

~ A Bard's Trekkie Flight from Maine to Ohio ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers

Copyright: Some characters I own and some I don't... take a wild guess! :)

Subtext: Oh yes.

Violence: Just a tiny bit.

Summary: This fanfiction contains three stories in one where the main character, Nowles, is a fanfiction writer and also a reader. She starts out reading a Xena and Gabrielle fanfiction as she's waiting for her flight. When she gets on her plane, she meets her row mates for the duration of the flight. Her row mates also happen to enjoy her fanfiction and request for a Star Trek Voyager piece next. However Nowles finds she's more taken with one of her row mates rather than her fanfictions.

Note: This fanfiction was written for The Royal Academy of Bards' Challenge #16 (Solstice From A to Xe) and boy was this a toughy! The rools required the use of 120 selected words within twenty-five pages and talk about some interesting words too and those are the ones that are underlined. So I managed to use all the words but the story only came out #6 against twelve competing works. I have to say though, I loved having the challenge.

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Nowles stretched her short legs out some however her full attention was captivated by her laptop's screen that rested in her lap. She held onto the laptop with her left hand then shifted it after adjusting her legs again. She stopped looking at the laptop's screen then checked her watch for the time; it would be another half an hour before her airplane would take off. In her right hand, she had a half eaten very juicy apple that she'd been meaning to get rid of but had failed to do yet. So she set her laptop down in the vacated chair next to her, got up, and tossed the apple away in the trashcan nearby.

When Nowles sat again she finally noticed a man, who was sitting across from her, was staring at her. He was subtle but noticeable enough for Nowles's taste. She decided to just ignore him and she returned to her earlier paradise in the laptop screen, which caused her to grin. The story flowed off the laptop's screen and happily consumed Nowles's world once again....

"Xena, look out!" yelled Gabrielle. She suddenly hurled her right sai at the bandit that was trying to sneak up on her partner.

The Warrior Princess heard the warning just after she cut her opponent down. She then spun around and engaged the bandit that now lost strength due to the painful weapon sticking out of his midback. She gave her fierce battlecry and engaged him.

The nimble bard efficiently finished off her opponent with a resounding kick to his chest. She smiled when he went sprawling on his back, unconscious. She flipped her sai in midair then pointed it at the five men she'd defeated. "Happy Solstice, boys." She chuckled, fixed her long, white wool coat, and strolled over to her partner. Just in time, she jumped off to the right as Xena's final opponent slammed next to her feet. She smirked then lifted her eyes from the unconscious bandit next to her. "I finished before you... beat you again." She pointed her thumb back at the five unconscious men behind her. "You're just getting old, Xena."

The warrior narrowed her indigo eyes in warning yet her lips curled with a grin. She sheathed her sword then with her hands on her hips she scanned the bodies of the sleeping bandits she'd taken out. "Hmmm... I count ten bandits." She stretched her neck out and counted Gabrielle's opponents. "Half as many... yeah."

The bard laughed as she flipped her sai again then casually strolled off towards Argo.

Argo snorted in annoyance, she'd been patiently waiting for the heroes after the fiasco broke out with the surprise attack.

"Gabrielle," called the Warrior Princess.

Gabrielle spun around on her boots just as her second sai came sailing at her. She offhandedly plucked it out of midair by its hilt then with a spin of both weapons, she bent and sheathed them. Then she continued traveling down the road. "Come on, Xena... don't putter because we won't make it in time."

Xena arched an eyebrow at her partner's receding back. "Putter?" she murmured. "Huh."

"Don't forget your horse," joked the bard, who shot a teasing smirk over her shoulder.

Xena rolled her eyes as she came up to Argo's side. She adjusted the mare's harness while talking. "Why would I forget you, girl?" She rubbed the horse's crown then adjusted the reins in her hand.

Gabrielle kicked a random stone and watched it skitter down the road. Within ten breathes though she smiled at her soul mate returning to her side.

The warrior slowed down once at Gabrielle's side then she slipped her right hand into her bard's nearby hand.

Gabrielle's smile grew and her green eyes sparkled. In no time she and Xena entered the fairly large town of Tricca that was under the rule of a king and queen, who were known for being rather snarky when it came to tax season. And tax season happened to be year around in this kingdom. The duo finally made it into a tavern after getting Argo stabled up for the night.

First thing was first so they retrieved a nice room that was plenty warm and had a huge bed. They had an early dinner in the tavern, which was filled with so much chatter from the locals. Then close to the end of the meal, they were joined by a visitor they'd been waiting for all night.

Gabrielle tilted her head back and offered a smile to the cloaked figure that loomed

over her.

"What took you?" barked the Warrior Princess.

The cloaked figure sighed at the gruff warrior. "Xena, you have the most unique greetings." He revealed a flashy grin under his hood.

Xena got up simultaneously with her partner and she tossed some dinars onto the table for the dinner. "Let's go to the room."

Gabrielle's agreement was leading the group through the tavern, into the back hall, and finally into the room. After the door was shut and the man's hood removed, she smiled and gave him a warm hug. "It's great to see you again, Autolycus."

Autolycus hugged back but gave a mischievous grin at the brooding Warrior Princess behind Gabrielle's back. He freed one hand, in between the hug, and pretended to grab Gabrielle's ass with his hand just hovering over a firm, luscious cheek.

Xena displayed all her teeth in a dangerous smile, her eyes flashing. Quickly her right hand vanished then displayed her chakram as her Autolycus replant.

"You look wonderful, Gabrielle," drew out the King of Thieves when the bard pulled back in the hug. He smiled very pleasantly. "Especially for being almost fifty years old."

The bard chuckled and she took a heartbeat to admire Autolycus's wrinkled features and soft, grey hair that mixed with his dark brown. "And you've aged well, Autolycus."

The King of Thieves chuckled then stated, "Not as quite as well as you, Gabrielle." He finally released the bard when Xena started to aim her chakram.

Gabrielle suddenly spun around because of her inclination about her partner.

Xena smiled brightly as her hands rested on her hips yet her fingertips lingered on her now hooked chakram.

Autolycus sauntered up to the Warrior Princess then held his hand out, palm up. "Xena, it's been so long."

The warrior went along as she slipped her right hand into his, very loosely. "It never seems long enough," she remarked.

Autolycus ignored it and lowered his head then placed a liberal kiss to Xena's hand. He then inhaled harshly when his hand was almost crushed by the warrior's. He quickly let go then shook his hand while straightening up. "Yes, well... perhaps we should get started."

Gabrielle had her arms folded and her face full of amusement. "How about we sit?" she suggested with a wave to the table and four chairs.

"I knew you were never a true blond," joked the King of Thieves, who darted out of the way from the bard's slap.

The heroes took a seat with the King of Thieves and got into the details of the

problems of Tricca. Xena drummed her fingers the entire time while Gabrielle was engrossed by the tale. Occasionally Xena would glance at her partner and catch her toying with her heart necklace, the piece of jewelry twined around an index finger.

At the end of Autolycus's story, Gabrielle breathed out, "That's so bizarre." She freed her necklace then propped her elbow against the table then leaned on her propped up hand. "Do you think it's the viceroys that's has them doing this?"

The King of Thieves laughed and shook his head. "It's all the king and queen, Gabrielle." He sighed then glanced between the women. "I really need the help. I can't keep stealing from the rich and giving to the poor."

"I can't imagine you giving aaaall that money to the poor," drew out the grinning Warrior Princess.

"Well... I do have a small fee," relented the thief, "I can't live on goodwill alone." At Xena's chuckle he held up his hands. "Listen, I'll have no will soon if the king slaps manacles on my wrists."

"Xena, we have to help," tried the bard, "it'll be Solstice soon."

The warrior knew and she couldn't argue especially when her soul mate gave her that longing look. She released a sigh then turned her focus back to the King of Thieves. "You don't have any idea why he's doing this?"

"Nothing," replied Autolycus, "there aren't even hardly rumors floating around."

Gabrielle opened her mouth to ask something then she was caught off guard by the shiver up her spine. She hastily jumped to her feet but not in fear or concern, her head turned to the left as pink sparkles developed in the center of the room.

Xena was surprised by her partner's early determination of the Goddess of Love's entrance. It was much the same reaction she had whenever Ares was near. She put that away for later consideration.

"Aphrodite," greeted the smiling bard.

"Hey bard babe, how's it going?" The Goddess of Love came over to the group but Gabrielle met her halfway.

"It's great to see you." The bard hugged her pink clad friend. "I'm doing well," she answered finally after the hug. "How are you?"

"Bodacious." Aphrodite looked Gabrielle up and down in her new red velvet outfit with the super short skirt. "You look killer, Gabs." She enjoyed the coy smile on Gabrielle's face then she looked to the flabbergasted King of Thieves and nonchalant warrior. "What's up, warrior babe?"

"The usual," commented the Warrior Princess.

"That's what I heard," agreed the Goddess of Love.

Gabrielle tilted her head, hands on her hips, and she asked, "You know about King Cornelius?"

Aphrodite sputtered with a wave of her hand at the bard. "By me, like duh! Who hasn't heard of big ole King Cornelius and his... big ole effigy?"

"His... effigy?" tried Gabrielle, her eyebrow mocking Xena's imitation.

"Gabs, his elephant and hippos?" tried the Goddess of Love.

Xena quietly groaned then hung her head down and covered her face with her hand.

Aphrodite goggled at the stumped bard. "Like his wombat?"

Autolycus had caught on long ago and could not stop his laughter.

Finally Aphrodite's underlying meaning of the words struck the suddenly flushed bard. "Oooo," murmured Gabrielle. She cleared her throat then muttered, "I see."

"Babe, you haven't seen... it until you've seen it," joked the goddess.

Gabrielle patted her blushed chest, her hand covering her necklace. She cleared her throat again then stated, "I really rather not anyway." Her features showed she was slightly queasy just at the thought. "So... why are you here?" she tried.

Aphrodite put her hands on her sheer pink hips. "To like help out."

"Ooo no," spoke up the protesting warrior, "I think we three can handle this."

Aphrodite's hands flopped off her hips as she stared dubiously at the warrior. "As - if, warrior babe. You're like outta your gourd. This is like my department not some kick-ass warrior's." Now she got smug and teased, "Besides warrior babe, what are you going to do? Scare it stiff?"

Xena arched a challenging eyebrow.

The bard decided it was best to take over again and curiously asked, "What's this have to do with... love?"

Autolycus nervously ran his fingers through his hair as he brought up something. "There is this one rumor why King Cornelius is so... cruel." He toyed with his silver mustache then hastily explained, "They say he can't... shall we say perform properly in bed for his queen."

Gabrielle turned to the King of Thieves fully with an outrageous look. "Are you telling me all this calamity in his kingdom is because he can't have sex?"

Autolycus bit his lower lip to hold back his smirk and he nodded.

This new revolution was just beyond the bard's sympathy. "He's joking right, Aphrodite?"

The Goddess of Love grinned at her friend. "Like I'd be here otherwise, Gabs."

Gabrielle let out a low groan.

"So," tried the Warrior Princess, "let me just guess. Somehow you know how to... right it."

The Goddess of Love instantly glowed with a smile. "Fer shurrr!"

Nowles was drawn away from her fanfiction reading when the woman's voice came over the speaker.

"We are now boarding Flight Number 316. We will begin with the business rows. All business rows first." The announcer's speaker clanked for a second then everybody went crazy to get prepared.

Nowles quickly closed up her laptop knowing it would go into standby. She then hurried to get ready with her carry on baggage. Once she was set, she walked into the abyss of people waiting to board the plane. When her row was called to enter, she surfaced from the line with her ticket out then after adjusting her messenger bag at her side she strolled down the whitewash tunnel that led to the plane.

Nowles wasn't so happy to discover her seat was a middle spot but there wasn't much she could do. She tucked her messenger bag under the front seat then flopped into her chair. Then she idly watched the people getting boarded and putting their things in the overhead. She amusingly watched a rather hapless, middling man that resembled a gnome try to shove his large carry on in the overhead. He eventually succeeded after a few drops.

Nowles chuckled but settled back into her chair and played with her short blond hair. She could only imagine who would be sitting on either side of her. She just hoped they were quiet and smelled fresh. She dropped her head back and closed her eyes.

"Excuse me, ma'am," broke out a man's voice.

Nowles's green eyes fluttered open and she peered up at the man in question.

"I have the window seat."

Nowles instantly recognized him as the small man that had been staring at her earlier. She hesitated then hastily climbed out of the row so he could get in too. She watched as the small but robust man wedged into the row and flopped into his chair. Nowles though easily slipped into her chair and got comfortable again.

The small man pushed his black glasses up onto the bridge of his nose with his index finger. He straightened out his brown corduroy coat then held out his hand while saying, "Hi, I'm Gary Steely."

Nowles nodded then accepted the hand. "Nowles Montessori."

"Ooo are you Italian heritage?"

Nowles slightly smiled at his perception. "Yes, it's an old family name."

Gary's head was bobbing. "Nowles is an English name if I'm not mistaken."

"Dweller at the hilltop," defined the young woman in agreement.

"Are you close to your Italian heritage?"

Nowles chuckled then indicated her blond hair. "The heritage has been slightly diluted." She shrugged as her hand flopped into her tiny lap. "My family is more like

hillbilly living in no-man's land compared to our Italian heritage."

Gary grinned at the joke.

"How about yourself?" tried Nowles.

The man shrugged then replied, "I'm from New York City myself."

Nowles consider this then when she was going to ask more, she noticed the arriving occupant of the aisle seat. Her eyebrows hiked up.

The very tall woman had to slightly duck when she flopped into the aisle seat. She stretched one leg under the chair in front of her and the other into the aisle. She truly required the aisle out of anybody on the plane. She generously and loudly chewed on a piece of gum as she worked to get her seatbelt on comfortably. She caught sight of the smaller woman next to her watching her. She smiled, nodded, and then looked to towards the front of the plane.

Nowles blinked and turned her staring away. Well it wasn't everyday that a tall, dark, and drop dead gorgeous sat beside you, mentally commented Nowles. She then felt Gary looking at her so she gifted him with a forced smile.

"I saw you were reading something earlier," remarked Gary. "I only noticed because you kept chuckling."

Nowles tried to hide her blush as she nodded. "Yeah, I like to read a lot." She shrugged then added, "I write too on the side."

"Really?" Gary pushed his sliding glasses back up. "What you enjoy?"

Nowles quickly glanced at the woman beside her, who seemed to be paying no mind. Her tongue ran along her molars then she replied, "I read a lot of fanfiction off the internet." If she thought that would slow Gary down it surely did not.

"That's cool because I'm into the same stuff." Gary was absolutely thrilled. "What fandom do you read?"

Nowles couldn't believe she was going in this direction but she found herself answering none the less. "Xena Warrior Princess is my favorite."

"Ooo sure," went on Gary, "I like sci-fi fantasy too... dragons, unicorns, Greeks, kings, hydras, and gods. Cool."

Nowles kept her smile but her eyes showed her annoyance. She forgot to hope that her row mates weren't pests or parasites but she was fresh out of luck for the flight duration. "So... what do you read?" Her voice was barely even.

"I'm a Trekkie," proudly declared the man.

Why does that figure, inwardly jabbed Nowles. "I read some of that fandom too," she relented, "but only Voyager."

"Cool... cool." Again Gary adjusted his glasses but he was kept silent by the now talking flight attendant.

Nowles stole a side glance at the dark beauty beside her. She groaned then stretched her legs out as far as she could under the front chair, not that it was too far.

The tall woman paused in her chewing then glimpsed down at the woman in the middle. She shrugged then went back to listening to the attendant go through the boring safety drill.

Nowles caught the fact that she'd had the woman's brief attention. She inwardly grinned then briefly focused on the attendant's monologue. Then it was all over and the airplane was rolling down the runway then shortly airborne. As soon as Nowles heard the announcement for electronic use, she dove into her messenger bag to free her notebook and produced it with a victorious smile.

Within a minute, Nowles's laptop was up and running then she pulled up her story she'd minimized earlier. She got comfortable, pulled the tray forward so that the screen was closer, and she once again was absorbed in her fanfiction.

Gabrielle adjusted the strap on her shoulder after just changing into a different, much more scantily outfit compared to her usual attire if that was possible. "Xena, you really think the king taxes his people for each child they have? I mean just because he can't have children?"

The Warrior Princess emerged from the washroom just after getting her new attire on too. "Sure, I believe it." She shrugged then stated, "Why not?" She stopped dead when she saw the laughing face of her partner.

Gabrielle bit her lower lip then quickly covered her mouth to stop the laughs.

Xena looked down at herself and back up at her bard. "Don't... don't even," she warned.

Gabrielle hastily shook her head as if in promise. She uncovered her mouth then tried to keep the laughter out of her voice. "So... how do I always end up being dressed like this?"

The warrior tilted her head as she admired the skimpy, mostly white outfit her soul mate wore. She crossed the short distance but stopped short in front of Gabrielle then signaled at her body. "How did," Xena emphasized, "I end up like this?"

Gabrielle had to giggle yet she stopped fast because of Xena's dark look. She'd never seen Xena in something so girlish and the sheer cut, see through outfit barely hid Xena's popular attributes.

"As I recall, somebody just had to help." Xena had a toying expression but at Gabrielle's slight pout she relented and lowered her head close. "I always try to do what my soul mate wishes," she murmured while her right hand touched Gabrielle's cheek.

The bard tilted her head back and was given a tender kiss. When the kiss ended, she grinned and poked at Xena's bare belly.

"Hey!" Xena jumped back with a glower. She rubbed her belly and poked navel. "Don't start with me, bard."

Gabrielle quickly turned her head to the right just before pink sparkles started forming. She grinned widely as the Goddess of Love poofed into the sunset lit room. "How was your night, Dity?" She absorbed the very different attire the goddess worry that made her seem so regal, like a debutante going to the ball.

"It was like supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Gabs!" gushed the perky goddess. "And like best of all, I got the stuff." She snapped her fingers then a vile formed in her right hand.

The bard crinkled her nose up and tilted her head. "That's it?" she pointed at the vile.

"Totally!" The goddess smiled so brightly. "Like this'll get his knocker knocking!"

Xena rolled her eyes and went across the room to get the last things organized.

Gabrielle nodded, her eyes wide some. "So what... is it?"

Aphrodite grinned, her nose all crinkled up much like Gabrielle's could do. "I call it my Everlasting Viagra. The name's a doozy huh?"

The bard's forehead wrinkled then she turned her focus to her partner. "Xena, is Autolycus meeting us here?" For her answer, there was a knock at the door. "Come in." She smiled when the King of Thieves entered.

Xena looked up from her saddlebags and smirked at Gabrielle. "Yes he is." She chuckled at her soul mate's scowl.

The Goddess of Love gave an approval of Autolycus's fine, royal dress that matched Aphrodite's outfit. "You totally look dreamy, Auto."

The King of Thieves smiled proudly and curled his hands around his coat's flaps. He took in Gabrielle's extra scantily clad outfit. "My Gabrielle, those clothes only hide your most beautiful ass-sets, you should remove them." As soon as he said that one of Xena's daggers went whizzing past his face, just missing his nose.

Gabrielle stood with a smirk and listened to the dagger briefly wobble in the wall off to her left.

Xena straightened up after her hunt in the saddlebags. "So..." She smiled at the shocked King of Thieves and her soul mate. "Are we ready then?"

"Like totally!" gushed the excited Goddess of Love.

In no time flat, the comrades made it across town to the king's castle where the king and queen held a Solstice Eve party. It was the only party allowed in his kingdom and the only instant in the kingdom that Solstice was ever celebrated. Otherwise the kingdom's jurisprudence did not allow celebration of Solstice for many seasons now. When they approached the gates of the castle, a set of guards stepped in their way.

"Who are you?" demanded the right guard.

Autolycus lifted his chin then proudly stated, "I am Dorian and this is my wife, Venus."

Gabrielle quickly rolled her eyes at the alternate name for Aphrodite that Autolycus

used for the goddess.

The left guard now pointed at the two women behind the regal couple. "And these... women?"

Aphrodite, with a proud stature, stepped up to him. "This is no conundrum."

The guards blinked at the big word just thrown at them.

Autolycus acted annoyed. "These are my assistances... they are to dance for King Cornelius tonight."

The guards weren't totally sure but by how they were dressed and sounded they seemed to check out. "Fine," spoke a guard. "Go ahead." They stepped aside then let the newcomers pass through. Then one guard shrugged at the other one and returned to duty.

When the friends entered the great banquet hall, they found it rather busy thanks to the crowd of rich and wealthy. In the center was a long table full of food and drink then straight ahead was a small stage where a quartet of musicians, who had a flute, tambourine, lyre and voice.

Autolycus easily picked out the king and queen far off to the right so he turned to his friends. "I'll talk to King Cornelius." He pointed at the heroes. "Get ready to do your... thing... whatever that is." His eyes flickered up to the goddess as a slick smile crossed his face. "And you get to do yours."

Aphrodite grinned with a crinkled nose. "Bitchin'."

"Let's go," ordered the King of Thieves.

Gabrielle gave her partner a worried look but Xena shrugged and followed the King of Thieves. She released a sigh then her and Aphrodite hurried along.

"King Cornelius!" bellowed the King of Thieves, a huge smile glued to his face. "It's been so long!"

The king broke away from his chitchat with a guest. He was clearly confused but he clasped the outstretched hand. "It's good to... see you too," he tried to think of the man's name.

"Dorian," offered Autolycus, "I know it's been awhile." He then held out his hand to the goddess beside him. "Surely you recall my beautiful, stunning, gorgeous wife Venus."

Gabrielle arched an eyebrow at her soul mate.

Xena let out a low sigh. She would much rather bust some heads to straighten up this king.

"Of course I do," agreed the king. He bowed and took the Goddess of Love's hand and kissed it. "You look amazing as ever, Venus."

"Why thank you," evenly answered Aphrodite, her voice not as high pitched.

"Perhaps later you can offer me a little waltz on the dance floor," tried the king. He then straightened up and signaled the queen beside him. "This is my wife, Queen Helena."

The King of Thieves did not wait a heartbeat as he took the queen's hands. "It is a pleasure, Queen Helena." After a long kiss to the top of her hand he let go and smiled at King Cornelius. "I have brought you a gift for this evening, my king." He stepped aside and held out his hand to Xena and Gabrielle behind him. "These are my assistances." He bit his lower lip as his eyes gleamed. He pointed at Xena then stated, "This is Cherish."

Cherish clenched her hands into a fist at her side and bit back every snide remark.

"And her lovely dance partner Gabrielle."

Gabrielle smiled quite sweetly at the king and queen.

"Dance partner you say?" tried the king. "Are they any good?"

"The finest, my king," answered Autolycus, "They will perform the Three Veils tonight for you if you so wish."

King Cornelius beamed at this news. "There is no better time than the present." He clapped his hands then hurried off to the musicians.

The King of Thieves's smug expression leveled at his assistances. "Ladies, if you'd be so kind to entertain our king."

Xena ran her tongue along her teeth then dangerously drew out, "Of course... my lord."

Gabrielle hastily shoved her soul mate off so that nothing else happened. "We should get prepared... Cherish."

The Warrior Princess lowly growled at her partner for the joke.

The bard smiled lovingly at her soul mate but her eyes were full of mischief. She and Xena quickly took front stage before the crowd of people. "I can't believe I'm doing this in front of all these people," she muttered.

Xena bent over and murmured, "Just pretend it's only us."

Gabrielle eyed her partner then sensually whispered, "If that were the case we wouldn't be wearing anything, Xena."

Before Xena could get in a response, the music began and the soul mates started the Dance of Three Veils. Those veils having somehow been kept hidden in random spots in the pair's clothes now materialized. Together they put on a slow performance that captivated everybody's attention solely on them.

Autolycus leaned towards Aphrodite, "Sweetie, could you get me a drink and some rhubarb pie?"

Aphrodite smiled then in a teasing voice asked, "Would you like ice cream too, dear?"

The King of Thieves had twisted features but he couldn't say anything as the Goddess of Love traveled off. He could only wonder what ice cream was but knowing Aphrodite it had many uses.

Aphrodite made it to the food table and she collected a piece of pie, a fork, and went down to the three large bowls of drinks. She noted one had something fruity, another wine, and the third was some white liquid that had a pungent smell of milk, wine, and egg.

The Goddess of Love was closest to the white drink and she glanced around and saw nobody paying her any mind. So she held her right hand out then the capless vile appeared in her hand. She then leaned over the bowl of odd white liquid that reminded her too much of... well anyway, she tilted the vile and let the Endless Viagra pour out slowly. The blue liquid swirled into the white liquid and mixed.

Aphrodite suddenly caught a big whiff of the strong drink, which made her perform a grievous error. "Grody to the max," she whimpered then her vile slipped from her fingertips and clanked into the metal bowl of white liquid then vanished. She stood stunned, her jaw hanging open and she wasn't sure what to do. "Ooo no," she squealed. The white drink was now tainted blue from the heavy Everlasting Viagra. "So not cool."

Aphrodite noticed nobody saw this happen but she quickly moved away before people became suspicious. She nervously got a mug of fruit drink for Autolycus then made a hasty retreat back to him.

Autolycus received the items from the goddess while murmuring, "Get it done?"

Aphrodite smiled brightly then leaned closer to him. "I like... had a problemo."

The King of Thieves's features dropped. "What?"

"The... EV is all in one drink," whispered the goddess. "I totally dropped the vile in it."

Autolycus let out a low groan. "Can't you just poof up more?"

"No," hissed the frustrated goddess, "it totally took me all day to like make it." She sighed then further whispered, "I so ain't a pharmacist."

The King of Thieves was baffled by what a pharmacist was but he ignored it. "So we'll just have to make sure he drinks that one." He took a piece of the rhubarb pie while asking, "Which one was it?"

"It was like the white one." At seeing Autolycus's confused expression she explained what she thought was in it. "It has a noxious smell... smelled like eggs, wine, and milk."

The King of Thieves brightened up. "Eggnog."

Aphrodite held up a hand and whispered, "Like I don't know but barf me out." When she stopped talking, she saw that Xena and Gabrielle were finished their Dance of the Three Veils. "Like omigawds, I totally missed the dance." She pouted.

"Hmmm." Autolycus held his fork with rhubarb pie near his lips and muttered, "I'm hoping they'll give me a private showing later."

Gabrielle grasped her lover's arm and softly asked, "I'm going to get a drink, you want anything?"

The warrior shook her head then replied, "I'll just take a drink of whatever you get." After her partner's nod, she continued on her short trip to Autolycus and Aphrodite.

King Cornelius appeared beside the King of Thieves. "They were marvelous!" He was excited and turned to the arrival of the dancer. "You were excellent, Cherish."

"Thank you, King Cornelius." Xena bowed her head in respect.

"Where did your splendid dance partner go?" poured out the king.

The Warrior Princess glanced over at her partner, who just filled her mug up with something. "She is getting a drink."

Aphrodite's eyes widened in alarm.

The King of Thieves's right hand shot out and squeezed the goddess's arm to keep her from saying anything.

King Cornelius brightened even more when Gabrielle made her appearance in the group. "My dear, you were absolutely marvelous. Where ever did you learn the Dance of Three Veils?"

Aphrodite stole a heartbeat to lean over to the right, over Gabrielle's shoulder. She bit her lower lip when she saw the blue tainted eggnog in the mug.

Gabrielle smiled warmly then replied, "Cherish actually taught me." She smiled widely at her partner. "Right, Cherish?"

Cherish's eyes darkened three degrees. "Riiight," she drew out but she slapped a smile on her face when the king turned back to her.

"Wonderful," gushed the king, "You are a lucky man, Dorian."

"Yes," agreed Autolycus, "every night they perform the dance for me. It helps me sleep."

King Cornelius laughed quite heartedly. "I can imagine!"

Gabrielle refrained from a smart remark by lifting her mug. She tilted the mug back and the eggnog crept down to her open mouth.

Aphrodite inhaled her gasp then suddenly flayed her arms. She effectively smacked the mug out of Gabrielle's grasp.

The mug was airborne for a few heartbeats then came to a crash and splash into Xena's chest.

Gabrielle's mouth remained hung open between shock that her mug was gone and that the eggnog was all over Xena.

"Ooo I am so sorry!" spewed out Aphrodite. "I... I don't know what came over me!"

"Honey," drew out Autolycus, "Its okay."

"Servants," called the king, "hurry to get some rags and clean this mess!"

The King of Thieves gave the king an apologetic look. "I am sorry, my king."

The eggnogged warrior rolled her eyes since she received no apology.

"My wife suffered a small case of leprosy many seasons back." Autolycus sadly sighed then stepped closer to the king and whispered, "Ever since then, nothing has been right with her. You know?"

King Cornelius clasped Autolycus's shoulder and nodded. "I understand... completely. It's good to see her beauty remains intact. You're a fine man to stay with her."

"Thank you, sir," replied the King of Thieves, he was holding back his laughter enough that it hurt his belly.

Xena had effectively wiped some of the eggnog off her cheeks by the time the servants bustled up to help.

Gabrielle came over and took a rag from a servant. "Here." She started wiping her soul mate's belly clean then she made it up Xena's chest. She wavered as a grin spread over her face. She ran her index finger over Xena's eggnog chest then licked the strong liquid clean from her finger. "Hmmmm."

Aphrodite groaned after seeing the bard do this.

The Warrior Princess's eyes twinkled down at her partner. "Are you finished?"

Gabrielle winked but teased, "Almost, Cherish."

When the mess was all cleaned up, the king excused himself to mingle with the guests again. Gabrielle spun on her heels to face Aphrodite and hissed, "Why'd you do that?"

"Like oh my gods," breathed out the goddess, "the eggnog had all the... EV in it." She watched the dumbfounded look come over the bard.

"I... just...," sputtered the bard.

"Yeah like I know!" raved the goddess, who quickly settled down again.

Xena stepped closer after hearing the conversation. "Will it affect her?"

The goddess shrugged then answered, "I think it only works on men. But like it might make her ovary go totally into overdrive."

"Is there a way to reverse it?" growled the Warrior Princess.

Aphrodite bit her lower lip then squeaked out, "Like maybe."

Xena's eyes slotted and her upper lip curled into a feral grin. "You better fix it."

"Afraid you won't be able to keep up with her... Cherish?" tormented the King of

Thieves. "Feeling the grays too?"

The warrior's attention snapped to the Autolycus. "I don't have any," she shot back defensively.

"Will I know of this stuff is doing something?" probed the bard.

Aphrodite chuckled and replied, "Duh! You'll totally know, Gabs."

The bard felt slightly woozy. "We need to get King Cornelius to drink that stuff."

"And get the Hades out of here," added the annoyed warrior.

"Leave it to me," announced the King of Thieves. He strolled off with his plate, fork, and mug to return them to the table. He dropped his dirty dishes off but kept his mug and filled it up with the wine this time. He set it down, got a second mug, and filled it with eggnog.

The two heroes and goddess carefully watched as the King of Thieves bee lined for the king, who was chatting with other guests. The King of Thieves held out the eggnog mug to the king in a warm gesture but the king, with a smile, waved him off.

"Great... he probably doesn't like eggnog," muttered the bard.

"Fer shur... that stuff is grody." The goddess saw that Xena was about to go fix the problem by whatever means necessary. She quickly grabbed the warrior's arm and stopped her. "Like let a professional handle this." She hurried off to rescue Autolycus.

Xena sighed then settled back next to her partner.

"Xena?" murmured the bard.

"Mmm?" Xena glanced at her lover and saw how her skin was flushed red.

Gabrielle inhaled deeply then quietly whispered, "You know how in bed I get like... during... you know?" When she saw Xena's discreet nod she continued. "Well multiply that by ten and that's how it feels."

"I'm not doing anything either," muttered back the warrior.

"I know." Gabrielle peered up into concerned blue eyes. "What happens if you do?" Her mind considered it, which was a big mistake so she had to cross her legs and her teeth clenched her lower lip for resolve. "This is real bad."

Xena had lifted her hand to touch her lover's mid back but decided it was safer not to do it. "After we get out of here... I promise we'll...."

"Work it out?" joked the bard.

The warrior couldn't help the soft laugh. "I'll take care of you," she promised with a glint in her eyes.

Gabrielle made a clearing sound from her throat. "I'm just worried it's more permanent... I drank a mouthful before I came over."

"How do these things happen to us?" murmured the cantankerous warrior.

The bard grinned up at her soul mate. "Come on, Xena you have the stamina for this job, don't you?" The only response she got was a faint grunt. "This might be a licentious night, Xena."

The Warrior Princess stared wide eye at her lover once she realized that tonight would be an all nighter.

Aphrodite smiled brightly at King Cornelius. "It is the best eggnog, my king. You must try it." She plucked the eggnog mug from Autolycus's hand and squeezed up to the king. "We toast then we shall waltz, my king." She winked at him while slipping an arm around his waist then leaning in close, she purred, "And after that, we'll do the limbo."

King Cornelius couldn't refuse now at this prospect with the beautiful woman. "Excellent."

The King of Thieves sighed in relief then held up his mug. "To King Cornelius!" He raised his mug then loudly toasted, "Here's to being firm... get firm, and stay firm!"

The crowd hooted and repeated out the toast in a cheer.

The king laughed then took a long drink of his famous eggnog that actually tasted better than he last recalled. He actually managed to down the eggnog in one big gulp then he tossed the empty mug to Autolycus. "Now for that dance, my lady."

Aphrodite giggled and held out her hand to him. "Shall we, my king?"

Xena blinked in amazement that it worked out. "Well I guess that means-"

"Its time for us to dance... in bed," hotly whispered the bard. She suddenly grabbed Xena's hand and hauled her out of the banquet.

The warrior almost tripped over herself as she was hastily towed. She quickly realized that her party tonight was about to begin. She could only pray that the bed in the tavern was nailed to the floor not that would silence her lover one octave. This would certainly prove to be the most memorable Solstice Eve in her life.

It wasn't too long before Helios awoke while the soul mates had only fallen asleep two candlemarks prior. As sunrise occurred, Gabrielle stirred from something and this caused Xena to slightly wake up.

"Please, Gabrielle," begged Xena in a throaty tone, "I can't... I need some sleep."

The bard stifled a laugh, kissed her lover's temple, and murmured, "I know... I just need to check something. Go back to sleep."

The exhausted, worn out warrior sighed in relief and closed her eyes. She felt Gabrielle slip out of her grasp and get out of bed.

Gabrielle donned her nightshift just before pink sparkles started glittering nearby.

Aphrodite's bright features went even brighter as seeing her mortal friend. She instantly spotted the sleeping warrior in the bed and loudly joked, "Like total

wipeout."

Gabrielle hissed and held her index finger over her lips.

The goddess smacked her lips closed then followed the bard's pointed finger to the Warrior Princess. She rested her hands on her hips and stared at the passed out, naked warrior sprawled out in the tangle of sheets; soft warrior butt cheeks on full display. She shook her head but smiled at her friend.

Gabrielle grabbed the goddess's hand then effectively pulled her out of the room into the hallway. Once the door closed, she hastily asked, "Did you find any antidote?"

"Of course I did, Gabs," answered the Goddess of Love, "after the party I totally found it."

"What?" The bard sighed. "Why didn't you bring it sooner?"

Aphrodite slinked forward and elbowed her friend. "Did you really want me to like interrupt your night?" She giggled at the hot flush spreading over the bard's face, neck, and chest. She relented though then held out her hand, a vile formed in her palm. "You like sure ya wanna take this?" Her nose crinkled up. "You sure know how to keep that warrior babe totally worn out!"

Gabrielle plucked the vile free then muttered, "Trust me, I don't need to torque my libido... my natural one is just fine." She freed the cap from the top.

Aphrodite watched her friend drink the stuff then make quite the face. "You know, like I wonder if you drink too much of the antidote if it'll do the opposite of the Everlasting Viagra?"

The bard's face fell after she just gulped the whole vile. "Aaaphrodite-"

"My bad!" Aphrodite held up her hands. "I'm like totally sure it's fine." She then got a very smug face and leaned closer to her friend. "I did get another vile of the EV... I totally thought you'd want it for a Solstice gift." When she saw the bard's protest on the rise, she hastily explained, "Like you know, Xena is getting a little... up there, Gabs."

Gabrielle's face darkened and her hands rested on her hips with the empty vile. "Xena is," she emphasized, "not getting old, thank you."

"Hey!" Aphrodite held up her hands in defense then pointed at the door. "Like who's passed out in the bed after an all nighter? Not my bitchin' bard."

"Aphrodite, keep it."

"Well if you like ever... ever change your mind you know to call your favorite goddess." The Goddess of Love uncrinkled her nose then leaned down to whisper, "Actually Auto was asking if I had any left."

Gabrielle giggled now then quietly asked, "You're kidding?"

"As-if, Gabs. He and Xena are like totally the same age plus he's a male too." The goddess shrugged then teased, "So maybe you're like safe since Xena is a babe."

The bard rolled her eyes then she decided she'd had enough of this topic. "Did everything work out okay after Xena and I left?"

"Fer shur. After the party ole King Cornelius got his knockwurst knocking." The goddess giggled at her friend's returned queasy look. "Or is that he got his knockwurst eatin'?"

Gabrielle covered her mouth with her freehand. She suddenly shoved the empty vile into the goddess. "I really need some sleep." She did actually feel exhausted like she'd ran a marathon, in bed. "Thanks for the help, Dity... and the antidote."

The goddess beamed at the praise. She poofed the tube away while saying, "We make a rad team... like no donnybrook broke out and we totally saved Solstice. Well I gotta see Auto. Toodles, Gabs." She snapped her fingers and was gone with her pink sprinkles floating.

The bard's shoulders slightly slumped from exhaustion. She slipped back into the room, tossed her nightshift on top of Xena's, and crawled into the bed. She quietly moaned when her bare skin molded to Xena's in the bed.

"Antidote?" came the groggy warrior's voice.

Gabrielle rested on her stomach just like Xena except her body was partially on top of Xena's. She placed a feather kiss to her lover's shoulder, lowered her head onto Xena's shoulder blade, and murmured, "All taken care of."

"Thank you, Aphrodite," mumbled the warrior, "but I expect restitution for this, Gabrielle."

"And it'll come in the form of those little red pastries you love," softly promised the bard. Her eyes closed and her breathing matched her soul mate's as she too finally passed out.

When the Helios reached the highest point in the sky, he shined down over the small city of Tricca, which was absolutely busting at the seams with activity. King Cornelius that morning had made a surprising but welcomed announcement that Solstice must be celebrated. Tricca's people came to life and hastily filled their revived king's demands with the largest Solstice spirit that hadn't been seen since King Silvas's kingdom.

Gabrielle stood in front of the open window, her traveling clothes on, and contentment over her face. She sighed happily at seeing the merry people of Tricca celebrating Solstice. "Who would have thought that a king's unhappiness was due to such a...."

"Limp problem?" offered the warrior's voice from the other side of the room.

The bard shot a scowl at her lover, who was packing their things yet she smiled when she turned back to the city. "You're sure about leaving today? We won't make it to the Amazons tonight."

"We'll campout tonight... if you want to, Gabrielle."

The bard shrugged but her smile widened when strong arms encircled her and she leaned back into the welcoming body of her lover. "Yeah I think so... I want to spend

the night with just us."

"What were we doing last now?" whispered Xena, close to Gabrielle's ear.

Gabrielle cleared her throat. "I want to relax tonight." She blushed when Xena's soft laugh made it to her ears. "I know." She studied the people outside. "Its great to see everything worked out." She tilted her head then quietly added, "I guess King Cornelius and his wife can now build a family... have an heir."

The Warrior Princess was able to detect something else in her lover's words, a hidden longing about her life or their lives. She pressed her lips against her soul mate's head then whispered, "Family is always important."

Gabrielle swallowed and tried to press away her bitter sorrow. Then Xena's arms released her but before she could move, nimble fingers worked her heart necklace free. After her necklace was gone, she caught a brief glimpse of a different necklace, whose chilled metals warmed against her skin. "Xena?" With her small fingers, she lifted the charm on the chain and realized it was a familiar yet strange design. It was a Gaelic knot done in gold that somewhat matched Xena's armor. She turned around while still holding the charm.

Xena saw the confusion coloring her lover's face and in her eyes. "I had it specially made several moons back, for you." She dipped her head closer to Gabrielle then softly explained, "It's a Gaelic knot that symbolizes eternal love. There is no ending and no beginning to the knot."

Gabrielle held her breath, stopped staring at the charm, and lowered it to her chest. Her soft mist eyes locked with Xena's.

Xena revealed a tender smile that warmed her face to a degree that revealed her heart. "One only gives it to another when asking for their hand in marriage." She laced her hands through Gabrielle's and her next defining words held their world still. "Will you marry me, Gabrielle?"

Gabrielle reached up and drew Xena's head down then sealed their lips in an answering kiss. After the kiss, she murmured, "Yes, Xena." She captured Xena's lips again and she sensed her warrior actually relaxing from the tension of waiting.

Xena drew her soul mate in closer and held her tightly. Her frantic heartbeat settled as she molded into Gabrielle. She knew this would be a Solstice to remember.

Then from the corner of the room there was an excited and happy giggle from the Goddess of Love, who was invisible to the soul mates. "Totally bitchin'!" She gushed so happily at the kissing and now engaged soul mates. "This is like totally what love stories are all about." She wiped away a warm tear from under her right eye then perked up even more with a beaming smile. "By me! I like totally got a wedding to plan out!" She threw a shower of sparkles over her body and was gone.

Gabrielle wistfully smiled at her lover. She decided not to mention that the invisible goddess had come and gone because she was too happy to think of anything else but her and Xena. "I love you."

Xena wiped away a trailing tear from her soul mate's cheek. She revealed her beautiful

smile. "Happy Solstice, Gabrielle. I love you too."

Nowles heard a snuffle from her right and she blinked then turned her head in the direction of the noise.

Gary had worked his right hand under his glasses and wiped his tears away. He mumbled, "That was a beautiful fanfiction."

Nowles just stared at him dumbfounded. "You were reading it?"

Gary sniffled again then nodded. "I'll have to read more of this... kind of fanfiction. What's it called anyway?"

Nowles's cheeks colored red. "Um... alternative fanfiction." She closed up her laptop quickly and glanced to her left; her aisle row mate was gone, which was perfect. "I'll be right back." She didn't know why she'd bothered to say that, got up, put her laptop in the seat, and made a dash for the rear of the plane. She mentally cursed when all the super mini bathrooms were taken.

Nowles sighed then shifted her weight on her feet back and forth. That damn soda that the stewardess gave her went straight through her stomach. She heard a loud flush, which made her groan between need and happiness. She quickly tried to act normal as the curtain like door scraped open and just by happenstance out stepped her missing row mate.

The tall, dark brunette smiled at her row mate and her noisy gum seemed to be gone finally. "Hey," she greeted.

Nowles coyly smiled and became virtually tongue tied.

"The name's Rasta." The tall beauty held out her hand.

Nowles's mouth hung open but she said nothing as she took the larger hand.

Rasta smirked at the smaller woman's shock. "Rasta is short for Rastafarian." Her eyes glinted with her grin.

Nowles's head just bobbed.

Rasta let go then softly laughed as she decided to keep filling the void. "Actually my real name is Rasine Tayman... my humorous friends nicknamed me Rasta." She tilted her head then teased, "No relations to Rastafarian though."

"Oh," murmured the younger woman.

Rasta side stepped as a man came out of the bathroom and squeezed past them. "So... I didn't catch your name?"

Nowles's earlier blush suddenly sprinkled her cheeks all over again. "I'm really sorry. I'm Nowles Montessori... I usually don't blank out like that. I'm sorry," she rattled on but quickly regretted it.

Rasta smiled warmly then winked. "It's alright." She started to slip past the small woman.

Nowles sucked in her breath when Rasta's larger but well defined body brushed past hers. She was almost positive she was going to pass out here between her dying need to go to the bathroom and because of Rasta's accidental brushing.

"Nice fanfiction by the way," mentioned Rasta after she stepped past. "See ya back in the row." She flashed a brilliant smile then turned away.

Just as Nowles was prepared to finally duck into the bathroom she was caught off guard by an awful sound. Somebody in the nearby bathroom just expectorated and quietly loudly. The man in that bathroom came out then stopped in front of Nowles. "You didn't eat the tater tots from the lunch huh?" He waved his hand over his throat. "They were... rough. Sorry about that, mate." He then slipped past the nameless woman.

Nowles just shook her head and hastily escaped into an empty bathroom with the door locked. She exhaled extremely loud as she leaned against the door for a few seconds but then she noted the music playing. With a tilt of her head, her confused tone muttered, "Why are they playing the Frou-Frou in the bathroom?" She rolled her eyes and decided to get down to business.

After her fantastical visit with the bathroom, she decided she could brave going back to the row and her row mates. When she did arrive, she braced herself to get past Rasta then flop into her spot. Once she was settled in with her belt on, she put the tray down and her laptop to follow.

Rasta was suddenly leaning into Nowles's space. "You have any other fanfictions on there?"

Nowles's jaw slacked at the tall beauty. "Um."

Rasta pointed at Gary then herself as she mentioned, "Gary and I were just saying how much we liked the Xena one."

"Well, I uh... I think I have a Star Trek... Voyager one on here." Nowles saw her notebook was back up and running.

"Does it have some lesbian action in it?" questioned the smirking Rasta.

Gary pushed up his black glasses on his nose. "Alternative fanfiction is preferred... if you have it, Nowles."

Nowles stared wide eye at her screen but a sly grin shaped her soft lips. "One alternative... hot lesbian fanfiction comin' up." She chuckled after just getting through her appropriate folders. She opened the Star Trek Voyager fanfiction then pushed her tray back so everybody could have a better view.

Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation Star Ship, the U.S.S. Voyager, decided she was really looking forward to her evening. She'd had a bad day several days ago that just seemed to last all week long however tonight would just have to end her string of bad luck. It was weeks like this that made her wonder if she shouldn't have been a naval captain instead of starship captain but a captain was a captain.

The captain sighed contently and leaned back in her comfy captain's chair. She then stretched her legs out and even propped her ankles up on the corner of her desk.

Slowly, a thin smile produced on her lips as she stared out the star field window of her Ready Room. These were the rare moments she acted like anything but the captain and she could get away with it here, alone, in her Ready Room.

Unexpectedly the captain's Ready Room door hissed open, which informed the captain of an arrival.

Captain Janeway suddenly jumped from her chair and slapped on her captain's mask.

Commander Chakotay stopped and humorously stared at the captain.

The captain's blush revealed her secret but she recovered by barking, "Can't you buzz, commander?"

Chakotay did an about-face, went out the door, and waited for it to close.

Captain Janeway had a glower when her door bell sounded. "Cute. Get in here, Chakotay." Her force five glare was doing nothing to wipe the smirk off the commander's face. "What is it?"

Chakotay approached the desk then held out a PADD. "The end Alpha shift's report, captain." After the captain took it, he casually inquired, "Will you be at the party tonight?"

"Of course," muttered Janeway as she glanced over the report but she set it down. "Yourself?"

"I wouldn't miss it," answered the commander.

"Anything else?" inquired the captain and at Chakotay's head shake she said, "Very well. Thank you, commander."

Commander Chakotay decided it was best to escape while he still could do so. He made hasty yet highly amused retreat.

Captain Janeway let out an agitated sigh then she glanced over the PADD again. She noticed that one person still remained on duty, who should be finished by now. It didn't surprise her to read Seven of Nine's name on the online Alpha roster, which made her shake her head. She truly knew that Seven was developing into a willful individual.

The captain finally concluded that she'd just have to chase the borg out of Astrometrics whether she liked it or not. As she made the journey there, she considered Seven's developments over the years and found herself quite proud of the progressing borg. She knew it wasn't easy as many crewmen showed xenophobia for the borgs, which still included Seven despite her changes.

Seven of Nine turned her head when she heard the lab's door swoosh open. "Good evening, captain."

"Hello, Seven." The captain came around to the front side and leaned against the half oval work station. "So why are you here so late?"

Seven kept her head down as she continued working however she addressed the captain's question. "I am still completing my analysis of the quasar we encountered,

captain."

"Any luck?" probed the captain.

"Perhaps," replied the borg's monotone, "it seems to be comprised of opaque photons."

"A little unusual," remarked Captain Janeway.

"Indeed," murmured Seven, her head still down and her face unmoving.

"How are you feeling, Seven?"

Seven wavered from her work and finally raised her head up. Her optical implant hiked up some. "I am running at optimum levels, captain."

The captain slightly grinned. "I meant how are you, Seven."

The borg's implant lowered to its usual spot as she processed the differences in the questions. "I am... well, captain. Thank you. How are you?"

Captain Janeway let out a low sigh but her head bobbed a bit. "Glad this week is over," she admitted to the younger woman.

The borg slightly turned, her hands behind her back now, and the overhead light made her borg implants reflective. "Your week has been rather... disruptive," she observed.

"To put it nicely, yes," agreed the captain. She now straightened up from leaning on the station. "Are you coming tonight?" She noticed how Seven debated how to answer so she cut to the chase. "I do expect you there, Seven."

Seven's chest fell in a subtle defeat, her head tilted. "I will be there, captain." Her demeanor showed she wasn't happy with it but that she'd make the best of it. When she saw the captain's smile form she completely relented to the idea of going tonight.

"Great." Captain Janeway patted her right hand on the station then stepped away but waited a beat. "Be sure to log off duty shortly, Seven." Her commanding mask flashed over her face. "And I mean shortly." She didn't wait for a response as she strolled across the lab.

Seven of Nine briefly watched the captain go then she turned back to her workstation. Suddenly her borg left hand dashed across the keyboard and her borg mind hastily worked out her calculations, algorithms, and data until she was satisfied with the results. Her work came to a sharp breaking point then her hand slowed down and she logged off duty.

It really wasn't long before the crew of Voyager got together in the Mess Hall that was elaborately decorated by Neelix earlier in the day. The get together had been going on for half an hour or so by the time Captain Janeway strolled in looking somewhat festive. She had on black slacks much like her Federation attire but her top was a traditional red blouse that was made of silk or something like it. As she wondered in, she observed the decorations that included a well ornamented tree, vine-like icicle lights strung about, hanging snowflakes, and of course somebody dressed as Santa Claus. The captain though made it to the long table that had an array of food and

drinks but all she was looking for was some eggnog with the brandy kick in it. And as she spooned up the white drink, she overheard the nearby table's conversation.

"Do you even know what onomatopoeia is, Seven?"

The borg raised her ocular implant at the effusive chief engineer. "Well it certainly isn't something you consume," she clipped.

"Buzz, buzz," joked Harry Kim.

"Perhaps onomatopoeia is what you do with Mr. Paris at night," remarked the borg.

Tom Paris suddenly choked on his eggnog.

The irascible human-klingson hybrid suddenly showed her sharp teeth at the borg. "Are you trying to start a fight, Seven?"

"No, I am simply stating a fact that anybody on Deck 5 can hear-

"Seven," growled B'Elanna, who was taking great umbrage. "You need to keep your damn nose out of people's personal affairs."

The borg merely ignored B'Elanna's invective and tone. "It's impossible for it to be personal considering how vocal you are, lieutenant."

B'Elanna Torres quickly stood up from her chair as she prepared to snap the borg apart however a strong grip on her shoulder stopped her. She peered over her grabbed shoulder and her attitude deflated as seeing the warning grey eyes set on her. "Captain," she welcomed and straightened up. "I was merely getting up to greet you."

Captain Janeway shot her chief engineer a dubious look. "You're too kind, B'Elanna." She then smiled at the group while the chief engineer sat down again. "How is everybody tonight?"

Everybody spoke at once, except for Seven, who merely listened and kept her back straight at the long table.

"How about you, captain?" questioned Harry Kim.

The captain pleasantly smiled at the young man. "Fine, thanks." Then her tone held a note of seriousness. "I hope everybody is enjoying their Christmas Eve. It's always nice to spend it with family as I know you all consider crew family." She waited to see if anybody would argue her point, which she knew nobody would at all.

B'Elanna had a glowering expression that the captain couldn't see.

Captain Janeway though must have had many skills as she asked, "Right, B'Elanna?" Then her eyes flickered over to Seven. "Seven?"

The human-klingson's shoulders slumped and she replied, "Yes, captain."

The captain's eyebrow went up at the borg.

Seven of Nine held her chin up as she answered the captain. "Of course, captain."

"Excellent." The captain beamed at the table then saluted her eggnog mug at the

group. "Do try the Christmas jelly that Neelix especially made for tonight." Then she was gone.

The Voyager crew mingled back and forth for awhile. Eventually Seven broke away from the table, chatted with the Doctor for some time, and then ended up in a corner just observing people. Her interest though mainly hovered on the captain on the other side of the Mess Hall.

Kathryn Janeway happily noticed how the party brought so much unity to her crew with the exception of one standoffish borg. She finally broke away from a conversation with Chakotay and wandered over to the food table again where the borg was standing close. She first popped a cube of Monterey Jack cheese into her mouth then picked up a couple of pieces of fresh cantaloupe well as fresh as a replicator could make it and then she strolled over to Seven.

Seven of Nine stood formally as the captain came closer. "Captain."

Captain Janeway stood beside her friend and finished off her last piece of fruit. "So what you think of Christmas?"

The borg turned her head to the captain. "Is it not a human holiday from the Bible?"

"Something along those lines, yes," conceded the captain "but it is religious... use to be." She peered up at her friend then casually mentioned, "For awhile in human history it really lost its meaning."

"What is its meaning, captain?"

Kathryn softly smiled at the inquisitive, young woman. "Like I said... it's about family and being together." She rested her hands on her hips as she scanned her crew all together. "Just like this."

Seven turned her gaze away from the captain and studied the mingling crewmen and how they happily interacted. "I believe I understand, captain."

"I think someday you really will," stated the captain, "hopefully someday soon." She then lost her solemnly looked and grinned up at the borg. "I'll cut you loose if you make a deal with me."

"A deal?" probed Seven.

"Mmmm." The captain tilted her head then pointed at the bowl of eggnog. "You have some of that eggnog and you can leave."

Seven of Nine's automatic response was a distasteful look then she dejectedly stated, "Captain, the eggnog is highly displeasing... perhaps it would serve as a better slush lubricant for the warp core."

Captain Janeway did everything possible not to burst out laughing but the earlier eggnog's brandy content out did her. She laughed loudly and held onto the borg's nearby arm for support. She wiped a few tears from her eyes and mumbled between her laughter, "I'm sorry." She inhaled a deep breath to calm down then she chuckled just a bit more.

"I see it has sufficiently affected you," noted the borg.

Captain Janeway cleared her throat then her bright smile met the borg's steel features. "Just try it, Seven. I promise you'll survive."

"Or my borg implants will be highly lubricated," informed the disappearing borg, who went to the table.

Kathryn covered her mouth as she absolutely refused to be caught laughing so loudly again. Her chest ached as she held back her laughter yet her body trembled.

Seven came back over while she stared at her cup's contents. She was very weary of the white liquid sloshing in her cup. "The eggnog has a very noxious smell, captain."

Captain Janeway bit her lower lip then used her resolve to stop her laughs. "It's from the brandy, Seven. Go on and try it."

Seven was dubious about the eggnog but she took a quick drink of it.

For the first time, the captain watched Seven's face clearly give a disgusted expression and it made her laugh again. She bit back her laughter then carefully asked, "Wasn't so bad huh?"

The borg's eyebrow implant hiked up at the captain's ludicrous question. "I would prefer to suffer one of your many lectures than drink this again, captain."

The captain softly laughed then took the cup away from the woman's hand to free her of the seeming punishment. "Alright... you're free. I'm finished tormenting you for the night."

"Indeed," murmured the borg. "Perhaps you'd be interested in returning the favor, captain."

"Ooo?" prompted Captain Janeway.

"You mentioned that Christmas is about family." Seven turned to the captain. "I would desire to spend the rest of the evening with the only person I consider family."

The captain's heart passed a beat as she peered up at the calm borg. "I take it that's me or am I being arrogant?"

"You are correct in your assessment, captain."

Kathryn carefully considered this then she slowly relented to the idea. "Alright... how about you meet me in my quarters in an hour?"

"That would be acceptable, captain." Seven then said a word of goodbye and departed from the Mess Hall. She did make sure to carry out proper edict and thanked Neelix then bid goodnight to the Doctor. She went back to her alcove for awhile where she dug out something she'd been setting aside. Then when it was time to go, she gathered up the square, black box into her hands and left the alcove.

Captain Janeway smiled at the door's chime and called for her visitor to enter. She just came around her galley table with a mug that had steam weaving up from it.

"Good evening, captain." The borg then lifted her ocular implant at the mug. "More eggnog?"

Kathryn chuckled yet shook her head. "Coffee."

"Of course," agreed Seven.

The captain set her hot mug down on the coffee table that was in front of her sofa. "What's that you have, Seven?"

Seven glanced down at the black reflective box then lifted her head again. "It is a gift for you, captain."

Captain Janeway for the first time saw the young woman was slightly uneasy, which intrigued her greatly.

"It is something I... made," carefully mentioned the hesitant borg.

"Seven," whispered the surprised captain.

Seven of Nine stepped up to the captain then held out the box in her borg hand.

Kathryn carefully picked up the item and sensed a decent weight to it. She noted an interesting glowing, white light on the top or what she assumed was the top.

"I will show you how to operate it," offered the borg, "however it would be in our best interest to do this near your desk. It requires some space."

The captain glanced at the furniture around them, which made her realize what Seven meant so she went to the upper level where her desk was and more space.

Seven came to stand behind the captain, her body almost touching the captain's back. "Only you can control it so I will instruct you."

"Okay," whispered the intrigued captain.

"First, rested your palm on top of the small xenon light." Seven watched as the captain did what she was told.

The shiny box made a zoom like noise that indicated tiny round panels on the sides opened up. Next a computer generated, friendly voice stated, "Welcome, Kathryn. What is your destination?"

Captain Janeway peered up at Seven in question, her grey eyes softening to a blue.

Seven tilted her head then gently stated, "Tell it Earth's moon."

Kathryn quietly cleared her throat then coolly stated, "Earth's moon."

"Destination: Earth's moon," declared the box's voice.

Kathryn gasped when suddenly her world changed and she felt like she was flying in outer space; the stars streaked past at an almost alarming rate.

Seven unexplainably grasped the captain's hips to soothe her.

The captain held her breath as she rotated her head and realized she was completely encapsulated by what she assumed was a hologram image being produced by the box. It felt so real though as she flew in space then it slowed and finally she was hovering down and her feet touched a white, dusty surface.

Seven freed her left hand and pointed off to Kathryn's left.

The captain turned and her heart paused. "My god... that's beautiful, Seven." She was standing on Earth's only satellite and she was watching a full Earth rising. She hadn't seen something so beautiful or breath taking since she left the Alpha Quadrant years ago. It made her heartache to see her home planet almost so real. And beyond it, was the solar system's only star for light years around that was burning brightly.

"Look this way," murmured the borg. This time she rotated the captain by her hips.

Kathryn turned to see the only red planet of Mars off in the distance then not much further was the asteroid belt followed by the speckled outer planets. Although she turned back to observe her home planet that was so amazing and she sadly smiled at the North American continent. The fresh blue given off by the vast oceans greatly reminded her of Seven's eyes.

Seven dipped her head lower then whispered, "There are different Earth terrains and environments you can visit." She considered one then offered, "Try Australian Outback."

Kathryn peered down at the box in her left that was covered by her right. "Australian Outback."

"Destination: Australian Outback."

Captain Janeway and Seven floated off the moon then slowly made the journey towards Earth, which was slowly rotating on its axis now. Kathryn's breathing was ragged as they flew towards the Earth then entered the atmosphere, their target certainly was Australia. The destination quickly shaped around Kathryn when her boots touched down on a rocky, brown terrain but she slightly jumped from a scare.

A large kangaroo jumped past then stopped and turned its head to the humans. Yet it ignored them and glanced off to its right.

Kathryn looked in the same direction and saw the rest of the kangaroo's family, which made her grin. She scanned the terrain that was very much the outback with low brush and off in the distance was the famous Mount Augustus rock formation.

"Now try Grand Canyon," suggested Seven.

The captain's voice sounded awestruck as she stated, "Grand Canyon."

"Destination: Grand Canyon."

Kathryn and Seven lifted into the air again for several thousands of feet then quickly they were flying in the amazing blue sky. They quickly went at hundreds of miles per hour.

"You can guide it some," mentioned Seven, "just tilt the box down carefully."

They just came over the Indian Ocean as Janeway tipped the box gently. They dipped down for several thousands of feet then leveled out just over the ocean's calm waters.

Seven put her right hand under Janeway's with the box then with her left borg hand she pulled Janeway's hand free from the box. Now the box sat in Seven's right palm, which allowed her to stretch out her and Janeway's hands together, fingers laced.

Kathryn held her breath as her and Seven's fingertips gently skimmed the salty water causing a long ripple effect behind them. Then their bodies lifted higher up into the sky and the ocean grew distant just as they came over the tip of South Africa. Their flight bared north-west now.

Finally the flight slowed down once they were in the western United States and below their feet were the rustic lands of Colorado state. Very slowly they weaved down to the ground then their feet touched the rocky terrain but the view straight ahead was amazing.

Kathryn and Seven were standing on the ledge of what was called the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Before Kathryn's eyes were the snaking canyons of the rusty colored Grand Canyon then the vivid blue sky in the horizon. A few clouds were rolling overhead with their shadows trailing over the canyons. Kathryn's eyes stung as her old childhood memories surfaced and she didn't realize it as her left hand's grip tightened with Seven's hand.

Seven studied the striking view and hoped one day that she would really stand on the South Rim, especially with the captain. Then she lowered her head when Kathryn leaned heavily into her, which she didn't quite understand but certainly didn't refuse.

"Isn't it amazing?" murmured the captain.

Seven though wasn't staring at the scenery but instead the captain's profile. "Yes... it is," she murmured. She lifted her head just as Kathryn realized what Seven was really referring to but all she saw was Seven's cool profile. "There is one last destination I have in mind." Seven finally met the captain's gaze. "Bloomington, Indiana."

Kathryn swallowed as she mentally prepared for this last trip. Her husky voice ordered, "Bloomington, Indiana."

"Destination: Bloomington, Indiana."

Once again, Kathryn and Seven floated into the air but in a slow twirling motion until they faced the east. Then they were in flight for the state of Indiana but once they were close to the state, Seven cautiously tilted the box against Kathryn's top hand. The flight brought them down quickly as they just entered Main Street of the small city of Bloomington. They glided over the moving vehicles and people, past the courthouse then winding through streets. Kathryn caught a brief glimpse of Indiana University before they were out of the city and following a barren country road.

Finally the journey ended in a low wheat field by a dirt road that was lined by apple trees. In the distance was a unique yet familiar white home that Janeway greatly missed. She recalled all her childhood adventures in the apple trees, fields, and grassy meadow nearby. Kathryn's held back tears finally broke free and they silently fell.

"You can control the time of day too, captain," gently mentioned Seven. "Simply tell it nighttime."

The captain bit her lip as she gathered strength. "Nighttime."

"Setting: nighttime."

Kathryn dropped her head back until it rested on Seven's collarbone. Her eyes widened as the sky darkened quickly then the stars one by one materialized before her eyes. Then she realized that she was now lying in the grass and really staring up at the stars, the crescent moon kissing the western horizon.

Seven could tell the captain was absolutely entranced. "Listen, captain."

The captain actually did focus on these unexpected sounds of crickets chirping then the fine rustle of leaves from the apple trees. Far off in the distance was the distinct clap of a screen door closing then it was gone. As Kathryn studied the constellations over her, she caught a glimpse of a shooting star.

Kathryn tried desperately to fight her tears that mixed her enjoyment and pain.

Seven detected the distress by how tightly the captain held her hand. She frowned in displeasure that the box was upsetting the captain. She lowered her head back down to the captain's. "Just remove your hand to stop it, captain."

Kathryn hesitated; her right hand trembled over top of the xenon light because she wanted to stay and leave at the same time. She very slowly removed her hand then gradually the starry sky and moon faded away and she was back in her quarters.

Seven was inwardly alarmed by the captain's unintended grief so she quickly put the box onto the edge of the captain's desk. Then with her locked hand and her freehand she was able to turn the captain around. Seven's concerned features deepened when she saw the captain's tear streaked face.

Kathryn refused to say anything but merely freed their locked hands and tried to wipe her tears away.

Seven followed her human instincts for once and gathered the captain into her arms.

The captain at first was stiff yet she melted into the borg's warm and anchored body. She rested her head on Seven's chest and closed her eyes.

Seven of Nine silently held the distraught captain as her quick mind processed how this went so wrong. It was several minutes before the captain slightly withdrew but remained in her arms.

Kathryn gathered her wits and peered up at the borg.

"Captain, I apologize that it upset you," whispered the concerned borg. "I thought that since you could not be home for Christmas that I could bring a piece of home to you."

Kathryn's emotions surfaced again yet she held control over them. "Seven...." Her right hand that rested on the young woman's forearm came up and pressed against Seven's cheek. "That is the most beautiful gift I've ever received. Thank you."

"It was not suppose to upset you," refuted the now distraught borg.

Kathryn sadly smiled at Seven's concern for her. "It is my home," she agreed, "that I haven't seen in so long. Trust me, it felt wonderful to see it again even if it's a piece of it." She knew by the box's simulation that Seven had put a lot of consideration, time, and research into constructing it. "You don't know how much it means to me, Seven." Her right hand slipped and instead rested on Seven's broad shoulder. "I just wish I had something to give back to you."

"Captain, you already gave me something." Seven lowered her head some then her next words were very gentle compared to normal. "You gave me life again."

In that instant, Kathryn didn't know what compelled her to act but she put her hand behind Seven's head. She then carefully guided Seven's head down to hers.

Seven followed the motions easily, her body taking control over her logical mind. Her eyes drifted shut and then her full lips met Kathryn's in a shy kiss. She sensed that the captain was mostly shy as if she was unsure so Seven's lips parted and her tongue lightly touched over Kathryn's silky lips.

The captain responded by opening her mouth, inviting then she moaned when her tongue met Seven's. Her left hand tightened on Seven's hip for support but then Seven shifted closer so that their bodies pressed tighter. Kathryn's next moan was deeper and almost demanding. Finally her chest was tight so she pulled back and breathed heavily, her head slightly dipped. She lifted her head and peered into warm blue eyes. "Where did you learn to kiss like that, Seven?"

"Perhaps it seemed pleasing because you have not kissed somebody in some time."

Captain Janeway considered this logic then disregarded it. "No." Her lips curled with a grin. "I know I've basically been living in a monastery here but... that was an amazing kiss."

Seven cocked her head to the side then her eyes glinted. "Indeed, captain. Perhaps we should continue to asses my kissing abilities."

The captain softly laughed at the borg's hidden agenda. "That... is a very intriguing logic but only under one condition." At the borg's lifted eyebrow implant she grinned and stated, "No more captain."

"Yes, cap... Kathryn." Seven then helped Kathryn asses the kissing more but the captain returned to the same conclusion after three more or maybe five more times. She lost count however she was sure that Seven hadn't lost count.

Finally, Kathryn withdrew from the kissing test then turned her head to the black box. "Thank you, Seven." She peered up. "It really does meaning a lot to me." She tilted her head back at the box. "And what is that material the box is made from?"

Seven of Nine also studied the box then factually informed, "It is made from xenoliths that I excavated from the last M-planet we took shore leave on. My findings detected it is a type of morion quartz found on Earth."

Janeway smiled at this then with her left hand she touched Seven's cheek, which

brought Seven's focus back to her. "Thank you again."

Seven's expression softened a degree then she lowered her head. She whispered, "Merry Christmas, Kathryn."

Kathryn guided Seven's head down then she murmured against Seven's lips, "Merry Christmas too, Seven." Then she finally sealed their lips in a long, promising kiss for the most memorable Christmas Eve.

"The fanfiction always stops right before the sex scene," complained Rasta with a sigh and huff. She stopped leaning in Nowles's area and settled back into her chair.

Nowles bit her lower lip and she started to shut her laptop down.

"I've noticed that too," commented Gary from his spot.

"You don't need a sex scene for the story to be good," stated Nowles after her notebook turned off.

Rasta smirked at the woman in the middle. "Let me guess, you rather do it than read it."

Nowles had just locked her tray back in place, her notebook in her lap, and she stared dumbfounded at Rasta. "Um... something like that." A lotta something like that, mentally added Nowles.

"How 'bout you, Gary?" quipped Rasta, "A good finish up sex scene for a first time story or what?"

Gary shyly smiled as he pushed his classic black glasses up. "It doesn't hurt," he dodged.

"God," complained Rasta, who reached up and adjusted her air vent. "So what you do for a living, Gary?"

The small man smiled then answered, "I'm a geometry teacher."

Rasta had a fake smile at this. "Nice." Then she peered down at Nowles. "Where you from?"

Nowles peered up with hooded eyes. "Maine but headed to Ohio for the holidays... family." She tilted her head. "How about you?"

"You won't believe it... I'm originally from Xenia, Ohio. My family is out here too." Rasta enjoyed the soft laugh from the young woman. "I know, weird huh?" She shrugged. "Its actually based off the Greek word Xenia for hospitality."

Nowles's grin now softened into a smile because she really liked how intelligent this woman was. Then her attention was stolen by Gary getting up and needing to get out.

Gary squeezed past the women while saying, "Every since I've had that appendectomy nothing has been right down there. You know?"

Nowles bit her lower lip and glanced at Rasta, who quickly arched an eyebrow back at her and smirked. Once Gary was out of earshot, Nowles leaned over to Rasta and

murmured, "There's just not something right with him."

Now there was a truism that made Rasta laugh and she joked, "He's a little Diablo I think... has a thing for lesbian fanfiction?"

Nowles giggled now. "I know, I was thinking the same thing too." She then continued to chat away with Rasta and was surprised how easily the conversation came between them. Their conversation was only briefly interrupted by Gary when he had to waddle on through. The pair kept chatting while Gary eventually fell asleep against the window. Thanks to the conversation, the flight went much faster and Nowles was thankful for having at least one interesting row mate.

Once the plane made its land and docking, the people bustled to get out in the frantic holiday dash however Nowles and Rasta were much slower. They each were due somewhere by a certain time but they had a harder time parting ways as they stepped off the plane and into the gate. Rasta and Nowles quickly decided to get Starbucks coffees together after tossing a few dollars and quarters onto the counter then getting the warm brew.

Then came the battle for the baggage, which they both survived amazingly as Nowles always seemed to have the worst luck in that department much like her love life. She toted her small suitcase along side Rasta as they stepped into the brisk afternoon outside the airport.

"Well," started Rasta, "I have to catch the next bus out or I won't make it." She hesitated though, her left hand resting in her leather jacket's pocket.

Nowles nodded then explained, "I have a ride coming soon." Her mood was going glummer at the thought of parting ways with this woman. "Maybe...." She shrugged, not sure how to bring it up comfortably.

Rasta revealed a grin then released her suitcase to let it stand alone. She closed in the distance between her and Nowles as her left hand came out of her pocket. In her hand was a slip of small white paper and she took Nowles's left hand then slipped it into it. "Give my cell a call some time... I'm here for two weeks." Her grin went more devilish. "We can go out and get a beer or somethin'." She winked then turned to leave as she released Nowles's smaller hand.

Nowles was shocked but recovered as her fingertips grazed over Rasta's but she jumped, her hand clenched Rasta's.

Rasta was taken aback as she turned around then Nowles's body was against hers. Nowles had her hand behind Rasta's head then Rasta was drawn into a brief kiss. Rasta was left with tingling lips and a warm feeling in her belly; her eyes shined a bright blue. "And I thought you were shy," she muttered.

Nowles appropriately blushed but quipped, "Don't judge a fanfiction by its genre." She patted the firm stomach near hers then she went back to her suitcase.

There busy airport's traffic filtered back then there was a car horn blowing followed by a woman's voice yelling for Nowles.

Nowles recognized her friend's voice anywhere so she started off in that direction

however after a few feet, she stopped.

Rasta was still rooted by her earlier shock but she now smiled then waved.

"Merry Christmas, Rasta," called Nowles.

"Merry Christmas too, Nowles!" Rasta smirked then under her breath said, "And thanks for the early present too." She then grabbed up her suitcase and hurried off with a bounce in her walk.

Nowles was loading her suitcase into her friend's trunk, a wistful expression on her face.

"Did I really just see you kiss that woman, Nowles?"

Nowles smirked at her short brunette friend. "Yes, El."

El laughed and patted Nowles on the back. "I'm proud of ya... she was pretty hot too." El wiggled her eyebrows in suggestion.

Nowles laughed then displayed a piece of paper. "Name, number, and location too, baby."

El hooted her laughter then quickly ordered, "Get in the car and tell me all 'bout her on the way home."

As Nowles got into the car, she considered the entire day she'd had and she quietly stated, "Damn this'll make a great fanfiction for later."

El heard the tail end of this comment and she teased, "And what would you call it, O Master Bardo?"

Nowles buckled up then with a smooth grin she proudly stated, "A Bard's Trekkie Flight from Maine to Ohio."

The End