

No One Will Ever Know

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No One Will Ever Know

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Summary

Nyota, Christine, Janice, and Gaila are having a relaxing girls' night in when they suddenly remember that the staff potluck is the next day and none of them have made anything. So they sneak down to the kitchens to bake some cookies. It can't be that hard, right? ... Right?

Notes

My entry for the Star Trek Potluck 2023!

"Thank the stars it's Friday," Janice said, dropping exhaustedly into Nyota's couch. "I swear, this week was about a month long."

"It's been so long since we last had shore leave," Gaila said from where she lay prone on the floor, staring at the ceiling. "It should be illegal. It's *cruel* is what it is. We need more vacations. We should unionize."

"We already *are* unionized," Nyota called over from her kitchenette, sounding as if they had had this exact conversation about six hundred times. "But it's to be expected that shit goes awry when you're in a big tin can exploring uncharted space."

Christine smiled from her seat in the plush armchair, looking comfortable in her flannel pyjamas and faded academy sweater, her legs folded under her. "They should have named this ship the *USS Murphy's Law*," she joked. "Because whatever can go wrong, *does*."

"Well, as long as there isn't a red alert tonight, we've got the evening to put all of that behind us," Nyota said, walking over to join her friends with a tray of full wine glasses and snacks.

"Oooh, don't mind if I do!" Gaila peeled herself off the floor at the sight of the wine and perked up significantly.

Janice's comm beeped, and she opened it to see that a reminder she set had called for her attention. She frowned. "Hey uh, speaking of Murphy's Law... I totally forgot about the staff observation lounge potluck tomorrow and I have not made anything."

"That's *tomorrow*?" Gaila exclaimed, the wine unable to prevent her face from falling. "I thought it was *next* weekend! I haven't made anything either."

Janice turned to Christine and Nyota with a sheepish grimace. "Don't suppose you guys would let us 'team up' with you and let us take credit for work we didn't do just so it doesn't look like we brought nothing?"

Nyota and Christine turned to each other, both about to speak, when they both came to the same realization.

"Shit," Nyota said. "We all forgot, didn't we?"

"Murphy's Law strikes again," Christine groaned, pulling her legs out from underneath her so she could slump dramatically in the armchair. "What are we gonna do?"

"I'll probably just synthesize something in the morning," Janice said, swirling the wine in her glass.

"But that's against the spirit of the whole thing," Gaila said. "It's about *homemade* cooking. Not that crap the synthesizer tries to pass off as food."

Janice snorted. "Look, we all know that nobody can actually tell if something's synthesized or not."

Gaila pouted. "It's about the *principle!*"

"Then what do *you* suggest we do with such short time?"

"Pool our resources and make something together?" Gaila suggested. "We could bake cookies or something. I mean, how hard could it be?"

Nyota hummed in approval. "That sounds like it could be fun," she said. "We can call it a wine-and-baking night."

Nodding, Christine added, "Nobody else would be using the rec-kitchens at this hour. We'd have the place to ourselves."

They all looked to Janice, who gave in without much reluctance. "Alright, I'm game. Do any of you actually know anything about baking? Because I sure don't."

The four of them looked around at each other, silently observing that none of them had any experience whatsoever in the field of baking.

"Well," Nyota shrugged. "It can't be that complicated. I'm sure between the four of us we can figure it out."

The four of them left Nyota's quarters, giggling when they found themselves sneaking through the corridors like school girls breaking curfew. When they got to the rec-kitchens, they discovered that Christine was correct. They had the place to themselves.

Since the ship was outfitted with synthesizers, the rec-kitchens were as their name suggested - for recreational use, rather than a practical amenity. The kitchens had stoves and any kind of cookware or baking tools one could ever need. However, storing ingredients, especially perishables, was not very practical. Thus, ingredients needed to be sourced from the synthesizer.

"So what's the point in doing the work if all the ingredients are synthesized anyways?" Janice asked upon learning this.

"Because when you do the work, you add something a synthesizer can't," Gaila said.

Janice raised an eyebrow. "Alcohol?"

Gaila snorted. "No, don't be silly. It's the homemade touch." When Janice gave her a skeptical look she added, "Remember, it's about the principle!"

The four of them put their heads together and began synthesizing the ingredients they figured they'd need. They confidently began with flour, then paused to muse over what kind of cookies to make.

"Chocolate chip?" Nyota suggested. "They'd appreciate a classic."

Christine hummed. "I think we could spruce it up a bit. Maybe some vanilla?"

They added synthesized chocolate chips to their bowl of flour, then set about searching for a synthesizer recipe for some sort of vanilla flavour.

"I found vanilla extract?" Janice said after scrolling through a nearly endless list of things the synthesizer was programmed to make.

"That sounds right," Nyota nodded.

Janice punched the code into the synthesizer, then paused. "How much do you reckon we need?"

Nyota and Christine shrugged, turning to Gaila who didn't appear to have any answers either. "I dunno," she said. "Maybe like, a cup? Two cups?"

"One and a half it is," Janice decided, punching in the values. They watched as a fragrant black liquid materialized in the synthesizer, floating in the air briefly before it dropped into their mixing bowl with a splat.

"Do you think that's enough?" Christine asked, skeptically.

"Maybe round it up to two cups," Nyota suggested. "Just to be on the safe side."

Janice added the extra vanilla extract. "What else goes in here?"

There was a pause as they all wracked their brains. "Chicken eggs?" Christine asked, unsure. "Is that a thing?"

"I think so?" Nyota said. "Oh, and we need sugar."

"Baking soda!" Gaila said, snapping her fingers as she finally remembered what she was trying to think of. "Or... was it baking powder?"

"Well, we are *baking*, so probably both?" Christine thought out loud.

Janice continued to be skeptical. "Shouldn't we be, you know, looking this stuff up?"

Gaila waved a hand dismissively. "Nah, we'll just eyeball it."

They continued to add what they thought should be in cookies into their bowl, until they were satisfied that there was nothing else needed. Then, they took turns mixing the dough by hand, which was a chore as the dough was quite thick. Once Gaila procured a cookie sheet from a cupboard, they set themselves to shaping the cookies and placing them in neat rows on the tray.

Or at least, they were neat until they realized that they had filled the tray and still had half a bowl of dough left over. They opted to not dirty another cookie sheet, and crammed the remaining dough into the last empty spaces of the sheet.

"What temperature should we bake them at?" Gaila asked once they had finished forming the cookies, now tightly packed upon the cookie sheet.

"Eighty?" Christine suggested.

Janice frowned. "Sounds a bit low," she said.

"I mean, we don't want to boil them, right?" Christine asked. "I think they'd burn at boiling temperatures."

"Let's try eighty," Gaila decided, punching in the numbers on the oven. "How long do you reckon?" She asked while waiting for the oven to pre-heat.

"We could turn the oven light on and keep an eye on them," Nyota pointed out. "When they look done we'll take them out."

So they put their overburdened cookie sheet into the oven, turned on the interior light, and huddled around watching through the small window. However, they quickly grew bored of the slow progress and opted to check in on it every few minutes rather than watching it every second. While they waited, another bottle of wine was procured and opened. A couple glasses later, and they forgot that they were supposed to be supervising their creation.

Suddenly, the attention of the four friends was drawn to the oven when several loud popping sounds and a high pitched hissing emitted from within.

"That sounds... not very good," Janice said.

"Maybe it means it's cooking?" Gaila, ever the optimist, answered hesitantly. A gurling noise joined the hissing and popping, and she grimaced. "Okay, it probably shouldn't sound like that."

There was a long pause as the four stared in the direction of the oven, the glow of the interior oven light ominously leaking out into the dim kitchen, though they couldn't see what was happening within from their distance. Occasionally, a shadow flickered across the window, and each of them secretly hoped it was just the light-bulb beginning to die.

Christine finally broke the silence. "Should we... take a look at it?" She asked nervously.

"Great idea, Christine," Janice said jovially, clapping Christine on the shoulder. "Why don't you go look and see what's going on in there?"

Christine balked. "I mean... if I open it and something happens..." she rambled out clumsily. "I mean, if one of you opens it and something happens and you get hurt at least you have a nurse on hand to help you?"

"So... you want to use us as meat shields?" Janice teased.

Christine pouted. "No, I'm being practical!"

"If you're so tough why don't *you* do it, Janice?" Gaila asked, putting her hands on her hips and giving Janice a 'what about it' glare.

"Or-"

"I'll do it!" Nyota shouted, slamming her hands down on the table and interrupting the argument between her three friends. "I'll carry the ring to Mordor!" When she got nothing but blank stares in return, she wilted a bit. "I'll open the door," she said dejectedly, and slowly approached the oven.

When she stepped right up to it, she found she still couldn't see much through the window. The inside of the glass had fogged up, or had been covered in some sort of residue, allowing light from the single bulb to permeate, but nothing more than vague shadow could be seen within. The noises coming from inside continued. Maybe it was Nyota's imagination, but it sounded like something was... moving. Losing any and all confidence, she turned to look back at her friends, and discovered that they had turned a table on its side and were peering out from behind it. Janice flashed her a reassuring smile and gave a thumbs up. Nyota sighed, resigned herself to her fate, and opened the oven door.

Steam billowed out of the oven, casting Nyota in a dense fog. It crossed her mind that it could be smoke, but the smell of vanilla overpowered any other smell that dared to make an appearance. Nyota squinted her eyes against the hot steam - or smoke - waving a hand in front of her face in hopes of dissipating it.

When she was finally able to see through the cloud, she gasped, taking a step back. Part-way flopped out of the oven was a brown sludgy mass that bubbled and gurgled and shifted. She watched in horror as it grew higher and formed a mouth.

"Muuu.... therrrrr..." it groaned in a sloshy, liquidy voice.

Nyota yelped and jumped further back. "It's... *alive!*" She exclaimed, absolutely dumbfounded.

"I *told* you guys we should have looked up instructions!" Janice shouted from behind the table-turned-shield.

Gaila turned on her defensively. "I didn't think it could go *so* wrong that we'd accidentally create new life!"

Christine groaned, her head sandwiched between her hands. "How can four girls be so good at math but *so* bad at baking?"

"Never mind that!" Nyota shouted as she dove over the table to take cover with her friends. "What are we supposed to *do* about it?!"

There was a long moment of silence as they thought about it, watching the dough monster very slowly make its way out of the oven, gargling and moaning and calling out to its creators.

"I have an idea," Janice said.

The four of them stood huddled around the airlock window, taking their last looks at their unintentional living creation as it sat plopped in a five gallon pail in the centre of the airlock chamber. It had given up on trying to haul its sticky mass out of the bucket, and now seemed quite comfortable where it was. Sitting mostly still, it had stopped the loudest of its sounds and contented itself to opening and closing its mouth leisurely, like a fish, and making the occasional gurgle.

"Are we.... doing the right thing?" Christine asked, breaking the silence outside the airlock. "I mean... it's a living being, and we're responsible for its creation... doesn't it seem kinda wrong to just... blast it into space?" There was a moment of pause as the other considered it.

"Eh, ashes to ashes," Janice shrugged, and opened the outer airlock door. The bucket and its living contents were gone so fast it was as if it had never been there in the first place.

Christine stepped back, clapping a hand over her mouth and looking horrified. "Oh my Stars! What did you *do*?!"

"What had to be done," Janice said, gravely.

"But... the ethics..." Christine started to panic. "I can lose my job over this!"

Janice grabbed Christine by the shoulders and gave her a shake. "Listen to me Christine. *No one will ever know*. Got it?"

She nodded nervously. "Yeah. Yeah, alright. Nobody will know. Just us. Our little secret," she chattered.

"Atta girl," Janice grinned, clapping Christine on the shoulder before releasing her from her grasp.

They returned to Nyota's quarters and sat on the couches, sipping wine in silence as they stared off at nothing in particular, contemplating what had transpired that night.

After a long while, Gaila set her glass down and sighed tiredly. "Look, I know this is a little less high-priority than coming to terms with the life and death of our cookie dough child, but we still don't have anything to bring to the potluck tomorrow."

Another long silence.

"Well," Janice said. "We could always synthesize cookies. Unless you really think it won't go unnoticed," she added, looking at Gaila for an opinion.

Gaila shook her head, tired and resigned. "No. No one will ever know."

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