

# Secret Santa 2011

## Wish:

*Fic: J/Kashyk ending with J/C.*

*Dark overtones but an upbeat ending (not fluffy, but hopeful).*

**Pairing:** J/Kashyk, J/C

**Rating:** NC-17

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**A/N:** I had many first times with this story but it was a lot of fun to write. I needed a little more time than I thought and unfortunately I didn't have the time to send it to a beta. I'm German so please be kind when it comes to my English grammar.

I hope you had a great Christmas and a good start in 2012.

And now have fun with your Secret Santa ☺

## FROM SCRATCH

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### Prolog

*He recalled the picture of the red haired woman. She had stood in front of him with squared shoulders and a provocative protruding chin. She had acted cold and distant in front of this man, as if the situation was still under her control.*

*He had seen the scattered thoughts in her, how she had clenched her fist, but no other sign for her tension.*

*He remembered that he had sent her a pejorative smile and the anger flashed in her blue eyes.*

*He knew that she wouldn't be easy to manipulate from that moment on, when he first saw her in her ready room. But he always loved challenges.*

*He clasped his hands on his desk and his lips formed a smug smile.*

## Chapter I

Captain Kathryn Janeway stood by the window after the Devore left her ship. With the left hand on her hip and in the right, a cup of coffee, she took a deep sip of the hot liquid to calm herself.

She didn't like this Inspector Kashyk. He was more arrogant and more obnoxious than the other inspectors they had met on their way through the Devore Empire. It has been the second inspection of his team and she hated how he hogged her ready room every time. Besides, he had asked the wrong questions. She had assessed that the Devore don't stop short of reading personal logs and to look through personal belongings but it seemed that Kashyk had a special delight in exploring people's personalities.

She took a deep breath. And if that wasn't enough the Devore ransacked her ship again and again. The doctor had told her a few minutes ago that some of the telepaths wouldn't survive another transporter suspension or at the least they would get serious health problems.

The past few days they tried to avoid as many Devore ships as possible but it wasn't always possible. The Devore use a special shield modification that Voyager's sensors couldn't detect and sometimes one or two of the Devore ships appeared out of nowhere.

They still had to withstand at least two more days but the transport shuttle changed the time again and they still waited for the new rendezvous co-ordinates.

She remembered how they had found the Brenari on a damaged transport vessel. The Brenari home system had been three small planets at the edge of the Devore System. But since the Devore extended their borders a few years ago they were hunted. Most of the Brenari could rescue themselves on a planet just a few light years away from Devore space but it was a rough environment and they didn't have the resources to survive there any longer. Because of that, the Brenari tried to find a new planet to live on. Because of their inferior technologies and the lack of resources the Brenari had to depend on the help from others to get through their enemies' space.

Some neutral species that also lived in Devore space send transports through space to smuggle the Brenari, but for a price that high, there were just a few Brenari who were able to afford such a trip.

Despite the high prices the transport vessels were small and sometimes badly damaged. More and more frequently the vessels got caught by the Devore.

Voyager met such a transport ship near the border just two days after they entered Devore space. Because she already knew about the regulations concerning telepaths and had to hide some of her own crew members she decided to help the small group.

The transport ship wasn't able to move because an energy relay had caused an explosion near the engines and had stranded it. Voyager detected a Devore Ship on an intercept course and after the Captain of the smuggler vessel explained the situation, Voyager

beamed the Brenari on board to meet up with another vessel that would bring them to the wormhole.

Kathryn took another sip of her coffee. Her head was spinning and she couldn't think straight so she decided to make a stop at the mess hall to get something to eat and clear her thoughts.

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She was currently finishing her dessert as Commander Chakotay called her back to the bridge.

As the door of the turbo lift opened she saw a small vessel on the view screen.

"Report!" she ordered.

"It's a scout ship, one pilot none other crew" Chakotay informed her.

"The vessel hasn't raised shields or charged weapons" Tom said.

"We're being hailed." Harry stated.

Kathryn nodded and to her surprise Kashyks face appeared on the view screen.

\*Oh no, not again\* she thought. \*Not him again\*

"Captain" he greeted her.

She took a deep breath to sound not too bugged.

"Inspector"

"It's urgent that we talk!"

She wondered why he wasn't wearing his uniform and why he wanted to talk so badly confused her even more. There were countless things she would prefer to do than to talk to him. But she was also curious why he arrived alone and on a small ship.

"You know the way to my ready room." She said finally and left the bridge.

She sighted as Kashyk left her ready room.

The Devore knew that they were hiding telepath. They knew about the nebula, the transport vessel, everything.

And the only way to avoid a catastrophe was to trust this man to help them.

The situation couldn't be worse.

This man wasn't reliable.

His actual behavior didn't fit him. Even she didn't know him for long she knew that he wasn't someone who cares for others and especially not for telepath.

There had to be another reason for him to pretend to help and she had to find out why.

Also she had to find a way to save the telepath unknowing to him.

The door chime rang.

"Come in!"

Chakotay entered the room with a pad in his hand.

He stopped in front of her desk and gave her a questioning look.

"He asked for asylum." She said and stood up.

She walked over to her replicator and ordered herself a cup of coffee.

"Can I offer you something Commander?"

"A cup of tea please." he smiled.

She ordered his tea and they sat down on the couch.

"Will you accept his request?"

"I have to, Chakotay. He knows everything; about the telepath, the transport ship, the nebula, the wormhole ... If I abandon him the Devore will catch us like nobody's business. If I accept and he is saying the truth he can help us out of Devore space without being caught."

"But if he's not ..."

"... if he's not and I'm sure he's not... for that case we need a solution."

"And you already have one?"

"No not really. I think in first place we have to find out about his reasons. His change of mind came all of the sudden. A few hours ago he was the exemplary Devore inspector and now he wants to help telepath. Maybe he makes a mistake or becomes careless if he thinks that we trust him and buy his story. She took a sip from her cup.

"Our other problem is what to do with the telepaths" Chakotay said.

"If the transport ship can't bring them to the wormhole theirs and our only chance to survive is that we find the wormhole by our self before the Devore ships find us."

Janeway stood up "Kashyk said he wanted to proof me that there are Devore ships in that nebula. I'll meet him in astrometry to see what we're dealing with. Meet me in an hour in the

Brenari quarters. I want to see if they know something more about the wormhole and good hearted Devore.”

She put her cup back into the replicator and headed to the door. Chakotay followed her.

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Kashyk stood in front of the big view screen as Kathryn entered the astrometry.

“You wanted to show me that the nebula is a trap.” Kathryn said challenging.

He took the few steps and joined her at the controls.

“Use these specifications to recalibrate your sensors Captain.” He smiled and handed her a padd.

She took a short look at the data and identified them as the specifications for the Devore shields.

\*If the Devore really don't know about his plan\* she thought \*this specifications can save us a lot of trouble and inspections.\*

He watched her from behind as she worked on Voyagers sensors and his eyes wandered over her back. Even without turning her head she felt his eyes on her back and could imagine his sly smile.

\*So you think I'm so easy to impress Inspector\* she thought. \*A few sensor specifications. But two can play that game.\*

The way he watched her made her feel uneasy but she had to grin and bear it.

She needed him to feel save.

As she finished she turned to him and gave him a sweet smile.

“It worked.”

He returned her smile “As you can see there are some Devore ships in this nebula.”

She cursed under her breath as she looked at the screen again and tapped her combadge.

“Janeway to Seven of Nine and Tuvok. Meet me in the astrometry.”

There were a dozen Devore ships in that nebula, invisible to regular sensors. A perfect trap they would have walked into if Kashyk hadn't warned Voyager.

When Seven and Tuvok arrived she let Kashyk show them the ships.

She watched him carefully \*he plays well\* she thought and waited for his next explanation.

“We were the one who changed the rendezvous coordinates.” He said.

“Alright Inspector you helped us to avoid this ambush, what now?” She was angry with herself that they didn’t notice that the last transmission they received from the transport vessel was actually sent from a Devore ship.

It was a relief for her that Kashyks plan was also to find the wormhole. That would make the whole thing a lot easier. To pursue a second plan with Kashyk unknowing would have been hard to handle.

After she finished the meeting with Seven and Tuvok she ordered a security officer to bring Kashyk back to the meeting room.

With Tuvok she set out for the Brenari quarters.

“What do you think about our guest Tuvok?” she asked.

“It seems that his interest in finding the wormhole is as large as ours. Either because he needs an escape route or to get the Devore a chance to caught more telepaths.”

“And what do you think is more likely?”

“Both possibilities have an equal probability. On the one hand he had given us lots of information to avoid the Devore ships and he is alone on board. He could be telling the truth. On the other hand it could be a well planned trick.”

For the last minute she had the same thought over and over again. There had to be hint, maybe just a little inconsistency in his actions to reveal his true motives.

“Tuvok! I need you to do something for me.” She handed him a padd.

He read it and raised an eyebrow.

“As you wish, Captain.”

They met with Chakotay in front of the Brenari quarters.

“Some Devore ships close by Commander?”

“No Captain everything quiet at the moment.”

She smiled at her first Officer and they entered the room.

After a short talk with the Brenari she was still uncertain what to think about Kashyk.

“There had been sympathizers before.” Left her question still open.

She didn’t want to throw him in the brig, which would cause only more problems.

Kashyk could really help them to find the wormhole; he was clever and knew the territory better than they did. She just had to ensure that the Devore wouldn't get any information from him.

She needed him to trust her. He mustn't figure out that she hid something from him.

At least they had a course and she ordered Chakotay to search for Torat.

Kathryn stopped in the doorway of the meeting room.

Kashyk walked up and down at the window.

She studied him over a minute.

She couldn't deny that he was an attractive man. She liked the deep black hair and his angular face. She had loved to watch his lips while he talked during the inspections.

Her plan could be dangerous and she knew it. But she would enjoy the little game she was going to play.

She still didn't like him for his thinking but except for his behavior now and then he was very handsome.

"Nervous?" she asked and Kashyk stopped walking.

She sized him up and decided for herself that his black uniform suited him more.

She liked the black leather gloves but this wasn't the moment to think about it.

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With a short call over the comm she asked for the status of the search for Torat before she went back to her quarters. She needed a break and she breathed in deeply as the door shot behind her. She changed in something more comfortable and sat down with a book and a cup of hot tea.

She couldn't finish the chapter she was reading before the door chime sounded.

"Come in" she murmured and hoped that the concern of her visitor wouldn't take much time.

Kashyk walked through the door and a security Officer stopped in the doorframe.

She nodded and he took his place in front of her quarters.

"How can I help you?" she asked and stood up.

"I'm sorry Captain" he said "I'm not used the time zone on your ship. On a Devore ship it would be early afternoon." Not really a lie but he knew for sure that it was late at night on Voyager by now.

"So how can I help you compensating this time differential?"

"You could bear me your company." He smiled seductively.

That wasn't exactly how she imagined the rest of the day but maybe it would open new possibilities to her.

"Can I offer you something to drink?" she asked with a small smile.

"Through the Inspections I found something in your database that sounds interesting. It's called wine?"

\*First day on my ship and he's already in my quarters asking for wine\* she thought but nodded and walked to the replicator. She ordered him a glass of red wine and for herself a cup of tea.

As she returned he sat on her couch already and watched her closely.

She joined him and handed him the glass.

For a few minutes both remained silent, Kashyk tasted the wine and looked around.

He knew these quarters. While Voyagers first Inspection he surveyed some of the quarters by himself. But now that he knew who its resident was he found it even more interesting.

Kathryn smiled as she watched him drinking his wine. She wondered what effect alcohol would have on a Devore. She replicated real alcohol purposely. Maybe it would lose his tongue.

"That tastes wonderful." Kashyk smiled.

"Tell me" she asked "what do you want to do when we left the Devore Space?"

"Until the last days I never really thought about it." He answered.

"I never had the opportunity to leave. But I think I'll find myself a world where nobody knows the Devore and start a new life, maybe to raise a family."

"That sounds romantic."

"Kind of but I always dreamed to have a little family sometimes. What about you Kathryn... please excuse me is it okay if I call you Kathryn?"

"Sure, I'm not on duty right now."

"Well, is there a family waiting for you at home?"

"You studied my database you should know that." She teased him.



“I have to confess that I indeed know that. But you would be a great mother why don't you have two or three little kids already?”

“Let just say I wasn't the right time yet. And maybe this isn't the right place to talk about family plans.” She changed the subject.

More and more his glass emptied and Kathryn brought him another one, white wine this time.

He told her some stories about his childhood while he emptied this second glass and after his third glass of wine he moved closer to her.

“I like the color of your hair.” He said suddenly and placed his left hand on her knee.

“Devore woman have always black hair. I like that shiny red.” He murmured while he took a close look at her hair.

A sudden shiver went through her body as she felt the warmth of his hand through her trousers. She knew she shouldn't let him touch her like that but she enjoyed the sensation it caused.

His hand moved a little while he talked and she caught herself as she moved a little closer to him. She savored the light touch of his hand but she suddenly came to her senses when it moved up to her thigh.

“It's late.” She said and stood up “I think we should find some rest.”

“Thank you for the wine. Good night Kathryn.” He answered with a smile and left her quarters.

## Chapter II

After nearly two days they finally found the trace of Torat and they located his ship at noon without any sign of a Devore Ship around.

She had to draw on her diplomatic talent because the Professor wasn't very communicative.

Torat didn't respond to their hails and deactivated his communication system.

Fortunately Harry was able to override the lockout and they got a chance to speak to Torat.

“This is a waste of time, disable his ship.” Kashyk said and Kathryn felt his body heat on her back, as he stepped right behind her.

“That's what we call overkill Inspector.” she answered and ordered Harry to transport the Professor instead.

It took her and Kashyk nearly an hour and their full range of persuasiveness to get the information they needed.

\*We worked well together\* she thought.

His tactic to depreciate Torats work was a great idea because there's nothing more vulnerable than the pride of a scientist.

They spend the night with the analysis of the new data but nothing they try to get the next position of the wormhole works.

Although their first night of research wasn't a success, to her own surprise, Kathryn had a lot of fun.

Kashyk was a smart and intelligent man and the more they talked the more she had to admit that he wasn't as bad as she thought.

They laughed a lot and now and then she caught herself flirting with him just because she wanted to and without any other purpose.

She enjoyed conversing with someone who was as interested in stellar phenomena as much as she was.

When they finally surrendered it was already early morning.

\*That has to stop Kathryn\* she told herself. \*He's still a Devore Inspector. It doesn't matter how nice he's talking to you, how many times he complimented you. He still isn't reliable. Concentrate on your mission Kathryn – you have to find out why he's playing this. And NOT flirting with him because he's so nice.\*

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They had decided to start another try after she finished her shift on the bridge.

The mess hall emptied more and more and as Neelix closed the kitchen and left they decided to play some music.

She remembered that it had annoyed her hearing this music during the inspections. But now, while sitting here with him in the nearly dark room, watching the colorful lights of the Kolyan Kolyar and solving a good problem she enjoyed it.

"It's not like you to give up, think harder."

\*How does he know me so well by now?\* she thought. \*But he's right. There has to be a way.\*

"How do you predict a random occurrence?"

"You follow your instincts."

She walked up next to him and took a look on his computer.

An idea crossed her mind and she stared at him while the idea gelled in her mind.

"Captain?" Kashyk asked wondering about her sudden silence.

"Counterpoint, it's in all great music ..." she started.

While the new analysis was running they looked out of the window watching the Kolyan Kolyar.

"You're risking a lot too, why?" she finally asked.

"Three months ago my teams were inspecting a vessel. We found a family of telepaths hiding in one of the extraction tanks. There was a very young child. She'd been inside it for days, barely breathing. When I lifted her out and set her down on the deck she thanked me. I sent her to the relocation center with the others knowing full well what would happen to her. After that I could think of nothing else. And when I couldn't stand it any longer – you're my deliverance Captain."

His words sounded so honest and so true. Maybe he was really telling the truth.

She really wanted him to tell the truth. She really enjoyed his company and something in her mind told her that this story couldn't be a lie.

She wanted to say something to him, tell him how sorry she felt for him, but the voice of Voyager's computer interrupted them.

To her relief the new method worked and they found what they were searching for.

She was tired and decided to solve the problem the Devore's sensor array would cause in the next morning.

She said good night to Kashyk at his quarters. He invited her in but she knew it wasn't the best idea during the current situation.

She still didn't have proof that the Inspector was honest to them and although she was well aware of that, she felt a little too attracted to him.

"Captain!" she heard Tuvok's voice from behind as she was on her way to her own quarters.

"Yes Commander?"

"I finished the investigation you asked me to do."

"What did you find out?"

"Here's my complete report but you were right." She took the padd from him and had a short look at it.

"Any news from Seven?"

"She said she'll be ready tomorrow night."

"Good work. Oh and one last thing Commander. Could you please give this to Chakotay?" she handed him a padd.

"Sure Captain. Good night."

"Good night Tuvok."

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Voyager's crew spent the next day preparing for the drift through the sensor array.

If everything goes well they'd arrive at the wormhole just in time.

She just arrived in her quarters after her shift when the door chime rang.

"Come in."

"You know" Kashyk said while he entered the room "I looked at the Kolyan Kolyar again last night and now I'm sure. It wasn't the polarization axis what made it look so beautiful." he smiled seductively.

She smiled back at him and walked to the replicator.

"Another glass of wine?"

"Neelix had a heart and replicated a bottle for me." he said and handed it to her.

"I think I'll miss wine as much as I will miss coffee."

"Maybe I'll replicate you some bottles." She opened the bottle and returned with two glasses.

They sat down on the couch.

"If everything is going well we'll be out of Devore space same time tomorrow." She mused.

"I hope so" he answered.

"I studied some sensor data – there is a small system a few light years from the new Brenari home world. I heard it's inhabited by a xenophile's species. You wouldn't mind dropping me off?"

"No. You're welcome as long as you decide to stay. We're all very thankful for your help."

The bottle he brought was soon empty and she replicated another one.

The wine made her easy in her mind and she slightly touched his arm.

\*Maybe it wouldn't be that bad to have him on board.\* She thought.

\*Or maybe he just wants to stay a little longer.\* she made her decision.

"Kashyk there's something we need to talk about." She started but was interrupted as she suddenly felt his hungry lips on hers.

Surprised she drew back from him. With a smile he placed the two glasses on the table before he softly grabbed her upper arm and pulled her closer.

"I don't think we have to talk." He breathed.

Again his lips found hers. Willingly she opened her mouth and his tongue slipped between her lips gently playing with hers.

His hands move from her arm down to her waist, moving her onto his lap. She didn't resist and deepened the kiss.

His hands wandered over her back, up and down leaving tickling traces.

She broke the kiss to watch him closely as he unzipped her uniform jacket and removed the gray turtleneck.

His warm breath tickled her ear as he whispered something she didn't understand, with every word his lips lightly touched the sensitive spot behind her ear that made her shiver.

"We have to stop." She managed to say with a croaky voice.

"No, we don't have to stop." He whispered and broke her resistance with soft kisses on her neck. His tongue danced playfully over her collarbone while he pulled her undershirt out of her trousers.

A soft moan escaped her lips as his hands slipped under her shirt and touched the naked skin of her back. Slowly his hands wandered up and cupped her breasts, teased the sensitive nipples through the fine fabric of her bra.

His teeth teased the soft flesh of her neck; his fingers caressed her hard nipples and as his hands slipped under the fabric of her bra and touched the sensitive skin of her breasts it drove her out of her mind.

With a sudden movement he removed her undershirt and laid her down on the sofa.

It made her feel uneasy as he watched her a little too long but he just smiled and lowered his lips to her belly. His tongue drew slowly circles on her hot skin moving higher and licking her erected nipples after he had taken off the last disturbing fabric.

A little scream came over her lips as his teeth gently bit down and he began to suck and nibble.

With trembling hands she managed to remove his shirt to touch his broad chest.

She felt his hands wandering down her waist, unfastening her trousers and pulling them down a little.

He kissed her hungrily, their tongues performing a wild dance. She pulled him closer and moaned into his mouth as she felt the sensation of his fingers between her legs.

His fingers moved slightly through her wetness making her moan again while he broke the kiss and went down to spread soft kisses on her swollen lips.

She whimpered as his tongue played with her clit, gently sucking it in his mouth. Her breath came in short, harsh gasps and she whined as his finger easily entered her.

She felt that he removed her trousers completely, placing himself between her legs.

She grabbed his hair pulling him on top of her while he moved in and out of her sending shivers through her body.

She kissed him desperately, holding him close.

She gasped at the sensation of a second finger inside her and his thumb massaging her clit.

“Kashyk please” she croaked.

He smiled and removed his trousers in a quick movement.

She tried to reach for his pulsating erection but he grabbed her wrists and placed them over her head.

“Relax” he whispered and entered her fully in one deep thrust.

She tried to free her hands but he held her in a firm grip. She groaned as he moved deep within her and entangled him with her legs pulling him even closer.

His lips returned to her aching nipple and she shivered beneath him as his free hand moved down to her clit.

She closed her eyes as waves of pleasure flooded over her.

He stopped his movement “Open your eyes, I want to see you.” he whispered.

She obeyed and he lifted her hips upward to change the angle. Again he began to move inside her increasing the tempo with every deep thrust.

She screamed his name as she couldn't control herself any longer and convulsed around him. He followed her a few thrusts later releasing himself inside of her.

The door chime rang and she woke up suddenly.

Realizing that she was naked and who was with her she cursed silently and grabbed her dressing gown, pulling it on as she walked to the door.

"Chakotay? It's the middle of the night what is it?"

"B'Elanna just gave me a report you should read urgently."

"What is it about?"

"The sensor array."

"Meet me in half an hour in my ready room and we will talk about it. I just have to get dressed."

"Okay Captain." he said and left.

She sighed in relief. How would she explain to him how Kashyk was with her if he'd asked to come in?

All of a sudden she felt a guilty conscience about sleeping with Kashyk.

She felt kind of caught as Chakotay stood in her doorway.

\*Come on Kathryn\* she thought \*it's not Chakotay's concern with whom you have sex.\*

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"Is there something else Chakotay?" Kathryn asked after B'Elanna left her ready room.

"I got your order from Tuvok."

"How is it going?"

"Everything is alright; B'Elanna and Seven are working on it. But there's something I don't understand ..." he paused. "Why Kathryn?"

"That's none of your business Commander." she answered coldly.

\*I shouldn't have gone so far\* she thought.

\*What am I going to tell him?\*

"Kathryn! Be honest. You know I want to help you but I can't if I don't know the truth."

“Chakotay I can't tell you.”

“Why?”

There was such a kindness in his eyes she couldn't look at him.

She knew he just wanted to help.

But she felt like she had betrayed him.

She still felt Kashyk's hands upon her, heard his breath in her ears, and remembered his smell and his voice.

She knew it was as mistake. She knew Kashyk wasn't honest and now she knew it even more. But she hadn't been able to resist him.

And now Chakotay was standing in front of her with this love in his eyes, the worry in his voice, the arms she wanted to be held close with. She felt more than terrible.

“I slept with him”, she whispered.

He looked at her in disbelief.

“I understand Captain.” He said coldly and left the room without another word.

Slowly Kathryn sat down on the sofa and gazed into space.

She could have handled it if he had yelled at her but she couldn't handle that he had just left.

She had seen the disappointment in his eyes, the anger and the disgust. And he was so right. She shouldn't have gone so far. She should have stopped it right at the beginning.

But it felt so good being touched.

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He didn't say a word during the meeting. She could feel that he was angry but more than that disappointed and hurt. But she didn't have the time to think about it. They needed a plan to reach the wormhole before the Devore ships arrived.

She escorted Kashyk to the shuttle bay. She was glad that he was leaving. It became harder and harder for her to maintain the appearance of an attracted woman. She had to concentrate on the situation but all she could think of was Chakotay's look on her face as he left her ready room. She wanted to talk to him, wanted to apologize, wanted to tell him how sorry she felt.



"I made one adjustment to your plan, after the inspection we're going to wait at the wormhole for as long as we can until it begins to collapse." she said as authentically as she was able to.

"I may not be able to join you this time."

"Try!"

He kissed her. Soft and gentle. She remembered the last night. She kissed him back.

Her lips longed for his touch but her head was screaming.

She took a deep breath and sighed in relief as his ship left Voyager.

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She sat in Chakotay's chair. The Devore were gone. She was alone with Kashyk.

"How did you know?" he asked.

"B'Elanna figured out the problem the sensor array would cause. It was quite obvious. You knew what the scan would do to our warp core. And there was this transmitter on your ship. Do you remember? The signal was very well hidden, but Tuvok found it anyway. Your inspection team knew the whole time what we were doing.

They followed us. How else was it possible that they arrived here so quickly? They're responsible for a completely different sector. You know, Seven of Nine has a talent in manipulating our sensors. And once she knew how your shields worked it was easy for her to figure out the small changes you did on your own vessel."

"Very clever Captain. And how were you able to hide your plan from me? Usually I realize when someone is lying."

"I just never knew it." she smiled.

"Captain, do you really think this was all about finding the wormhole?"

She gave him a questioning look.

"Captain I really thought you would find out earlier about my duplicity." He smiled.

"Usually I'm a really bad actor."

"I know you hated me when I first entered your ship. It was fun to see you angry while sitting in your chair. And it was even more fun to see you lying naked on your bed, screaming my name. The wormhole would have been a welcome addition but I really don't care about a hand full of telepaths." he grinned and left the bridge.

## Chapter III

Kathryn sat in her quarters and tried to read a book. She read the last sentences over and over again but her thoughts returned to her first Officer.

He didn't talk to her more than was necessary. He left her ready room after everything about the ship's business was said.

He canceled their dinners. The warmth she loved in his eyes had disappeared. She had tried to call him. She had invited him to stay with her. Every time he had left.

He didn't talk to her while they were on the bridge. He stared at the view screen; spent more attention to a padd than was necessary. The days had followed the same pattern for nearly a week including today.

After a while she couldn't stand the silence any longer and escaped into her ready room.

He hadn't followed like usual.

When she headed off to her quarters a few hours later he had already gone.

She sighed and closed the book. This was going to be a long night. She wouldn't be able to sleep like the previous days. Startled she looked at the door as the chime rang. "Come in!"

Chakotay walked through the door, stopped in the middle of the room and faced her with an angry expression on his face.

"Why?" he simply asked.

"Chakotay?"

"Why, Kathryn?" his voice was a little louder than before.

"What Chakotay?"

"Why Kashyk?" he spat the name.

"I don't know ..." she stumbled and it was the truth. She couldn't explain it to herself why she fell for this man.

"Chakotay" she tried again "I can't explain it. It just happened."

“It just happened? So that’s the explanation for why you spent a night with an unknown alien?”

“He wasn’t an unknown alien, Chakotay and you know that. He tried to help us and...”

“And then we found out that he betrayed us Kathryn, you remember that?”

“We didn’t know it at that time.”

“And you think that makes it so much better? So what was it? Fascination? A crush? Maybe love?” his voice got angrier with the last words.

“Fascination, yes, a crush maybe but I didn’t love him. Maybe it was just a need.”

She had asked herself this question over and over again the last few days but couldn’t find a satisfactory response.

“What kind of need?”

“Closeness, a touch.” she knew that it was the wrong answer right after the words left her mouth.

“And why did you never ask before?” he asked with hurt in his voice.

“You know we’re not allowed to.” She tried to explain to him.

“Since New Earth you’ve kept me an arm’s length away.” his voice is just an angry grumble.

“I waited for you because I love you. I waited for three years.” He sounded hopeless. “You said you loved me too, but instead you jumped into bed with the next alien.”

“No! You’re wrong Chakotay. I didn’t jump into bed with the next best alien. Kashyk was the first man I got in touch with after New Earth and you’re well aware of that. I never lied to you. I loved you on New Earth and I still love you, but you know protocol”

“Shut Up Kathryn! If you’re so damn into protocol then tell me just one thing Kathryn! Did you ask the Doc before you went to bed with him? Like protocol dictates? - No? So you just use protocol to avoid me!”

“Chakotay ...”

“No Kathryn. You could have told me that you’re just not into me anymore, but still using protocol to hide behind ... I thought better of you!”

“Chakotay be honest.” She got a little angry too. “Did you ever kiss a woman again since New Earth?”

“Of course I kissed women Kathryn. But I didn’t have sex with them.” He turned and left her quarters.

“Chakotay!” she cried after him but the doors were already closed.

She stared at them in disbelief. She has never seen Chakotay that angry.

A tear runs down her face. So that was it. They hadn't talked for days and she sat here and cried. Wasn't that the reason she held on to that damn protocol? She knew she couldn't stand to lose him and she didn't want to feel the pain of a broken heart again. And now it hurt even more.

She missed him. She missed him badly. She missed his smile, his soft voice, the touch of his hand. She missed their dinners, his optimism, and her best friend.

She cursed herself for that moment of weakness. That moment of weakness, were she wasn't able to push this man away. She cursed herself for screaming Kashyk's name instead of Chakotay's. She cursed herself for enjoying his touch, for losing control.

She did it again. She lost a man she loved on her own fault. She lost Justin and her father on that damn planet because she wasn't able to help them. She lost Mark with the decision she made five years ago to destroy that array, and now she's lost Chakotay because she was afraid to lose him.

But he wouldn't understand. She didn't understand it herself.

All the years on board Voyager she was afraid. She was afraid that they would never make it home. That there would be a problem she couldn't solve. She was afraid of losing her crew, her friends. And even more she was afraid to lose him. Every time he wasn't at her side.

Every time he wasn't on board. Every time he lay in sickbay. Every time she should be afraid of an alien warship she was afraid of losing him. Even now she couldn't read the reports laying on her desk because she was thinking about him.

Maybe this was a chance for letting him go. A chance for her to concentrate on her mission again. Maybe it was the right decision to hold onto protocol.

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The days went by too quickly. The returning of the Doc's memories had kept her busy.

He sent her to sleep but she couldn't. His situation reminded her too much of her own problem but nobody was supposed to know about her own inner fight -- the fight between her own feelings. The fight between love and fear. The fight between life and protocol. Maybe if the Doc was able to start a new life she would be too.

Her breathing grew heavy and her stomach convulsed as she activated the chime.

The door opened only seconds later and she entered the darkened room. Chakotay sat on the couch reading a padd.

"Captain?" he asked without any noticeable emotion.

“Chakotay please. I'm not standing here as your Captain.”

“Then maybe you should leave.” he looked back at the padd.

“Please Chakotay can we just talk?” she pleaded.

“Okay. We'll talk.” he pointed at the couch and she sat down beside him. “You wanted to talk.” he said after a minute of silence.

She forgot everything she wanted to say. She had composed every sentence in her mind but now there was nothing left. “Chakotay I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.”

He watched her closely.

“I was afraid.”

“Afraid?”

“I was afraid of losing you.”

“You were afraid of losing me.”

“Chakotay please... Every day on board this ship I'm afraid of losing you. I'm afraid of losing you to a pointless battle, losing you in a shuttle accident, losing you to an unknown disease. Chakotay I couldn't live without you. I couldn't handle it. But I'm the Captain. I'm not allowed to be afraid. And I thought I would be less afraid if I didn't love you. But that's the problem – I DO love you. I needed to find a way ...I needed something to hide behind so I wouldn't start a relationship with you because I knew I would be even more afraid if I did. Until now I have lost everyone I've ever loved. And I don't want to lose you too.” She paused. “Does this make any sense to you?”

“No not really.” he smiled softly.

It wasn't important to him what she was exactly telling him. It was important that she was here in his quarters, saying that she loved him.

“Me neither.” she sighed.

“Maybe we could start from scratch. Without protocol” she said with a hopeful look in her eyes.

“Yes maybe. Just give me some time to think about it.”

Yes he was glad to hear her say \*I love you\* but he couldn't forget so easily. He needed time to think about it. He needed time to figure out how he was able to forgive her. He knew it was a big step for her to throw away protocol. And because of that he really wanted to forgive her. But he still needed time. She nodded and left.

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She hadn't seen him all day. It was his day off and she sat nervously in her ready room. She waited for a sign since she left his quarters last night. Finally the doors to her ready room opened and he entered. "Here are your reports Captain." he handed her a handful of padds and left.

Disappointed she sat down on the couch. How could she expect that everything would be alright after just one night? She began reading the padds. She worked herself through a boring security report and an even more boring report from the Doc. Her shift was nearly over when she started the last one. Her eyes widened in surprise and she smiled happily as she read it.

"Dinner tonight?"

The End