamkivi and sneezed in her face "oh, I beg your pardon, how rude of me". Tamkivi wiped her face with a napkin and her face showed her distaste. Wood/Na'nnerd was being clever. Three infected already. The sooner that sickbay started to fill, the sooner the Captain would begin to panic, especially given the recent Tarellian incident.

Wood/Na'nnerd finished her beverage, smiled at Tamkivi and left to make her way back to cargo hold 2, where the Science group she was assigned to was working. She was in two minds about whether or not to infect Dr. David Marcus. If their top scientist was too sick to continue to develop the Genesis weapon, then the Klingons might even give Na'nnerd a bonus. But for now - no, wait, the Deltan, Aabin, approached. Wood/Na'nnerd had helped him with his little "love" problem before; better to have him as a friend to use later. So he would not be infected today. But he was still a 'friend' in a hostile place.

"Oh, Aabin. Hold up for a second, please" called Wood/Na'nnerd. Aabin was a big believer in the Deltan proverb 'to help another is to help oneself'. It wasn't an entirely selfish act, and was a part of his religion; you help another, and your own Karma.

"Ensign Wood. What can I do for you?" enquired Aabin. "I have to get back to Cargo 2. But I just wanted to remind you that you owe me a favour, and I may need to call it in soon". Aabin smiled "Of course Rachel, I owe you so much. You can call on me anytime".

Continuing on his way, Aabin entered the Mess Hall Wood had just left. Though busy, he did hope that someone would be there to talk to for a couple minutes.

Deltans were a very gregarious people. Their society was built around relationships, though to outsiders it just seemed like casual sex; he enjoyed the company of others, and this ship's complement was limited. While he had promised to limit his sexual interactions (a vow he had now broken, but did not really feel bad about), he can still make friends. "Hello, Lt."

Liisi Tamkivi didn't hear him at first. The ill feelings, the headache and nausea, had struck like a disruptor blast. "Huh? Oh, hello." Young Aabin wasn't expecting this, and so didn't catch on immediately to her discomfort, and continued with a little light banter. "Does Lt. Thorsen have you working on your break again?" Again a delay before she responded. Liisi put her drink down a little hard, not able to stomach it any longer. He asked again, "Lieutenant?" Finally she tried to answer civilly, "No, I'm -- man! What a headache! Did you see the shuttle that hit me?"

"Shuttle?" Aabin was now letting his Deltan abilities flow a little stronger, and he could sense the discomfort nearly full force; he almost wretched himself. "Lt., are you OK?" He asked even though he knew the answer. "Um, no" as she moaned at the pain, "would you please help me to sickbay? I'm not sure I'll make it on my own." He could feel the urgency now. "Should I call for a medic?"

Like Jensen, maybe a bit too proud, Liisi responded weakly, "No, just walk with me please." "Of course. Let me help you up. You look very flushed, too" said Aabin. Again her pride butted in. "I'm OK, I can move fine - just stay close, please." She was beginning to think that this was no ordinary illness.

### **U.S.S. Grissom Sickbay**

Events had been going remarkably well today. Nevertheless, so much had happened that, while it was calm, Jonathan Esteban wanted to roam the ship, let the crew see him. People always want to believe that whoever is in charge actually did care about them, but rarely did they see the Captain, for any reason, unless they had screwed up. Esteban was not that kind of Captain, and wanted his crew to know that. He was not Henry V, roaming amongst the troops only before battle. What better way than to tour the ship than when things were running routinely?

Having been to the lowest decks already, and assured that things were fine, he stopped in at Sickbay to talk with his friend, and sometimes lover, Dr. S'Raazh. They were not getting along right now; Vindi was still mad over his interrogation of Nurse Murphy, and if she was honest, upset over the recent Tarellian incident.

Still, he had to try. "Hello, Vindi. I was just touring the ship and heard you have a couple of new patients. Anything serious?" Vindi brought things back to business, as she was still furious with him; her response started off as cold as her home world. "Hello, Captain. I don't know yet what I have. Your Steward, PO Jensen came in less than an hour ago, complaining of a headache, and while I was

examining him, his temperature rose from normal to 101. Since then it is up another degree. And before you say anything - I told him I was holding him, and would notify you that he was being held on doctor's orders." And good that she would thought Esteban, as normally Jensen would be on report for taking off without notification first. "Sounds a little unusual. Who are the other patients?"

Her voice allowed in a bit more concern. "Specialist Tamkivi and Chief Petty Officer Saberi. Saberi came in first, he too is pyrexial. Tamkivi was apparently working on paperwork in the mess hall when she was suddenly struck with a headache. Spec. Aabin was with her when it started and escorted her here - he noted that she looked flushed, and by the time she arrived her temperature was 104. She came in about 10 minutes ago."

As they looked at each other, each of them thinking about how these circumstances could affect the ship through their separate points of view, from a few feet away Nurse Murphy interrupted, "Excuse me, Captain, Doctor. All 3 patients are also reporting dizziness and are having trouble focusing their eyes." Alarmed, Esteban took Vindi by the arm to talk in private, but hardly takes a step before he let out his full concern in a hoarse whisper "My GOD, Vindi. Is this the Tarellian Plague? Have we brought it aboard Grissom?"

Dr. S'Raazh was startled by his reaction, and the fear she had felt when she first held back Jensen flooded back to her, but reason again prevailed. *If only just.* "We don't know for sure yet, but I am treating them that way. Our priority is that anyone who came into contact should be isolated immediately. Because of our protocols concerning contact with the Tarellians, I'm very sure we didn't bring it aboard. It may be simply a strain of Urodelan flu. While humans are normally immune to that, there are always exceptions."

Capt. Esteban was at least a bit relieved. "You're sure? There can't be any mistake. If this is Tarellian Plague then this mission, this crew, is finished." "I can't be 100% certain yet, but I had thought of it, I do have the genetic code of Tarellian plague, and comparisons are being run. I should have test results in a few minutes." Assuaged, Esteban was still was filled with urgency to contain the situation. S'Raazh took Esteban by the arm and took him to one side "Look, Jon, I can't really be sure of anything right now, so please, bear with me. I really don't want to diagnose anything at all, until I am 100% sure". Esteban could see that she was a bit shaken, understandable give the recent events with the Alcyonians. She spoke again "Let's just be prepared to go to full quarantine at a moments notice." He nodded "understood".

She now let go of Esteban's arm " Captain, have security locate Aabin and bring him back to sickbay. He said he didn't touch Tamkivi, but I want him in isolation just to be sure." The Captain wanted no further delays, and stepped quickly to the COMM panel. "Esteban to Thorsen." It seemed to take forever for a response. "Thorsen here. Yes, Captain?" His voice controlled, Esteban imparted just enough urgency to let Thorsen know that following of these instructions was crucial. If

someone was nearby Thor, he didn't want them to hear too much. "Thor, locate Spec. Aabin, but do not touch him! He may have a contagious (what did Vindi say?) form of Urodelan flu. Find out from him who he has had contact with in the past hour."

"Aye, Sir. I'll pick up Casas and Tamkivi and bring him in right away; and any others." In a matter of fact voice, Esteban replied, "Thor, Tamkivi is already in sickbay. She is the reason you are to get Aabin." Thorsen was perturbed; in sickbay without letting me know? "Tamkivi? She didn't inform me that she was going." The Captain cut him off, "She just arrived, but she is quite sick. Don't put her on report yet. Just get Aabin." "Yes, Sir. I'm on it." And Esteban cut the connection. "Dr. S'Raazh, keep me informed. I want to know the test results - and keep this quiet for now." "Of course, Captain. You will know when I do."

Capt. Esteban had a call to make; Adm. Morrow needed to be notified of this new development. "I'll be on the Bridge, Doctor."

## **USS Grissom-Cargo Bay 2**

"Lt. Thorsen to Specialist Aabin. Report immediately." came the call over the ship-wide intercom, relayed from the Bridge. Thor didn't know what was happening, but the Captain's voice alone said it was serious, and with the code word "chaperone" (it is 'code' when used for the crew), he was saying it was dangerous. He couldn't take the time to hunt for him. Aabin's a good kid - he'd respond to a general call.

Sure enough, it didn't take but a few seconds, the call routed directly to him. "Aabin here, Sir." "Aabin, where are you, and are you alone?" "I'm just outside Cargo Bay 2, to consult on some aspect of Climatology with Dr. Marcus. I am not with anyone, but people are passing by at times."

Thor didn't need this complication. "OK, listen, and do exactly what I say. Get into the nearest Escape Pod, and stay there until I arrive. I will find you." Aabin didn't understand, and so hesitated to reply. Thor's voice became sterner. "SPECIALIST, DID YOU HEAR ME? ACKNOWLEDGE." "Yes SIR. Entering an Escape Pod now, Aabin out."

Thorsen checked again, "Aabin?" But there was only the voice of Childers, who had monitored the exchange as requested. "The connection has been closed, Lt. I suspect he has entered the nearest one, which would be Deck 3, Number 11." Thor sounded a little relieved. "Good. I'm heading there now." He then opened the personal communicator he carried and called Casas "Meet me at Cargo 2 right away. Bring your side arm."

When Thorsen arrived at Cargo 2, Casas was already there; he had been on Deck 10 doing a security sweep. "Check life signs monitor for Number 11." Casas had

only to glance to see that it read one occupant. "He is in there, Sir." Casas knew who it was - he heard Thorsen's ship-wide call like everyone else. "Ok, the Captain said not to touch him, in case he has Urodelan flu". Thorsen stood at the escape pod hatch and activated the communicator "Specialist, stay put, I am going to organise a site to site transport to sickbay. NOTHING to be concerned about". Unsure of what he could possibly have done to receive such treatment, Aabin looked into the hallway. "Aabin" said Thorsen "you may have Urodelan flu, which is what I am told Tamkivi had when you took her to Sickbay. For the well being of the crew, you are being isolated until this is confirmed. I've also been instructed to bring along anyone you have had contact with. Who have you touched in the past hour?"

Urodelan flu? Deltans do get that, but usually it is a very mild illness; he wasn't sure about how it affected humans, but it must be horrible if they were isolating him like this! "The past hour? I, I don't think I have touched anyone during that timeframe." Think - did he touch Wood? No. Christopher! When had he been with Christopher? NO, no, that was nearly three hours before he helped PO Tamkivi. Chatty Chappy was safe. "No Sir. Except passing several people in the hallways, I've not been near anyone else in over two hours."

"Alright"-grunted Thorsen, "We are going to transport you to Sickbay. "Stay put while I organise it". "Thank goodness I didn't get near Christopher! I couldn't stand it if I got him ill!"

### **U.S.S. Grissom-sickbay**

"Dr. S'Raazh to Captain Esteban" Her voice was its usual calm. From the Bridge, he answered, "Esteban - what's the latest, Doctor?"

"Captain, I am instituting a quarantine of anyone with any symptoms similar to what I am getting down here. I now have 5 cases in various stages of illness, but what concerns me the most is that some of the most recent are the sickest. What ever this is, it seems to be getting worse."

Esteban had been brewing his concern inside him for a couple of hours. He tried to just do the routine things of Command, but this trip had had too many things go wrong. He was strongly considering the possibility that there was more happening here than a simple illness. "Worse? How so? I thought you just had the three patients." S'Raazh continued "Two more had complained of headaches earlier, so I had them come back in, even though they have not said they feel worse. Also, I am seeing new cases, but some are more severe than those I have had in sickbay for several hours. I don't know yet if they are simply more susceptible or if there is something more to it." Now that clinched it. "OK, send up a list to Lt. Saavik of all cases so we can adjust work schedules." She could hear his voice change over the intercom. "Childers, give me ship-wide." "Attention all personnel; Dr. S'Raazh has instituted a quarantine protocol. All contacts between

crewmembers should be limited. All personnel on duty at this time will stay at your posts until relieved by your supervisor. Biohazard hazmat suits standard issue for all on duty personnel” He punched the button to cut the communication, and then pressed again the one for Sickbay. “Does that sound sufficient, Vindi?” “Quite. I’ll keep you posted as I get test results on the genetic makeup of” and she hesitated, not wanting to make too much of a flu outbreak, but also not wanting to downplay the seriousness of the situation, “whatever this is. Sickbay out.” Esteban turned to Rebecca Sato at the helm “Lt, make your way to your quarters and stay there with the door locked until we clear this situation up”. Sato started to protest but Esteban overrode her “Rebecca, given your condition, it is probably for the best”. Sato nodded and left the bridge. Esteban was fond of Sato, and did not want her unborn child to be harmed.

Lt. Saavik was a newcomer to Grissom. While protocol dictated that she get to know her commander better before interfering with ship personnel, logic dictated that she offer help when it was appropriate. “Captain, may I make a suggestion?” “Yes, Saavik?” “Sir, while Dr. S’Raazh is quite competent, she does have her hands full in sickbay. We have two experts in related fields, xenology and biology, whom might be able to aid in detecting the source of this illness.”

It took but a moment for the references to sink in; and Esteban nearly choked on the words he said next. “Liebmann and Saunders? You sure can pick ‘em, Saavik. You’re right, of course” and his brow furrowed at the realization of how hard he would have to push these two, “but that is one collaboration I will have to put together in person. I want Science Lab 4 set aside for Liebmann and Saunders. It is more isolated and has quarantine fields for this type of work. Dr. Marcus can continue his testing in Cargo 2 on his own.” The Captain looked directly at Saavik, and she understood that this last part, that look, was directed straight at her. How could he know? Or did he? Was the Captain making a guess about her involvement with David, or did Captain Kirk inform him of his suspicions? Or is it just the urgency of the situation? Humans are so complicated. “Right away, Captain” was all she could say without tilting his ‘theory’ to a course she was not ready to navigate publicly.

“Mr. Childers” he said coldly, still bothered by the recent lack of performance of his COMM officer; “please notify Drs. Liebmann and Saunders to meet me in the Conference Room in ten minutes. Have security escort them; no stops along the way.” “Aye, Captain.”

### **U.S.S. Grissom- Conference Room**

“What is going on this time? Why do we have to wear these bio hazard hazmat suits?” Michael Liebmann, Ph.D. asked of the Captain as he entered; not quite a demand, but more than an inquiry. Before he could respond, Dr. Clive Saunders walked in and tossed in his 2 cents with “Well, now we have a fancy dress party!” in his most sarcastic voice.

But Captain Jonathan T. Esteban wasn't going to have any of it. He jumped to the point as he motioned for Saunders to take a seat across from Liebmann. "Just be seated! I have no time for your petty arguments. Gentlemen, I brought you together because of your expertise in a multitude of sciences, including multiple species. Dr. S'Raazh has her hands full treating symptoms of whatever this disease is. It looks, to me, like Tarellian Plague, though Vindi is no longer so sure. However, after our recent encounter, and her description of the symptoms, I am taking no chances."

Saunders was the first to protest, though he tried his best to sound sincere. "Captain, Tarellian Plague? Despite our recent encounter with the Tarellians, I find it hard to believe. We were very careful. Almost TOO careful." "You can never be too careful" argued Liebmann "I was against getting involved with the Tarellian situation in the first place if you both recall!"

"ENOUGH!" Esteban rapidly took control again, and slammed his fist on the table. These two could not be allowed to run over him, or any other, on the ship. "You two dislike each other, fine. But you are assigned to Grissom, under MY command, and you WILL do as I say, without question." He waited a moment for the seriousness to set in. "Dr. S'Raazh has compiled all she has so far on this disease and it should be coming onto your data pads in a few moments. She has told me that the genetic makeup is mammalian, but other than that she is not sure of how it is being passed along, what the rate of infection is - she has lots of questions, and no answers."

"Mammalian? Then we cannot eliminate the Tarellian plaque from the outset," said Saunders. "I think you will find, if Mammalian in origin, that puts it in my ballpark" Liebmann's response was nearly sheepish. "Yes." Still speaking a bit sternly, Esteban went on. "I expect your work on cetaceans will be helpful. I am not here to do a pep talk, or to hold your hands. I have set aside Science Lab 4 for you. Report directly there, have no contact with anyone, stay in your suits - I don't need you getting sick before we have a solution. Pull in whatever resources you need, coordinating with Lt. Saavik for personnel. Keep Dr. S'Raazh apprised of any findings." He gave just a breath of time for it all to settle in on them. "That is all, gentlemen. Security is waiting to escort you." Captain Esteban arose and marched out.

### **Bird of Prey/IKV Kahless- Bridge**

The Planet Vanacheck had long been disputed between the Empire and the Federation, but it was to this haven for bounty hunters, gamblers, smugglers and general low life, that Valkris and Reshtarc had come. As Valkris entered the bridge, Reshtarc turned around in his command chair.

"Ah. Milady Valkris. We have arrived at the coordinates you gave us. This

particular planet is well known throughout the Empire, it is a place for those with no honor!" Valkris came and stood beside Reshtarc, laughing softly to herself; what better place to find the likes of M'Pursong, or her partner, Vego Maali. He owns an 'establishment' in Acheck City, and he will not have fled.

Reshtarc stood and took Valkris roughly by the shoulders, "you had better be right Valkris, for all of our sakes. Kruge will not be accepting of failure!" Valkris calmly removed Reshtarc's hands from her person and turned to the nearby navigator holding out a faded computer slip, "here are his coordinates. Hail him." The navigator looked at her, and then at Reshtarc "Commander Reshtarc?" Reshtarc shuffled on his feet "Do as she says".

The Navigator turned to the communications console and got to work "Kahless to Vego Maali. This is the IKV Kahless to Vego Maali. The Lady Valkris summons you to speak. Repeat, Lady Valkris summons you to speak. Respond." There was a crackle of static, like an old ether wave radio set, and a voice came across the bridge speakers "This is Vego Maali. I wondered how long it would take you to show up again here, Milady. What can I do for you?" Valkris walked closer to the communications station, "Maali. Don't waste my time, you son of a Rigellian bloodworm. Where is M'Pursong?" Maali's voice came back stronger this time, he sounded almost jaded "M'Pursong? She's gone. Not here. Flown the coop. Quit. Broke for the border. AWOL." Reshtarc and the other Klingon's looked at each other in puzzlement. What is this human droning on about? Tell him to get to the point. Valkris however wore a thin smile "Vego, Vego... Just give me the information I want. Where is she?"

Maali laughed now, his laughter reverberating across the channel, "You know me too well Milady, shall we say 5000 galactic credits to my usual account?" Reshtarc snarled but Valkris silenced him with a wave of her hand, "of course Vego, as you wish". Maali immediately became less sardonic, "she was here about 36 hours ago, aboard the Merchant ship Phoenix, heading for Romulan space. They won't have gotten far." Reshtarc exploded 'Romulan space! This just gets better Valkris. "Silence Reshtarc," snarled Valkris, but she gestured to him to get his men armed and ready for action, then she turned to the speaker again "A merchant ship called Phoenix you say Vego?" Vego Maali's voice was cold and clear "Yes, and that's all I know. Now let's just conclude the matter of my payment." Valkris replied, "But of course Vego, Commander Reshtarc has already sent his men to deliver it personally. They should have just beamed down... outside your cantina." Valkris could hear the sound of a distant explosion and the sound of disrupter fire.

And Vego Maali's expletives, "Valkris, you bitch, when I get my hands on you." Then the sound of disrupter fire broke his invective and Vego Maali spoke no more. Valkris strode to the command chair. "As soon as your men are back

aboard, Reshtarc, we should pursue that merchant ship called Phoenix.” “Despite my doubts, everything is proceeding as planned, Milady. Well done. Who would have thought we would work so well together,” replied Reshtarc. Valkris gave Reshtarc a cold smile. “Beware, the mission is far from over Reshtarc. We can salute our achievements later.”

### **USS Grissom-sickbay**

Sickbay was not yet full, but could be soon. Dr S'Raazh was watching over things but could do little. Coughing was heard from Tamkivi and Jensen - a lot. Strangely though, she thought, Aabin was not showing symptoms. She would release him, but he had been in Sickbay for too long - certainly he was exposed now if it was an airborne virus, so she couldn't let him leave, just to have the disease show up later and infect the crew. Instead, he wandered amongst the ill crewmen, comforting them with his pheromones.

Nurse Sean Murphy was the best she had seen in all her Starfleet years. His attention to the needs of her and the patients said more about his worth than any degree. “Doctor, their fevers are getting critical. Tamkivi is at 104 fahrenheit, and has never said a thing since she came in, she just moans; should we consider forced stasis to make her more comfortable?” “Is there not any response to our treatments?” asked Vindi as she looked up at the bio-monitors.

Murphy started to respond, but was startled by Aabin's interruption. “Doctor, I think Tamkivi is trying to say something.” S'Raazh too was taken aback, and both moved closer to Liisi's bedside. “What? Yes, Lt.?” she coaxed.

Liisi was in extreme pain, but hearing the frustration of her attendants brought out her willingness to aid them. “Bug... I had” but she sneezed violently, then coughed violently several times “AHHEEEE” is all that came out as she started to rigor upping the agony a thousand-fold. “I had ... Wood ... ” but she stopped again because of the pain.

“Murphy, 10cc more of the analgesic and add an anti spasmodic stat” Vindi called for something to give the girl any relief she could. “Coming!” Her Nurse spun around for a hyposprayer and a vial; however before he could turn back, he heard the fateful change in the monitor's tones. “Wait! Damn, she's fallen into a coma. And so quickly! How is that even possible?” Vindi was despondent over the inability to help her charge. But the circumstance allowed Murphy to voice his skepticism. “Vindi, could this really be Tarellian Plague here on Grissom? Is that even possible, with all of the filters on the transporters?”

“I'm sure she was just delirious, but right now I'll take any hint of help” and she quickly stepped to the COMM. “S'Raazh to Captain Esteban.” “Vindi! Have you got something?” said Esteban from the bridge. “Doubtful, but we have to try. Tamkivi just slipped into coma, but before she did, she said something about Wood. It's a long shot, but if Wood does know something...” As she took a breath, Esteban

jumped in. "I'll have it checked. Saavik, have Wood report to sickbay." Esteban spoke "Vindi, how did Tamkivi present?"

"Specialist Aabin found her ill in the Lounge. Now that you ask, I guess Wood may have been there." "Vindi, is it Tarellian, have Saunders and Liebmann come up with any ideas yet?" queried Esteban. "Captain, they report that some of the etiology is the same, but I'm not willing to take a risk at this stage. Quarantine sickbay and this deck. Have everyone, and I mean everyone else stay in their quarters and those who have to move about MUST still wear biohazard hazmat suits".

"Understood Doctor, keep me informed," intoned Esteban. Things were happening behind her, and S'Raazh had to get back to her patients. As she looked up at Murphy, he gave her more bad news. "Doctor, Jensen has gone into a coma as well." S'raazh turned, "I'll intubate both him and Tamkivi. Prepare to ventilate them both. Send all test results so far down to Science Lab 4, and beam the samples to Deck 8 yourself. I don't want any chance of infecting anyone else. Make sure security is there to receive them first."

#### **USS Grissom-Science Lab 4**

Juan Casas strode down the short hallway from the transporter to the Lab, and through the automatically opening doors. "Doctors, Dr. S'Raazh has forwarded these latest samples to you." "Thank you, uh, Juan, is it?" asked Clive. "Set them there, please." "Yes, Doctor." This guy is all right, thought Casas. A joker, but serious when the need arose. "I'll be right outside."

Liebmann turned from his screens. "Let's see what they sent us this time." As he checked the tags on the samples, Saunders turned away. "The notes are coming across on the monitor. Seems that Tamkivi was in extreme pain, and has lapsed into coma. Jensen didn't show much pain, but has also gone into coma. Both are pyrexial, over 105 Fahrenheit. Aabin may have been exposed; but shows no symptoms so far beyond a mild fever. Casas informed me that Lt. Thorsen had Aabin transported directly to sickbay, so if he is infected, it should limit the spread." He paused, and Liebmann couldn't contain himself. "That isn't much to go on."

Annoyed, and letting it show, Saunders continued. "I wasn't done. Tamkivi said, let's see, she said something about Ensign Wood, and a bug. Security are looking for her right now and she'll be brought to sickbay for sampling'.

"In the interim," said Liebmann, "I'm going to put all of the samples through the DNA Sequencer to see if we can isolate the DNA of the cause from the victims. It should also find any traces of bugs."

Their little rivalry was knocked off-line by the COMM. "Lt. Saavik to Dr. Saunders." Clive reached over and pressed to connect. "Saunders here." "AND

Liebmann” intoned Michael Liebmann. “Yes, Saunders AND Liebmann” said Clive Saunders again showing his annoyance through. “Lt. Saavik, what did your scan find?”

“Unfortunately I found no trace of any foreign body anywhere on Grissom. I also checked the transporter logs from our recent encounter with the Tarellians, nothing is showing up in the bio filters.” Liebmann’s defeatist tone came across clearly, “Great. Thanks, Lt., so we are still in the dark!” “Thank you, Saavik” interrupted Saunders “Saunders out.” He looked over at Liebmann “Our best bet now is Wood”.

### **USS Grissom-Deck 4**

Again the ship wide hail came across the internal communications system “Ensign Wood, please report to sickbay” came the voice of that annoying Vulcan, Saavik. Wood/Na’nerd looked around - no one was near. Getting alone on Deck 4 was not easy, and to get away with it during 1st shift even harder. Rachel/Na’nerd used a mini-tricorder to verify that no one was inside, and then slipped into the Subspace Transceiver Bay. She had to let the Klingons know that David Marcus was on board. She had planned to infect him, but figured that since he knew more about Genesis than anyone, he should be captured at the earliest possibility. A “flash” message, specially encoded, had to be sent. She opened the access panel and patched into the main array - where she set this up, it would not show as originating from Grissom, but would show up in the logs as ‘something, from somewhere’. There were millions of subspace messages every instant - this would just get lost in the background. She set the timer for 10 minutes so if Childers somehow caught that the ship sent a message not of his making, she would be safely on her way to sickbay, with all the answers that the Grissom needed.

### **USS Grissom-Science Lab 4**

Michael Liebmann was staring at the latest results of his tests on the computer screen when the Comm signaled. He pressed the button, expecting to see Dr. S’Raazh but was startled by the stern look of Capt. Esteban. “Captain!” “Dr. Liebmann, I placed a call to Admiral Morrow some time ago telling him we might have Tarellian Plague outbreak on Grissom. He wasn’t available, but I expect him to contact us in the next 30 minutes or less. I don’t want to tell him that is confirmed, but instead that our problem is much less serious. So I need to know what you know so far.” His voice was deliberately succinct. “Am I ending this mission?”

Liebmann straightened; the Captain wanted his input; as well he should! “The symptoms start out very similar to Tarellian Plague, yes. But they change fast, and so I am prepared to say that this is something else.”

“What do you mean something else? We just had a run-in with one of the deadliest diseases in the quadrant, my crew is getting sick, but it isn’t the Plague?”

Liebmann couldn’t understand it - he gave the Captain good news, but he wasn’t happy at all! Clive Saunders broke into the conversation “Captain, I have noticed a record of a viral agent which matches this particular outbreak in your logs. It actually came from a downloaded log from Cinera Base” “Cinera?” said Esteban incredulously. What has mind control got to do with plague?”

Saunders understood the confusion. “Sir, nothing. But Terlis did a lot of manipulating of DNA in his making the pheromones multitudes more potent than normal. With all the problems you have had on this mission, having people get a sickness that looked like Tarellian plague was too much of a coincidence - and I don’t like coincidences; not medical ones, anyway. From what I see, Terlis may, in fact, have been working for someone else. His first notes were about DNA modifications of plants, then reptiles; I think he took that data and applied it to his own body. But anyway, it seems clear that he had a far bigger agenda, and it involved someone else. He was probably working for someone.”

Esteban was one of a select group of men who knew of the theories as to whom Terlis was working for, including his friends Jeff Pierce and Alexander McKnight, but he was not about to share that with Saunders or Liebmann “as you know Gentlemen, Cinera was destroyed. This is all too fishy for my liking. Can you pinpoint this viral agent?” “I’m working on it Captain” said Saunders, then looking at Liebmann he replied “WE’RE working on it”. Liebmann had saved his life during the Tarellian incident, so Saunders grudgingly gave him his due.

Liebmann was surprised, but spoke “Captain, if I may, this research reminds me of the work I was doing at Pacifica. Terlis may in fact have used cetacean DNA. In my studies of cetaceans and their relation to human physiology, I found that just as a person can become delirious from a high fever, dolphins and whales also do strange things when very sick, like the beaching of dozens of animals in the 20th and early 21st century. I had concluded several years ago that they were not simply ‘off course’, or driven out of the water by powerful sonar, but that they had a virus, and the high fever they experienced drove several to beach themselves, probably in an attempt to cool off.”

Esteban broke in - “We know that when a person gets a high fever a solution is to put them in ice-water. Wouldn’t they have gone into deeper water? A hundred feet down is much cooler than a sunny beach.” Dr. Liebmann was professional; “Yes Sir, but they probably tried that and failed, then with no experience with being out of the water, they tried something new. At first the evaporation of water from them would have given some relief, but they could not have understood the dangers of beaching, or just not cared since they were extremely sick.” Saunders thought it all sounded quite reasonable, and added, “Of course, some others also became beached because of ‘pack mentality’, but when they

repeatedly sought the beach, it had to be a sickness.” “Yes, yes that is probable,” Liebmann added.

PO Fernando entered the Conference Room, and handed Esteban a data pad - her “Excuse me, Captain” was almost imperceptible, more a look than words; 4 more had reported to Sickbay. He looked at it, then looked back at the screen as seriously as if he had just ordered Self Destruct. PO Fernando left as quietly as she came. “Very well, then. With all that, do you have a cure? Or at least some treatment to help?”

Clive was somber. After a moment's thought, he said, “No sir. We know what ballpark we are playing in, but this is at best the third inning. We have a lot to go through here.”

He was going to question them further, but the analogy was just what Esteban needed to get his bearing on the problem. “Fine, gentlemen. Let me know when you have your first hit. Esteban out.”

### **USS Grissom-transporter room**

Wood/Na'nerd again opened a Jeffries Tube panel; if someone came in to find him, they would think Wood was doing maintenance up inside, out of sight. Instead, he checked the transporter settings, and the scan it produced of Deck 10, and then changed shape to look like a human he met a month ago when he visited Cinera Base for his latest purchase of biological agents. The Transporter came to life as he stepped on the pad, and then he was inside the Aft Port Battery Compartment. There were 2 from Engineering in the forward compartment, and he would get to them in due time; first he wanted to check the several locator beacons on the Batteries, which he had placed upon coming aboard. These beacons would let his Klingon employers know the Grissom's location at all times. If there came an emergency and he needed to get away, these could be remotely activated, causing the Transporter to beam the beacons into the warp coils; bombs would be simpler but the ship's sensors would detect them on normal security sweeps. The resulting explosion there would knock out emergency power to Shields protecting the lower bow saucer section so he could be beamed away, and transporting the parts into the warp coils would permanently destroy them so the ship could be captured. This job would have been so much easier if he had been able to come aboard posing as Liebmann, with M'Pursong, as planned. Still, as long as he could kill someone, it was good. I hope the Kahless is still cloaked and tracking me, he thought, I want to get out of here soon, before we get to Genesis.

### **U.S.S. Grissom-Conference Room**

The voice of Brian Childers interrupted Esteban's own research “Captain, there is a message. It is Adm. Morrow, Sir.” Esteban had waited several anxious hours for Adm. Morrow to return his call. “Thank you, Mr. Childers.” The Admiral's face

popped into view. "Jonathan, I might have some aid coming your way. First, though, what's this message about an unusual number of crew getting sick?"

"This may not be what was first thought, Admiral. After our encounter with Tarellian Plague, the fact that several people started exhibiting similar symptoms made me contact you out of a sense of caution - if we had Plague, you would have to mothball the mission and send another ship." He could see Morrow reddening with frustration, and so put his hands up in front of him so they would show on the monitor. "Hold on though, Sir. I spoke to my two head researchers on this, Drs. Liebmann and Saunders a few minutes ago, and they assure me that we are not witnessing an outbreak of the Tarellian Plague."

"So your call was for nothing?"

"No Sir, I'm not saying that. What we have is something NEW, but it could still be very serious. They think it is connected to the work that Terlis did at Cinera, so it may be just as deadly. Saunders and Liebmann are going through all the notes, and might be jumping to conclusions, but they should have some solid answers presently," he hoped.

"I need to know soon. This illness puts your Genesis mission in jeopardy. I can't send another ship into the Mutara Sector right now, but I am getting the Hathaway under Jeff Pierce briefed and underway ASAP, and will station them at Regula One, ostensibly to assist Carol Marcus; but their main purpose will be to assist you if required. Or, now, to replace Grissom if this illness escalates into another plague."

"Jeff Pierce? He's a capable man and a good friend. I'm happy to hear this news Admiral" replied Esteban.

"When this is done, I hope we can all sit down together" the Admiral stated in a matter-of-fact style, "but until then let me know what your two experts find. Morrow out."

Jeff Pierce! It would be good to see him again. Captain Esteban stood slowly and strode back onto the Bridge. As he did, he caught the end of someone coughing, and the hair went up on the back of his neck! "Who was coughing?" The words jumped from him faster than he could control his concern.

"Me, Captain." Childers could hardly believe the ferocity in Esteban's voice. "Just a tickle in my throat."

He got his composure back quickly. "Sorry, Mr. Childers. But I'm told that coughing is one of the first signs of the sickness Dr. S'Raazh is currently treating. Please report directly to Sickbay for a checkup to make sure you don't have what's going around. I need a fully functioning Bridge Crew, Lt. If she clears you, report right back."

Childers rose from his chair, straightened his biohazard suit, and simply responded, "Yes Sir." and left the Bridge.

"Lt. Saavik, please man the COMM station for the moment, and request from Commander Ottair a temporary replacement for Lt. Childers." "Aye, Captain," and she secured the standard scan she was running and walked to COMM.

### **USS Grissom-Engineering Deck**

Commander Ottair had not seen someone change so much since she attended Starfleet Academy. Chris Chattman had followed every order given him all day, without so much as a sideways glance. From the man she saw just days ago, complaining at having to assist Lt. Graav move cargo, she could hardly believe the man she saw today. Something had shifted in his mind; something had put him back on track; she had no idea what, but this was the Chattman she met when she first came on board.

So when the call came from the Bridge for a temporary COMM Officer, she felt she had no choice. This mission has been plagued with problems, from Klingons to Romulans; so if the Captain needed a body, she had to give him the most capable one available - Chattman.

"Lt. Chattman," He looked over from cleaning carbon deposits on injectors. "Lt. Childers has been ordered to Sickbay. The Captain needs someone to relieve his post until next shift, or until he returns. Do you think you can handle that?"

His heart jumped; he almost jumped straight to the second Engineering Level; but instead Christopher Chattman stood, nearly at Attention, and in his most professional voice, answered, "Yes Commander, I can." It wasn't a permanent return to duty, but it was a start. And he had confirmation from sickbay that Aabin was asymptomatic and would be released soon. So all was going to be all right.

"Then clean up, and report to the Bridge in ten minutes." She would call the Captain and talk to him before Chattman arrived.

### **USS Grissom-Science Lab 4**

Juan Casas had heard heated discussions coming from the Lab all day. The only time it ever quieted down was when he took in new samples from Sickbay. However, this one was sounding worse than any before it. Saunders was exploding. He opened his communicator and started to tell Lt. Thorsen that it was getting more heated than ever in Science Lab 4.

"I'm telling you what I have found, you son-of-a-bitch!" It was Saunders "Will you

just shut up and listen to me, we need to synthesize a serum based on the information from Cinera and the samples from the infected crew. It WILL work". "I am merely saying that more trials are needed to ensure we do no more harm, two of my simulations have resulted in death". "People are dying in front of our eyes Liebmann," said Saunders, pushing Liebmann aside.

"WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN HERE?" bellowed Juan Casas. How could two scientists in the middle of an epidemic come to fisticuffs over research?

"His serum is untested, we must run more tests" exclaimed Liebmann.

"I'm no scientist, but you two better figure out how to tell this to the Captain, whatever the case may be. I'm not going outside to the hall any more. From now on, I'm going to be right here beside the two of you! I just got assigned to Grissom, but those are my shipmates and I will do everything I can to see that you two keep focused on the JOB and get them well again." He looked at them with as menacing a look as he could muster; he wasn't as tall as Thorsen, but his heavier frame made him look just as formidable. "Now, Gentlemen, I would like you to return to your work." Juan didn't turn his back to them; he just waited for Saunders to move toward the door, then he followed him and stood post at the right side of the opening.

### **USS Grissom-Bridge**

He was uncomfortable; Chappy had been dressed-down by the Captain, and demoted; everyone knew what had happened. They would stare or not, and there was nothing he could do about it, except prove that he had a right to be there again. "Lt. Chattman reporting for Duty." He stood there in the doorway and waited to be acknowledged.

"Lt., please take the COMM station." The Captain was not giving away any emotion. Chattman stepped over to where Lt. Saavik was seated; she merely raised an eyebrow as she stood "Ever efficient Vulcan", he thought. He sat down, and then he was THERE! Back at COMM, where he started his tour on Grissom.

He turned to Bacari Jata "Hey Bac, where's Becky?" he whispered, noting the absence of Rebecca Sato at the helm. Jata turned and walked over to Chattman as if passing on information "Captain confined her to quarters soon as this thing started. He's quite chivalrous like that, her being pregnant and all that".

"MR.JATA" came Esteban's voice "when you are quite finished gossiping, resume your station". Jata smiled at Chattman through his hazmat suit, then turned "Yes sir".

Chattman smiled back and looked over the panel to see if any communications were ongoing, if there were any errors, failures of equipment - all looked perfect. "I have COMM, Sir." Nothing happening, just proceeding normally thought space - the familiar flow of stars on the view screen made him even more at-home. He started a routine diagnostic of all subspace systems, and language translators.

When that finished, he planned to do Level 2 diagnostics; he checked the time - the tests will be done before shift change, easily.

This felt so good.

A voice came over the intercom "Ensign Wood to Bridge". Chattman responded "Wood, Lt.Saavik has been looking for you, hold on". Saavik walked over to the communications station once again "Wood, you were ordered to report to sickbay, are you on your way there?" Wood replied "No Lt., I have been carrying out routine maintenance checks in the aft bussard collector, as per Commander Ottair's orders, so was out of contact. As soon as I got out of the crawlway I heard one of the announcements to suit up and got straight into a hazmat".

Wood/Na'nnerd had to be clever now. "Lt.Saavik, since I am feeling fine and have been in a sealed environment, should I really be placing my self at risk by going to sickbay? Saavik responded "your logic is sound Ensign" 'good' thought Wood/Na'nnerd "but" continued Saavik "did you have contact with Tamkivi earlier today?" Wood/Na'nnerd knew that Tamkivi was going to die soon, so could easily bluff this one "Well, I did see her in the mess hall and ask her to put me down for phaser practice, she was trying to gather a group. BUT, she was fine". This seemed to satisfy the Vulcan "We can discuss this in more detail later, for now, resume your station. Saavik out." Now that he would be forced to wear a hazmat suit, Wood/Na'nnerd transferred copious amounts of his own saliva to his gloves. The infection needed to spread just a little bit more. After all, if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

## **USS Grissom-Science Lab 4**

Juan's presence had the effect he had hoped. Liebmann and Saunders had been focused on their consoles, running tests, for over an hour. They were sitting apart, and each had up several different displays, but one monitor had a shared image with which they could collaborate in their hunt for the disease.

"This has all the earmarks of the cetacean virus in this section of DNA", Saunders pointed out on his monitor; the same display was on Liebmann's, and circles appeared as Clive drew them. "But on chromosome 74, it looks totally different."

"74 - yes, that comes from a Cephalopodan class. And here, on 55," the displays slid 'right' in unison, "I found something that appears to come from the Blue-Ringed Octopus; well, something similar anyway. It's been changed, but I can't think of any natural process that would put these combinations together. It must be Terlis's work."

"I saw that, but didn't recognize the source genome. Good catch." Credit where credit due, and Clive Saunders had to admit he had no clue this time.

Liebmann had another thought. "Computer, reference monitor 3, chromosome

42. Is there a match to any known species of humanoid?" "Working," was the response. "I'm checking to see if there might be a species he used to develop an antidote. If he had any sense, Terlis designed his own protection in tandem with designing the virus."

"Chromosome 42 matches a sequence in the Bolian and Deltan species."  
Computer finally responded.

"Show us, on monitors 3 and 7" commanded Mike, and the men started to see a pattern.

### **USS Grissom-Sickbay**

Murphy turned as the doors slid open, and saw two more crewmen, visibly pyrexial by their flushed appearances. "Please come in, and sit over there next to Lt. Childers," he pointed to a bench, his voice muffled by the re-breather unit in his hazmat. "As soon as you are triaged, I'll assign you a place. If you are not too bad off, I'm afraid I'll be sending you to one of the Deck 8 Science Labs, as they have the quarantine fields needed to stop the spreading of this illness, in case it is an airborne virus. Nurse Carrigy is there to assist you." While Saunders and Liebmann had also set aside Lab 3 in case they needed it, Labs 1 and 2 S'Raazh had commandeered.

Childers greeted them in a likewise muffled sound, "Welcome to the chain gang." Unfortunately, the reference was lost on them, and they gave him very puzzled looks. He started to explain, and then decided it was a waste of time.

Aabin had been in Sickbay several hours now, and was using his pheromones to ease the many patients' discomfort. If not for that, he would also have been sent to Deck 8. Well, that, and because he had not gotten any worse. Which puzzled the medical staff to no end. And Aabin, as he was constantly asked for samples from every orifice, and where there was no opening, they made their own to get tissues; but he was never told why. Dr.S'Raazh continued to dialogue with Saunders and Liebmann from her office and cast occasional glances at Aabin as she spoke. Why was she looking at him that way?

### **USS Grissom-Science Lab 4**

Saunders was calmer than he had been all day, yet he was excited just the same - they had solid progress! "I think we should call the Captain. We've isolated the source and he would want to know."

"Why bother? This isn't going to do him any good. We have a source, but no clue about a cure."

“Look, I think my serum will do the trick.”

Clive rolled his eyes - Liebmann would ordinarily be chomping at the bit to tell someone about a discovery, he could only assume that his own involvement had Liebmann upset because he wouldn't be able to claim all the credit himself. What a piker!

But they were both caught by surprise when the intercom came to life. “Esteban to Science Lab 4.” Liebmann jumped, but Saunders already had his fingers on the controls; he pressed to connect. “Saunders here, Captain. We were just about to call you. Dr. Liebmann and I have made a further discovery about the source of the virus.”

“Sir, the source of the Tarellian Plague” started Liebmann from his own console, “is the basis for this disease, and it came from Earth.” Nice, thought Saunders. No lead in, no setup, just the punch line!

Esteban just sat there, stunned.

Saunders tried to explain. “It is the same thing that the cetaceans on Earth died of centuries ago, though mutated enough that we can't apply the same cure.”

Esteban interrupted: “Earth is source? That can't be! The Tarellians developed it as a bio-weapon! So how did we do this? How? When?”

Saunders tried to explain. “Earth is probably the source, yes. But WE didn't bring it to space - the virus is too advanced in the natural mutations we're seeing. I suspect that some other race that visited Earth centuries earlier, perhaps even 50,000 years ago, took samples, or even were simply infected themselves and passed it on to other planets as they explored the galaxy. Tarellian physiology is different enough from human that they didn't have the natural immunity that we have against the cetacean sickness. And as it festered in them, it became more dangerous. Then they developed it into a bio-weapon, which later mutated into the Plague we see today, killing nearly all-humanoid and mammalian species that come into contact with any Tarellian. But THIS sickness is the original version, though mutated even more - and we suspect Terlis did the mutations in his lab, though we can't figure out just yet how this changes the disease enough to modify the symptoms; nor how it is being transmitted without detection by our bio-scanners and bio-screeners.”

Liebmann jumped in - “ Yes, but easy to scan for now that we have seen it and calibrated the scanners to detect it and all similar viruses. If it shows up again, we should catch it.”

Esteban was thinking all this through. “You can detect it?” He turned to Saavik. “Lt., you didn't tell me you could scan for this disease.”

Liebmann apologised, “No captain, we can see it, and only just now, from here in the Lab.” He quickly picked up a data card and slapped it into his console. “I’m sorry. I am loading the parameters onto a data card, and will transmit them to Lt. Saavik.”

Saavik touched a couple buttons, “Yes, I have the parameters and will begin modifying the ships’ sensors.”

Esteban set his jaw, and asked the hard question. “So when will you have a cure? Or have you developed that also without telling me?”

Saunders tried to deflect the harshness of the query. “Sir, that ball game we talked about earlier? I’d say we are aiming for a home run.”

“If I remember the game correctly, that means you have a cure.” He peered back at the view screen intently.

Liebmann jumped in again. “Cure? NO. Possible cure, YES.”

Saunders completed his analogy, “Finding this out was our break, Captain. I believe I have developed a serum that will effectively be the antidote for our virus. Now we come out swinging.”

“Then I leave you to finish the game. Good Luck, Gentlemen. I will send an update to Starfleet at the earliest possible time. Esteban out.”

### **USS Grissom-Sick Bay, 1 hour later**

“Sean, what do you have on the last three to come in?” Dr. S’Raazh sounded exhausted, and the hazmat helmet didn’t help her mood.

“Doctor, all have elevated temperatures, little else in symptoms. But the new parameters from Science Lab 4 show that they do have the disease.” The hazmat, too, bothered Murphy.

The COMM chimed. “Esteban to S’Raazh.”

“Damn it, what now?” She reached for the control, and smacked it hard. “S’Raazh here.” She was past hiding her frustration with this disease.

“Doctor, I am pleased to tell you that Drs Liebmann and Saunders have a breakthrough, they are sending the data to you now and believe they have a cure” said Esteban.

Her voice didn’t calm, even though she was talking to her Commanding Officer. “Praise be to Uzaveh the Infinite Jonathan, and not a moment too soon! My people on Deck 8 report that 5 have slipped into coma. No pain, no new

symptoms. They were lying there, barely making a sound, and then their temperature spiked and they fell into coma within seconds. I have had 3 do the same here. Tamkivi, Jensen, Saberi and now McLaughlin, whom was here only 15 minutes before she succumbed, it was like she fell asleep." Vindi took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I'm getting their data now Captain, I'll get to work on it immediately. S'Razh out".

### **USS Grissom-Bridge**

Chattman had been re-running every test on his systems, because this didn't make sense. The Level 2 Diagnostics showed that there had been a power draw to send a message, but there were no records of transmissions for the time stamp indicated. It seemed that there must be a malfunction but nothing was wrong. It takes a lot of power to punch through into subspace; signals through there travel at many multiples of the fastest starships, so it is really the only way to communicate over any distance beyond a planetary orbit. But not only had the power draw been recorded, it was extremely short - about one tenth of a second.

As Chattman pondered what could be wrong with the system, it beeped at him again. No, this was hardly possible as a malfunction - three other times over the past 5 days, there had been similar power draws, and every one was the same length. A broken system would not have such a perfectly sized glitch repeated to this exactness.

The COMM panel beeped again - a message from Sickbay. "Chattman here." He listened closely, then, without a hint of change in his voice, "Yes, Lt. Childers. I will inform the Captain and Lt. Saavik that you have been released and will report back to the bridge in 10 minutes." He closed the connection.

He made a copy of his findings, twice. Then turning, he spoke to Lt. Saavik, who had the bridge when the Captain worked from the conference room "Lt. Saavik, Lt. Childers will be up to relieve me in 10 minutes." Those Vulcan ears probably had heard everything, but he had to do the report anyway.

"Acknowledged." Again, that Vulcan efficiency. Don't say more if less will do. Just then Esteban returned. "Captain on the Bridge," Chattman reported. As J.T. Esteban took the center seat, Saavik passed on the news about Childers.

"Not sick? Phew!" Esteban let out a long blast of relief "And it looks like a cure is imminent".

Chattman saw his chance; he had to get this in before anything else interrupted. He pressed a data card into the slot, and recorded all his test results onto it, then spoke clearly, professionally, "Captain, before I am relieved, I need to report several unusual occurrences of the Subspace Transmitter."

Esteban was still annoyed at Chattman. That Ottair had sent him to the Bridge

ticked him off severely, but he did admit that Chattman was the best Comm Officer on board, regardless of his recent screwups. If he said something was wrong, then Esteban would listen. "Go ahead."

Christopher rose from his station and handed the Captain the data card. "Sir, when I came on duty, there was very little going on, so I instigated system diagnostics. In those tests, I compared all power usages to communications initiated or received. Sir, I found several discrepancies."

Esteban shifted in his chair. This better be good. "Go on."

"Over the past 5 days, there have been four apparent 'glitches', or very short power drains, in the subspace transmitter. There were no other communications going on from the bridge, nor, with our silent running, from any other department. This has been verified, Captain."

"Glitches." Esteban shifted in his chair again. "Explain."

"There have been four power drains of exactly one tenth of a second at various times of the day and night. I have seen this type of power draw in training. It was sufficient to send a flash message at least 3 light years. It is what we were taught to do when sending covert messages from the standard console. But I have no explanation yet as to how they were made."

"Can you expound as to why Mr. Childers didn't notice this covert signal?"

"No Sir, except that things have been very busy on Grissom and he may not have had the time to do an exhaustive test. If he so much as blinked, he would not have seen the indicator of the power usage when it occurred. I, on the other hand" he paused, debating whether to say it, then decided 'yes', "have had a lot of time to think about what I would do when I got back to my post, and had planned these tests out to get the most from the time allotted." He didn't want to say 'Childers was lazy'; that was for the Captain to decide. He also didn't want to be seen as "back-biting".

"That data is what you have handed me?"

"Yes, Sir."

Esteban outstretched his arm toward Science. "Lt. Saavik, please look over Mr. Chattman's findings." Saavik stepped down, took the data card, and returned to her station. It took only moments. "I concur, Captain. For these to be random power glitches they should be of varying duration and energy level. However, each is precisely the same as the other to within 4 decimal places."

The door slid open - Childers was early. "Lt. Childers reporting back from Sickbay." He automatically moved over toward the COMM station, but stopped

dead in his tracks when he saw Chattman. Now THAT was a sight! Was he being reprimanded again?

Jonathan took it all in well. "Acknowledged, Mr. Childers. Would you please join us here?"

He didn't know what had happened in the hours since he was forced to go to Sickbay, but by the sound of it, something had happened. Childers stepped down to the Captain's chair.

"You will be relieving Mr. Chattman. But first, he will explain what he has found, and I believe suggest some further actions you should take to continue his investigation."

The Comm Officer wondered what the disgraced Chattman could have found wrong with communication that he had missed - or was it a new problem?

"Lt. Chattman, when you are done here, please do whatever you feel necessary to investigate the Subspace Transceiver until the end of your shift, and report back to Lt. Saavik your findings."

Yep. Things are turning around, Chappy thought. This has turned into a really great day! "Aye, Sir."

### **USS Grissom-Deck 1**

Christopher Chattman had just scored big! The Captain was again listening to him; he was gaining the respect of his crewmates. And he found someone on board whom cared about him, and whom he cared about just as strongly.

He smiled broadly as he left the Bridge, closed his eyes and clenched his fist, thrusting it into the air, shouting just to himself "YES!!!" - and bumped into someone.

He opened his eyes. "Oh, gosh, I'm so sorry. Are you OK?" and looked straight into Rachel Wood/Na'nnerd's eyes.

"Shit, Chattman! Can't you even walk without causing a catastrophe?"

"Rachel! I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Are you heading back to the transporter room?" asked Chattman, as Woods primary station was working there, alongside her recent assistance to the science team.

"I'm constantly asked to run errands for Dr. Marcus. So I go to where ever I have to go," replied Wood.

"What could Dr. Marcus need from Deck 1?" he asked, because he really couldn't figure why she was up here.

"I don't know if I can say. It's from his Quarters." This was getting her nowhere.

Wood/Na'nnerd had to end this. "Look, I'm sorry too. It's just that, with trying to do my regular job in the Transporter, and helping in Cargo 2, plus whatever anyone else wants to throw at me, I don't have any time to myself. It's... it's getting to me, I guess."

"Rachel, I've been through an awful lot over the past couple weeks. But I'm not blaming others. If they are throwing too much at you, ask someone for a little help running these errands." OK, not exactly true - he complained plenty when Ottair assigned him a bunch of extra duties. But he wasn't going to tell her that. "Look, I've got to go, I'm heading down to investigate an anomaly in the subspace transceiver".

Wood/Na'nnerd was shocked, but hid his reaction. He now knew she had to eliminate Chattman. Wood/Na'nnerd was quick "Oh my God, I think there's a crack in your faceplate, look" he said pointing at Chattman's hazmat helmet. Chattman involuntarily took his helmet off to check it without thinking "It looks OK Wood," he said examining it. "Are you sure sir?" asked Wood/Na'nnerd, and he touched a gloved hand to the inside of the helmet, making sure a large amount of the dried saliva from his glove was wiped on the interior. Saliva containing a massive dose of the virus "So, sorry, and apologies for troubling you" said Wood/Na'nnerd as he stepped back to let Chattman go his own way. Wood/Na'nnerd had released a huge dose of toxin; Chattman was as good as dead.

Chattman headed for the Turbolift, and Deck 4's Subspace Transceiver.

The walk took only 20 seconds, the lift ride another 5 seconds. His destination was less than 50 feet away. He entered an access code, went inside, bent over to open the main panel, and fell on the floor. "What? What's wrong with me?" He started to stand up but couldn't, and instead found himself practically panting, he was breathing so hard! He waited a few seconds, looked around, realized he was sweating, and that he had a shaking hand.

He didn't know it, but Saavik was just completing her first active scan for the virus - an active scan was still the only way to spot it, because of the way the Doctors in SL4 had tied in the transporter bio-scanners circuits; she had to remotely access them each time, until she found a better method. "Captain, I have detected the virus on Deck 4", she reported.

Chappy tried again to stand, this time successfully. He held a hand against the wall, and made for the COMM panel. "Chattman to Bridge." He knew that was the one station guaranteed to respond in less than 2 seconds.

Childers answered, as he knew he would. "Bridge. What's up, Chattman?"

"Medical emergen..." Nope, he tried but couldn't finish. As his knees buckled, Chattman passed out.

## **USS Grissom-Bridge**

Childers sat there a moment before responding, waiting for him to continue. "Chattman? Chattman? Bridge to Chattman." He had to act. "Bridge to Sickbay, medical emergency on Deck 4, Subspace Transceiver. Suspect Mr. Chattman is down."

Nurse Seán Murphy was quick to respond. "Sickbay here; a med team is on the way. Out."

In the background, before the connection was cut, Childers heard Aabin scream through his earpiece "Christopher! Christopher! NO!"

Esteban turned his attention to Lt. Saavik. "Lt, do you have a specific location? Is it Chattman?"

"I can't narrow down the location that well, Captain. I am picking up traces of the virus from the hall leading to the turbolift, the Subspace Transceiver, several places between and obviously, from our quarantine labs and sickbay."

"Have Security seal off that hallway until Liebmann and Saunders confirm if the virus is airborne or contact. Kill the ventilation for that section also, to be sure." Esteban was taking no chances.

Childers had been monitoring the communications of the med team, as since they are in hazmat suits, they were using radios to talk to each other. "Sir, they have reached Mr. Chattman." He listened closely and passed along the highlights. "They have revived him to the point of responding minimally to questions, but his temperature has risen to near 101."

"Childers, please pass to Sickbay Chattman's apparent good health while on the bridge, and the time of his exiting. That may help them in their diagnosis of when he was infected." That led to just one thought, "Saavik, scan the Bridge immediately for the virus." Jonathan Esteban now had to worry whether the entire Bridge crew had just been exposed to the disease, hazmat suits or not.

All eyes turned to the Captain, and not a one failed to shudder at the thought.

## **USS Grissom-Sickbay**

Seán Murphy howled in frustration as the med team brought Christopher Chattman into sickbay "Get him on the table in Dr.S'Raazh office, that's about the only space we have left". Aabin rushed to be beside Chattman but Murphy stood in the way "Get a grip kid, we need your pheromones working to our advantage here, keeping blood pressure down on the other patients, so get back to work". Aabin was in tears and began to protest but Murphy took him by the shoulders,

his gloved hands touching Aabin's naked skin "Liebmann and Saunders have a serum, we just have to keep our patients stable for a little while longer, it'll be alright". Aabin turned away to see Dr.S'Raazh exit the ICU bay. She hit the table in anger and then turned to Murphy and Aabin "Liisi Tamkivi is dead".

### **USS Grissom-Conference Room**

Esteban and PO Arunie Fernando entered the conference room together; the Yeoman had been assisting him since the viral outbreak. The conference room monitor chimed "Liebmann to the Captain, we have an update".

"Alright, Doctors, what have you got?" asked Esteban.

"It's a lateral gene transfer, Captain." Liebmann sounded both relieved and proud.

"It's what?" Esteban needed a better explanation than that.

Liebmann tried to explain what he found. "Captain, I know you are familiar with the basic structure of DNA, the double-helix strand with our genes and chromosomes encoded in it. You may also be familiar with plasmids, a circular DNA strand that is also in some cells and found mainly in bacteria, but also in some more complex cells. As you see on your monitor, when a bacteria cell infects another, this plasmid will strip off part of its DNA structure and pass it into the next cell, then both re-grow the missing DNA parts. It's called 'conjugation.' What we have found is that your crew have been infected with a type of plasmid that infects like bacteria, with a part that integrates itself like a more complex organism's cell, and a snippet of plasmid that's left in turn instructs the new host to grow another plasmid to pass the disease along. The differences are highlighted, again, on your view-screen."

Esteban wrapped his head around that without too much of a problem, but "Why are people that got sick many hours ago sometimes less sick than the more recent patients?"

Saunders explained "because there are, as best we can figure, different infection methods; the coughing suggests airborne to the lungs, and maybe airborne onto the skin. The sample from Tamkivi showed a large concentration of infected cells radiating out from her respiratory tract" he paused to catch his breath, and for effect. "As the plasmids infected nearby cells, it quickly passed into her brain. I'm sure that is why she experienced so much pain. Others have who breathed in the disease, in smaller doses we suspect, have had much more effect on their internal organs."

"With this information, do you believe that your serum will stop it?" queried the usually timid Fernando. Esteban looked at her sideways, but Liebmann again showed his mastery of the situation. "Captain, I have - we have - decided on a

retrovirus method for the serum. When it gets into the complex cell, it takes the place of the telomeres, which are the very ends of the DNA strand, and then causing replication errors in the DNA structure to eliminate the plasmid. It should work very fast, too.”

Esteban liked the idea “what about the seriously ill? And those with a lot of cell damage? Will you be able to cure them?”

Liebmann almost conveyed true sorrow in his voice. “Sir, Dr.S’Raazh informs us Tamkivi is dead already, and your Steward Jensen, will die very soon. We have begun replication of my, I mean ‘our’ serum, and will be issuing hyposprays shortly. In the meantime, now that we know it is airborne, we can halt further progression if everyone just stays in hazmat suits.” Saunders chimed in “It’s like he said Sir, Dr.S’Raazh had everyone in hazmat suits pretty promptly, and so we now know that the infection is contained. The only thing I can’t understand is how Aabin was not infected, but, as Terlis was Deltan, and this links to him, he may have built a Deltan immunity into this virus. I’m studying Aabin’s tissue samples now and will confirm shortly. Lab 4 out.”

### **USS Grissom-transporter room**

Rachel Wood/Na’nerd was clever. She was in a hazmat suit and at her station when Commander Ottair entered the main transporter room. During the viral outbreak Ottair had been doing what she did best, helping as best she could from engineering. “Wood, THERE you are. I have been busy in engineering, carrying out ventilation diagnostics for Lt.S’aavik, but the Lt. was specifically looking for you earlier. Did you contact her?” Wood/Na’nerd replied “Yes Commander. I was carrying out those routine maintenance checks in the aft bussard collector, as per your orders, so was out of contact. When I climbed out of there I met a crewman in a hazmat suit and got straight into one, then contacted the Lt. I have had no symptoms.” Ottair nodded her helmeted head “And how do you feel now?” “Fine Commander, I didn’t go to sickbay in case I was needed at my station, as per Starfleet regulation 7-10, subsection 12, what to do in event of quarantine.” Ottair nodded again, and seemed satisfied. “Good work Wood, contact sickbay and let them know you’re safe, I’ll continue my tour of the ship. Sometimes a visual tour can turn up more than a communicator”.

### **USS Grissom-Sickbay-9 hours since Tamkivi’s first symptoms**

J.T. Esteban entered sickbay. All was slowly returning to normal. Liebmann and Saunders serum had been distributed throughout the ship to all crew as a precaution, and to the infected as a cure. Unfortunately, it had come too late for Tamkivi and also, alas for Absalon Jensen, who had passed away shortly before the serum was issued. Esteban had lost his steward, a man whom he had worked with for a year, and the Grissom had lost another 2 crewmembers. Esteban remembered his speech to the crew when they had lost Solak and Hewson at Cinera. Although, he now knew that Hewson was dying anyway, it did little to

ease his pain at his earlier promise to get the crew back 'in one piece'. He sighed heavily. "Murphy, well done for your work here, it can't have been easy" he said to Seán Murphy. Murphy was wary of Esteban following his recent questioning by Thorsen on Esteban's orders "I'm just doing my job". Esteban nodded and moved away, and Murphy spoke again "But Captain, do us all a favour and stop filling the mortuary, we're running out of space". Esteban could have rebuked Murphy, and normally would, but, for once, he was speechless. This wasn't the time or place, and besides, Murphy had a point.

Esteban moved to the ICU area, where Christopher Chattman was sitting up on a biobed, Specialist Aabin sat beside him, holding his hand. Aabin stood when Esteban entered, ever polite and respectful "Captain Sir, excuse me". Esteban gestured with his hands awkwardly "No, excuse me, just checking up on the patient. You're recovering Chattman?" Chattman blushed "Yes sir, thank you sir, I should be back on duty soon". Esteban saw Vindi S'Raazh enter the sickbay and took that as his excuse to leave "Well, later then". As Esteban left ICU, Chattman turned to Aabin "Now it's my turn to be in sickbay with you watching me." Aabin squeezed Chattman's hand "Just you get better soon my love, we have our entire life's ahead of us".

### **USS Grissom-Conference Room**

Esteban had called a meeting with his senior staff and Drs Marcus, Liebmann and Saunders. He had also requested that the meeting be linked directly with Admiral Morrow at Starfleet Command. Esteban, Ottair, S'Raazh, Saavik, Thorsen, Casas and the 3 doctors now sat looking at the image of Admiral Harry Morrow in the conference viewer.

Liebmann stepped up to the plate. "Admiral, as Saunders said, the Tamkivi infection was caused by an airborne virus, but the concentrations in her, and several others, suggest that direct contact was made with an infected individual. Someone practically had to spit or cough directly onto Tamkivi's face to infect her as heavily as she was in such a short time. We know from our Security people questioning several of the crew that she seemed fine about 15 minutes before Specialist Aabin found her."

Esteban's concern rose. "Are you suggesting someone infected her on purpose?"

Saunders cut in; "we can't be sure. Maybe they sneezed or coughed while standing right behind her, but they would have had to be extremely sick too, or have a resistance to the disease. And no one was sicker than her before she came in, or for at least a half hour after. It just doesn't seem right."

Esteban's frustration now kicked in; but he spoke slowly and deliberately "on this voyage we have had Tholians board us, Romulans infiltrate us, and of course, Klingons attack crewmen planet side and try to kidnap them. Now we may have either a device planted on the ship, or a saboteur?"

Liebmann countered, "OR someone with a resistance to the virus, like Typhoid Mary, whom infected others but showed no sickness herself. We used a combination of Deltan and Bolian DNA strands to build the antiviral serum. I will admit, Dr. Saunders was right on this. We were so concentrated on identifying the problem and developing a cure, that we hadn't the time to investigate anything else."

Admiral Harry Morrow spoke "For now, Doctors, I want you to finish classifying and typifying the disease, its etiology and on testing the serum more thoroughly. Jonathan, have your Security go through what they can to find the source." Morrow clasped his hands together and spoke once more "this mission is attracting a lot of attention, which was never my intention. For a science vessel that is meant to slip under the radar, you're practically sending up a location beacon for all to see." Morrow looked concerned, and even the normally imperturbable Thorsen was worried by that. He spoke again "I have nothing more to add right now. Continue your course to the Mutara sector, but please send me a full report on this as soon as" The Admiral's concern filled his voice. "Morrow out".

The image faded and Esteban turned to his team "you heard the Admiral; you all know what to do, so get to it". They rose to leave but Esteban spoke again "Ottair, Thorsen, Casas, a moment please". Ottair and the men halted and as Vindi S'Razh passed them she gave Esteban a quick but secret glance, one which showed her love and concern. Esteban smiled at her briefly, acknowledging her, thanking her silently. The door slid shut as S'Razh exited, and Esteban turned to Ottair, Thorsen and Casas. "You have heard Liebmann's theories, and I think my own theory about a saboteur is probably most likely". He turned to gaze out at the stars through the windows; "opinions".

Thorsen spoke first "Sir, given the number of incidents and the 'coincidence' of this outbreak just after our Tarellian encounter, I concur with your thoughts". Casas spoke next "Tamkivi did mention Ensign Wood before she lost consciousness, I think that we should start any crew interviews right there". Ottair interrupted "I can account for Woods whereabouts during this incident, she was at her post and acted accordingly, but still, she should be questioned, as should we all".

Esteban looked at Ottair. "Carrying out this mission in this atmosphere of paranoia is going to be nigh impossible. Casas, Thorsen, I want you to meet each crew member to 'debrief them' after these traumatic events, do not mention interview or interrogation, understood?" Both men replied simultaneously "Yes sir". "Get to it men, find me this saboteur and lets end this". Thorsen and Casas exited. Ottair stood at the conference table "you really think we have a saboteur aboard Captain?"

"We uncover a plot at Cinera base, it is later destroyed, and a mysterious viral

agent which originated there suddenly is aboard Grissom?" said Esteban wearily.

"I see your point sir" said Ottair. "For what it is worth, it seems to me that with the euphoria of our secret mission we have been wandering around in, as the Latin would put it, a 'Lacus Somniorum', a lake of dreams."

"Your point being?" queried Esteban.

Ottair stood, adjusted her uniform jacket and looked Esteban directly in the eyes "My point being sir, it is time for the dreamers to wake up".

-END-

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