

The Future Is Ours – Part 39

“A New Life”

By Dawn

Summary: The Final Chapter

Rated: PG-13

Over the next few days, Kathryn had more visitors, but it was clear that her patience and stamina was waning. Three weeks into her convalescence, she found that it was nearly impossible to remain awake for more than two hours at a time.

One night, she was awakened by movement around her and opened her eyes to find the lamps on, Chakotay holding her hand, and Patty taking readings on the other side of her. “What’s...?” she started to ask.

Patty replied, “You and the baby weren’t getting enough oxygen so we had to turn you and give you tri-ox.”

Chakotay smoothed Kathryn’s hair back and whispered, “He’s okay now. You can go back to sleep.”

“M’kay,” she murmured and then closed her eyes. It seemed like only a few minutes went by before she opened them again and saw that it was daylight and Dr. Joe was there. Confused, she asked, “How long was I asleep?”

Patty replied, “This last time? About four and a half hours.”

Joe looked at her with an expression that Kathryn had learned to recognize as one that preceded bad news. With foreboding, she mumbled, “Whas wrong?”

“We need to make some decisions,” Joe said.

Closing her eyes, she whispered, “Is time?”

“No, not yet, but your body can’t handle the pregnancy any more on its own.”

She forced her eyes open to look at Chakotay’s face and was relieved to see that he wasn’t worried or upset. “Need Starfleet Medical?”

“That’s one option,” Joe replied. “But I think you’ll be more comfortable here. I want you on oxygen because the placenta isn’t functioning as well as it should. I also want to add an intravenous nutritional supplement. Regardless of how much you eat, your ability to draw calories and nutrients isn’t sufficient.”

“ ‘Kay.” She blinked slowly, feeling too tired to argue.

“You’ll need to keep walking to a minimum, and we’re going to attach a few more monitors so we can keep a closer watch on you and the baby.”

Kathryn thought about nodding, but wasn’t sure if she actually carried through. She heard Joe say, “She can barely stay awake. We need to get these nutrients started.”

She felt movement of the sheets, a prick in her leg, and then something cool laid against it. Next thing she felt was an oxygen tube against her nose and looped over her ears. She could tell that Chakotay was situating it by the way he was lovingly arranging her hair. Forcing her eyes open again, she was happy to see his return smile in her line of vision.

He said, “Hi there.”

“Okay with this?”

“I’m just fine. Relieved, actually.”

“Why?” she whispered.

“We’re finally bolstering your strength. I thought we needed it a couple days ago.”

Joe replied, “Perhaps so, but she was managing.”

Kathryn squeezed Chakotay’s hand and closed her eyes again. “Just sleepy.”

“Then you should sleep.” He caressed her forehead to lull her into a relaxed slumber.

Kathryn’s energy ebbed and flowed as often as her visitors did. She had two doctors monitoring her condition and a host of friends stopping by to sit with her. They were happy to keep her amused during her wakeful moments and happy to visit with Chakotay while she slept.

After another week and a half, she found it difficult to breathe while lying on her back. The uterine wall and placenta were strained if she laid on her left, and the umbilical cord was compressed if she laid on her right. She was decidedly uncomfortable with constant heartburn, nausea, hunger, and the continuous need to go to the bathroom.

After a particularly long night of insomnia and severe discomfort, Kathryn couldn’t face another day in bed. When she returned from the bathroom, she announced, “I can’t do it.”

“Do what?” Patty asked.

“Get back in bed. I need to walk around.”

“That’s not a good idea, Admiral.”

“Why?” she asked as she paced over to the sitting area in her bedroom. “What’s the worst that could happen if I move around for a few minutes?”

“You could go into labor.”

“And that’s bad because?”

“You’re not due for a few more weeks.”

“I’m not sure I can handle a few more weeks of this. We knew he was going to be premature.”

“Yes, but he’s underweight. We should try to keep him in your womb for as long as possible.”

She continued to pace. “Not sure I can handle him getting any bigger. How much does he weigh?”

“Two and a half kilograms.”

“And a normal birth weight is closer to three and a half,” she noted.

“Or more,” Patty tried to stop Kathryn mid-pace, but was unsuccessful. “Admiral, get in bed.”

“Not, yet.”

“I should get your husband.”

“Then go,” Kathryn motioned as she made another lap across the bedroom.

Patty was hesitant to leave her, but decided she needed to go. She ran into the hallway and called downstairs, “Chakotay... We need you.”

“Coming,” he called out.

Kathryn felt pressure building in her lower back and thought that she should be wearing her maternity belt. Her back wasn’t used to the weight of the child.

Patty implored, “Admiral, you really need to get back into bed.”

“What do you need?” Chakotay asked as he came in. Once he saw Kathryn, he said, “Oh. What are you doing?”

“I’m moving around.” She cocked her head towards the bed. “I’m too uncomfortable, and I’m hoping that if I wear myself out, I’ll be able to get some sleep.”

Patty said, "If you get that much exercise, you really will have this kid today."

"Well, we need to change something because this isn't working for me."

Chakotay got in Kathryn's way and held her arms. "I know you're frustrated, but..."

"Get out of my way," she said while glaring at him.

"At least let us scan you."

She sighed and motioned for the nurse to come over. "Fine. Don't know what good that will do."

Patty ran the tri-corder across her belly and shook her head. "You're dilated to five, Admiral."

"And?"

"And by the time most women get that far, they've been in labor for hours."

"Get a doctor, then. I need to know what my options are."

Patty tapped her combadge. "Fields to Dr. Zimmerman, Starfleet Medical."

After a moment's silence, a female voice replied, "Dr. Zimmerman is in surgery. Is this an emergency?"

"Not yet, but we have a rather headstrong patient who wants to have a discussion."

"Admiral Janeway?"

"Yes," Patty replied and received a glare from the patient in question.

"Dr. Zimmerman suggests contacting Dr. Crusher, and he'll be with you when he's finished."

"Will do, thank you." Patty tapped her combadge twice and said, "Lieutenant Fields to Starfleet Command."

"Command here."

"This is Lieutenant Fields, aide to Admiral Janeway. I need a link with Dr. Crusher on the Enterprise."

"Patching you through."

Only a moment later, Beverly replied, "Good morning, Lieutenant. What can I do for you?"

“If you’re free, Admiral Janeway would like to speak with you.”

“I can stop by this afternoon.”

Patty said, “She might be having a baby by then.”

“What?” Beverly replied.

Kathryn interrupted. “I’m not getting back in that bed, Beverly.”

“I see. And Dr. Zimmerman’s opinion?”

“He’s busy,” Kathryn stated. “And sounds like you are, too. I’ll be fine. I’m just going to walk around a bit.”

Patty interjected, “She’s at five centimeters.”

Beverly commanded, “Get back in bed, Kathryn. Now.”

“In a few minutes.”

They heard Jean-Luc’s voice say, “You’d better get down there, Beverly. We can handle the rest of this briefing without you.”

Kathryn closed her eyes and groaned. “We interrupted a meeting?”

Jean-Luc replied, “Only a small one, my dear Admiral.”

“My apologies.”

Harry’s voice came through next. “We could all come down and get you back into bed.”

Before Kathryn had a chance to respond, Chakotay said, “Thank you, Harry, but that won’t be necessary. I think we can handle her.”

Beverly said, “I’ll be right down. Crusher out.”

Chakotay took Kathryn’s hand on her next pass. “Come on. You don’t want to do this.”

“Don’t I?” She snapped her hand back. “Standing up is a hell of a lot more comfortable than anything else.”

“You can handle it.”

She glared at him. “I can’t breathe, he can’t breathe. Neither one of us is handling it.”

“Let’s arrange the pillows differently, then.”

“I don’t care how you arrange the damned pillows, my back hurts and I can’t breathe.”

“Then I’ll give you a massage.”

“We’ve tried that. This body just wasn’t made to be still for this long, especially not while eight months pregnant.”

Beverly walked in and pointed to the bed. “Lie down, now.”

“No.”

Patty said, “She wants to discuss her options.”

“Fine,” Beverly said. “We’ll discuss your options when you’re lying down. You haven’t spent the last five weeks in bed just to go into premature labor now.”

Kathryn put her hands on her hips. “We’ve had five weeks of letting this baby’s lungs mature. I want to know where he stands.”

“You want to hear what his chances for survival are just because you’re a little uncomfortable?”

“More than a little,” she grumbled as she returned to the bed, fully chagrined.

While Chakotay helped Kathryn put the oxygen tube back on, Beverly took scans with the tricorder. Shaking her head, she said, “5.2 centimeters.”

“How is he?” Kathryn asked.

“He’s fine.” She did a deeper internal scan of the womb and then reported, “His heart and lung function are advanced enough that he’ll be fine as long as you have him at a hospital.”

“And the uterus?”

“It doesn’t look good, but it seems to be holding. I want to take a look at your recent scans here in a moment.” Beverly set the tool down and took Kathryn’s hand. “I know this is hard and you’ve done great.”

“I can’t sleep.”

Chakotay pointed out, “Before, you couldn’t stay awake.”

“I’d rather have that.” She took the oxygen tube off to blow her nose and then put it back on again. “This thing is really getting on my nerves.”

Beverly asked, "Would you prefer a face mask or a hypo of tri-ox every five minutes?"

With a deep sigh, Kathryn replied, "No."

"Tell you what, if you'll eat a good breakfast, I'll give you a light sedative to help you get some rest."

"Fine," she acquiesced.

As Chakotay started to get up, Patty said, "I'll get her breakfast. She needs you here."

"Thank you," he replied and sat back down.

Kathryn mumbled, "I'm really not happy."

"I never would have guessed." He smoothed her hair back. "You can do this, love."

"Doesn't mean I have to be happy about it."

"No, it doesn't."

Beverly got up and plugged Patty's tri-corder into the medical console that had been temporarily placed in Kathryn's room.

"What are you looking for?" Kathryn asked.

"Rate of dilation, hormone levels, and a few other things."

Chakotay said, "Let's arrange these pillows to see if we can make breathing easier."

Kathryn let him maneuver her body until she was as comfortable as she could be, but she still felt like she needed to be walking around. Her belly didn't feel right, her hips hurt, she couldn't breathe, and her back pain was verging on intolerable.

Patty returned with toast and a banana, and then helped Beverly study the readings while Chakotay helped Kathryn eat.

Beverly was intent as she took another tri-corder reading and showed Patty. "5.4 cm."

"What does that mean?" Chakotay asked.

"It means she needs to stop eating and we need to go to Starfleet Medical."

Kathryn looked down at her belly. "I'm in labor?"

“Yes and no. Your uterus isn’t contracting but your body is ready to have this baby.” Beverly downloaded the data back into the tri-corder in preparation to leave. “It’s no wonder you weren’t able to sleep last night.”

“So me walking around...”

“Was just your intuition telling you what you needed to be doing.” Beverly tapped her commbadge. “Beverly Crusher to Starfleet Medical Obstetrics.”

“Go ahead, doctor.”

“I’m bringing in a patient for Dr. Zimmerman. We need to prepare for fetal transport and NICU.”

“Is the patient Admiral Janeway?”

“Yes, it is. Give us a few minutes to prepare for transport.”

“We’re ready for her. Dr. Zimmerman warned us.”

Kathryn closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “This is really happening.”

Chakotay kissed her forehead. “You’re in good hands.”

Patty grabbed the overnight bag they’d already packed and rounded up the medical equipment that they’d need. Chakotay talked to Mark Yosa and put their plan in motion, alerting command of the need to transport the entire group from inside the house. Beverly took the monitors off of Kathryn and detached the oxygen tube from the tank.

“Do we need to carry her?” Chakotay asked.

Beverly shook her head. “She wants to walk around, let her walk.”

They helped Kathryn out of bed, and she instantly began to pace again. Chakotay caught her on her return trip and nodded to Beverly.

“Crusher to Starfleet Command, initiate transport.”

They rematerialized inside a labor and delivery room and the staff immediately went to work. A nurse said, “Dr. Zimmerman has been notified and will be here as soon as he can.”

Beverly nodded. “Tell him not to rush. I’d like to induce labor and let it progress a little and see how the baby reacts.”

“I’ll let him know,” the nurse said as she left the room.

Kathryn started pacing again while the staff tried to attach monitors to her. Finally, Patty said, "You need to stop moving, Admiral."

She nodded and did as they asked, right in the middle of the room. Arching her back, she tried to figure out what felt like regular back pain and what might be different.

Chakotay took her hands and led her to the inclined bed. "Sit back for just a few minutes and then you can walk around again."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because Beverly and the nurses asked you to."

"They did?" Looking around, they nodded as she slid onto the tilted bed. "I didn't hear you."

Beverly said, "It's normal for you to tune everyone else out. Your body thinks it's in labor."

She watched them attach various sensors to her body, and then her eyes followed Patty who was reattaching her to oxygen. For the tube being so annoying, she was surprised that she hadn't noticed that she was still wearing it. "This doesn't hurt like I expected."

"That's because you aren't having contractions." Beverly pressed a hypo into a vein on her leg. "But let's see if we can get that to change."

"What did you just do?"

"A very light dose of a medication that should get you going."

"Should I prepare for pain?"

"Strong cramping and discomfort," she replied. "I meant it when I said light. Your uterus isn't going to be able to withstand much, but I want to see if we can get a few contractions at least."

Chakotay asked, "Why not just do a fetal transport? That's what we'd planned."

"Because the contractions stimulate the baby. He'll do better if he gets some squeezing now."

Another lady was scanning Kathryn's belly and said, "I'm the neonatologist, Doctor Sims. We want labor to progress as long as possible before we transport."

Beverly said to Sims, "Her uterus is in danger of rupturing, but we'll go until just before."

Kathryn's eyes popped open. "You'll what?"

She put her hand on Kathryn's arm. "Don't worry. We'll see it happening and we'll do the hysterectomy immediately."

“Hysterectomy?”

Beverly looked between Kathryn and Chakotay. “Did he not discuss it with you?”

She felt her heart sink. “No,” she shook her head and begged, “Please don’t do that.”

“Kathryn,” she said softly. “It’s already beyond a point that you could have another child.”

Chakotay said, “I don’t think this is the best time to discuss this.”

“All right,” Beverly squeezed Kathryn’s hand. “We’ll do what we can to avoid it.”

She closed her eyes and tried to stop the tears that were building. Unable to control them, she laid her forearm over her face and tried to take deep breaths.

Chakotay held her as much as he could. “It’s okay, Kathryn. We’re here for you, and we’re going to figure out what’s best.”

She shook her head. “I’m so angry that I just want to throw something.”

“At me?” Beverly asked lightly.

“No,” she sniffed and pulled the tube out of her nose. “At the idiots who hurt me. They took too damned much.”

Chakotay handed her a box of tissue. “Yes, they did, but don’t let them take the joy out of having a child. Focus on that right now.”

She nodded and blew her nose. “You’re right.”

Patty cleaned off the tube and tried to put it back on her. Kathryn got annoyed and pulled her head away to blow her nose again. Once she was finished, she took the tube and put it on herself. “Sorry.”

Smiling, Patty said, “It’s okay, Admiral. I’ve been through childbirth, and I know what it’s like to not want people messing with you.”

Kathryn felt a sudden tightening all the way around her middle and leaned forward to try to cope with the intense sensation. She grabbed Chakotay’s hand and cried out as the tightening morphed into a deep, painful cramp like nothing she’d felt before.

Beverly said, “Breathe through it, Kathryn.”

She tried to breathe, but wasn’t entirely successful until the pain receded. Chakotay held onto her, guiding her to sit back again, and soothing her as best he could.

Once she'd recovered her breath, Kathryn glared at Beverly. "You said it would be light."

"That was light," Beverly replied as she focused on her scans. "Baby is responding well, but to get the full effect of the contraction, we should break your water."

Joe walked in and asked, "How are we doing?"

Kathryn replied, "Not good."

"She's doing great." Beverly said with an encouraging smile and then caught Joe up to speed.

He took some of his own scans, and said, "I agree. We should accelerate the labor because she won't be able to do it for long. Care to do the honors?"

Taking the hook off the surgical tray, Beverly touched Kathryn's knee and said, "Open for me. This won't hurt at all."

"You're just breaking the amniotic sac, right?" Kathryn asked and then clamped together as another wave of tightness came over her.

Beverly said, "Breathe through it, Kathryn. Deep, even breaths."

Since she knew what to expect this time, she was able to tolerate it better and found her breath before the contraction passed. Once it was over, she parted her legs for Beverly.

"You're correct, Kathryn. I'm just breaking the sac and then you can stand up if you'd prefer."

"M'kay." As Beverly touched her most intimate areas, Kathryn thought she should feel exposed, but found that she didn't care in the least.

Chakotay came into her sightline and gently held her chin so she'd focus on him. "I love you."

She relaxed some and said, "Love you, too."

"Nurse," Beverly called out as Kathryn felt a warm gush between her legs.

"Got it!"

"Ugh," Kathryn groaned as she felt the fluid.

Joe noted, "Childbirth is very messy, but you'll skip the worst of it."

Once they got her cleaned up, Beverly asked, "Standing or sitting?"

"I'll try standing. This is not the least bit comfortable."

Chakotay helped her up and Joe showed her how to stand with her hands resting on the bed. The men got her in position just in time for the next contraction.

“Mmmmm,” Kathryn moaned as her uterus cramped down on the baby.

Joe put Chakotay’s hands on Kathryn’s lower back. “Try massage to take her mind off the pain. Just avoid her kidneys.”

He did as suggested and asked her, “Does this help?”

Kathryn gave him no answer as she focused on her breathing and arched into his hands. Once the contraction passed, she said, “I suppose.”

“How can I do it differently?”

“I have no idea, but massaging my back takes my mind off of contractions about as much as a level one forcefield could contain a warp core breach.” She straightened up and tried to arch her back in the opposite direction.

Dr. Sims chuckled. “That’s an analogy I’ve never heard before.”

Joe mused, “Starship captains have their very own outlook on any given situation.”

Kathryn stated, “I need water.”

“Ice chips,” Patty said as she handed her a cup.

She glared at them, but as soon as she put a few chips on her tongue, she sighed in relief. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

Her fist came down on the bed as the next contraction rolled over her unexpectedly. Chakotay did his part and someone else took the ice as she curled into the pain, breathing as best she could.

Once it was over, a nurse said, “I’ve often wondered why Starfleet doesn’t include childbirth pain in a course about how to endure torture.”

Kathryn looked up and calmly stated, “This is nothing like torture.”

She gasped and turned bright red. “Oh, Admiral. I’m so sorry.”

“Let it go.” Closing her eyes, she said, “It’s a good reminder, actually. Unlike cruelly inflicted pain, this serves a purpose, my body knows how to handle it, there’s an end in sight, and I’m surrounded by people who care about me.”

Chakotay made long, soothing strokes down her back. “You’re doing great.”

She nodded and braced herself as she felt the next one coming. Focusing on her breathing and Chakotay’s loving touch made all the difference as she realized how thankful she was to be alive and able to do this.

After the pain receded, Kathryn asked, “I need a time frame. How many more of these?”

“Just a little while longer,” Beverly said as she gathered Kathryn’s long hair and tied it back into a ponytail.

“I need more information than that.”

“I can’t tell you, exactly.” She handed Chakotay a cool, damp washcloth. “Forehead and neck.”

He started towards her forehead and she shooed him away. “Just my back.”

“You want me to put this on your back?”

Another contraction hit and she grunted, lowering herself onto her elbows so her head was touching the bed. When Chakotay put the wet washcloth up under her gown, she yelled, “DON’T!!” He yanked it back too fast, surprising her, and causing her to inhale too quickly. To recover, she started breathing quick and shallow.

Beverly rubbed Kathryn’s back and said, “Slow down. Deep in, slow out. Shhhhhhh.”

“Can’t,” she gasped.

Joe said, “Her blood/oxygen is dropping. Admiral, try to breath through your nose.”

“Give her triox,” Beverly said. “She’s doing the best she can.”

When she calmed, she told Chakotay, “I meant, just rub my back.”

“I’m so sorry,” he said as he tried to make up for his stupidity by doing long, soothing strokes down her back.

“Not your fault. I can’t communicate during these contractions.” She took the cloth from him and rubbed her own face. “I feel gross.”

With understanding, Joe said, “Your body is working hard. Try to think of it as a workout.”

“Maybe, but with workouts, I stop when it hurts.” She straightened up and took a deep breath, trying to fill her lungs. “Damn, it burns.”

“Burns?” Beverly asked as she adjusted the monitor to get a different reading.

Kathryn grabbed Chakotay’s hand. “Don’t let me fall.”

“Do you feel like you’re going to?” Beverly asked with concern.

“Maybe.” She turned towards Chakotay and leaned against him. “Don’t let me go.”

“Not a chance,” he said as he wrapped her in his arms. “I’ve got you.”

Beverly announced, “Get her back on the bed. Dr. Sims, prepare for fetal transport.”

“It’s coming,” Kathryn cried out as she started breathing deeply.

Chakotay held his wife as she focused on the labor, but asked the doctors, “What do I do?”

Joe said, “Hold her until it passes. We’ll get ready.”

Nodding, Beverly said, “Kathryn, you’re losing a lot of blood, but you’re going to be just fine.”

Joe said to a nurse, “Increase oxygen saturation.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

The contraction lightened and Kathryn moved back to the bed. While they were lifting her up, she felt something give way in her belly and an unexpected sharp pain lanced up from her left hip to her breast. “Aaaaaahhhh!” she cried out.

“Hang on Kathryn,” Beverly said calmly. “Dr. Sims, get ready.”

“Ready, Doctor.”

Kathryn laid her head back and closed her eyes as they reclined the bed into a horizontal position. Everything seemed to be going in slow motion and she couldn’t quite understand what anyone was saying. She could guess what was happening, but decided not to worry. There wasn’t anything she could do but let the doctors do their job.

Chakotay’s hands were on her head, stroking the damp hair away from her face. He leaned over and said, “It’s almost over, my love.”

All she could see and hear was him. “It hurts.”

“Beverly’s taking care of you.”

The burning intensified and she told him, “If they have to take the uterus, it’s okay.”

“Are you sure?”

“Just save my eggs.”

“All right.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead and watched as the doctors initiated the transport. One moment, Kathryn’s belly was full and ripe, and the next minute, it flattened out like a deflated balloon. Across the room, he saw his tiny son materialize to be immediately surrounded by medical personnel in a flurry of quiet, intense activity.

Beverly said, “Kathryn, I need to sedate you.”

She didn’t react as a hypo delivered the medication into her jugular vein. Only seconds later, an alarm sounded and Beverly began calling out orders.

Chakotay looked between the bed in front of him and the one on the far side of the room, and said a quiet prayer to protect his family.

Kathryn felt the heaviness of sleep holding her in the bed, and she wanted nothing more than to stay right where she was. However, the quiet hum of medical equipment and the scent of antiseptic alerted her that she wasn’t at home. She forced her eyes open only to have them close again.

Chakotay caressed her arm and asked, “Kathryn?”

“Mmmmm.” She tried to open her eyes again with only a modicum of progress.

“You’re safe, my love.” His fingers stroked along her forehead. “It’s okay to sleep.”

Kathryn wanted to, but something was niggling at her, something she needed to know. “kotay?”

“I’m here.”

“Can’t... ‘member.” She frowned in frustration at not being able to wake up or figure out what was going on.

“Our son is in intensive care, and you can go see him as soon as you’re able.”

“Mmh.” Now she remembered. She’d just had a baby. “m’kay.”

As he kissed her fingers, she drifted off to sleep again.

A short time later, Kathryn woke again and this time, she was instantly more alert. She touched her flat stomach and searched the room for her husband. When she saw that it was empty, she got up and then immediately thought better of it as she swayed with dizziness. To keep from fainting, she did her best to lower herself to the floor.

“Kathryn!” Chakotay called out as he came into the room and saw her sprawled on the floor. He was with her in a flash, gently holding her trembling body in his arms. “Kathryn?! Did you fall?”

“Got up too quick,” she muttered. “You weren’t here.”

He held her close and pressed a kiss to her hair. “You scared me.”

“Sss...sorry.”

Chakotay reached up and pressed the call button. When a nurse answered, he asked, “Is Dr. Crusher still here?”

“No, but Dr. Zimmerman is. Do you need him?”

“Yes, and a nurse. She has fallen.”

“We’ll be right there, Captain.”

After the channel closed, she stated, “Didn’t fall.”

“How’d you end up on the floor, then?”

“Gracefully swooned.”

He shook his head in amusement as Joe ran into the room, a nurse hot on his tail. Chakotay looked up and explained, “She seems to be fine, but I found her on the floor. I was only gone for a minute.”

Joe knelt down and scanned her with a tri-corder. “I don’t see any injuries. Are you in pain, Admiral?”

“Sore.”

“That’s not surprising. Chakotay, can you lift her back onto the bed?”

“Yeah,” he said as he gathered her up into his arms. “She said she didn’t fall, she swooned.”

Kathryn muttered, “Gracefully swooned.”

Joe gave her a more thorough examination, administered a couple of hypos, and said, “You’re fine, Admiral.”

“How’s my son?”

“He’s stable.” Joe looked to Chakotay and asked, “Have you told her anything, yet?”

“Just that he’s in intensive care.”

Kathryn looked between the two men, and asked, “Do I have to demand a report?”

Chakotay sat down on the side of the bed and took her hand. “He’s 2.5 kilograms and his heart is doing great. We’re worried about his lungs, but his condition is pretty typical of a premature baby.”

Joe added, “It’s exactly what we anticipated, and with treatment, I am confident that he’s going to be breathing on his own in just a day or two.”

Kathryn pursed her lips and nodded, trying to keep control over her emotions. “All right, is he okay otherwise?”

Chakotay was almost hoarse as he said, “He’s beautiful, Kathryn. Would you like to go see him?”

“Yes,” she said as she cradled his jaw in her palm. “I’d like that very much.”

Joe nodded. “This time, let’s take it slow and use a hoverchair. You lost a lot of blood today and you already know that your body needs a great deal of healing.”

As they moved her, she asked, “Am I due for a pancreas transplant now?”

“Yes, you are, but we’ll just take it one thing at a time and see how you do.” Joe patted her shoulder as they moved her out of the room.

“I like that plan.” As they went down the short corridor, Kathryn asked, “How long was I unconscious?”

Chakotay replied, “About three hours.”

“Have you held him, yet?”

“No, but I’ve touched him. The NICU staff believes that you should hold him first.”

“Why?”

Joe answered, “To establish a bond that will promote successful breastfeeding.”

Kathryn was anxious about how small he'd be. She remembered lying back on the bed to prepare for fetal transport, but she didn't remember it actually happening and didn't see him after he was born.

When they rolled her into the room, Kathryn's eyes were drawn immediately to the right. Even before she was turned in that direction, she knew the tiny infant was her son.

A nurse she recognized from the delivery room said, "Would you like to hold him?"

She leaned forward and saw him in the temperature controlled incubator. He looked more helpless than she could have imagined with the tiny oxygen tube attached to his nose and the near translucence of his skin. She worried that he might get cold or that she might hurt him if she picked him up. "Is that a good idea? He's so small."

Joe said, "It's a very good idea, Admiral. All babies, but especially those that are premature, thrive with skin-to-skin contact."

The nurse helped Kathryn untie her hospital gown and then very carefully set the baby on Kathryn's chest. "He's been rooting around for you. I think he's hungry."

She gasped as they touched for the first time and his little body snuggled right up against her. The pure softness of his skin and the way his delicate fingers reached for her were so wonderful that an instant warmth and love spread through her entire body all the way down to her toes. "He's so precious," she whispered in awe.

Chakotay wiped his eyes and sniffed. "You both are."

The baby rooted around until they got him to Kathryn's breast, and when his little mouth found her nipple, she gasped in surprise at the intense sensation. "Wow, he's got quite a bite."

"It's pure instinct," Joe said. "But babies are very efficient little pumps."

Chakotay sat down next to them and watched with adoration as mother and child bonded. "I never want to forget this moment."

Kathryn tore her eyes away from the baby and looked at her husband. Smiling at the pure love in his eyes, she said, "He's here."

"Yes, he is. You're amazing, Kathryn."

They looked at him together, and she asked, "I know this isn't the time, but I have to know... do I still have a uterus?"

Chakotay's jaw quivered slightly and replied, "Partial."

Kathryn swallowed hard and did what she had to do... accept it and move on. "I understand."

"You were hemorrhaging severely. Beverly had to save your life."

"I understand," she said again. "Phoebe offered to carry this one, maybe..."

"We'll find a way, Kathryn."

Looking up at Chakotay again, she whispered, "We've been given an amazing gift here."

"Yes." He put his hand on the baby's back and said, "We need to give him a name."

"The choice is yours, honey."

He kissed the baby's head and said, "For the brave man who gave his life for your mother, for my great-great-grandfather who led our people in a time of great abundance, and for your courageous mother who gave you life, I name you Scott Katowa Janeway. May you embrace your heritage and be proud of those who came before you."

Moisture in her eyes, she whispered, "A beautiful name, thank you."

He kissed the side of her head. "Thank you, Kathryn, for bringing peace to my life. When I met you nine years ago, I knew that we were destined for a remarkable journey."

Looking at him with a sly smile, she said, "That journey is far from over."

"Oh, I have no doubt." Nodding towards Scott, he added, "This one is going to be a handful."

Kathryn put her hand over Chakotay's on the baby's little back and said, "A handful is about all he is right now."

With a smile, he replied, "You're right about that."

They watched him as he fell asleep, still suckling at his mother's breast. Kathryn looked up for the nurse and saw that they'd been left alone. "I guess I get to keep holding him."

"Are you comfortable?"

"If there's a pillow or two handy, they might help."

Chakotay looked around and saw a cart of linens. He grabbed what he needed and returned. "Where do you want them?"

She leaned forward. "One against my low back and one under my elbow."

After getting her situated, he tucked a blanket up around her and the baby to keep them warm. “How’s that?”

Huskily, she replied, “Perfect, thank you.”

He sat down again and together, they looked their baby over, taking inventory of his fingers and his toes, looking inside his diaper, touching his full head of dark hair, and wondering what kind of personality he’d have.

Kathryn asked, “Did you see his eyes?”

“No, he hasn’t opened them, yet. I’m guessing brown, though.”

“They might be blue for awhile.”

“With my genes? Kol’s were brown.”

Kathryn smiled. “Hard to know for sure. Phoebe’s eyes are brown, but mom said they started off blue.”

“I didn’t realize they could change colors.”

“Sometimes.” She looked at her husband and noticed how tired he looked. “How are you doing?”

“Me?” he asked in surprise.

“I doubt you slept well last night with all my tossing and turning, and I’m guessing today has taken a toll on you.”

“Yeah, but,” he said as he shook his head in wonder. “The way it’s turned out – This is incredible.”

Her head tilted with affection. “I’d kiss you, but I don’t want to disturb little Scott, here.”

“Then allow me,” he said with a chuckle as he rose up a little and pressed his lips against hers.

As a tingle spread through her, she pulled back and gasped, “Oh!”

“What?” he asked, a little amused.

“It’s... strange to be kissed with his little mouth on my breast.”

Chakotay grinned. “I’ll have to remember that a couple months from now.”

“You are deliciously naughty, you know that?”

“Is that a problem?”

“Not in my book,” she said with a wink.

He licked his lips in pure delight as he sat back in his chair. After a moment, his smile faded and he dipped his chin. “I, um...”

“Hmmm?”

“I wanted to ask if you’re okay after what happened in the delivery room.”

Her eyebrows furrowed. “You mean labor?”

“No, what the young nurse said to you.”

She thought back and then remembered. “Oh, torture.”

“I can’t believe she’d say that to you, of all people.”

“Don’t let it bother you, honey. It’s nothing.”

“It’s not nothing. I’m thinking of pulling her aside.”

“No,” she requested. “Please don’t. She knew the instant she said it that it was a mistake. I’m sure she’s beating herself up over it enough without you adding to her angst.”

“Maybe her supervisor should be notified.”

“Chakotay,” Kathryn said sternly. “Don’t. Haven’t you ever had reason to stick your foot in your mouth?”

“Of course, and in Starfleet, I was always called to the carpet on it.”

“Not always,” she said with a click of her tongue. “I never did that to you.”

“Sure you did.”

“When?”

“When Annika had us thinking that we were conspiring against each other. You pointed it out to me that I didn’t trust you.”

Kathryn rolled her eyes. “I don’t think you needed that pointed out to you. It was obvious with the phaser in your pants.”

“<I>On</I> my pants, Kathryn.”

She shrugged mischievously. “Whatever.”

Laughing, he said, “I love you. Everything about you.”

“I certainly hope so, because now,” she nodded towards their son, “you’re really stuck with me.”

Dr. Sims said, “Sorry to interrupt your fun, but I thought I’d check on our little boy.”

“He’s asleep,” Kathryn said as she pulled the blanket down a little. “But he’s still sucking. Think he’s getting anything?”

“Not yet, but it’s a reflex to suck. If he likes to do that while he sleeps, he’ll probably suck his fingers or his thumb.”

Kathryn smiled at the image that created. “He just might.”

“Are you getting sleepy, Admiral?”

“Yes, but I don’t want to put him down. I don’t want him to be alone.”

“Not to worry. We’ll be right here with him.”

Kathryn looked at Chakotay’s tired eyes and nodded. “All right, maybe all three of us could do with some rest.”

Dr. Sims carefully took the baby and placed him back in the incubator. “Does he have a name, yet?”

“Scott,” Chakotay replied. “Do you need the full name for his records?”

“You can fill those out, later. We just like to have a name other than Baby Boy, and Scott is a lovely one.”

“Named after a good man,” Kathryn added quietly as she watched the doctor tend to her son.

Chakotay took the pillow out from under Kathryn’s arm and set it on a nearby table. Before turning back to her, he stopped to look down into the incubator. He kissed his fingertips and then touched Scott’s hair. “Sleep well, my son. We’ll be back a little later.”

Kathryn smiled at her husband and said, “Now that was precious.”

It was mid-October in LaBarre, France at the Picard Vineyards. Friends and loved ones were gathered in the large yard between the grapevines and the house, joyfully watching the wedding of Beverly Crusher and Jean-Luc Picard.

Kathryn was wearing her dress whites as she stood before the happy couple and pronounced them husband and wife. "You may now kiss the bride."

Jean-Luc's eyes were alight as he placed his hand on his wife's cheek to draw her close. "Beverly," he whispered as he gave her a simple kiss.

Kathryn addressed everyone, "It is my distinct pleasure to introduce Captain Jean-Luc and Doctor Beverly Picard."

As soon as the applause ended, the newly married couple walked across the yard to the reception area for the first dance. A team of caterers had set out a beautiful display of food and bartenders were pouring glasses of champagne.

Deanna turned to Kathryn and embraced her in a firm hug. "Sorry I didn't get a chance to say hello earlier. You look wonderful!"

"Thank you, I feel wonderful," she said as she walked with her friend towards the reception. "How are things on the Titan?"

"Pretty good, actually. Negotiations with Romulus are coming along."

"That's what I hear. Did you have a chance to meet Commander Tuvok before you left?"

"I did, but only briefly. He and T'Pol boarded the same day that Wesley and I left to come here."

Kathryn picked up a glass of champagne and handed one to Deanna, and then asked for a glass of ginger ale for herself. "Well, I wish him luck with the Romulan/Vulcan alliance. That's a big job."

"Did I hear correctly that you might come out at some point?"

With a shrug she replied, "Perhaps over Chakotay's spring break. Praetor Rabom would like to take me on a tour of the capital city."

"He seems quite interested in garnering as much positive publicity as he can. I'm not sure what to think of it."

"Oh, don't worry too much. He recognizes that a positive public image can be an important tool."

Chakotay came over with Scott in his arms and said, "Hello, Counselor. Would you like to meet the newest addition?"

"Oh, would I!?" Deanna exclaimed as she set her glass down and took the tiny infant into her arms. "He's so precious!"

Kathryn looked at her son and nodded appreciatively. "I think so, but I'm a little biased."

"He looks just like his father, doesn't he?"

Chakotay smiled. "Has my coloring, at least. But I think he has his mother's bone structure."

Kathryn touched Scott's forehead as she remarked, "I don't know how you can tell at this age."

Jean-Luc came over and said, "Pardon the interruption, but I'm told that I must dance with the maid-of-honor. Deanna, would you do me the pleasure?"

"Of course, Captain," she said as she handed the baby to his mother. "But may I hold him again later?"

"He's already looking forward to it," Kathryn replied with a laugh.

Once they were dancing, Chakotay said, "Lovely wedding, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Beverly looks beautiful in that blue dress, don't you think?"

He shrugged. "You may call me biased, but I think the most beautiful woman here is standing next to me."

Kathryn looked around him and nodded towards an Al-Aurian woman standing nearby. "She is quite handsome, but I didn't think you had a thing for aliens."

Shooing his wife along, Chakotay said, "Now who's being cheeky?"

Worf raised a glass to the bride and groom. "May this union bring you great honor, and may your wedding night be voracious enough to break a clavicle, for that will be a blessing upon your marriage."

"Hear! Hear!" was heard throughout the yard.

Beverly kissed her new husband and then addressed everyone around them. "Then I guess it's a good thing one of us is a doctor."

The group laughed and at that moment, Scott started crying. Kathryn set her drink down and returned to her husband with an understanding smile.

Apologetically, he said, "If I could feed him, I would."

"I know," she said as she accepted her son from his father. "We knew he'd get hungry about this time."

They went to one of the reception tables near the house and Kathryn made herself comfortable. Chakotay put a receiving blanket over her shoulder as she unfastened her coat and lifted her shirt. He asked, "Can I get you anything?"

"Sure," she said with a flinch as Scott latched on. "An iced tea?"

"Be right back."

As soon as Chakotay left, Harry came over and asked, "May I join you?"

"Please do," she said with a smile. "How are you, Harry?"

"Doing great, actually. Are you loving motherhood?"

Kathryn looked down at the blanket that covered her and asked, "What's not to love? He's amazing."

"Well, he has amazing parents, so what else would he be?"

With a wink, she asked, "So, do you have the Enterprise ready to disembark?"

"Just about. We're doing a full systems check while Captain Picard and Doctor Crusher are on their honeymoon."

"While in space-dock or are you taking it out for a test flight?"

"Test flight. Commander Madden wants to bring her up to warp nine and see how structural integrity holds."

"Is there a concern that it won't?"

"Not in my opinion, but I know what B'Elanna is capable of. Her team has done a remarkable job with the rebuilding."

"And how are you? Ready for this?"

He blushed a little and said, "Tom keeps ribbing me that I'm finally fleeing the nest."

“You’ve been on board that ship for the better part of six months now.”

“More or less.”

“I’m sure you’ll be fine. You already make me proud.”

“Thank you, but to answer your question, I think I’m ready. I know the ship, I feel comfortable with the senior staff, I have a top-notch operations team, and, thanks to working with you over the past year and a half, I feel good about my knowledge of the quadrant.”

“Just remember to keep your eyes sharp and don’t pretend to know anything you don’t.”

“Good advice.”

“What is?” Chakotay asked as he returned with Kathryn’s tea and sat down.

“Staying sharp.” Harry acknowledged Chakotay with a nod. “How are you handling fatherhood?”

“I’ve never been happier and more sleep deprived.”

Kathryn laughed. “And you’re not the one feeding him at all hours of the night.”

“No, but I’m holding him when you’re so sleepy that you can’t keep your eyes open.”

“Thank you,” she said with a wink and then spoke to Harry again. “Not that I want to talk about work today, but did Judy send you an update?”

“On the situation with Eridani IV? Sounds like they just need a little handholding. Their concerns aren’t as demanding as they think.”

“I’m glad to hear it. We could certainly benefit from having their Federation membership restored. It’s been far too long.”

“Speaking of that, are you still planning to return to work in January?”

“On a limited basis.” She smiled at her husband. “I’ll try to work from home as much as possible, and, since I’m already participating in meetings every so often, I doubt it’ll be much of a change.”

Harry asked, “And Lt. Fields is going to help you with Scott?”

Chakotay nodded. “During the day, but she’s going to live in our guest house at night. Between my classes and Kathryn’s meetings, we’ll need a third set of hands to keep Scott happy. He’s quite taken with her.”

“How are your classes going?” Harry asked. “You have three this semester, right?”

“Feels like more since we’re getting used to parenthood at the same time, but yeah, three fourth-year tactics courses.”

Kathryn suggested, “Tell him about your plans for next semester.”

“Oh? Something new in the works?”

Chakotay frowned at his wife. “It’s not been announced, yet.”

“He’s family,” she encouraged.

“I’m one of many involved, so it’s not really that big of a deal, but Tactical Command has asked me to participate in a task force to do a SWOT analysis of the fleet.”

Harry looked between the two of them and said, “I, um, feel like I should know what that means.”

Kathryn licked her lips. “Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.”

“Ah,” Harry said with a nod. “Did I learn that in school at some point?”

“Evidently not,” Chakotay replied with a chuckle. “But after we do this analysis, the task force will be coming up with strategies and goals to strengthen the fleet. I’m representing the academy and command school.”

“I think it’s important,” Kathryn continued, “because we have only a few ships we can count on in really heated situations.”

“Like with Romulus,” Harry offered.

Chakotay nodded, “Exactly.”

Kathryn added, “When Chakotay was the only one who could come up with a plan to find the Enterprise in the Bassen Rift, Nechayev took notice. She wants to make some changes to strengthen the fleet.”

“I’ll be looking forward to hearing more about it,” Harry said with enthusiasm. “And kudos to you for getting Nechayev’s respect. That’s no easy feat.”

“She’s really not as bad as everyone assumes,” Chakotay glanced at his wife with a pointed look.

Kathryn clicked her tongue and changed the subject. “So, Harry, tell me more about the enhancements you’ve made to the Enterprise while she’s been docked. Jean-Luc was telling me about your new sensor grid last week.”

Later, when they were standing alone, Kathryn noticed a familiar-looking admiral standing by the drink table. She asked Chakotay, “Casually look at the Admiral behind you getting a drink. Have you seen him before?”

He did as she asked and said, “There’s no one on there.”

“He’s holding a martini glass and seems quite fascinated with the olive.”

“I don’t see anyone.”

Kathryn handed Scott to Chakotay. “Watch my back, would you?”

Raising his eyebrows, he asked, “Should we alert security?”

“No,” she said. “I recognize him from somewhere and he looks anything but threatening. Maybe he’s a Q. I’ll give you a signal if I need you.”

Before she got too far away, he said, “If you strike up a conversation, you might want to lead him behind that tall hedge. I could still see you and you won’t look like you’re talking to yourself.”

“Thanks,” she said over her shoulder as she made her way over the table. Casually, she nodded towards his drink and asked, “Does he make a good martini?”

“Martini?” the older man asked. He looked at his glass and said, “Oh, martini. Yes, this is quite good.”

The barkeep said, “I can make several types of martini, Admiral. Would you care for a pink one?”

“On second thought, I’m standing in the midst of a vineyard. I’ll have a glass of the Picard sparkling grape juice, please.” As the drink was being poured, she asked the older man, “Did you enjoy the wedding?”

Both the barkeep and the unknown admiral answered at the same time. The barkeep said, “Yes, Admiral. It was very nice.”

The older man said, “It was just as I expected. Quite remarkable to watch history in the making.”

Kathryn accepted the glass. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Admiral.”

She smiled and then looked at the older man, raised her eyebrows and turned to walk towards the hedge Chakotay had suggested. As suspected, he followed her.

Acting nonchalant, Kathryn casually mentioned, “This is a beautiful time of year to visit a vineyard, don’t you think?”

He chuckled. “You don’t recognize me, do you?”

“Yes and no. There’s something familiar about you, but you’re either out of time or out of place.”

“How can you tell?”

She quirked a smile. “Two things.”

“Which are?”

“One... I’m the only one who can see you, and two... your uniform is not quite right.”

“It’s not?” He looked down and glanced between hers and his. “It should be an exact replica.”

She pointed at his buckle. “The bullseye on your belt is too small.”

Laughing, he asked, “Can’t get much by you, can we?”

“We?”

He extended his hand. “I’m Admiral Jenkins from the 29th century temporal review board.”

“Ah,” she said in relieved surprised. “That’s right. You were a lot angrier when I saw you last.”

“And it’s been a year and half for you.”

Taking a sip of her drink, she asked, “And how long has it been for you?”

“A few months. Since you can’t travel through time anymore, I’ve come to you.”

She blinked slowly. “Don’t tell me you have another assignment for me.”

“No, actually. A few of us thought you needed affirmation.”

“Affirmation?” she asked with a smirk. “Do I strike you as the type?”

“Not exactly, but we’ve read your memoirs.”

“I write memoirs?” she asked with disbelief.

“You might,” he grimaced at his slip. “Anyway... I... we... just wanted you to know that you’ve accomplished what you set out to do. Timelines A and B have merged and we’ve got the best of both.”

A sense of relief washed over her and she relaxed. “Maybe there’s something to be said about affirmation after all.”

“Good work, Admiral. We still expect great things from you, but time has been restored.”

Kathryn asked in jest, “Am I high profile enough for you?”

He laughed and bowed his head. “Good day, Admiral. It has been an honor and a treat to work with you.”

“Thank you, sir.” She watched as he dissolved away in a transporter beam. Feeling much lighter, Kathryn turned to walk back towards the group and then practically jumped out of her skin to see Q sitting on the ground, legs stretched out as he gazed up at the sky. “Q!”

“Is that any way to welcome an old friend, my dear Kathy? I have, after all, come such a long way to see you.”

“Friend?” She put her hand on her hip. “I’ve been talking to Jean-Luc about you.”

“So I’ve heard,” he jumped up with excitement. “You’re planning to write a little book about yours truly.”

“Honestly, I don’t think we will because you’re too unpredictable. We cannot figure out what your ultimate motivation is.”

“It’s quite simple, even for your miniscule minds.”

“Then enlighten me, please.”

“Humanity is fun to play with. Why not put you through a few tests and watch how you dance? Jean-Luc is a man who likes to debate human nature and the mistakes of humanity. You’re a woman who likes to pursue compassion and a utopian way of life – a yearning to share your vaunted Starfleet ideals with the entire galaxy.” He grinned. “I’ve given you both exactly what you want.”

She stared at him blankly for a moment and then sighed. “Where is my godson?”

“Over there,” he waved casually. “Making plans to liven up this rather dull wedding.”

Whipping her head around, she admonished, “Q! You’re supposed to keep an eye on him!”

He laughed. “Just a little joke, dear Kathy. You’re entirely too nervous.”

“No, I know what your son is capable of, and this is not a Betazoid wedding!”

“Ooooooh, now there’s an idea!”

“Q!” she admonished. “I expect you to control your son.”

“Or what?” he asked with a pouty taunt. “You’ll throw me out? Not a problem, I can assure you. While your wedding may have been nauseatingly romantic, at least the food was tolerable.”

“Thanks, I think.” She frowned. “What, exactly, is my godson planning?”

“Try not to worry. You wouldn’t be able to do a thing about it.” He got in her face and was practically salivating as he asked, “Now, tell me, what are your plans now?”

“I have no idea.”

“Don’t you, Kathy?” His eyes widened and he was gone with a flash.

Chakotay walked up, no longer holding Scott, and asked, “So, he was Q? I just saw the flash.”

“Two visitors in a row,” she said with a sigh. “One was our Q and the other was from 29th century temporal review board.”

“Oh?” He held her elbows. “New orders?”

“No,” she said with a relieved chuckle. “Just an affirmation of a job well done.”

“Really?”

“Really.” With a deep sigh, she wrapped her arms around Chakotay and hugged him tightly. “The future is ours and it feels really, really good.”
