

The Future Is Ours – Part 26

“Bent, Not Broken”

By Dawn

Summary: Honeymoon

Rated: NC-17

B’Elanna sat down at the table with Kathryn’s family and had to stifle her laughter.

Gretchen asked, “What’s so funny?”

She nodded at Kathryn who was asleep in her mother’s arms. “The woman who made dozens of delta quadrant aliens turn tail and run is asleep in her mother’s arms. It’s a sight to behold.”

Looking down at her daughter, Gretchen said, “There are many facets to her personality.”

“That there are.”

Kathryn’s Aunt Martha said, “I’ll tell you one thing, B’Elanna. Seeing our dear Katie as happy as she was tonight, and content enough to fall asleep like this... it’s nothing short of a miracle.”

Chakotay came up to the table and leaned on the back of a chair, smiling at the sight of his wife asleep. “I’ve only been gone for a few minutes.”

“About twenty,” Phoebe said. “She just couldn’t stay awake.”

Gretchen kissed the top of her daughter’s head. “I don’t want to let her go, but my son, I think you should take her to bed.”

Tom arrived next. “The last of the guests are gone, so it’s just us left.” When he realized that Kathryn was asleep, he spoke softer. “Sorry, man, but it looks like we wore out your bride.”

“Nah.” Phoebe waved away his concern. “She’s just resting up for the wedding night.”

Everyone laughed, but Chakotay said, “Not to worry, she warned me that after all this excitement, she might sleep through the first half of the honeymoon.”

Gretchen asked, “Do you want help getting her upstairs?”

“No, I’ll be fine. This won’t be the first time I’ve put her to bed.”

“All right, but leave all of this mess. There’s a whole team of people coming to clean this up in the morning after you leave.”

Phoebe vacated her seat to let Chakotay sit down next to his new wife. He stroked her cheek with the backs of his fingers. “Kathryn?”

She hummed sleepily, but didn’t wake up.

Looking around at the wedding party, he asked, “Would you see yourselves out?”

“Of course,” Tom replied. “We’ll see you both in about a month. Enjoy your time away.”

“Thank you, we will.” He put one arm under Kathryn’s knees, one around her back, and carefully lifted her into his arms.

Gretchen stood with him and gently placed her daughter’s head on his shoulder. “Take good care of her.”

“Always.”

“I know you will.” She patted her new son on the back and then cleared a path for him to take his bride inside.

Justin opened the front door for him. “I’ll lock down the house and turn off the lights.”

“Thank you.” Chakotay carried her up to their bedroom and carefully laid her down on the bed.

She sighed with a sleepy moan and her eyes fluttered open to see where she was. “Honey? Our bedroom?”

“I carried you over the threshold, but you slept through it.” He sat down and caressed her leg through the soft fabric of her dress.

Putting her hands on her face, she asked, “Did I really fall asleep at the reception?”

“Yes, it was very sweet.” He drew one of her hands away from her face.

“Admirals are not supposed to be sweet.”

Kissing her fingers, he said, “On their wedding day when they fall asleep in their mother’s arms, yes, they are very sweet.”

“Oh, no. How many people saw that?”

“Only your family, Tom, and B’Elanna. Your reputation is mostly safe.”

“Well, I blew my cover with them a long time ago. And if my insecurity last night didn’t do it, holding Lanna’s hand while we slept sealed the deal.”

He lifted her other hand away from her eyes and leaned forward to give her a soft, warm kiss. He whispered against her lips, “Would you mind holding mine tonight?”

“I’d like that, but I’d like to hold all of you even more.” She cradled his face between her hands and pressed her lips to his. The kiss was gentle at first, but as the heat of his tongue swept through her mouth, it grew more intense and passionate. Their lips moved against each other, mouths open, savoring the feel and taste of each other.

When he broke the kiss, she stretched her body dreamily. “Mmmm... that was nice.”

“Yes, it was,” he whispered against her lips and then gave her a simple kiss. “I’m going to turn out the lights, but I’ll be right back.”

“M’kay.”

He made a quick check outside their room to make sure that all was quiet downstairs. The lights were off and he could see out through the front windows that the lights in the yard were going out. Even though they were alone, he closed the bedroom door just so they’d feel more secluded. He turned down the lights, and was toeing his shoes off when Kathryn slipped her arms around him from behind. “Hi there,” he said as he felt her press against him.

Huskily, she replied, “Hello husband.” She hugged him close, laying her head on the back of his tuxedo jacket. “Do you know how much I love you?”

“I have a pretty good idea.” He chuckled as her fingers began working at the studs on his shirt. Because she was fumbling a little with the old-fashioned links, he helped her by guiding the one she was working on through the button hole.

She lightly slapped his hands away. “I can unwrap my wedding present myself, thank you very much.”

He looked over his shoulder and asked, “Do I get to unwrap mine, too? Or did you do that while I wasn’t looking?”

“Not to worry, husband. I’m still fully dressed.” She was getting the hang of unfastening his shirt and just about had all the links open.

“I’m not sure that gown counts as fully dressed, but it definitely highlights some of the more provocative features of my gift.” As she pulled his shirt and undershirt out of his

slacks, he had a hard time resisting the temptation to turn around and start unwrapping her.

She hummed with disapproval as she loosened his tie. “The dress was supposed to conceal those kinds of attributes.”

“Ah, but your perception is much different than mine, love.” He unfastened the link in his collar for her.

“How so?” She rested her head on his back again as her hands moved up and down over the soft undershirt, feeling the hard muscles underneath.

Holding her hands in place, he said, “I’ll show you if you’ll let me turn around.”

“Not yet.” She pulled her hands out from under his so she could slip them under his shirt. “I’m not done, and I’m rather enjoying myself.”

“I’d enjoy it more if we were both unwrapped.” His breath caught as she traced the curves of his pectorals, her thumbs skimming across his hardening nipples. With a deep rumble in his voice, he cautioned, “Kathryn.”

“If I remember correctly,” she said as she gave each little nub a light pinch. “You had me in a similar position not too long ago.”

“Mmmhmm.” He closed his eyes to concentrate on the way her fingers toyed with him. “I seem to recall that you enjoyed being touched like this quite a bit.”

“And you don’t?” she asked with disbelief. While one of her hands continued toying with his chest, the other slowly slid down to his waist and then continued over the front of his slacks. When she found what she was looking for, she chortled in triumph, “Seems the feeling is mutual, my dear husband.”

He groaned as her fingers slid up and down his erection. “Like what you found?”

“Oh, yes.” She gave him a reprieve as she let go in order to slide his shirt and jacket off his shoulders. When he turned around to face her, she slid her hands back underneath his shirt to lift it over his head. “I like it a lot.” She placed kisses on his bare chest while he pulled the pins out of her hair.

“I’m glad to hear that.” He ran his fingers through the long, wavy tresses, but froze when she flinched in discomfort. “Your head?”

“It’s fine.” She continued to kiss his chest. “I’m ignoring it.”

He stepped back a little so he could bend down and pick up his discarded jacket. “Joe gave me something for you.”

“I meant to talk to him before he left.”

He fished a hypospray out of his pocket and showed it to her. “Enough to keep you pain-free until he sees you on Tuesday.”

Smiling gratefully, she said, “I’ll have to thank him.”

Chakotay walked over to the bathroom so he could use its light to load one dose. “Beverly and Amy also checked in with me to make sure you had something if you needed it.” He came back and administered the medication into her bloodstream.

“Thank you.” She rubbed the tingly spot on her neck.

After setting the hypo on a nearby dresser, he carefully threaded his fingers through her hair to feel the back of her head. “He said to call him if it started to swell, but he didn’t think it would.”

Her fingers joined his to check the tender spot. “I don’t think there’s a bump. It’s just sore to the touch.”

He pulled her gently into his arms. “I’m really sorry that happened today.”

“Not your fault.” She sighed against his warm skin. “Just another example of how I don’t seem to be myself. Can you imagine that I would have let that hairdresser ramrod me that way a year ago?”

“Yes and no.”

“Go on,” she said with mock annoyance as her arms went around his waist.

“Well, after reading the report on that incident when Joe impersonated you and several others...”

“While I was being held hostage by numbskulls, yes.”

“You let him fly the shuttle that day to avoid hurting his feelings.”

“I wanted him to get experience.”

He gave her a knowing look.

“All right, fine. So sometimes I let people put me in a bad spot.”

Kissing her forehead, he said, “I love you... Everything about you.”

“Hmmm... I suppose that I’ll take that as a compliment.”

“Absolutely.” He caressed her cheek and looked into her eyes to gauge how she was doing. “Feeling better?”

“The throbbing has faded to a mild pressure.” Her finger traced along his collarbone as an idea came to her. “Dance with me.”

“I’d love to.” He settled his hands low on her back, just as he had earlier that evening.

She pressed her body against him and slid her arms up around his neck. “What song was playing when you made me feel so wonderful tonight?”

“I don’t know. We’ll have to ask the band.” His fingers caressed the soft skin all the way down her back.

“We were dancing cheek-to-cheek.” Her lips brushed against the slight roughness of his jaw. “I felt intoxicated, loving the scent of your cologne, loving the way your hands touched me, loving the way your body felt against mine.”

“And how does my body feel now?”

“Strong, solid.” She melted as he kissed behind her ear. “Loving, protective.”

His fingers made tiny circles on the sensitive area right above her tailbone once more. “What else?”

“Mmmmm... warm. You feel very warm and so very, very sexy.”

His lips traveled lower and began trailing across her neck, leaving little kisses of moisture along the sensitive skin. He whispered, “I don’t think you’ve ever told me that before.”

She stretched her neck to give him better access, and her mouth fell open with a whimper as the kisses continued down to the hollow of her throat. “Told... you...” She had to pause until the word came to her. “What?”

“That I’m sexy.” His breath was warm against the damp kisses he’d left on her throat.

“Yes,” she said breathlessly as his mouth kept descending. Instinctively, she arched into his kisses, lifting her chest towards his hot mouth.

“This dress is something else, Kathryn.” He kissed the soft, forbidden skin in the valley between her breasts. “I’ve wanted to do this all night.”

She couldn’t form coherent words as he kissed down to the bottom of the plunging neckline. Her breasts were separated in such a way that the plump, inside curve was fully

open and available to his lips. He tormented her by kissing and licking only what was exposed, ignoring her hardened nipples that were clearly pushing against the fabric of her bodice.

Her entire body shuddered as his tongue drew a wet line up between her breasts. She was panting with soft puffs as she begged, “Kiss me, please.”

“It would be my pleasure,” he said as he wrapped her tightly in his arms and lowered his mouth to hers.

She moaned as his tongue edged its way into her mouth, one small lick at a time until he was stroking sheer pleasure out of her. One of his hands dropped to fondle the rise of her bottom, a delightful blend of hard muscle under supple curves that fit perfectly in the palm of his hand. As she moaned and rocked her pelvis towards him, his hand came around and slid up to cup her breast, his thumb stroking along the exposed skin of her cleavage.

Their mouths came apart for only a moment as they looked into each other’s eyes, each seeing their one, true love – the best friend and lover that would be theirs, and only theirs, for the rest of their lives. She nipped at his lower lip, her tongue licking with each gentle bite, while her hands roamed over his bare chest and neck.

His hands explored her dress, looking for a zipper or a clasp that would free his bride from her beautiful wrapping. When he found none, he lowered one strap over her shoulder so that he could hold and manipulate her naked breast.

She moaned into his mouth as his fingers found her hardened nipple. A surge of arousal shot straight down to her core and spurred her into action. Her hands slid down his abdomen to the closure of his slacks. She had them open within seconds, her fingers sliding inside the waist band and around to the back so she could squeeze the taught muscles of his buttocks.

She opened her eyes to ask him, “Honey? What are you wearing under here?”

“Like them?” He kicked his pants off so she could get a better look at his black silk briefs.

“Ummm... yeah.” Walking all the way around him, she touched everywhere – his rear, hips, and finally came to rest on the front where she studied the way the skin-tight underwear clung to its not-so-hidden contents. “What’s not to like?”

“I’m glad, because I got several pair for you to enjoy over the next few weeks.”

She looked up at him and licked her lips. “You took my request to heart, didn’t you?”

He lowered her other strap, peeling the rest of the bodice away to expose both of her breasts. “What request was that?”

“To keep me humming with pleasure all month.”

“Oh... that one.” He rubbed his thumbs across her nipples, eliciting a deep sound that was somewhere between a moan and a gasp. “How am I doing so far?”

She pressed up against his body, trapping his hands between them as she clutched his rear, “I’m definitely humming, and if you don’t get to my own little undergarment surprise soon, they’ll be drenched.”

Growling with unrestrained lust, his hands searched her dress. “Where’s the zipper?”

Smiling, she asked, “Is that what’s been holding you back?”

“I’ve been looking,” he turned her around to inspect the back of the gown more closely.

She looked over her shoulder and said, “There isn’t one. Just peel it off over my head.”

His hands stroked down her legs to her ankles and then back up under her dress. He paused when he discovered satiny ribbon and bare skin halfway up her thighs. “What have we here?”

Replying innocently, she said, “Just a little something to hold up my stockings.”

“Just a little something, huh?” His fingers rose higher until they encountered her panty-covered derriere.

She gasped and arched her back as he stroked the narrow piece of dewy fabric between her legs.

Standing up behind her fully, he left one hand under her dress, and wrapped his other arm around her waist. “You’re dripping, my lovely bride.”

She whimpered as his fingers snuck inside her panties to dip into her well of moisture. Her head fell back onto his shoulder as her exposed breasts heaved with her quick, deep breaths.

His voice rumbled in her ear as he asked, “Instead of humming, how about I keep you writhing in pleasure instead?”

“Touch me, please,” she begged.

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“Wha...?” She gasped, her body trembling as a single finger stroked lightly through her folds with the slowest of movements.

“What’s your preference, love? Humming or writhing?”

Her stomach was clenched tight as she tried to position his fingers where she wanted them, but he moved with her, not letting her have what she wanted. “Ei... ther. Both,” she gasped, wanting his touch so badly that she could barely stand it.

“Your wish is my command.” He withdrew his fingers and deftly peeled the dress off over her head, leaving her in nothing but her panties and stockings.

She turned to him, still panting, “You stopped!”

He immediately tugged her back into his arms and smoothed his hands down her back, pressing her nearly naked body into him. “If I give you release, you won’t be humming and writhing anymore.”

“So you’re just going to leave me like this?” Her body was shaking with arousal.

“That’s the general idea, yes.”

“For how long?” She gasped as he slipped his hands inside the back of her panties and clutched both buttocks.

“Oh...I don’t know. An hour? Two?” His mouth caught hers and he drove his tongue inside in one smooth stroke, his kiss reverberating through her.

She arched into him as he spread her bottom apart and pushed his fingers into her wetness from behind. “Ommmmmm,” she moaned as she tried to push back so his fingers would touch where she wanted them.

“Tsk ts, my love. You’re not being patient.” He dropped his hands until he had a firm hold on her thighs and lifted her off the floor. She wrapped her legs around him, grinding her mons against his hard penis.

“I don’t want to be patient. I want you, inside me, now.”

He whispered into her ear, “Comfortable?”

“Absolutely not,” she replied, wriggling her bottom to try to get him to touch her.

“Hold on tight.” He carefully let go of her legs, making sure she wasn’t going to slide down, before he slid his hands up to the apex of her thighs again. Pushing aside the soft panties, his fingers delved again into her moisture.

“Ah,” she panted. “Chakotay...”

“Are you ready for me?” His breath was hot against her ear.

She whimpered before she was able to reply, “I thought I’d married an intelligent man.”

Grinning as he carried them to their bed, he said, “Hold onto me while I turn down the covers.”

“Don’t let go.”

“I won’t.” He braced her with one hand and used the other to pull back the bedding. After straightening back up, he folded both arms around her and looked into her eyes. In awe, he said, “You are glowing right now. So beautiful.”

“You’re just saying that because you’re about to make love to me.”

“No.” He shook his head, a huge smile on his face. “You just are. I love you, Kathryn.”

She cupped his cheek and placed a chaste kiss on his lips. “Thank you. I love you, too.”

Gently, he lowered her to the bed, and as soon as she felt the mattress beneath her, she let go of him and relaxed. Very slowly, he peeled her panties, garter, and stockings from her thin, but shapely legs. Once she was naked, he put his thumbs in his waistband and asked, “Shall I, or do you want the honors?”

“I’ll enjoy watching, but take your socks off, first.”

He gave her a wink and bent over to do as she asked. “As you wish, my wife.”

Kathryn pushed the covers down further on the bed and scooted to the middle. She watched him studiously as he slowly peeled off his briefs, revealing a semi-erect penis. “Looks like I’ve got some work to do.”

Kneeling over her, he placed a gentle kiss on her lips. “I don’t think that’ll be a problem, not with you in my bed.”

She reached out to run her hands over his body as he stretched out along side her. He cupped her breast lovingly and took a nipple into his mouth, sending currents of desire all the way down to her toes.

A soft moan of approval came from him as her hands threaded through his hair to hold him in place. He slid his hand down her body, caressing her hips, stroking her thighs, and stimulating her arousal with a few strokes through her wet folds. His hand came to rest on her belly where he rubbed slowly back and forth, his lips leaving her breast to travel downward to join his hands.

Kathryn watched him kiss and caress her stomach, “It’s hard to believe there’s a baby in there, isn’t it?”

“He’s a miracle, really.”

“He?”

“I think so.” Chakotay’s fingers continued to circle her belly, every so often dipping down through her folds to keep her humming in a high state of arousal. “It hasn’t quite sunk in, yet.”

“I keep wondering if I’m dreaming.”

He kissed down a little further along the edge of her damp curls.

She arched her pelvis forward and closed her eyes to enjoy the sensations he was stirring within her. “I need you.”

“You’ve got me. Forever.” He spread her labia and, with a flat tongue, licked once across her aching nub.

Fireworks shot through her and she decided that she couldn’t take any more of his teasing. She sat up and took matters into her own hands, holding his face and kissing him deeply. Her intention was to mount him, but he reacted too quickly and lowered her back down to the bed, knelt between her legs, and pushed himself inside with one, smooth thrust.

A low moan came from deep within her throat as she adjusted to the wonderful sensation of being completely filled. “You were right,” she rasped as she folded her legs around him to draw him in deeper.

“About what?” He nibbled on her neck, just below her ear.

She shuddered as he withdrew and plunged into her again. “You’re hard.”

“You noticed that, did you?” Buried deep inside her, he lowered himself to his elbows and placed hot kisses on her breasts.

Lost in the sensations, she arched her chest and attempted to meet his thrust for thrust. The pressure of his pelvis was perfect against her clitoris, his every movement stirring her higher and higher. She clung to his shoulders, trying to get as close to him as possible, needing to be one with him.

He lifted his head and stopped his thrusting to delve his tongue into her panting mouth. Imbedded deep inside her, he pressed upwards and slowly rotated his pelvis, putting pressure on her hardened nub.

His mouth melded with hers, leaving her breathless as she writhed in the pleasure of the intense, erotic stimulation. She was in complete bliss, unable to think, unable to do anything except cling to him and let the powerful feeling build within her.

He whispered into her ear, "Don't come, yet, love."

"I can't stop it," she gasped.

"Make it last." He backed off from the pressure and began sliding in and out of her. "Hold onto it, Kathryn."

"Oh," she panted over and over as he filled her, trying to hold out for him, sensation piling on top of sensation.

"Shhhhh." He withdrew partway and moved with shallow strokes in and out of her, leaving her shivering with the need to come, but unfulfilled on the edge of wonderful. "Don't come until I tell you to."

Gasping loudly, she groaned, "Out... rank... you," as she tried to lift her pelvis to meet his, but he wouldn't let her have it. "Please," she begged, shaking with an arousal more extreme that she'd ever imagined.

"You're glowing. So beautiful, so sexy." He was having trouble holding back himself, but the intensity of their connection, the heat of their arousal was so seductive a lure that he desired nothing except to make it last. As her breathing calmed, he chose that moment to thrust powerfully into her, so deep that he was pushing against her cervix.

"Cha..... ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh," she groaned as he brought her even closer to the precipice.

As her body trembled on the verge of climax, he grew harder with every deep stroke into her core. When his sac tightened, he pressed his body against her clitoris, and rocked against her. "Now, love. Come for me."

It took only the sensation of his hot semen filling her for her to let go. Her entire body seized in pleasure, coming so hard that she felt the climax burning everywhere, washing over her like a volcanic eruption before she convulsed, her body jerking uncontrollably over and over again. Their eyes locked, communicating the deep love they had for each other, the depth of which couldn't be broken by anything within the far reaches of the galaxy. They knew it without any doubt, because they'd been there... and back.

An unwanted chill crept over Chakotay, causing him to stir in his sleep. He reached for Kathryn and spooned against her bare back to snuggle up next to her warmth.

She murmured, “ ‘m cold.”

He reached down to pull up the covers, but groaned sleepily when he didn't find any. The light hitting his eyelids told him that morning had arrived, and he figured that they must have kicked the covers off during the night. He wanted to fall back to sleep, but the chill was getting uncomfortable enough that he opened his eyes to assess the blanket situation.

In his sleepy haze, their surroundings confused him. The room was unfamiliar, yet he didn't feel alarmed. Kathryn was still lying naked in his arms, a vision as she slept. Tearing his eyes away from her, he looked out the window and realization dawned on him.

Kathryn grumbled, “You stole the covers again.”

“No, I don't think you can blame me for this one.”

“Hmmm?”

“I'm just saying that it's not our covers that have disappeared. It seems to have been us.”

She opened her eyes and looked around. They were lying on top of a bed that wasn't theirs, in a room that wasn't theirs. She twisted her head and shoulders around to look at her new husband. “Are we where I think we are?”

“I think so.” He edged off the bed and lifted the turned-down covers. “Scoot under.”

She groaned a little as she sat up and let him draw the covers down. “I think I overtaxed my abs last night, but damn, that was good sex.”

“I aim to please, ma'am,” he said with a wink.

The fluffy white bedding on the large, iron bed almost swallowed her small form.

“Whose idea was it to transport us in our sleep?”

“I'll give you three guesses and the first two don't count,” he said as he cuddled in behind her and tucked the blankets around them.

“Your less-than-best man.”

He snuffled his nose into her hair and held her close. “I'm guessing there's probably a note, but I don't feel up to looking for it right now.”

She wiggled her bottom against him. “That can be fixed.”

Groaning, he said, “You’re a wicked woman.”

She chuckled and pressed her back into his chest. “Yes, I am, and now that you’ve married me, I don’t have to hide it anymore.”

“As if you ever did.” He sighed tiredly and rubbed her arms to warm her up. “Let’s try to sleep more.”

“If you insist.” After a quiet moment, she commented, “I hope they transported our clothes, too.”

“You don’t need to wear any on my account.”

“You do realize that there are at least a dozen security officers watching us all the time?”

He sensually rubbed her tummy in slow, soothing circles. “Feel like engaging in a bit of exhibitionism?”

“Mmmmm... could be kinky, but since they all work for me, no.”

“Party pooper.” He kissed the back of her neck, lingering there because he knew how much it turned her on.

She murmured, “You keep doing that and you’re not going to get that sleep you wanted.”

He didn’t stop.

After making love in their un-familiar surroundings, they dozed for awhile until Chakotay’s stomach started growling. He said, “I think it’s time to get out of bed and explore.”

She mumbled, “Too.” Shaking her head slightly, she moaned softly. “Sseeepy.”

Concerned about her slurred speech, Chakotay sat up to look at her. The freckles dotting her nose and neck were unusually dark in comparison to her very pale skin, a sure sign that she needed to eat immediately. He kissed her cheek and whispered, “I’ll be right back. Don’t try to get up.”

“ ‘kay.”

He climbed out of bed, found the bathroom, threw on a robe, and then padded out to the main living area of their small cabin. In the adjacent kitchen, he found a cooler that was fully stocked and poured a glass of orange juice. He smiled when he saw a container of bendable straws and instantly knew that Gretchen had helped set this up.

Back in the bedroom, he sat down next to Kathryn and placed the straw against her lips. “Can you drink?”

She took a sip of the cold juice, finding it refreshing in her warm, sticky mouth. Chakotay’s fingers brushed tenderly through her hair as her body adjusted to the badly needed glucose.

After a few minutes, he noticed her pallor was closer to normal and asked, “Better?”

“Mmm hmmm. This seems to be getting worse.”

He laid his hand on her belly and caressed it tenderly. “I think he’s already draining your energy.”

Although still drowsy, she opened her eyes. “I don’t think *she* had much to do with sapping my strength, Mr. ‘I want more sleep.’”

“Guilty as charged,” he said with a huge grin as he leaned down to kiss her. “Do you think you can drink more while I fix us breakfast, or a snack, or... dinner? I actually have no idea what time it is here.”

She let him help her into a sitting position, resting her back against the headboard. Her body was still sore from the night before, so she stretched to ease the discomfort.

“There’s a nine hour time difference, so how about we kill two birds with one stone and have omelets for dinner? Do we have food?”

“We’ve got plenty. I’ll get started, and when you feel up to it, come join me.”

“Thank you.” She reached for his arm as he got up. When he turned back to look at her, she added, “For taking care of me.”

“It’s my pleasure, love.” With a wink, he said, “Besides, just yesterday I vowed to do that sickness and health thing. Might as well start now.”

She laughed, holding her aching middle. “You started about eight years ago.”

“You’re probably right.” He placed a kiss on top of her head and said, “Come when you’re ready.”

As he walked out, she yelled after him, “You didn’t let me come when I was ready last night.”

He hollered back, "Great, wasn't it?"

About an hour later, Kathryn was slipping on a light jacket when Chakotay walked into the cabin from the back door.

"Ready to explore our little paradise?" he asked.

"Yes, I think a little activity will help relieve some of my soreness. Who's on duty?"

"Mark Yosa and the beta team. We're secure along the coastline for a half kilometer in each direction."

"Let's do it."

He bit back a grin as he opened the back door for her. "Yes, ma'am."

"What are you laughing at?" she asked as she walked past him to go outside.

"Your use of 'let's do it.' We should engrave that on a plaque and put it up in your office."

She elbowed him gently in the ribs as he put an arm around her shoulders. "Cheeky."

"I seem to recall that you're rather fond of my cheeks."

When the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea came into view, she forgot all about his impertinence. "Wow."

"I agree. This is incredible."

She wrapped her arm around his waist. "This moment, alone, is worth our trek across the galaxy."

Squeezing her close to his side, he said, "I think it takes a close second to being able to love you openly."

Kathryn tore her eyes away from the view to look up at her husband. She turned in his arms to face him and gently laid her hands on his chest. "I've been asking myself why we refused to acknowledge this out there. It really would've been a lot less difficult than ignoring it."

"A myriad of reasons, none of which I can think of at the moment."

“Hmmm... I think you just nailed one. I distract you.”

He laughed lightly. “Yes, but this is nothing new. I got really good at thinking about two things at once.”

A wicked glint shone in her eyes. “Tell me, ‘Commander,’ if you would, what is it that I do on the bridge that is the most distracting?”

“Well, ‘Captain.’” He paused to clear his throat. “If you want your first officer to stay focused on the task at hand, you should refrain from leaning on the command deck railing while you’re looking at the viewscreen.”

“Really?” She laughed with surprise. “So, when I was focused on whatever the problem of the day was, your brain was focused on my ass?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I’ll take note and try to improve my posture, ‘Commander.’” She slid her hand down and pinched his rear. “Your ass, by the way, looks *really* good in uniform.”

It was his turn to laugh. “And you say that you weren’t distracted?”

As she walked away, she tossed over her shoulder, “I never said anything of the kind.”

Joy filled his heart as he watched her move towards the beach with a definite sway in her hips. She was sounding more like herself than she had in a long time – enjoying life, awestruck by nature, flirting with him, and her sharp wit was shining through all of it. He followed her to the edge of the sea where they both took off their shoes so they could wade in the warm water.

Kathryn asked, “Do you know what part of the Mediterranean this is? It occurs to me that I have no idea where we are.”

“Eastern part. We’re on an island off the coast of Greece in the Aegean.”

“The water is such an amazing shade of blue.”

“Yes, it is.” He took her hand in his. “Would you like to walk a little?”

“Sure.” They walked along quietly for a few minutes until Kathryn broke the silence. “I love the feeling of the sand between my toes.”

“So do I. We need to explore the coast along our property sometime.”

“I didn’t think it was possible to get down there.”

“Not directly from the house, but on the north side of the guest cabin, there’s a trail that goes down to the ocean.”

“Have you been there?”

“No, but Justin told me about it. He said it’s a pretty steep hike.”

“This summer when the Pacific warms up, I’d like to try it.”

Chakotay laughed a little. “By then, your balance might be off a bit.”

“Oh yeah.” She placed her hand on her stomach. “I have to keep reminding myself.”

“Did you tell anyone?”

“No, but Beverly knows, and she thinks Amy might.”

“Then it’s no wonder that they were both so worried about you.”

“They were?”

“Beverly more so, but Amy asked me several times if there was anything she could do for you.”

Kathryn asked, “What did Beverly say?”

“She was hesitant to leave the reception, and told me to keep a close eye on you, to make sure you eat a lot of small meals. Captain Picard finally urged her to leave, but she made me promise that you’d call her before making any decisions. She said it so emphatically that it took me back a little.”

“She’s worried that Joe is going to try to talk us into something we don’t want to do.”

“Then she doesn’t know you as well as she thinks she does.”

“You’re right. All she really knows is who I’ve been these last couple of months. We’d only met briefly last summer, so she doesn’t know the ‘real’ me.”

“You haven’t been that different. Physically weakened and emotionally upset, but not once have you let anyone force you into making a decision.”

“That’s true.” She nodded and put her hands on her sore ribs. The movement triggered her memory. “Oh…”

“What is it?”

“Oh, nothing,” she said in dismissal. “It’s just a strange coincidence.”

“What’s that?”

“Beverly asked if my abdomen hurt up here, and now it does.”

Chakotay looked at where her hands were touching. “Is it more on your right?”

“Yes. I think I overtaxed a muscle is all.”

He nodded in agreement. “I think she’s worried about your liver. Joe mentioned something, but I wasn’t tracking.”

“If there was a problem, I’m sure Joe would have told us.”

“That’s true. He can be a bit of an alarmist.”

They walked along quietly for a few minutes until Chakotay asked, “Do you feel a change, yet?”

“What kind of change? In my body?”

“No, in respect to you being more yourself.”

“My demeanor?”

“Yes, because outwardly, you definitely appear to have regained your footing in the last couple of weeks, except when alone.”

“Some, I suppose. Being around so many people has forced me to put on my game face. I didn’t want anyone to think I’d been broken.”

“You haven’t been. Just bent a little.”

She smiled. “That’s right, and I have you to thank for straightening me back out.”

“Speaking of strong women, I had a long conversation with your Aunt Martha. She’s a piece of work.”

Laughing, Kathryn asked, “What did you talk about?”

“I didn’t do much of the talking.”

“I bet not. She never takes a breath.”

He chuckled. "And when she does breathe, it's timed so that you can't say anything because it would be an obvious interruption to her train of thought."

"A train without a caboose."

"Mostly, she told me how Janeway women like to be treated, as if I didn't already know."

"Oh? And how's that?"

"She said they need to be challenged in life. You come from a strong line of women, and, according to your aunt, you're the strongest of them all. I've been instructed not to turn you into a docile woman that will see to my every whim."

"What makes her think that I would *let* you turn me into anything?"

"I thought the same thing."

She gave him an incredulous look.

"Really, I did. I just decided not to voice it because that would've only prolonged the conversation."

"What else did she enlighten you with?"

"You don't want to know."

"Out with it," she demanded.

"All right, but you asked for it." He licked his lips. "Janeway women like an adventurous man in the bedroom."

"She didn't."

"Oh yes, she definitely did. I've been directed to always see to your needs before my own and to make sure I keep it interesting so you don't get bored."

Kathryn groaned. "I'll have to ask Mike if he got the same talk when he married Phoebe."

"He did. He warned me at the bachelor party."

"In front of everyone?"

"No, he pulled me aside. He promised that if he saw your aunt corner me, he'd come to my rescue."

“Did he?”

“Not soon enough, but yes. He sent your sister to ask me to dance in typical Phoebe fashion. I kept her at a respectable distance, but it wasn't easy.”

“And who saved you from her?”

“Your mother, who then asked me what her sister-in-law talked to me about.”

“Did you tell her?”

“Only that I'd better treat you as you deserve or else I'd have Martha to deal with.”

“And mom's response?”

“She assured me that she couldn't have asked for a better husband for you.”

“Awwww. Did she really?”

“Yes. I was flattered, but then again, your mom and I've become pretty good friends since last fall.”

“I've noticed.” She squeezed his fingers. “I don't think I've ever told you how much I appreciate you moving in with her that week before I got home. There aren't many men who'd be willing to console their future mother-in-law like that.”

“Under the circumstances, it was the best thing for both of us, and it reminded me a lot of the way you and I held each other up when things got tough on Voyager.”

“I hope not to that extent,” Kathryn joked. “Did you give my mom foot massages and put her to bed when she was so exhausted that she couldn't see straight?”

“No, but I did hug her and let her cry on my shoulder.”

“Good. I'm sure you both needed it.” She leaned her head on his arm as they continued walking. “I suspect that I'll need your shoulder a lot before this baby arrives.”

Hesitantly, he asked, “How do you feel about being pregnant?”

“Hasn't really sunk in, yet, but I've always wanted children.”

“I tried not to think about it until you mentioned it last summer. You know, after Sekaya asked if she could name her son Kolopak.”

She stopped to pick up a seashell. “I suspect that I already know the answer, but why didn't you want to think about it?”

“What do you suspect?”

“That you gave up the dream of home and family when you joined the Maquis and then, like me, you didn’t think Voyager was exactly a playground for children.”

“It wasn’t so much that our ship was unsafe, but that having us as parents would be very difficult on a child.”

Kathryn thought about that as she started walking again. “It’s still going to be difficult unless my popularity wanes a great deal.”

“But I think that’s a different issue than what I’m talking about. On Voyager, your life and mine were constantly at risk, there was an almost unbearable amount of pressure on us, we were always poised for a red alert, and I wasn’t sure we’d have enough energy at the end of the day to give a child what he or she would need.”

She nodded and looked out at the deep, blue sea. “Those are the very reasons why I didn’t think I could be in a relationship with you.”

“And why I didn’t push.” He put his hand on her back and rubbed it gently as they walked. “The difficulty that our children will face now is that they’ll be famous, but we can do our best to isolate them.”

Kathryn studied the details of the seashell in her hands for a few minutes before taking a deep breath. Because the movement caused an ache in her ribs, she rubbed her right side as she spoke. “I have to admit that I’m a little anxious.”

“Anxious about pregnancy or about being a parent?”

“Both.”

“So am I.” He stopped to get a piece of broken shell out from between his toes. “Do you know how many?”

“How many children?”

“Yes, I thought you might know from your temporal adventure.”

“Oh, no, I don’t. I only know that we have descendants.”

“So how many do you want to have?”

Shrugging, she said, “I’d like to get through this pregnancy before deciding if I want to try it again. And if there is a next time, I’d like to be a lot healthier.”

He splashed the water a little with his feet. “I keep thinking about what Dr. Joe is going to tell us.”

I'm hoping he can sort out this blood sugar issue on Tuesday. He's probably just concerned about my weight... and I suppose my liver, if that's a problem.”

“And your lack of intestinal fortitude.”

She shook her head in amusement. “You might be the first person who has ever told me that I don't have guts.”

His smile joined hers. “I meant it in the literal sense, of course. You really are missing intestines.”

“Yes, I know.” Feeling a little woozy, she slid her hand into the crook of his arm to walk closer to him. “But I do hope that I have the stamina to see this through.”

“How about if I lend you some of mine?”

“You might have to if I'm bedridden. Not only will you have to take care of me, but I'll likely be in a rotten...” She paused to clear her suddenly blurry vision. “...mood.”

“Are you okay?”

“Just a little light-headed, but I don't know why. We just ate.”

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a few hard butterscotch candies. “For you.”

“How'd you know to bring those?” she asked with a smile as she unwrapped one and popped it into her mouth.

“I told you last night. You married an intelligent man.” He gave her a wink and started walking again, but slowly. “Let me know if that doesn't help.”

“Thanks.” She squeezed his arm and asked, “What was I saying? Oh... I'll be grouchy if I'm stuck in a bed.”

“And I'll understand why. Just don't be surprised when I try to cheer you up.”

“I won't, but I'd love lots of massages. That worked wonders last time I was in a funk.”

“I'll remember that.” He put his arm around her back and held her close, remembering sadly her depression last summer.

They stopped walking when they felt the energy of a forcefield prickle at their skin. She said, “I guess this is how far we go.”

“Feels like it.” He looked around and then pointed to the cliff. “There’s the shield generator.”

“How far out to sea do you think it extends?”

“Two kilometers. There are several Starfleet Navy ships out there to complete the perimeter.”

Her voice was low as she said, “I’m glad that we can’t see them. It would ruin the view.”

“They’re doing their best to be discreet, but I also want you to feel safe.”

She sighed. “I’m vacillating between feeling safe and feeling like a prisoner.”

“I can see how you’d feel that way, but I doubt any judge would sentence someone to serve time in a place as beautiful as this.” He stretched his arm out as he spun around to take in the view.

“No, but that doesn’t make me feel any less trapped.”

Trying to lighten her mood, he offered, “At least you get a full-time conjugal visit.”

She gave him a look. “While that does have certain benefits, it makes you just as confined as I am.”

“And there’s no one I’d rather be confined with than you.” He nudged her playfully. “Kathryn, I really don’t mind, and it means that I can focus on you rather than on your safety.”

She turned to face him and stated forcefully, “We need to talk about this.”

He frowned. “What do you mean by ‘this?’ Did I say something wrong?”

“No! Not at all.” She waved her arm in the air. “I’m referring to all this security and why it’s here.”

“Okaaay,” he said slowly. He was relieved, but didn’t understand her statement. “You don’t know?”

“Of course I know,” she put her hands on her hips. “But I’m tired of it and I’m tired of feeling terrified that someone is going to kidnap me in the middle of the night, or that a sniper is going to shoot me in broad daylight. The threat needs to go away because I can’t keep going like this.”

“I agree, but that’s not something that you and I can solve by ourselves, and it’s not going to be solved while we’re here.”

She popped another candy in her mouth and started pacing. “I realize that, but if we put our heads together and go over what we know, maybe we can find an answer. At the very least, you and I should draft a strategy to bring this to closure. We have at least one starship, if not two, at our disposal, and a couple hundred friends, some in very high places, who would help us at the drop of a hat.”

“Yes, but…” Chakotay scratched his head. “You really want to work on this here?”

She stopped pacing and her shoulders fell. “I…”

Coming up behind her, he tucked a few loose strands of hair behind her ear. “Kathryn, I’m happy to help you do whatever you think is best, but this is only the first day of our honeymoon. It just might be that what you need right now is to let all of this go and relax.”

Her voice husky with emotion, she said, “I don’t want to get depressed about this forced isolation, and the only way I can think of snapping out of it is to take action.”

“You’re not depressed, love.”

She wiped at her eyes and asked, “Then what is all this? My moods are all over the place, and I can’t seem to control them. It’s damned irritating.”

“I’m going to take a wild guess and suggest that it could have something to do with hormonal changes. Oh, and there’s the fact that you just went through a very exhausting and emotional week, during which you made your first public appearance in months, you were reunited with people you hadn’t seen for a year, and you made a life-altering commitment.”

Staring out at the darkening sea, she had one hand on her hip and the other hand pressing below her eye to stem the flow of tears. “I hate feeling this way.”

His tugged on her fingers to draw her into his arms. “Kathryn, we’ll figure it out.”

“I want to eliminate the threat against me, and I want my life back.” She rested her head on his shoulder. “Being around everyone this week made me miss working. And I miss doing something as simple as walking down the street.”

“We should do that, then. Find a way to get out and see some sights.”

“I’d like that, but it’s more than that. Our friends can’t know where we live, we can’t tell anyone where we are, there’s an entire security force watching us 24/7, and if that isn’t

enough, now our child is in danger because of what's happened. I'm angry that those three horrible weeks cost us so much."

"I know, love." He hugged her tightly. "The price is definitely too high, but what they didn't manage to take was your life. For that, I'm extremely grateful, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to keep you safe."

"I want more than safety. I want justice, and I want this baby."

His heart ached for her, for both of them. "I want this baby, too, so much that it hurts. We're going to do everything in our power to give him the best chance he could possibly have at life."

"I hope its enough."

"It will be enough. It has to be." He held her close, offering what physical support he could. "As for justice, if we move too quickly on our suspicions, we'll have no concrete evidence and they'll walk." Rubbing her back soothingly, he asked, "You know what?"

"What?" she mumbled against his neck.

"This anger is a sign that you're not broken."

"Bent."

He winked at her. "I think you should latch on to your anger and get really, really mad, livid, outraged, whatever you want to call it. It could be the healthiest thing you could do right now."

She looked up at him. "That's what Deanna told me. She suggested that I ought to throw things or hit something."

"Good advice." He held her beautiful face in his hands and gave her a simple kiss. "We'll look for something that you can do. Maybe throw rocks in the water."

"No, I need to hear or feel the impact. Maybe you can teach me to box, or I could take up pottery so I can take my aggression out on a lump of clay."

"Either one." Smoothing her hair back, he said. "You're going to be fine, Kathryn, and you're going to come out of this stronger than ever, out of spite if nothing else."

"They've messed with the wrong woman."

He smiled at her response. "And then you're going to bring the walls crashing down around Zife and his puppeteers. You'll see your justice that day."

She nodded with confidence. “Damn right.”

Pride swelled up inside him. “You’re a phenomenal woman, Kathryn. I know you’ve heard it a hundred times this week, but I don’t care because you need to know.”

“Thank you.” She gave him a simple kiss and pulled out of his arms. “It means a lot coming from you, especially when you say it with such conviction.”

“I think you can trust my judgment. Even if I’m a little biased, I know you better than anyone else.”

She looked into his eyes for a moment, deep in thought. “Remember my first night back?”

“Every moment.”

Her head tilted in sympathy. “You promised me that you’d help me get my strength back. I want that, now. I’m ready to fight for it.”

“You’re not as far away from it as you think you are, but yes, we’ll keep moving in that direction. Even if it means working while we’re here.”

“You’re sure?”

“Absolutely.”

“Good.” She picked up a rock and threw it out into the water. “First things, first. I need something to hit. That can be you or a lump of clay. Your choice.”

“All right,” he said with a laugh.

As she started walking back towards their cabin, she popped her last butterscotch into her mouth. “We’d better get back before it gets dark. I need something to eat besides candy, and then we need to make three lists.”

“Of what?”

“Verifiable facts, suppositions, and evidence needed.”

“It shouldn’t be difficult to get a copy of the trial records and of Jared’s statements.”

“No, but Khurma might not give them to me since I’m supposed to be on vacation. We might need to go through Harry or Bernie.”

“I’m sure they’d be glad to do whatever we ask.”

“Right.” Her pace quickened as she talked. “Then I want that data I asked Bernie to get, the information about the people who work for Zife. I also want to know who the movers and shakers of the Bolian government are. We should find out who was involved in getting Zife elected, and who stands to gain the most from his success. I doubt that it’s obvious or this would’ve been sorted out long ago.”

Chakotay rubbed his hand over his mouth to try to hide his smile.

“What?” she asked with mild irritation.

He chewed on his lip before admitting, “I love seeing you with your hackles up. It’s energizing.”

“Love? You actually enjoy it when I’m ticked off?”

“Of course not, but I love watching you gather your forces, so to speak. When your targeting sensors are locked, the universe had better stand back.”

She rolled her eyes and kept on walking at a fast clip, trying her best to contain her amusement.

“It’s adorable, really.”

Instantly, she stopped and rounded on him, one hand on her waist. “Adorable?”

He winked at her and laughed. “Yes, but only to me.”

She threw her hand up and stomped away from him, muttering, “I’ll show him ‘adorable.’”

“I’m looking forward to it,” he called out from several paces back.

Kathryn froze, turned on her heel, and pointed her finger at him. She fought back a smile as she said, “Look here, mister. I will not tol...” She couldn’t finish and keep from laughing at the same time.

He took control of the moment and took her into his arms. Pressing his mouth to hers in a demanding kiss, he wanted to consume her as she opened up for him, soft and pliant as she accepted the sweep of his tongue. He groaned as her wet heat and sweet, butterscotch flavor burst across his senses.

She threw her arms around his neck and pressed her body close, her breasts crushing against his chest until he swore that he felt the beating of her new heart, a strong and sure life-force sustaining her, protecting her. A soft moan escaped from her as she matched his passion, her tongue dueling with his in a fervent dance.

When he eased his lips away from hers, she clung to him in protest and whimpered for more. He whispered against her cheek, "If we weren't being monitored, I'd lay you down right here."

She nibbled along his jaw. "The sun has already set; maybe we'd blend into the shadows."

He groaned as she pressed her pelvis against his straining erection. Finding the strength to touch his commbadge, he said, "Mark, would you transport us back to the house? The Admiral is getting fatigued."

"Yes, sir. Stand by."

Kathryn pulled her head away and raised an eyebrow at him as the blue tingle of the transport beam took them away. When they re-coalesced, she remarked, "I'm not the least bit tired."

He took no time before backing her towards the bedroom, grabbing a banana for her on the way. "Yes you are, because you're going to bed."

She nodded towards the fruit he was unpeeling. "That's a rather suggestive snack you have there."

"You have a choice, Kathryn."

"Oh?" she asked as he handed it to her.

"You can put the banana in your mouth, or you put me in your mouth." When her knees hit the mattress, he pressed her down onto the bed.

As she finished her first bite, she asked, "Can't I have both?"

"I think that can be arranged." He pulled her pants off of her, not caring that sand was getting all over the floor.

"Is this how you plan to get more adventurous in the bedroom?"

"How's that?" He quickly unzipped her jacket, pushed her shirt up, and exposed her breasts.

A gasp escaped her lips as he devoured her hardened nipple, almost making her choke on the bite she was eating. Once she swallowed, she said, "By taking control. You're more aggressive than usual."

He dropped his hands to her hips to hold her in place as she began to squirm under the insistence of his tongue on her nipple. One of his hands continued downward and

pressed firmly against her mound, finding it warm and very wet through the thin fabric of her underwear. He smiled against her chest as she groaned in pleasure. “You seem to be enjoying it.”

“The command deck is yours, Captain, just as soon as I finish my little snack.”

“I feel good, honey. Really, really good.” Kathryn breathed in the fresh air and looked at the entrance to the outdoor market.

“I’m glad, and you look great in sunglasses. Have I ever told you that before?”

She lowered them on her nose to look at him directly. “Because I’m more mysterious?”

“Yes.” Chakotay put his own glasses on and adjusted his hat. He asked Mark and Kathryn, “Are you sure this covers the tattoo?”

“I can’t see it at all,” Mark replied. “All three of us look like stereotypical tourists. We’re out of place, but no more so than all the other tourists walking around.”

Kathryn held her hat. “Just so long as this doesn’t blow off.”

Chakotay said, “Even if it does, your hair wouldn’t be recognizable with the artificial color you put in it today.”

“Mark, thank you for arranging this.” She took Chakotay’s hand and started walking towards the entrance.

“You’re welcome. There are six other officers blending into the crowd, and I’ll stick right with you.”

“I feel perfectly safe,” she touched his arm in appreciation. “Now, let’s go explore!”

Both men smiled at her exuberance, and followed her lead. The small village was on another island, but it was a common destination point for tourists throughout the area. They meandered through a few shops before stopping at an outdoor Greek restaurant for a lunch of stuffed grape leaves, shish kabobs, and hummus. Because Mark sat and ate with them, they had a wonderful opportunity to learn more about him and what he’d been doing during the previous year.

After lunch, Kathryn looked at the map, and said, “I’d like to browse through the textile shops, if you two don’t mind.”

Chakotay placed his hand on the small of her back. “Not at all. Looking for anything special?”

“Not necessarily, but I’d like to look at upholstery fabrics to see if anything would look nice in the house.”

Mark tapped the commbadge that was hidden inside his jacket lapel. “We’re moving to the textile market.”

Kathryn was in heaven as she walked around touching and looking at all the different fabrics. Her sunglasses were a minor inconvenience, but she got around it by lifting them slightly so she could look down without revealing her eyes.

“Have you seen anything you want to purchase?” Mark asked, careful not to use her title.

“Yes, although I’m not sure how to do it without revealing my identity. I’ll just take some notes and ask my sister to place an order later.”

Mark said, “Don’t let that stop you. When you said you wanted to shop, we set up an account under an alias. Just tell me what you want and I’ll take care of it for you.”

She touched Mark’s shoulder. “I knew there was a good reason I asked you to be on my team.”

“Asked me?” He laughed. “Absolutely, A....aunt... Sue.” He grimaced and rubbed his mouth. “Sorry for the slip.”

“That’s all right, Mark. I’ve always liked that name.”

Chakotay asked, “While you two shop, would you excuse me for a few minutes to find a restroom?”

Mark pressed his badge discretely. “Davis, we’re splitting up.”

“I don’t need an escort.”

Kathryn tapped his arm. “Let them help so they don’t get too bored.”

“Remember that next time you protest.” When Davis arrived, he winked at Kathryn playfully and said, “Be back in a few minutes.”

“Okay, Mark, let’s go back to that last vendor. I’d like that light green damask to reupholster the breakfast room chairs.” She set down the fabric she’d been holding during their conversation.

The vendor that had been watching her, said, “Madame, are you going to purchase that fine piece of silk you’ve been touching at length?”

“Oh,” she paused and patted the fabric. “It’s beautiful, but not what I’m looking for. Thank you.”

“Madame,” he said more insistently. “You should not soil the fabric unless you plan to purchase it. I do not have these items out just so that you may ruin them.”

“My apologies, sir. I didn’t realize...”

“Of course you do not realize!” He raised his voice. “You tourists are all quite rude!”

Mark stepped in. “We aren’t interested. Good day, sir.” He led Kathryn away.

The vendor yelled, “Rude! Rude! Rude!”

Kathryn cringed at the scene he was making and walked back to the booth, despite Mark’s protest. Having dealt with more than a few heated tempers, she approached him calmly. “Sir, please accept my apology. If I have ruined the fabric, then I will compensate you for it, but I assure you that my hands are clean.”

“Pompous tourist! Get away from me!” He shoved her away with his forearm. “You come here and...”

“Hands off!” Mark edged between them, glaring at the vendor.

Kathryn was about to try to get everyone to calm down when she felt a hand on her back. She nearly jumped out of her skin when she saw that it was someone she didn’t recognize.

The stranger said, “Ma’am, please come with me to a more secure location.”

“Your name is?”

He flashed his commbadge and guided her away with a hand on her elbow. “Reynolds, ma’am, security.”

Once they were away from the scene, she said, “It was just a simple dispute really. I think he was just trying to coerce me into making a purchase.”

Quickly leading her through another door, he said, “Yes, ma’am, but we don’t want to attract attention.”

“I seem to have a knack for it,” she grumbled and then nodded towards Reynolds’ commbadge. “Aren’t you going to let the others know where we are?”

In the restroom with Chakotay, Davis touched his earpiece and his eyes widened in alarm.

“What is it?” Chakotay asked as he tossed a towel into the recycler.

“We need to go. She has disappeared.”

“WHAT!?”

The two men hurried back to the textile market as fast as they could without attracting too much attention. Chakotay’s heart was in his throat when he saw Mark Yosa without Kathryn anywhere in sight.

Mark made eye contact with his former Captain, and shook his head remorsefully. “I’m sorry, sir.”

His heart beating heavily, Chakotay ordered, “Let’s just concentrate on finding her. Has Command been notified?”

“Yes, sir, and the head of security said they’d initiate a scan for the alloy, but I don’t know what that means.”

Chakotay nodded. “She has a traceable medical implant. Tell me exactly what happened.”

Davis informed them, “I’m joining the others to extend the perimeter search.”

Mark told Chakotay, “She was having a minor dispute with a vendor, and I stepped in to get him to back off. When I turned around, she was gone and no one on the team saw her leave.”

“How could they not notice?” he asked with disbelief, his anger simmering under the surface. “What about her commbadge?”

“It was found discarded in the courtyard on the east end of this group of buildings. Rogers and Watson are focusing on that area of the search.”

Chakotay demanded, “Let’s go.”

“Sir, my orders are to remain here with you.”

“If you’re staying with me, then try to keep up,” Chakotay said as he headed out of the market as fast as he could without breaking into an actual run. He whispered to himself, “Hold on, Kathryn. We’re coming.”

“Sir!” Lieutenant Watson looked up from his tri-corder as Chakotay entered the vacant courtyard. “Don’t come any closer. We’re scanning the area for evidence.”

Ignoring the young man, Chakotay spun in a circle, his eyes focusing on every detail of the scene. A broken flower pot caught his attention. “Watson, scan that for residual DNA.”

He did as ordered and nodded. “I’m picking up traces of the Admiral’s genetic markers, sir. It’s highly concentrated along the edge. She must have cut herself.”

Chakotay studied the fragment he was pointing at and saw fresh blood. He studied how the pottery fragments had fallen and nodded in that direction. “Look for her blood on that doorway. Scan for it, both of you.”

“Here!” Mark yelled as he started scanning a dark spot on a wooden fence. “It’s hers. This way!”

All three men moved swiftly, coming to a halt when they found themselves in a dead-end alley between two bright-white stucco buildings. Chakotay’s eyes were immediately drawn to a dark smudge on the wall at the far end of the alley. He ran towards it and found a walkway that they hadn’t seen at first glance. “Over here!” he yelled as he took off without worrying whether the other two were following him.

Halfway down the cluttered passage, he tripped over something and looked down. “Her sunglasses.”

Watson said, “If the assailant planned this well enough to snatch her right out from under our noses, why would they be leaving all of these obvious clues? This could be a false trail.”

Mark shook his head. “It’s the Admiral, not the assailant. She’s done this before. Do you remember a few years ago when she left that trail of breadcrumbs for us?”

“That planet in the Nobian system.” The memories flooded back to the forefront of Chakotay’s mind. She’d been taken on a tour by an ambassador who’d had a personal agenda with her, and she’d counted on Chakotay’s tracking skills to find her before she had to destroy their trade agreement by declining his advances. “Look for a concealed door, some kind of exit point in the immediate vicinity.”

As their tri-corders were scanning, Chakotay’s commbadge crackled with static. Freezing, he tapped it and said, “Chakotay here. You’re not coming in clear.”

The commbadge crackled again and he nodded towards Watson. “Try yours.”

Watson tapped his commbadge. “Mediterranean Squad Command, Captain Chakotay’s badge is picking up static from an unknown source. Can you track it?”

The reply was clear. “Sir, we’ve intercepted it, but it’s garbled. The signal isn’t strong enough to be ‘fleet. It must be a civilian communicator in a heavily obstructed area.”

Yosa’s badge started crackling, too. “Now it’s on mine. Can you detect if it’s from the same source?”

“They’re on the same frequency modulation.”

“Any report from Command about the alloy scan?” Chakotay asked gruffly.

“No, sir. Whatever the composition of that alloy is, the ships in orbit have to reconfigure their sensors to scan for it.”

“Damn it!” Chakotay redoubled his efforts to find where Kathryn was trying to lead them. “Yosa, it’s the same poly-deutonic alloy as in the mobile holographic emitter. Do you detect it?”

“Sir, these tri-corders aren’t programmed for that,” Yosa called from a few meters up the abandoned walkway.

“Why the hell not?” His anger and fear were mounting every minute that she was gone.

Yosa yelled, “Here! There’s a trap in the floor!”

As Chakotay helped him pull the door open, his commbadge came to life again with intermittent static. He slapped it hard, “Receiving static. If you can hear me, boost the gain.”

Only a moment later, Kathryn’s voice came through. “Janeway to Chakotay, can you read me?”

Although she sounded winded and tired, her voice was music to his ears. “Yes, thank God. Where are you?”

After a moment of static, she said, “I’m not sure. A cellar or basement of some kind.”

Over Watson’s commbadge, Squad Command told them, “We’ve put a trace on it. Stand by.”

“Kathryn?” Chakotay asked as he lowered himself through the hole in the floor. “We’re coming down through a trap door. Are you hurt?”

“Not severely. I’ll try to retrace our steps. I don’t think you’re far.”

“Stay where you are, Admiral,” Mark instructed as he followed.

As soon as Chakotay's feet hit the ground below him, he heard a loud creak and swung around, ready to defend himself. He wasn't prepared for the overwhelming relief that washed over him when he saw his wife. Before he had time to think about it, he was holding her as tightly as he could. "You're okay, Kathryn. You're okay."

She whispered hoarsely, "Yes, honey. I'm okay."

Mark jumped to the floor and tapped his commbadge. "Yosa to Squad Command, we've got her. Have the team converge at my location."

"Lieutenant," she said to Mark over Chakotay's shoulder. "Back there. He's out cold. Take him into custody for questioning. He has a hell of a lot of explaining to do."

Chakotay pulled his head back to look at her. "Who is he? Any demands?"

"I've never seen him before, and I don't know if he's in Starfleet or not. Regardless, Starfleet security has to have been compromised since he knew where and when to find me. Not that we didn't already suspect that."

He noticed that her complexion was a little ashen, so he unwrapped a candy and gave it to her. "Did he lure you away under the guise of your security team?"

As she nodded, Davis came down the ladder asking, "Which direction did Yosa head?"

Chakotay jerked his head back in the direction Kathryn had come from, but didn't take his eyes off of his wife.

When they were alone again, she took a shaky breath. "I realized that I was in trouble as soon as we left the market, but I couldn't get the upper hand until just a few minutes ago."

"Did he hurt you?" Taking a visual assessment of her body, he saw that she was favoring her right side and was holding her bloodied left hand close to her waist. He turned her hand over to see a large, jagged cut that looked incredibly painful. "Oh, Kathryn. I was worried when I saw how much blood you'd left."

"I did this to myself. He only hit me in retaliation after I broke his nose."

Chakotay cradled her face with both of his hands, studying it for any sign of injury. "Your right cheekbone?"

She touched it cautiously. "It feels huge."

“Just a little swollen, but the skin isn’t broken.” He glanced up to see Watson coming down the ladder. Not wanting to share their precious secret, he laid his hand gently on her hip. “Any injury down here?”

“I protected it best I could.” She leaned her forehead against his and whispered, “More than anything, I’m exhausted, but I finally found something to hit, and it felt damn good.”

He held her close, rubbing her back with comforting strokes as he whispered into her ear, “I love you, Kathryn, so much.”

“I love you, too.” Watson was standing back to give them a moment of privacy, so she felt free to tell Chakotay, “I think I just came up from my first deep sea dive again, and it feels great.”

“What do you mean?” he asked without breaking their embrace.

“Just that I was confronted with one of my biggest fears. I didn’t panic, and I’m going to be okay.”

“Yes, you are.” He gently rocked them from side to side.

After a moment of enjoying his comfort, she asked, “Can we go home? I’m fading fast.”

Chakotay made eye contact with Watson. “What’s the situation up there?”

“Clark and Rogers are keeping guard until our cavalry arrives. The local authorities have gotten involved, and we’re trying to keep your identity secret.”

Chakotay called up, “Clark? Can you transport us out of here or send down a medkit?”

Justin came down the ladder. “I can do you one better than that. I was with Tom when I got the call, and he came with me.”

Tom appeared next, carrying a medkit. “I heard there was a little excitement so I tagged along to see if I could help.”

“It’s good to see you both.” Kathryn managed a small, but tired smile.

Tom took one look at her and frowned. “You need to sit down before you fall down.”

“I’m fine,” she insisted as the men guided her towards a sturdy crate so she and Chakotay could sit.

Justin said, “I’m relieved to see that you’re okay, Admiral. You had me worried.”

She raised her eyebrows. “When do I not have you worried?”

“Good point.” He gave her a quick once over and said, “I’ll leave you in their capable hands while I asses the situation down the hall.”

“I made a big mess in there, got his blood all over the place.”

“So I hear,” Justin said proudly and left the room.

Tom opened the medkit and asked, “Have I ever bought that ‘I’m fine’ line before?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, you have, but I’m glad you’re here.” She held out her left hand to show him the cut. “This is the worst of my injuries. Do you think the dermal regenerator will be sufficient enough to heal it?”

Tom glanced worriedly at her as he scanned it. “How did this happen?”

Chakotay said, “A broken clay pot fragment.”

Kathryn gave in to her fatigue and laid her head against Chakotay’s chest. “If I fall asleep, wake me up when I need to give a report.”

He kissed the top of her head and held her close. “Rest for now. We’ll take care of it.”

“Mmhmm.” Sleepily, she closed her eyes and said, “Next time you have to pee, I’m coming with you.”

Tom gave them a questioning look as he finished closing up the wound on her palm and wrist.

Chakotay whispered, “Doesn’t she always find trouble when we least expect it?”

Not opening her eyes, she stated clearly, “Paris, you’d be wise not to answer that.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He winked at Chakotay and pulled out his tri-corder to scan the rest of her.

Chakotay waited to see if Tom would discover her pregnancy before mentioning it. When Tom’s eyes bugged out in surprise, Chakotay held a finger up to his lips and shook his head.

Tom pointed to Kathryn and mouthed, “Does she know?”

Chakotay nodded and then flicked his eyes to Watson who was standing nearby. He whispered, “You’re the fifth person, including us and two doctors.”

Kathryn opened her eyes to look at the two men, and then closed them again, sighing tiredly. "I suspect that you'll tell your wife, but it stops there. Understood?"

"Aye, Admiral," he replied and set about healing her face. "Keep your eyes closed."

Justin came back in and kneeled next to them. "How's she doing?"

Eyes still closed, Kathryn answered, "She's ready to go home."

"Yes, Ma'am. Does that mean to an island or back to North America?"

"Island," she murmured as Chakotay felt her relax into sleep.

"Tom," Justin asked. "Does she need medical attention?"

"Ummm," he glanced up at Chakotay and asked, "Are you scheduled to see the Doc soon?"

"First thing tomorrow morning."

"Does she have any pain meds?"

Chakotay nodded. "Metorapan."

Tom answered Justin, "It can wait until morning."

"She really did a number on that guy in there," Justin said in amazement. "Reminds me of the way she kicked ass last fall on Ktaria."

Chakotay couldn't help but smile as he rubbed his chin on her soft hair. "Do you need a report from her now or can it wait?"

"It can wait for a few hours." Justin stood up and pulled out his tri-corder. "We just got the dampening field down, so we'll be ready to transport momentarily. I'm going to take some quick scans in the vicinity before we go. I'd like to make sure no one else is hiding out down here."

"Thanks," Chakotay said before asking Tom, "What needs medical attention?"

Tom sighed. "I haven't the slightest idea how to interpret these readings. Her medical needs are out of my league, but I can confirm that her vitals are strong, and obviously, she's low on blood sugar."

Justin cleared his throat, causing Chakotay and Tom to look up at him. He had his tri-corder aimed at them, and by the sounds it was emitting, it was clearly detecting lifesigns.

Chakotay asked, "Lieutenant Watson, would you excuse us for a moment?"

The request woke Kathryn and she opened her eyes to see the three men staring at each other. "What is it?"

When they were alone, Justin held up his tri-corder and asked, "I assume since you asked Watson to leave, you know what I've just found?"

Kathryn groaned tiredly and closed her eyes again. "Sixth person to know."

"Do you want me to report my findings, Admiral?"

She straightened up and arched her back in a simple stretch, wincing as the movement caused pain in her ribs. Her eyelids were heavy, but her eyebrows were furrowed in deep thought. Looking at Chakotay, she asked, "Your opinion?"

"It's up to you, but I'd suggest telling your C.O. before he reads it in a report."

Shaking her head, she said, "I'm not ready for him to know yet. Justin, we've only known ourselves for two days, so let's keep it on a need to know basis."

Mark walked into the room at that moment. "Are we ready to go?" When everyone looked at him blankly, he asked, "Is there a problem?"

They all shifted their focus to Kathryn for an answer. She blinked slowly and scratched her forehead. "Mark, scan me with your tri-corder."

Tom and Justin stepped out of his way, both of them not giving anything away when Mark looked at them inquisitively. He flipped it open and then did a double take when he saw the readings. They all watched as he scanned in a complete circle before settling back on Kathryn again. "There's a life-sign inside you, Admiral."

"Right. Now that all of you and my doctors know, let's keep the lid on it, shall we?"

"Of course, Admiral," Mark nodded, although he kept looking down at his tri-corder to check the readings.

With Chakotay's help, she got to her feet and said, "Tom, thank you for coming to my rescue today. However, next time I see you, we need to have a conversation about transporting people while they're sleeping." Without missing a beat, she spoke to Justin. "Ready when you are, Lieutenant."

"Aye, Admiral... and congratulations."

A smile tugged at her lips as Justin instructed the squad command leader to energize the transporter.

After they re-materialized inside their cabin, Kathryn put her hands on her hips and looked down at the floor.

“What’s on your mind?”

She re-focused on Chakotay, concentration and fatigue etched on her face. “Today didn’t quite turn out like I’d hoped.”

“Good, because if you’d hoped that you were going to be abducted again, I’d see about having your head examined.”

Amused, she yawned and shook her head. “That’s not quite what I meant.”

“Okay, what then?” he asked as he put his arm around her back to guide her towards the bedroom.

“For starters, I wanted to get some clay, maybe find some artwork for our house, and as you know, I had my eye on some fabric.”

“We can have someone get you any art supplies you’d like or we’ll replicate them. And if you know what fabric you want, maybe Mark could go back and get it. Or we could have some samples brought here.”

“I know.” She sighed tiredly as she kicked her shoes off and sat down on the edge of the bed. “This is just frustrating because I haven’t had a chance to walk down a city street in over six months, and I’m tired of being confined. This idiot really messed up my day.”

He sat next to her and smiled sadly. “Mine, too, but I’ll take ‘messed up’ over ‘devastated’ any day.”

“Honey,” she said as she put her arms around him. “I’m sorry that I walked off with him. I assumed that I hadn’t met everyone on the team, yet.”

“I thought as much and I’m not upset with you in the slightest. I’m just…” He shook his head and closed his eyes, unable to talk for fear of losing control over his emotions.

She held onto him, letting him take comfort in her embrace as much as she was taking it in his. “You know what the best part of being married is?”

“I have a general idea.”

She wove her fingers through his short hair, watching as the dark hair curled slightly around the tips of her fingers. “I liked knowing that you’d pick up on my clues because you know me so well; and I was glad that I was free to hug you when it was over.”

“Those clues are something we’ve had far too much practice with over the years.”

She nodded; her eyes were growing heavier with each passing moment. She put her fingers under his chin and brought him forward for a light kiss. “I’d also hoped that today would end with a romantic dinner at one of the restaurants we walked by.”

“It’s only mid-afternoon. Why don’t you rest and I’ll see what I can do about that.” He helped her take off her dirty shirt and pulled back the covers.

After lying down, she helped him slide her pants off. “We can’t go out again knowing that security has been breached.”

“Maybe not today, but I promise you that before this honeymoon is over, we’ll have that dinner.”

“Even if it takes clearing an entire restaurant?”

“If that’s what it takes, then yes.” He covered her with the fluffy bed covers. “I’m only going to let you sleep for a couple hours so you can eat again, soon.”

“Okay,” she said tiredly. “Don’t suppose you’d be interested in holding me, would you?”

“I’d love to.” He slipped off his shoes and crawled into bed next to her, taking her into his arms. “Are you really okay?” he asked quietly.

She snuggled against him. “I really am. Hitting him did wonders.”

“You said you broke his nose?”

“Mmmhmm.” She shaped her hand as if she was doing it again. “Just like Tuvok taught us last August. Worked great, but it was messy.”

Chakotay curled his fingers around her clenched fist and brought it to his mouth for a kiss. “What else did you try?”

“Diplomacy first, of course.” She stretched her legs and then relaxed them, trying to get comfortable.

“Of course. I wouldn’t expect anything else.”

“While we were walking, but once I realized that we’d gone as far as we were going, I struck.”

“A ‘now or never’ situation.”

“Mmmhmm.” Her voice husky with sleep, she told him, “He turned his back to me, and I kicked him so hard that his chin ricocheted off the wall.”

“Good one,” Chakotay patted her leg. “But he really turned his back on you?”

She murmured, “Don’t think he’s Starfleet.”

“I’d say not. That was a dumb mistake, but I’m glad he made it.”

“Then I took him down with a leg swipe. Buckled his knee.”

“You’ve used that move on me. Then what?”

Her eyes opened to look up at him. “That ticked him off and he came at me, so I popped him in the nose. I was so excited that it worked, that I didn’t see his fist coming when he punched me in the face.”

Chakotay caressed her cheek with the backs of his fingers. “Any residual pain?”

“Not much.”

“So how’d you knock him out?”

Kathryn smiled at his eagerness. “I kicked him in the gut, and while he was vomiting, I clocked him in the head with my elbow.”

With mock admonishment, Chakotay replied, “He could have choked.”

“Can’t say that I cared, but I made sure he was breathing before I left.”

“Very thoughtful of you.”

She yawned. “I figured it would be easier to get answers out of him if he were alive.”

“Good point.”

Settling in, she said, “I’m sleepy.”

“Then I’ll stop asking questions.” He kissed her and whispered, “I love you.”

“Love you, too.” After a moment of quiet, she asked, “Would you call Khurma before he breaks down our door to check on me?”

“Sure.”

“Tell him I got some fire back.”

“I will, and yes, you most certainly did.” He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, silently watching her as she fell asleep.
