

The Future Is Ours – Part 38

“Bump”

By Dawn

Summary:

Rated: PG

As soon as her shuttle set down in their front yard, Kathryn breathed a sigh of relief. Beverly had given Justin implicit instructions about making the shuttle ride as smooth as possible to avoid jostling her patient. Kathryn had been sequestered to the back so she could lie down and avoid any undue stress on her weakened uterus from the gravitational changes.

The hatch opened and Chakotay rushed inside. “Are you okay? Dr. Joe is here.”

She held up her hand to forestall his concerns. “I’m fine, but I’ve been directed to go to bed and not get up until this baby is coming out.”

Joe came into the shuttle and said, “That’s not exactly how I’d put it, but that’s the basic idea.”

“Should I carry her into the house?” Chakotay asked.

“No,” she replied, “But you can help me to my feet.”

“Of course.” He put his arm around her back as they walked up to the house, Chakotay and Joe talking about her care.

Instead of listening, Kathryn tried to get an eyeful of her front yard and of her beautiful rose garden because she knew she wouldn’t be seeing them for awhile. She acknowledged Chakotay when he spoke to her, but otherwise, she let them fuss over her as they got her out of her uniform, into pajamas, and settled in bed.

After Joe left, Chakotay went downstairs to prepare dinner, and Kathryn closed her eyes, letting a few tears fall. It wasn’t that she minded doing what was best for the baby, she was just sad that her ordeal so many months earlier continued to impact her life to such a degree.

“Hey,” Chakotay said softly as he sat next to her on the bed.

She pushed the tears away. “Thought you were downstairs.”

Gently, he asked, “You didn’t want me to see this?”

“There’s no reason for me to be upset.”

He leaned forward and placed a kiss on her cheek. “There are a lot of reasons for you to be upset, and it’s okay for you to show it.”

“Thanks.” She took a shuddering breath and said, “I think we should get a nurse.”

“Okay.”

Looking up at him, she asked, “That’s all? No argument?”

“Do you want an argument?”

“Of course not. I just don’t want to burden you, and I expected you to say you could handle it.”

He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear and smiled. “I can definitely handle your care, and any whining, complaining, and arguing that you can dish out. But if a nurse will help you be more comfortable with this, then we can get one.”

“I feel like an invalid.”

“It’s temporary, and you happen to be the coziest incapacitated admiral I’ve ever seen.”

“Oh? How many incapacitated admirals have you seen?”

He thought for a moment. “Probably just the one.”

“At least I like this room.”

“You don’t have to stay in here. Didn’t you hear what Joe said?”

“Honestly, I wasn’t listening,” she confessed.

“For now, you can walk to anywhere in the house, but once you arrive, you need to be still.”

“On my right side.”

“Correct.”

“Beverly said we can’t have sex anymore.”

“Well, she’s wrong,” he noted.

“How do you figure?”

Drawing his finger along the edge of her top, he replied, “We can’t have it for a couple of months.”

“That’s what I said.”

“No, you said ‘anymore.’ That implies ever.”

Kathryn rolled her eyes and said, “Shouldn’t you go check on dinner?”

He winked at her and planted a kiss on her lips. “I’ll be back soon. Don’t go anywhere.”

As he left, Kathryn muttered, “Cheeky.”

“I heard that.”

Before the Pioneer left orbit, Kathryn put in a call to their sickbay and asked Lieutenant Fields if she’d like to be reassigned. She jumped at the chance to be Kathryn’s personal nurse again and was at the house within the hour.

They got into a good rhythm of caring for her, Chakotay and Patty dividing up the tasks in a way that made Kathryn feel most comfortable. But after a week of lying around in her pajamas, she decided that she’d had enough.

When Monday morning arrived, Kathryn rolled out of bed and stated, “I’m getting dressed.”

Patty put her hands on her hips. “And what are your plans after that?”

“I don’t know, but I’m not staying in this bed.”

“Fair enough. Want to take a bath first?”

“No, I’m going to take a shower. Alert Starfleet Medical, would you? Admiral Janeway is about to stand on her own two feet for fifteen entire minutes.”

“As you wish,” she replied as Kathryn walked into the bathroom.

Chakotay came into the bedroom and asked, “What’s up?”

“She’s taking a shower.”

“Really? Not a bath?”

Patty nodded. “That’s what she said.”

“Does she need help?”

Kathryn stuck her head out the bathroom door and stated emphatically, “No, I do not need help, thank you very much.”

He held up his hands in surrender. “Okay, I’ll go make your breakfast.”

“Thank you,” she grumbled, and then paused to add, “Good morning.”

“Good morning to you, too.” With a wink, he said, “See you downstairs.”

Patty began to pull the sheets off the bed. “Since you won’t need these today, I thought I’d throw them in the refresher.”

With a sigh, Kathryn replied, “A good idea. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, dear.”

Kathryn started to close the bathroom door, and then thought better of it, leaving it open a crack. After turning on the water, she shed her robe and stepped under the warm spray. It felt wonderful and she relished every moment of it.

Later, when she and Patty came downstairs, Kathryn saw that Chakotay had rearranged the furniture and pillows to make a comfortable spot for her. She smiled and said, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” He gave her a soft kiss and whispered, “You look beautiful.”

“And you’re biased,” she said as she gingerly sat down and had Patty help her scoot back into the spot he’d arranged for her. “After this is over, I’m never lying on my right side again.”

With barely contained excitement, Chakotay announced, “I have a surprise for you.”

“Oh? I kind of like surprises.”

“I’ll be right back.” He went into the kitchen and returned with a tray of food, a very odd looking tray in the shape of an amoeba.

“Where’d you find this?”

His eyes brightened. “I made it.”

“When?”

“While you’ve been sleeping.” He slid it right up next to her so that it extended over her belly and made everything on the tray within reach.

“Impressive,” she said as she situated it. “This is perfect.”

“I’m glad you like it. I’m going to make a book stand for it next.”

A vibrant warmth infused her from her chest all the way down to her toes. “This is almost as thoughtful as the bathtub.”

He grinned as he made a final adjustment to its placement. “I aim to please. Enjoy your breakfast.”

“Thank you, honey.”

“You’re welcome,” he said as he walked back over to the kitchen. “There’s a comm message from Beverly waiting for you.”

After eating a bite, she asked, “Did you listen to it?”

“No, it’s for you.” He brought her computer terminal over and held it since there was no room on the tray.

“Thanks.” She keyed in her code and played the message.

Beverly said, “Kathryn, I’m sending you a recorded message so that I don’t accidentally wake you. If you don’t have any plans today, I was hoping I could come see you. Play some cards? Do some knitting? I have the day off and not a thing to do. Plus, there’s something I need to talk to you about. Crusher out.”

“I wonder if he finally asked.”

Chakotay replied, “Wonder if who asked what?”

“Remember the so-called business that Jean-Luc wanted to talk to me about at the wedding?”

“Yes.”

“He wanted to know if I’d officiate at a wedding. His wedding, to be precise.”

“And he hadn’t talked to Beverly, yet?”

“Nope,” she said as she took a bite of toast. “Mum’s the word.”

“Of course. Not a peep.”

“I don’t have my commbadge. Would you call up for me?”

“Sure.” He tapped his badge and said, “Captain Chakotay to Starfleet Command.”

“Go ahead, Captain.”

“Please connect me with Dr. Beverly Crusher on the Enterprise.”

“Right away, sir. Stand by.”

While they waited, Chakotay said, “It’s nice to have these privileges, don’t you think?”

“No doubt,” Kathryn said with a laugh.

Beverly’s voice said, “Crusher here, Captain. How is your wife today?”

“She’s fine, but not wearing her badge.”

Kathryn said, “I would love to have some company today. Are you sure it’s no trouble?”

“Of course not. I only wished I could’ve come sooner.”

“Well, come on down whenever you’re ready. Have you had breakfast?”

“It’s almost ten,” Beverly replied.

“Is it?” Kathryn asked. “My schedule is off. All this lounging around.”

“Well, pour me a cup of coffee. I’ll be right there. Crusher out.”

Chakotay said, “I’ll go meet her outside.”

Only a few minutes later, Beverly came in and plopped down near Kathryn’s feet. “I have a bone to pick with you.”

“And hello to you, too.” Glancing up as Patty took her tray, she said, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, dear.”

Beverly smiled at Patty. “Nice to see you again, Lieutenant.”

“And you, as well, Doctor.” Patty bit back a smile and said, “I’ll just leave the two of you alone.”

Once they were by themselves, Beverly drummed her fingers on the back of the couch. “So, last week after you left, I went to Jean-Luc’s quarters. He hemmed and hawed around, showed me a new picture of the vineyard, asked how my day was, and eventually kissed me goodnight. I thought it was odd, but considering what he’s been through, I dismissed it.”

“I see,” Kathryn replied with her best poker face. “And how is his odd behavior my fault?”

“I’m getting to that.” She cleared her throat and gave Kathryn a stern look. “So the next night, he invited me over for dinner. I show up and he’s got soft music playing, candles, casual attire, and I think maybe he wants... well, you know... what I told you not to do for the time being.”

“And did he?”

“No!” Leaning forward, she said, “The conversation was as dull as it was the night before, but with a huge elephant in the room in the shape of a romantic dinner.”

“Not even a simple kiss goodnight?”

Beverly shrugged and looked away. “Well, it was a little less simple than the night before.”

Kathryn smirked. “Go on.”

“All week, he’s been doing such odd little things, like inviting me to join him in checking the condition of the arboretum. He never checks on the arboretum, and the whole time, he chattered on and on about the most inconsequential of things. This went on for days, Kathryn,” she said while narrowing her eyes at her friend.

“Again, why is this my fault?”

“Because if you’d been straight with me, I could’ve helped the poor man along! Have you any idea how long I’ve been waiting for this?”

“No, can’t say that I do.”

“Eleven Years!” she stated. “Our relationship has stopped and started so many times that I can’t count them all. I’d just about had enough with his dalliances when about a year ago, he came to me and said that regardless of the many women he’s been fond of, his heart belongs to me.”

“That’s really sweet.”

“A Year Ago!”

“Well, he’s a man who doesn’t like to rush into things.”

Beverly gave her the evil eye, and then continued, “So, yesterday, he invites me to accompany him to his vineyard. We had a wonderful day together, and just when we were about to leave, he told me that there was something he wanted to talk to me about and that he wasn’t sure how to start.”

“And you didn’t figure it out?”

“No. I thought maybe he was trying to tell me that he was going to retire. You know, this latest mission really affected him. With the way he’d been acting, I thought anything was possible.”

“So...?” Kathryn urged her to continue.

“He started rambling about timing and stability and family. I had no idea what he was talking about until he blurted out, ‘Would you marry me?’ It came out of nowhere!”

“And your response?”

“Well, I was dumbfounded, and then, like an idiot, I asked him to repeat the question.”

Kathryn grinned. “Did he?”

“Yes, and the second time, he got down on one knee and did it properly.” Beverly couldn’t help but smile. “And I said, ‘Yes.’”

“Ohhhh,” Kathryn gushed. “You’re going to have to come here so I can hug you.”

Beverly laughed and they carefully embraced. “So, will you help me plan a wedding?”

“I’d love to.”

“I thought it might give you something to do, and it seems that you’ve already been asked to officiate.”

“Only if you want me to, and I’m surprised he told you that part.”

“Once I agreed, he told me all about how he’d talked to you at Deanna’s wedding and how he wasn’t going to follow through, but you urged him to. Thank you for that, by the way. You have no idea how easily he gets derailed on all things romantic.”

“After eleven years, I can imagine.”

“I can’t believe you didn’t even give me a hint.”

“And destroy the romance?”

Sincerely, Beverly said, “Thank you, Kathryn.”

“You’re welcome. Do you think you can wait until after this baby is born to have the wedding?”

“Absolutely. Enterprise will be in space dock for a few months. Plus, I’d love to have Will and Deanna here for it. I don’t know how long they’ll be at Romulus.”

“Romulus?” she asked with surprise. “When did they leave?”

“Three days ago. I assumed that Admiral Khurma would’ve told you.”

“No,” she sighed. “I’ve been waiting for his call regarding the next step.”

“Would you not have sent Titan?”

“Will would’ve been my first choice. It’s just frustrating to be stuck here and to not know what’s going on.”

“How are you feeling, by the way?”

“Sore, achy, crabby.”

Beverly patted Kathryn’s leg. “Well, let’s see what I can do to cheer you up. I brought a wedding planning guide, my rather pathetic knitting project, and a deck of cards.”

“Wedding, first.”

Smiling brightly, Beverly replied, “I was hoping you’d say that.”

Over the next couple of days, Kathryn threw herself into working with Beverly on catering, flowers, and music, but once she’d done all she could do, she was left with nothing to distract her again. She tried reading a book, but ended up staring off into nothingness.

Chakotay moved into her sightline. “Are you awake?”

“Unfortunately.”

He sat down and put her feet in his lap, gently caressing her calves. “I think we’ve got to take some action before things become dire around here.”

“Dire?” She furrowed her eyebrows at him.

“You’re getting depressed.”

She rolled her eyes. “No, I’m not. I’m bored.”

Tilting his head, he asked, “You sure?”

“Aren’t I always?”

“I have a suggestion, if you’re interested.”

“I’m all ears... and belly,” she added, rubbing the baby bump.

He smiled and joined her in rubbing the bump. “I think we need some visitors. Someone you can look forward to seeing each day, just like when you were in the hospital.”

She shrugged. “I suppose. It was good to have Beverly here.”

“Most of our friends are worried about bothering you.”

“They needn’t be concerned.”

“I know.” He squeezed her toes affectionately. “I took the liberty of making arrangements. Phoebe is coming over for lunch and will stay for a few hours.”

“Katie, too?”

“She’s spending the afternoon with Gretchen.”

“All right. What does Phoebe want to do?”

“Talk? Whatever you want, I suppose.”

Kathryn wiggled her toes against his stomach and smiled. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” The doorbell rang and he said, “That must be her, now.”

Patty called out, “I’ll get it.”

Chakotay noted, “Patty’s nice to have around. A good idea.”

“I have one of those every now and again.”

“Yes, you do.” He got up and said, “I’ll put lunch on the table.”

Phoebe walked in and plopped down in a chair. “So, Katie. What’s new with you?”

“Oh, nothing much. Just lying around like a bump on a log.”

“That’s my sister – the laziest bump in the galaxy. Too bad she’s not some famous admiral who saved mankind from the bad guys.”

“Nah, you don’t want someone like that in your family. Too risky.”

“Who says I don’t like a little risk?”

Kathryn raised her eyebrows. “Your junior high gymnastics coach.”

“Pffft,” Phoebe waved it off. “I much preferred painting to jumping around on a trampoline.”

“Did I tell you I tried a little painting on Voyager?”

“No. How’d you do?”

“Eh,” Kathryn shrugged. “It was fun, but the finished project wasn’t anything to write home about.”

“Obviously, or I would’ve known.”

Chakotay had returned and said, “I thought it was a lovely picture of some very interesting flowers and was not at all happy that you recycled it.”

“They were supposed to be roses.”

He gave her a wink. “Lunch is ready. Would you like to eat at the table or in here?”

“At the table. I’m getting stiff.”

Patty came over and helped her move. Once Kathryn was re-settled, the nurse said, “I’ll be in my room if you need me.”

“Aren’t you going to have lunch?” Chakotay asked.

“I’ll eat later. I don’t want to interrupt.”

Kathryn pointed to a chair and said, “Sit. You’re more than welcome to eat with us anytime, even when we have guests.”

“Are you sure?” Patty said hesitantly.

“I’ll let you know when we need privacy.”

“All right. Thank you.”

They talked about Katie’s precociousness for awhile, and then about the painting that Phoebe was currently working on – a commissioned piece for the lobby of an office building in Chicago.

Towards the end of lunch, Phoebe asked, “So, have you got all the baby shower gifts put away? Are you ready?”

Kathryn replied, “They’re in the nursery, but I haven’t done anything with them.”

Chakotay said, “It’s on my list of things to do.”

“When the Romulan situation arose, I set it all aside.”

Phoebe asked, “May I help?”

“Of course,” Kathryn said, noticing that Patty looked eager to help. “And I take it you’d like to help, too?”

“Only if I wouldn’t be in the way.”

“Not a bit,” Phoebe smiled. “Is the glider rocker put together, Katie? Maybe you could sit and order us around?”

“I’m sure you could handle it without me.”

Chakotay elbowed his wife. “She’s here to visit with you, not be another room while you continue your imitation of a bump on a log.”

“You heard that, did you?” Kathryn asked with a slight smirk.

He squeezed her shoulder and placed a kiss on the side of her head. “I did, and you’re a lovely bump if I do say so myself.”

Kathryn asked, “Patty, what do you think? Can I sit up for a little while longer without damaging anything?”

“We’ll position you to take the pressure off.”

“I wonder if I’ll be able to stand up straight after this is over.” She leaned to the right. “I might be developing a permanent list to starboard.”

“Don’t you worry, love,” Chakotay replied as he stood up to clear the table. “I’ll get you straightened out, one way or another.”

Kathryn almost choked on her water and Phoebe laughed.

After lunch, the three women moved upstairs and got started working on the nursery. Kathryn had chosen a teddy bear theme, and B’Elanna had given her a giant teddy bear wearing an environmental suit to work in a little of the space theme as well.

From her contorted, yet surprisingly comfortable position in the glider, Kathryn watched as Patty and Phoebe took the gifts out of their bags and put things away. She made note of where they placed things, but for the most part, let the two other ladies make the decisions.

After Patty put the bedding on the crib and situated a couple of small bears and stuffed planets in the corner, Kathryn found herself gazing at the crib with affection. She caressed her ever-growing belly and smiled as she felt her son moving around, having just gotten a dose of energy from her lunch.

She thought back to when she'd felt the first flutter of life within. It had been in late June, and she had been standing on the deck, watching the sunset when a ripple of movement had taken her by surprise. Chakotay had come right over and, although he hadn't felt what she had, it had been a wonderful moment of love between them – a memory she'd cherish forever.

“Katie? Did you hear me?” Phoebe asked.

“Hmm?” She moved her gaze to her sister.

“I just asked where the other stuff is.”

“What other stuff?”

“The diapers and other things you need. Are they in one of the guest rooms?” she asked as she went to look.

Kathryn called out, “The list you made is in the kitchen by the replicator.”

Phoebe appeared in the doorway, along with Chakotay carrying his tool bag. She put her hands on her hips and asked, “You haven't gotten all of that stuff, yet?”

Chakotay asked, “What stuff?”

Kathryn replied, “She gave me a list of things for the baby, and I put it by the replicator. I figure we'll replicate it when we need it.”

Looking around, Chakotay said, “I thought you got all the stuff you needed at the shower.”

Phoebe looked at Patty and the two women shook their heads. “No, I gave her a list after the shower that had everything she didn't receive.”

“Oh,” he replied as he came inside. “Well, it's no problem. I'll put this curtain up and then I'll go get whatever we need.”

With a patient sigh, Phoebe asked, “May I go look for the list?”

“Sure. It should be right there on a civilian PADD.”

Kathryn looked up at her husband, admiring his physique as he worked on putting up the curtain rod. With his arms extended above his head, his short sleeves had slid back just enough that she could see his strong triceps flexing with the slight exertion.

He glanced down and noticed her staring at him. “Hi.”

“Hi,” she replied, openly adoring him. “I love you, you know.”

“I’m a very lucky man.”

“I’m glad you think so.”

Patty cleared her throat and attracted their attention. “Would you like me to press the wrinkles out of the curtain before we hang it?”

“Sure, thank you,” Kathryn replied.

After Patty left the room, Chakotay whispered, “I think it’s good to have her around – makes it easier to avoid making love to you.”

She tapped the hard plastic monitor attached to her side. “Don’t forget Joe is watching us, too.”

“True.” He leaned down and gave her a lingering kiss. “And in case you didn’t know, I love you, too.”

“You have a thing for bumps, do you?”

His gaze dropped to her breasts. “I can think of two in particular.”

Shooing him away, she laughed. “You’re a trouble-maker.”

“You’re right. I helped make that baby, and I bet you he’s going to be in trouble a lot. I sure was as a kid.”

“That doesn’t surprise me in the least.”

Phoebe came back into the room with her list and was ready to make notes. “All right, let’s go through this and you can decide what you want. Chakotay, I’m happy to shop for her if you’d like.”

“You wouldn’t mind?” he asked.

“Not in the least. I’ll take Katie and Mom and we’ll make a day of it.” As soon as she finished her sentence, she bit her lips and looked at Kathryn. “Or maybe I’ll just get it done by myself.”

Kathryn frowned. “What’s wrong?”

“I don’t want you to miss out on a girl’s day, so I’ll just get the necessities and we can all go together after baby arrives.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that. Katie will probably have a lot of fun with it.”

Patty came back in and asked, “Are you ready for the curtain, Chakotay?”

“Yes, thank you,” he replied as he took it from her.

Phoebe asked, “Are you going to breast feed or go the bottle route?”

“Breast feed,” she replied.

“All right. That means I can cross a lot of this off. You’ve got everything you need for bathing him, but nothing for grooming.”

“Grooming?” Chakotay asked. “He won’t be shaving for a few years, Phoebe.”

Patty said, “A baby’s fingernails grow fast, and they tend to scratch up their little faces. Also, you’ll want a thermometer, gas relief drops, diaper rash cream, and dry skin ointment.”

“I’ll add the ointment,” Phoebe said. “What color do you want for your crib sheets and receiving blankets?”

“We already have a sheet and a blanket,” Kathryn said as she pointed to the crib.

“You’ve got one of each. You’ll need a lot more than that, especially if he spits up much. Katie sure did. I was going through blankets and burp cloths like nobody’s business.”

Kathryn shrugged. “Whatever you think is fine.”

“You’ve got four outfits, but I think we can go shopping for more once he’s born and we know how big he is.”

Patty added, “He’ll be a preemie, so we’re going to need smaller sizes than these.”

“That includes smaller diapers, too. I didn’t think of that,” Phoebe noted.

Kathryn felt a sudden surge of sadness, but tried to hide it. She closed her eyes and ran her fingers into her hair. “I really think we can replicate this stuff as needed.”

“Oh, there’s no doubt you’ll need these things, Katie. Might as well save on replicator usage.”

“Is that a concern?” Chakotay asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Phoebe replied. “I read an article that overuse of replicators may be harmful in the long run.”

“That doesn’t compute,” Kathryn said with a frown. “Replicators produce no harmful emissions, and, if they’re functioning as they should be, the food and other items they produce are perfectly fine.”

“It’s just something I read,” she said with an air of dismissal. “What about onesies and sleepers? Any special requests?”

“No,” Kathryn replied.

“I’m guessing you don’t care about style of pacifiers, either?”

“There’s more than one?” Chakotay asked.

While looking out the window, Kathryn quietly replied, “Whatever you think, Phoebe. Or get what Katie used.”

“Okay,” Phoebe said hesitantly. “I’ll see what I can find with bears or stars.”

She smiled at her sister and then went back to looking out at her rose garden.

Phoebe stayed for a little while longer to play cards and tell her sister about what to expect after childbirth. Kathryn asked a few questions, but mostly just listened to stories about Katie. Afterwards, she took a two hour nap in bed and then came downstairs for dinner.

“Hi there, beautiful. Sleep well?”

“Mostly,” she replied with a warm smile. “I’ll sleep better tonight in your arms, though.”

He pulled her into a hug and said, “I’m already looking forward to it.”

Patty waited until they were finished and said, “Admiral, you’d better lie back down since you’re sore.”

Chakotay asked, “Placenta?”

Kathryn nodded as she carefully slid into her spot on the couch. “There just might be something to this weakened uterus diagnosis.”

He stood over the back of the couch and stroked her hair away from her forehead. “How bad is it?”

“Oh, not too bad, but it’s not something I can ignore.”

Patty said, “There’s no tearing, but we’re keeping an eye on it because she’s a little weak. Dr. Zimmerman will be here in the morning to check on her, although he wants us to contact him if the pain gets worse.”

Chakotay squeezed Kathryn’s shoulder and said, “All right, then. I think we’ll have dinner in here tonight. Patty, would you get the trays?”

“I’d be happy to.”

Once they were settled with their meals, Chakotay asked, “Is there anything else we should do to get ready for baby’s arrival?”

Kathryn looked at him and decided to share what was on her mind. “He’s going to be very small.”

“Yes,” he replied patiently.

“I’ve known that, of course, but it just hit me this afternoon that, as tiny as the clothes we have are, he’s going to be even smaller.”

With care, Patty said, “Admiral, he’s going to be just fine.”

“I know he will be,” she stated with certainty. “But it got me thinking about that big crib. It’s too large for him, and I want him closer. At least in the beginning.”

Chakotay smiled. “A smaller crib in our room?”

“A bassinet,” Patty suggested.

“I think so,” Kathryn said, feeling a little better. “This house is so big. I think he’d like being with us.”

Patty asked, “Is his size why you were uncertain about what clothes to get for him?”

“Hmm?” Once she realized what the question was, she shook her head. “No, it just seems unimportant whether his pajamas are blue or yellow or green.”

“I suppose not,” she replied.

Kathryn caught Chakotay sharing a look with Patty and asked, “What’s going on?”

He didn’t hesitate before explaining, “We’re just worried that you seemed detached. I wanted to make sure you’re okay.”

“I’m not detached. I just can’t get excited about the color of onesies. I mean, it’s good to have them, and I’m glad we’ll be well supplied, but it’s just a shirt.”

“You make a good point,” Chakotay agreed.

“And if the pacifier doesn’t work, we’ll replicate another. I can’t say what type he’s going to want, and it’s not like he’ll be able to tell us, either.”

Patty said, “I apologize if I was too forward, Admiral.”

Kathryn waved off her concern. “I’m fine leaving you and Phoebe to it. You’re quite capable, and I’m happy to delegate. Maybe it’s the former starship captain in me, but I don’t need to be involved in the running of the ship just so long as I know that the supplies are on board.”

Chakotay nodded his approval. “Now you sound more like yourself. I’m glad we cleared that up.”

“Always good to get to the bottom of these things,” she asserted. “So, remind me to contact Phoebe after we’re finished eating. I’m hoping that she won’t mind choosing a bassinet.”

“I think she’d like that a lot,” Patty sighed happily. “I’d suggest a functional one with storage underneath rather than a frilly one.”

“Fantastic idea.” Kathryn pointed her fork in Patty’s direction. “If you’d like the job of picking one out, it’s yours.”

“Oh, may I?” she asked eagerly.

“Absolutely.” She looked at her husband and said, “Now, did you say something earlier about brownies?”

“As a matter of fact, I did.”

After Dr. Joe left the next morning, Kathryn felt a lot better and was ready to plan her day. However, Chakotay wouldn’t tell her who was coming over to visit. He thought she’d have more to anticipate that way, but instead, she was getting particularly annoyed with him and didn’t hesitate to point that out.

When the doorbell rang, he smiled mischievously as he went to answer it.

As soon as their guest appeared, Kathryn sighed with relief. “Lanna, I was hoping it’d be you.”

“Now that’s a greeting I could get used to,” B’Elanna said as she sat down. “Why do you want to see me?”

“I want to know everything that’s going on. Don’t leave a thing out.”

She laughed. "Getting bored, are we?"

"I'm feeling cut off from the action. How are repairs going for the Enterprise? Is it going to take a complete rebuild of the hull?"

"We're removing the outer hull plating on most of the bow and installing a new frame forward of the beam. The tricky part is that the compression of the impact affected the mid-line beam as well. We might end up rebuilding that from the inside."

"You're right, that will be tricky. You'd have to gut, what? Three or four decks?"

"Yeah. Sometimes I wonder if we'd be better off starting with a new frame from scratch, but as long as we don't get ahead of ourselves, I think we'll enjoy the challenge of it."

"Mhmm." Kathryn rubbed her chin as she gave it serious thought. "The first step would be to reroute the power relays."

"I've been studying the schematics. Want me to draw a picture?"

"Great idea," she replied enthusiastically. "Maybe I can help in some way."

B'Elanna came into the kitchen to get what she needed for the illustration. Looking at Chakotay, she stuck her thumb up and then down in a request for feedback. He immediately gave her a thumbs up and a wink.

Once B'Elanna was back with Kathryn, Patty quietly asked, "What was the thumb for?"

He answered while chopping vegetables. "Before she came over, I asked B'Elanna if she could distract Kathryn for a little while. Get her mind on something besides the baby."

"Ah, well, it seems to be working." Patty listened to the ladies for a moment and then asked, "Do you understand what they're talking about?"

He smiled with amusement. "Bits and pieces. When those two get their heads together, I usually steer clear because I know they're way out of my league."

"I've never seen her so animated."

"She thrives on this kind of thing. Warp power, quantum mechanics, and stellar phenomenon in particular."

Patty nodded thoughtfully, and then asked, "How long before she goes stir crazy without working?"

"I'm giving it a month after the baby is born."

“But she plans to stay home until he starts grammar school.”

“Oh, I know what she’s planning. Once she’s got her mind set, she goes full speed ahead.”

“Can’t you talk her out of trying it?”

“No, but I can support whatever decision she has currently made, and then be responsive and understanding when she changes her mind.”

“You’re a patient man.”

“Maybe, but I’ve been by her side for almost nine years. I know her. The best thing to do right now is support her current goal and make sure she is aware of her options.”

“Would I be out of line if I offered to help with the baby?”

“Not at all, but don’t you want to go back to the Pioneer?”

“No, not really. The new doctor is a little brusque, and I was thinking about retiring anyway. I just turned sixty-five, and I’ve decided that I want to find something a little more enjoyable to fill my days. I really like working for you and the Admiral.”

Chakotay nodded. “I’m glad you do. If I may make a suggestion?”

“Of course.”

“Don’t retire, yet. The baby might need a nurse for awhile, and if Kathryn decides to return to work, Starfleet would provide a care-giver. It’d be more convenient to have someone with the rank of lieutenant than to have a civilian.”

“Good point.” Patty smiled. “I like the way you think.”

“Thank you, but don’t suggest anything to her right now. I’ll know when the time is right to introduce the idea.”

“I’m happy to leave it in your hands. Thank you.”

“No, Patty. Thank you. This might just work out best for all of us.”

Kathryn woke up to the sensation of someone touching her leg. She cracked her eyes open to see her husband sitting on the side of the bed and gazing at her with love in his eyes.

He said, “Good morning, beautiful.”

“Morning,” she yawned. “What time is it?”

“Not quite ten. How are you feeling?”

She repositioned her head and took inventory of her body. “A little weak, but breakfast will help.”

“What would you like?”

“I don’t care. Food doesn’t sound good, but I know I’ve got to eat.”

“Nauseous?”

“It’s not bad.” She held out her hand. “Help me up?”

“Gladly.” Once she was on her feet, he helped her to the bathroom. “After you’re dressed, Khurma would like to speak to you.”

“In person?”

“On the comm. I think he wants you to do something for him.”

“I wonder what?”

He shrugged. “Wouldn’t tell me, and believe me, I asked.”

“I’ve no doubt,” she gave him a wink in the reflection of the mirror as she washed her hands. “Now, how about that breakfast?”

“I’ll get right on it. Do you want to get dressed while I get it ready?”

“Sure. Send Patty up, would you?”

“Right away.” He smiled at her as he left the room.

Twenty minutes later, Kathryn eased her way downstairs with Patty’s help. She gave Chakotay a tired smile as she scooted into her spot on the sofa.

He set the tray down in front of her. “Try the toast and eggs first to see if that helps your nausea. If it does, I’ll get you some yogurt and granola.”

“Thanks.” She squeezed his hand and said, “Patty gave me an anti-nausea hypo, but I’m not sure it’s working.”

Patty noted, “You’re nauseous because you’re hungry.”

Kathryn hummed an acknowledgement as she ate. It took her about half an hour, but once she finished, she felt a lot better. Chakotay brought a computer to her and then he and Patty left the room in case the content of the call was confidential.

As soon as his image came up, Khurma said with delight, “Kathryn! It’s good to see you. How are you feeling?”

“I’ve been better, but I’ve also been a lot worse.”

“With you, that gamut is extremely wide. Can you be more specific?”

She shrugged a little. “I don’t do well with inactivity, and although we anticipated this period of bed rest, it hasn’t exactly been an easy adjustment.”

“And physically?”

“A little weak, sore from inactivity, but my health is about the same.”

“I’m glad to hear it.”

“Chakotay thought you might need me for something?”

“Yes, ah... we have a little problem with the Romulans.”

“How little?”

“Very,” he nodded. “It doesn’t amount to much in the grander scheme of things, but there’s something you could do to smooth the waters.”

“All right, shoot.”

“Remember our friend Robam?”

“Has he resurfaced?”

“He has,” Khurma rubbed his neck. “And he wants to talk to you, not our people on the Titan.”

“Did you explain that I can’t come to Romulus right now?”

“Yes, but I’m not sure he believes me. He’s giving Riker the runaround, indirectly, and I think it’s because he doesn’t believe that this new captain has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Federation.”

“I see. He wants an admiral.”

“Specifically, he wants you.” Khurma sighed. “Are you willing to have a com conversation with him?”

“If it’ll help.”

“I really think it would. If nothing else, you could put him at ease about your welfare.”

“All right,” she said with an understanding smile.

“I try to avoid suggesting to a woman how to handle her appearance, but in this case...”

“You don’t want me to look my best.”

He nodded. “You’ve read my mind.”

“And you’d like me to give Riker a glowing recommendation.”

Looking apologetic, he explained, “Robam hasn’t been elected as Praetor, but Riker says that he has asserted himself as an unofficial authority. The citizens appear to be following him and they’ll have an election within the month to re-establish the senate.”

Kathryn said, “Rabom is going to want it known that he and I have spoken... that we’re friends.”

“How would you like to handle that?”

“If needed, you can issue a press release with my name on it. Other than that, I’m not prepared to make any public appearances.”

“Agreed. I think that’s a reasonable solution.”

She held up a hand to indicate that she wasn’t done, yet. “However, I suspect that he’s going to ask for my involvement once I’m physically able to travel.”

“And what are your thoughts about that? We haven’t really talked.”

“I know,” she said with a sigh. “I haven’t talked to Chakotay about it, either, but I’m vacillating on whether or not I’d like to return to duty part time. Regardless, I’m not willing to travel in the near future.”

“Your diplomatic skills would be very useful to the Federation, even if done from Earth.”

“And I want Truov or whoever the new president is to establish his or her leadership without the public thinking that she’s relying on my advice.”

“I believe we could handle that,” he said with barely contained enthusiasm.

“My title would need to change. I can’t be an envoy if I’m not willing to travel.”

Khurma shrugged. “Oh, I don’t know about that. You’d still be representing the Federation. Once you’ve decided on your plans for sure, I’ll talk to President Truov and the rest of the admiralty about it. We’ll figure something out.”

“All right,” she said with a sigh. “I’d like to talk to Chakotay before we link up a conversation with Romulus. I assume we can do a live link?”

“Yes, we can. We made sure the Titan had the enhanced communication system before we sent it out there. I wish we’d done that on the Pioneer before you went.”

“As do I, Admiral.” She gave him an understanding nod. “I’ll call you back within the hour, and you can tell me how sickly I look before initiating the connection.”

He shook his head in amusement. “Talk to you then, Kathryn. Khurma out.”

Kathryn sighed to herself and then called out, “Honey?”

Chakotay poked his head out of the study. “Yes?”

“How much of that did you hear?”

He walked over slowly and asked, “How much of it did you want me to hear?”

“All of it.”

Sitting down with her, he said, “Then you’re in luck.”

Kathryn studied his expression for a clue about how he felt, but found nothing of note. “You’re not angry, so that’s good.”

“Angry?” he asked in surprise. “Why would I be angry?”

“Because I’m talking about going back to work, and I promised you that my commitment would be to motherhood.”

He took her hand and held it between both of his. “Kathryn, you promised yourself that, not me. I never asked you to become a stay-at-home mom.”

Her mouth dropped open slightly and then turned into a quirky smile. “I’m relieved.”

With a chuckle, he shook his head in amazement. “I love that you’re insisting on staying on Earth for awhile, but I know that can’t be a permanent arrangement. When the time comes that you go back into space, we’ll reassess our situation and decide how to manage our family together. I’d say that it all depends on the timing.”

“I like the way you think.” She squeezed his fingers and added softly, “But I’m not ready to go any time soon.”

“I know. We’ve still got some work to do to get you back to where you were, but try not to worry.”

“It’s been eight months.”

“Don’t forget that you’ve accomplished a lot this year. The Federation is in a better place because of your involvement, and I believe that if you continue to charm your way into the hearts of planetary leaders, things can only get better.”

“I read that enrollment at the academy this fall is up by fourteen percent,” she noted.

With a smile, he replied, “Yes, it is. You’ve done what you set out to do... consider this Federation re-energized.”

Cupping his cheek in her hand, she whispered, “Thank you for helping me do it.”

“My pleasure.” He leaned forward and kissed her tenderly. “Now, we need to make you look less vibrant, right?”

“I think if I just take off the light make-up I put on this morning, we’ll call it good.”

Chakotay reached up and pulled out the clip holding her ponytail. Arranging her hair in a relaxed manner on her shoulders, he said, “This makes you look more like a civilian.”

“More maternal?”

He shrugged. “Not necessarily. You’re going to be a great mother, no matter how you wear your hair.”

Laughing, she said, “Go get me a washcloth, would you? I’ve got a rather tenacious and determined Romulan to call.”

“Be right back.” He went into the downstairs bathroom and returned almost immediately with a warm cloth.

She began to wipe her face and asked, “Do you think Patty would be interested in staying with us to help with the baby?”

“Yes, I do, but you should talk to her.” He studied what she was doing. “Don’t you use some kind of special goop to get the make-up off?”

“Yes, it’s in our bathroom,” she replied as she wiped her face. “A pink bottle next to my cleanser by the sink.”

“Be right back.”

While he was gone, Kathryn took a moment to collect her thoughts regarding the call she was about to make. She almost expected Q to show up considering he was behind their first meeting, but there were no startling flashes of light, nor were there any haughty omnipotent beings lounging about in her great room.

Once Chakotay returned, she got herself looking as natural as she could, and then placed the call to Khurma. He approved of her appearance, but quickly added that she was still quite beautiful in her relaxed state.

She was placed on standby while the com-link with Romulus was set-up. While waiting, she changed her mind twice about whether she wanted Chakotay in the room or not. He had just returned and was staring out the window when the comm signaled that the uplink was being established.

“Admiral Janeway, a pleasure to see you,” Rabom said as the link came through.

“Mr. Rabom,” she said with a bow of her head. “It’s been too long since we spoke.”

“A year of Earth time, I believe.” He dipped his chin. “Admiral Khurma said that you are not well, and I must say that it appears he was correct.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Did you think he was hiding me?”

“The thought occurred to me because he was particularly evasive about your illness.”

“Well, it’s not exactly an illness. Have you been following the news media from Earth as much as you used to?”

“What I can of it.”

“I’m expecting a child within the month.”

“Oh,” he said with surprise and sat up a little straighter. “And for human females, does this impair your ability to function normally?”

“It can vary depending on each woman’s situation,” she replied. “Admiral Khurma conveyed your wish to have me lead the diplomatic team that is there with you.”

“Yes, I believe you and I established a nice friendship that I want to continue. Is it not possible for you to give birth on a starship?”

“Not for me,” she said with feigned regret. “Are you aware that I was abducted nine Earth months ago?”

“Oh, yes. I was heartbroken to hear about your suffering.”

Nodding her gratitude, she continued, “My injuries from that ordeal were quite extensive and are impairing my ability to function normally while pregnant. Therefore, I’m taking a leave of absence from Starfleet until my health has improved. I’m sure you understand.”

“I don’t like it, but I understand.”

“I don’t particularly like it, either, but for the sake of my son, I’m doing what is necessary.”

“Ah, yes. Family is very important. I have two sons myself.” He leaned forward as if getting a juicy piece of gossip. “Is that why you didn’t become President of the Federation?”

She smiled, but ignored the question. “Have you met President Truov?”

“Hmmm,” he shrugged. “She seems fair.”

“She is, and the people of the Federation respect her. You can trust her, too, Mr. Rabom.”

“And what about this new captain they’ve sent me? Riker? Surely your Federation could’ve placed a higher priority on this particular relationship?”

“Captain Riker is a dear friend of mine, and it was I who suggested that he be appointed to this mission. While he is a new captain, he has been the first officer on the Enterprise, our flagship, for fifteen years. There’s not a better man for the job.”

“You’re sure?”

“I’m absolutely sure. Will and I have been colleagues since we were students at Starfleet Academy, and his wife and I are close, personal friends. You can trust him.”

“That may be, but the Romulan people have heard of you. They respect what you’ve done in turning the tide in your Federation.”

“Well, you can tell the Romulan people that I have sent my dear friend, Captain Will Riker, to establish the groundwork of a peaceful co-existence between the Star Empire and the Federation. When I am able, you and I can continue our conversations about ending the conflict with Vulcan and about establishing scientific partnerships.”

“Will you be coming to Romulus?” he asked hopefully.

“Not for awhile, but perhaps someday. My place is on Earth for awhile, but as we are doing today, we can continue to build our friendship from a distance.”

“I would enjoy that, Admiral. You are a delightful human.”

“And you are a delightful Romulan.” She smiled graciously. “May I contact you when I return to duty in a few months?”

“You may call me any time. And as a favor to you, I’ll get to know this Captain Riker. Any suggestions for getting the conversation with him off to a good start?”

“No, just be straightforward with him and he will do the same. You can let him know that you and I have spoken and that you’ve got my ear. On a personal note, Captain Riker is a fan of a type of music called American Jazz. I’ll have Admiral Khurma send you a sample.”

“Jolan tru, Admiral.” He bowed his head. “I look forward to hearing that your son is healthy and full of your spirit.”

“Thank you, Mr. Rabom. Julian tru.” She closed the connection and then closed her eyes, laying her head back on the pillow.

Chakotay set the computer aside and took her hand. “Kathryn?”

“I’m okay,” she sighed. “Just tired.”

“Sleep, then. I’ll fill Khurma in.”

“Thanks.” She curled up on her side and snuggled into the pillow. “Send him some jazz?”

“I’ll take care of it,” he said as he covered her with a blanket and placed a kiss on her temple. “You were terrific.”
