

## Potluck

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## Potluck

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### Summary

The Jemison's senior crew have a New Year's potluck. There is controversy surrounding two of the dishes: gagh and macaroni and cheese.

It was New Year's, and the *Jemison's* senior crew took the rare opportunity to gather among themselves to socialize without the pressures of work bearing down on them. Someone had suggested that they hold a potluck of their favourite foods, and everyone was looking forward to sitting down together.

There wasn't much coordination, so it might not have made the most balanced meal, but the important part was getting to share a favourite dish with colleagues and friends. It was a clear rule that nobody was obligated to eat anything they didn't want to, though sampling was encouraged should dietary restrictions allow.

The group brought their dishes to the table, laying them out. There was a wide array, from Ijeoma's simple fried plantains to a special 36 ingredient stew brought by Galan.

Galan had just finished listing off the 36 ingredients when Sha'Rel steered herself over to the table with a heavy covered tray on her lap. "Well, I made it from scratch and did my best," she admitted, "but it's nowhere near perfect." When she removed the lid, eyebrows rose in surprise, or possibly shock. Holloway, on the other hand, lit up.

"Yes!" He cheered. "It's been so long since I've had fresh *gagh*!"

Sha'Rel waved a hand dismissively. "I'm not as good at making it as my father."

"I'm sure it will be great!" Holloway said, encouragingly.

"I'm sorry," Nors said, still blinking their wide eyes at the wriggling platter. "You eat this? Alive? Is this a prank?"

Their brother, Soran, elbowed them in the ribs.

Nors winced. "No offence, but..."

"None taken," Sha'Rel said, meaning it. She knew her dish would incite this sort of reaction. "It's a traditional Klingon delicacy. And my favourite, though that probably has something to do with my father's cooking skills."

"It's quite healthy, too," Doctor Keytal said. "High in protein."

"I will not be offended if nobody tries it," Sha'Rel assured the group. "I am well aware of how it appears to other species. Aside from Zac, of course. I've never met a human who likes *gagh* as much as he does."

"Chalk it up to your dad's cooking," Holloway said. "But really, the taste is incredible."

"Well, I am very curious to try some," Ijeoma said graciously, and scooped a rather bravely sized helping of the wriggling worms onto her plate. Her crew was staring at her expectantly, and she found herself with no choice but to taste it with everyone watching for her approval. She steeled herself to keep her face neutral as she scooped a worm into her mouth, but her eyebrows shot up at the taste. She chewed thoughtfully and swallowed. "Oh my, that is not at all what I expected," she admitted. "So flavourful. Savoury. The texture is something else. It's crunchy, chewy, and juicy all at once. I've never had anything like it. It's delicious."

"Well, I'm sold," Galan said.

"I dunno," Nors said, skeptically. "I don't know if I can get past the wriggling."

"Come now, Nors," Galan said. "It isn't as if it's... *cheese*," he said with a shudder.

The humans in the group looked at him quizzically. Jory, who had brought cheesy macaroni, asked, "what's wrong with cheese?"

"Has it never crossed your mind how strange it is to eat the congealed breast milk of another animal?" Galan asked.

Holloway, Jory, and Ijeoma looked at each other. "Well, when you put it that way..." Jory said.

"I'm lactose intolerant," Ijeoma disclaimed.

"Have you even tried it?" Holloway asked. It was a challenge. "Can't knock it till you try it."

Galan stared him down. But he was always curious about human things, even the gross ones. So he scooped some macaroni and cheese onto his plate, and took an experimental bite. He took a long moment to think about what he tasted.

"Well, if you ignore how it's made, it's actually quite delicious, I must admit."

"See?" Holloway boasted.

"Well, I'm hungry enough to eat just about anything, so if we're done debating..." Ijeoma suggested, waving a hand.

Deferring to their captain, everyone sat down, talking about the dishes they brought and tasted. Everyone tried the *gagh*. Almost everyone tried the cheese.

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