

DISCLAIMER: Star Trek is the property of Paramount, this story depicts a loving/sexual relationship between women. No money earned.

ARCHIVING: Only with the permission of the author.

Awaken by Kadyan

Part 1

I tried to open my eyes but the light was so bright it was hurting. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't force my eyes open. Suddenly a thought crossed my mind: who was I? I didn't remember my name. A surge of panic came through me.

"Kathryn, open your eyes!" a voice ordered nearby.

Yes, my name was Kathryn. I tried to obey the voice, which was repeating the order, but it was so bright, too bright.

"Lower the light," asked another voice even closer. I knew this voice. It was a comforting voice when I was a child, my mother's voice. I started to smile before a fading thought told me something was wrong with this picture. How could my mother be here with me? My ship was lost in the Delta Quadrant, 35 thousand light years from home. And then I remembered all. I was Captain Kathryn Janeway of the Federation Starship Voyager. Remembered the attack. My ship was a mess when I stepped into Engineering wanting a report on the warp drive. The communications were down, sickbay was piled with wounded, my second in command, Chakotay, was there and I had left the bridge to Tuvok after we limped to a nearby nebula to hide. The panic and shouting in Engineering was all I remembered; everything went dark after that.

"Katie, open your eyes," my Mom's voice softly asked and, this time, I obeyed the sweet order.

Everything was bright and clear as I recognized a medical room. It wasn't Voyager's and it wasn't the EMH either. Doctor Kathryn Pulaski was smiling at me. I was at a loss so I turned my head a little on the left to meet the watering eyes and the smile on my mother's face.

"Oh, Katie," that was all she could say, her finger's tightening on my left hand. I smiled at her before the command mask fell on my face.

"My ship?" I croaked in a voice so low I was afraid nobody heard me.

"Ahrrr, the captains, you are all the same, worried about their ship before anything else," the annoyed voice of Doctor Pulaski retorted. She had been my instructor at the Academy and our relationship had always been rough and friendly.

"Your ship arrived to Earth six months ago, Katie. You were so badly wounded....," my mother's voice failed her.

"You were lucky your EMH put you in stasis as fast as he did or you would have been dead," explained Pulaski. "You are at San Francisco Starfleet Medical Hospital."

"How long?" I asked. I was so very tired but I had to know.

"Two years of stasis on Voyager and six months here heavily sedated under medical attention. We needed to proceed slowly to regenerate your skin. 70% of your body suffered plasma burns."

"My crew..."

"Home. I will pass the word that you are awake and kicking," teased the doctor. "If I remember well, you will try to get home sooner than I allow it, if I let you get bored."

"Mom?"

"I am here."

"Stay, I..." My eyes closed and I lost in the darkness of sleep what I wanted to ask.

Doctor Pulaski was right. I started to get bored. It has been two days since I had awoken but as time flew, I grew more and more restless. Tuvok had come to see me but I was so tired I could barely hold a conversation. He had promised to come back. Harry Kim had come as well. He had started to work for Starfleet Design and knew little about the other crew members except Paris and Torres. They had told him they would come to see me today. Harry was so busy with his life, he hadn't had time to remain in contact with Voyager's former crew. I felt so much pain about it. My family was scattered in the Quadrant and I would never see some of them again. When I had asked him about Seven, he couldn't tell me anything.

"Hey, Captain!"

The light voice of Tom Paris, Voyager helmsman, drove away my muddy thoughts. I smiled. He hadn't changed a bit, except he was carrying himself with more confidence. Just behind him stood B'Elanna Torres, my Chief Engineer. My heart pounded in my chest. I realized today that they were special to me like some very bright and difficult children. I had to fight hard to bring them back in the fold but it had worked. I was so glad when Harry told me they were still married and now had two children. I remembered B'Elanna had been pregnant when I was put in stasis.

"Tom, B'Elanna, come in." I waved my hand to show them a seat. "I am so glad to see you. Where are Miral and Owen Jr?"

"My mother is babysitting, she loves it," Tom joked. "I see Harry had already told everything,"

My smile faltered. "Not everything. He didn't know first hand what really happened in Engineering that day. But you do, B'Elanna, don't you?"

She sighed. Her dark eyes dived into mine.

"Everything happened so fast, Captain. I saw you entering Engineering, I heard the consol beeping a warning and saw the conduit nearest to you exploding. I remember my shock when I saw plasma splashing on you but I was too far away to do anything. Seven caught you and immediately ordered a site to site transport to sickbay. Afterward, I was too busy with the mess around to think about anything else. By the time the engines were back on line, you were in stasis. I am sorry, Captain."

"It wasn't your fault, B'Elanna." She looked so guilty that I tried to reassure her. "So, it's Seven who saved my life with her quick thinking? Bet, I'm glad I severed her from the Collective."

"In fact," started B'Elanna, "she saved you twice."

I looked at her a frown on my face. B'Elanna fidgeted.

"Seven grabbed you before the worst of the plasma leak could touch you," B'Elanna explained, her voice catching. "She put herself between you and the plasma. If she hadn't, there was nothing the Doctor could have done."

"If she hadn't protected you partially, all her quick thinking afterward would have been for nothing," said Tom. "The Doctor told me she ordered him to take care of you although she was badly wounded herself. When he saw your burns, he immediately put you in stasis."

"We almost lost her, you know. Only her nanoprobes kept her alive," admitted B'Elanna.

All the blood ran away from my face. My heart pounded like crazy. Seven almost died because of me? A nauseous feeling was settling in my stomach. Even if B'Elanna noticed uneasiness, she kept talking, "I had to help the Doctor to find a way for her to regenerate on a biobed. I created a portable regenerator and, on the long run, she had been glad to have it, it afforded her to go on longer missions."

"Where is she now?" My voice was trembling even if I tried to hide it.

They looked at each other. Fear started in the pit of my stomach. "Lieutenants?" My command voice was back when I needed it and I felt a bit better.

"We don't know, Captain," Tom admitted, unable to hold my stare.

"She hadn't tried to contact any of us since we are back in the Federation," confirmed B'Elanna. "I know Starfleet had debriefed all of us, especially Seven because of her connection with the Borg, but beside that, it's like she disappeared."

My fear was back. I had told her that if needed I would protect her when we would be back home. I had failed her. In a low voice, afraid of the answer, I asked, "The Doctor?"

Tom's unease was back ten fold. He started to talk, stopped, tried again but couldn't and shook his head.

"His matrix was lost," said B'Elanna, anger filling her tone now, "He is gone. These Pa'tak didn't want to listen to us when we said he was sentient, they just wanted to check his subroutines one by one to understand why he did things he did. One of this...Human triggered a wrong subroutine and he reverted to his initial matrix."

Tears were in my eyes but I kept them at bay. I couldn't let my senior staff see how these news affected me, even if they weren't my senior staff any more. The Doctor was no more and I couldn't help him but I had to find Seven of Nine, I had to know if they had...no, Starfleet wouldn't have dismantled her. I refused to think about that.

"I need to find her." I said at last. "We were her only family and six months is a long time to be alone here, in a place where she knows nobody."

"We know, Captain, we will help you. As soon as we go home, we will contact Voyager crew to pass the word." B'Elanna was disturbed. Had the same thought of a dismantled Seven just crossed her mind today? Why hadn't she try to find her earlier? I knew they didn't get along at the beginning, but as far as I know their relationship was better at the time of my accident.

"We will find her, Captain," confirmed Tom.

"I will contact Starfleet. I will talk to your father, Tom, maybe he knows something." When I saw B'Elanna rolled her eyes, I knew something was on. "What?"

"He didn't protect the Doctor," she said anger in her voice. "We asked him..."

From Tom's attitude, I could tell this wasn't a new conversation.

"Anyway, if my name still holds some power around here, I will find her."

I was home now, pacing in my bedroom, pacing in the living room, pacing in the garden. I couldn't remain still. I was on medical leave at home in Bloomington, Indiana, but nothing was as I had expected. I had promised Seven to bring her here when her cortical node was failing, when she was dying, but Seven was nowhere. It was like she had disappeared. I had pestered all the brass at Starfleet headquarter until Admiral Necheyev ordered me to stop my search for the Borg drone. I could see in her eyes she hated the Borg, she had lost too much to them when they had attacked at Wolf 347.

After her several week long debriefing, Seven had been affected to work for Doctor Brahms at the Theoretical Propulsion Group. Just two months before I awoke she went on vacation to Risa and nobody had heard of her since. After pressing Admiral Owen Paris for days, I learned that Starfleet had searched for her, they had been worried she would do harm to the Federation. They had not found her. How could they be so blind? Hadn't they seen it? Her tender heart who would never hurt a human being again? She could be cool, icy, arrogant, but all this big armor hid a sweet personality. Was I the only one who saw her for who she really was? A lost child, assimilated when she was only six years old, and who was scared of her growing humanity.

I swallowed the lump in my throat. Yes, I had stopped to go to Starfleet for help. Their hatred for the Borg blinded them, but I had hired private investigators to look for her. I couldn't go myself yet, I was still too weak. So far, they had only confirmed she had really been on Risa and involved in one of the commonest activity there: sex. I had a report on how many times she went to a particular house to visit a particular woman. It made me feel sick...no, jealous. After I had read and re-read this report I had to admit my jealousy. I had always wanted to be the one to teach her this part of humanity but, apart from regulations, I thought she wasn't ready. Now she was and I wasn't there. At least, the fact it was with a woman part put at ease some of my worries. She appreciated woman in bed, otherwise why go back six days in a row to this particular woman for sex?

"Katie? Could you set the table? Your sister is going to be here soon," my mother asked from her kitchen.

"Yes, Mom."

My mother worried about me. I could see it in her eyes when she looked at me. Could she understand I was in love with a Borg? No, for me Seven, Annika, would never be a Borg again. My mother had never asked what was driving me crazy. It has been two months since I awoke and more than five weeks since Dr. Pulaski released me home. Two months, and I never stopped to look for her, asking Tuvok to go to Risa to employ private investigators, asking Chakotay, when he came back from his short mission, to relate his two years of captaincy and his relationship with Seven.

I was so jealous when Tom let slip that Seven and Chakotay had briefly dated when I was in stasis. I felt betrayed. How dared he? But Chakotay explained, and I understood, that their short dating was a normal process in Seven's evolution. He had been a bit hurt when she broke up with him but chose to let it go.

"Hey, Katie, how are you feeling today?" my sister asked as soon as she arrived. Phoebe had always been happier, more optimistic than me. Was this the reason why she was an artist and I was a Starfleet captain? I have never met a Starfleet captain who stayed joyful and optimistic after a while. Too much responsibility, too many choices to make when sacrifices were to be made.

"Fine and bored," I answered immediately. She knew me too well and I couldn't keep my sad mood from her prying eyes.

"I can see that. Your big day is almost here and after that, you will get a new ship." She smiled, the glint of teasing very present in her eyes.

"Don't tease her, Phoebe," my mother said, "she is not in the mood."

"Why? It's your big celebration, isn't it? Starfleet waited until you were back on your feet to hold it, all your crew will be there."

"Not all of them, the dead..."

"There are always casualties, Katie, you know that." My mother's gentle tone almost made me cry.

"The Doctor. A stupid engineer killed my friend," I barked.

"He was a hologram," replied Phoebe, annoyed. We had had this conversation more time than I could count.

"He was my friend and save my life, our life, on numerous occasions. Is it so hard to understand I promised to stand by him and Seven when we would reach Earth to help them and couldn't do it?" Tears were in my eyes now and I couldn't hold them.

Phoebe started to answer but my mother lifted her hand, stopping her. Couldn't they see how I hurt? Without another word, I left the room and went outside. The big event was in three days but I was unable to appreciate it. I had failed the most important person in my life and I didn't know how to make it right.

Part 2

Everybody but the civilians was dressed in white. All of my crew would be here tonight. No, not all. Don't go there, Katie, not if you want to survive the night. My mother was shining with her green dress, my sister had already too many dancing propositions for her own good. Her blue dress fitted her like a glove, she was breathtaking. My command mask firmly in place, I walked slowly among my crew, shaking hands, acknowledging their happiness to see me alive. Many times, my mask almost slipped. It was so hard to see their smiles, their tears. Each of them wanted to introduce me to their families, they wanted them to meet their Captain, the one that made their return possible. How could they forget I was the one who made the decision to strand them in the Delta Quadrant in the first place? I kept smiling.

When I finally reached the head table to sit with Admiral Paris and Necheyev, I was relieved.

"I am not sure I will ever be able to flex my hand again, "I tried to joke.

"They are happy to see you," Admiral Paris stated. "I see your lovely mother is still attracting attention."

My mother was walking straight to us, acknowledging old friends that were scattered in the crowd among my crew.

"It's been a while," she said, "since I went to a reception. It's nice to see you again Owen, you too Alynna." It always amazed me to hear my mother call the Admirals by their first name. Why did I keep forgetting they were my father's friends and had known each other for years? I don't know.

"Sit beside me, Gretchen," Owen Paris asked, charming. He never missed an occasion to be nearby a beautiful woman. At least, that hadn't changed in nine years.

One by one, I greeted my senior staff before they sat with us at the table. It meant so much for me to have them here tonight. Only one was missing... No, stop that!

We were talking and sipping champagne, waiting everybody to sit down when Vorik came to whisper in my ear. "Captain, Lieutenant Nicoletti urgently asks for you at the entrance." I looked at him with blank eyes. Nicoletti? What did she want? I haven't had the opportunity to see her yet. I believed she was late. I wasn't to move when Vorik added: "Seven is with her."

I immediately jumped on my feet and rushed to the door.

"You are not going to take her away, Lieutenant, not until our captain is here," Nicoletti shouted, her face almost touching the lieutenant's. I barely saw the other members of Voyager's crew around the three men of the security detail. Seven was the only one I could see clearly. Even without her biosuit, with jeans, blue shirt and short hair, it was her. She was looking at the security detail and I could tell that, behind her icy Borg armor, she was scared. It kicked me into action.

"What is happening here?" The command tone in my voice put everybody at attention.

"They didn't want to let Seven in, Captain, they have orders to arrest her," Nicoletti stated in an angry voice. I didn't know the lieutenant was so protective of Seven and, as I looked around, I could see that many of my crew feel this need as well.

Holding my arm to stop any reply, I approached Seven. She was looking at me, emotion glowing in her eyes.

"Are you well, Captain?" she asked in a strangled voice.

"Now, I am," I smiled, "now, I will be." Unsettled, Seven looked at me. "I will explain later, when we will be alone."

"Very well, Captain." That was all she said. She just gave me this small curve of lips I liked so much.

Pulling back my command face, I turned to face the lieutenant of the security detail. "Can you explain why you want to arrest one of my senior officers, Lieutenant?"

He swallowed, hard. "I have orders, Captain." He showed me his PADD.

By the time I had read this order and who signed it, my blood was boiling. The crowd around us had grown. All my senior staff was here; I could sense anger from all Voyager's crew about what was happening and I could tell nobody would arrest Seven tonight. Suddenly, my mother and my sister were here as well and I didn't want to delay the presentation even if it seemed awkward to do it now when so many people surrounded us.

"Mom, Phoebe, I want to introduce Seven of Nine. Seven, my mother, Gretchen, and my sister, Phoebe."

My mother barely hesitated, she offered her hand to Seven while my sister had her mouth hanging open.

"Seven of Nine, nice to see you," my mother said, a gentle smile on her face.

"You can call me Annika, Mrs Janeway," Seven replied politely.

"We should go back to our table, Katie," my mother whispered. "They are waiting for you to start the ceremony."

"Damn, the ceremony! They want to arrest her and I am not going to let them do it."

"We won't let them arrest someone from our family, Captain," confirmed B'Elanna, arms crossed on her chest, "isn't that right, people?"

"Yes, Chief," answered immediately the engineering staff who was present.

I didn't recognize B'Elanna at all. She had been so aggressive against Seven from the beginning. I started to wonder what had really happened in the last two years. I had read the logs but none of them could give me an insight about the feelings between people.

"Nobody will be arrested, it must be a misunderstanding," Admiral Paris said, approaching. The crowd opened silently for him until he stopped in front of me. I said nothing, just gave him the PADD to read.

"Lieutenant, your orders are suspended until further notice," Admiral Paris said after reading the PADD. The Lieutenant straightened up and ordered his detail to follow him. I heard a general deep sigh and felt a big weight off my shoulders.

"Now, if we could continue this celebration... Miss Hansen, would you do me the honor?" Admiral Paris showed Seven his arm but she looked at him with a blank look.

"Seven," I whispered, "put your hand around his arm and follow him."

My Borg is so cute when she is at loss with the social interaction. My Borg? Hold on, Katie! She is not yours, you don't own her. Watching Seven entering the room with Admiral Paris, I swallowed and turned to my crew.

"Thank you all, especially you, Lieutenant Nicoletti."

"A pleasure, Captain," she answered with a big smile on her face, "It's good to have you back."

"It's good to be back. Now, people, shall we go and celebrate?"

When I reached my table, Seven was already seated between my mother and B'Elanna. I swallowed my disappointment. I wanted, no I needed, to talk to her but an official function wasn't the best place for that. I would have to wait until we could go home. I knew I was presumptuous but I couldn't imagine not bringing Seven to my mother's home tonight. I sat at my sister's side in the only free seat left.

Seven was watching me with the intensity she put in everything she did. For a few minutes I felt we were alone. To everybody, she seemed cool, without expression, but I noticed her eyes were glowing and knew she was happy to see me. I gave her a full smile before telling her in front of everybody: "I am so happy you are here tonight, Seven. This party wouldn't have been the same without you."

I saw looks of surprise from most of the people but I didn't care, my reward was right in front of me when the corners of Seven's mouth lifted up.

"Thank you, Captain," she answered in a low and soft voice, "It means a lot to me to be here with you." She swallowed and took a deep breath. Seven anxious? "I didn't know if any of Voyager's crew wanted to see me tonight."

"What are you talking about?" I asked, frowning.

"When I couldn't reach any of you, I asked Starfleet to deliver messages to all of you. I knew you were in a hospital somewhere, Captain, and couldn't answer so I sent a message to your mother. I wanted very much to visit you even if you were unconscious but nobody replied."

"What? I didn't receive any message," B'Elanna shouted.

"Me neither," Chakotay confirmed before adding in a concerned voice "I would have answered, Seven, you know that."

My mother shook her head.

"It seems like none of us received any messages, Seven. I will make an official enquiry tomorrow," said Tuvok before I had time to say the same thing. I could see my old friend was upset by the news, as far as a Vulcan can be upset, of course, but with all the years we had worked together I could read him almost as well I could read Seven.

"It won't be necessary, Commander, I ordered all these messages not to be delivered." Everybody stared at Admiral Nechev.

"Alynn...", Admiral Paris began. Nechev lifted her arm to stop him.

"She is Borg and a security risk. I couldn't give her access to Starfleet personnel."

“We are her friends and Seven is no security risk, Admiral!” B’Elanna was on her feet almost shouting. Before I could intervene she continued: “Seven saved our life many times back on Voyager, she put her life at risk to save my daughter, I will never consider her a security risk.”

“Lieutenant, sit down,” ordered Nechev but B’Elanna stared at her with so much anger in her eyes I started to worry. If Seven had saved Miral, I could understand why B’Elanna had changed her mind about her and, now, her Klingon honor refused to back off.

“B’Elanna, sit,” Seven said, her hand on my Chief engineer shoulder, “...please.” This small little word seemed to do the trick. I have to say that I heard this word from Seven only a handful of time.

B’Elanna looked at Seven. “I am sorry, Seven, I should have looked out for you.” Then, she looked at me, “I am sorry, Captain, I let you down.”

“No.” Seven’s dry voice cut through all the guilt. Seeing our surprise, she elaborated. “I should have known better than to trust Starfleet with these messages. I should have found another way.”

Guilt and sorrow were clearly showing in Seven’s eyes. I stood up and walked to her. Resting my hand on her shoulder, I looked her in the eyes. “You did nothing wrong, Seven. Starfleet did and I’m sorry. I wish I had been there for you. I know these last months should have been hard for you, alone among millions of individuals.”

“It was...but I adapted.”

I smiled at her. “I know you did because you are an intelligent and remarkable young woman. I am proud of you, Seven.”

“Thank you, Captain.” Seven answered in a small voice. I squeezed her shoulder and returned to my seat.

“I see everybody is fraternizing with the enemy,” Nechev said, degusted.

For the first time in my life, I wondered what the sentence was for strangling an Admiral.

“I am not your enemy!” Seven said in a strong voice.

“You are Borg!”

Taken aback, Seven seemed to think for a little while. “Tell me, Admiral, what would you do if your husband was suddenly returned to you after he has been severed from the Collective? Would you help him regain his humanity or would you abandon him because you would be unable to forget he had been assimilated and had assimilated others? Would you help him with his guilt or would you reject him?”

Nechev blanched. Seven was staring at her waiting for an answer. With surprise, I noticed Nechev’s hands were shaking. She tightened her lips but didn’t answer for many minutes.

“I would help him...” The honesty of the answer when it came seemed to surprise even the Admiral herself, “...if he was willing.”

“He would.”

“You weren’t. If Janeway hadn’t forced you to stay aboard Voyager, you would have returned to the Borg, wouldn’t you?”

“At the beginning, yes, but not later,” Seven conceded.

“How can we be sure you are sincere now?” The Admiral was staring at Seven, waiting for an answer. I knew she would get a straight forward one but I didn’t know which one. One who could change Nechev mind or one who would made things worse?

“I was a six year old child when I was assimilated, Admiral. When captain Janeway severed my link to the Collective eighteen years later, I felt fear, apprehension. All my memories were those of a child...a child who wanted to return to something familiar, not to deal with human emotions. It took me months to grow up and, in a way; I am still growing, learning my way among individuals. Tell me, Admiral, how many years does a human being need to reach the stage of adulthood?”

“A lot...sometime, some of us never reach this stage.”

Seven didn’t comment, she just looked at Nechev. My Borg had learned a lot those last two years. If she could nail an Admiral, especially Nechev, it meant she had grown up more than I had expected. I

kept thinking about the private detective's report. Might Seven have a girlfriend now? Was I too late? Might this beautiful young woman be interested in an old captain? I swallowed my doubts.

"I see your point, Miss Hansen, perhaps I was mistaken." Necheyev conceding she was wrong? Was I in the same dimension as before? "I would be interested to continue this discussion...at your convenience, of course," the Admiral added, sparing a moment to look at me. I took the clue.

"Seven will be staying with me at my mother's house, you are always welcome, Admiral." Maybe I was presumptuous because I didn't know what Seven's plans were and if she had come alone on Earth but I wanted her near me. I looked at her and added, "if you are willing, of course."

"I am." Her eyes showed her happiness although her face remained impassive. "You promised me to show me your home three years, eight months and eleven hours ago."

I remembered. She was dying and we were in the Astrometric lab looking at a picture of the field of Bloomington. She was so calm. I wanted to shout, it was so unjust. But I hid my feelings under my command mask.

"No minutes?" I joked, trying to hide all the emotions I had felt.

"22 minutes...23 minutes now."

The persons who didn't know Seven well stared at her.

"How can she do that?" whispered Phoebe in my ear.

"You will have to ask her," I answered, knowing that her enhance hearing enabled Seven to hear everything.

"You are still very good with this precision," Chakotay teased, a smile on his lips. "It used to drive B'Elanna crazy." He lifted his glass and took a sip.

"It is very easy to drive B'Elanna crazy," Seven told very straight forward.

"Watch out, Borg, I can take your sorry ass anytime," B'Elanna replied, growling, but I could see the humor in her eyes and my concern died immediately.

"Indeed, Lieutenant," cut Tuvok in his normal flat voice. "Maybe you could explain what happened the last time you tried." If Tuvok was involved, I guessed it wasn't so funny at the time of the incident.

"Forget it," B'Elanna growled again, her face a deep red, "it was nothing I couldn't handle."

All my senior officers chuckled but none of them commented. I would have to ask Seven, later, at home.

Part 3

"Free, at last!" I sighed on the way to the transporters. This ceremony had been longer than I could bear. All I wanted was to be alone with Seven. I still had to get rid of my mother and Phoebe and THAT would not be easy.

"Katie, this was for you, don't forget it," admonished my mother gently.

"This was for Voyager's crew, not only for me, Mom."

"What do you think, Seven," asked my sister. "Did you enjoy it?"

"No."

This short answer so typical of Seven shocked Phoebe and my mother. I laughed out loud. She had been so rude at the beginning and sometime still was, but I was used to it and enjoyed it tremendously. It kept me on my toes.

Seven sensed she hadn't answered properly. "My apologies. I should have elaborated. I didn't enjoy the ceremony because I have never been good with social gatherings, they make me uncomfortable. I still perceive small talks as a waste of my time, it is a futile activity. Unexpectedly, I enjoyed seeing Voyager's crew tonight. Their attitude towards me made me feel...warm." Seven hesitated. "I am sorry I don't know how to describe what I felt. It is very frustrating."

I caught my mother's glance.

"Maybe you think of them as family and tonight, when they protected you, you had proof they think of you as family as well. You felt safe?"

Seven lips curled up. "Yes, Mrs Janeway, it was exactly what I was feeling. Thank you."

"Please, if you are going to stay in my home, call me Gretchen."

"Very well, Gretchen." Seven answered a small smile on her feature.

We were arriving at the public transporters. At this time of the night, they were only a few people and almost immediately, we stood on the pad and waited silently to be dissolved in millions of particles and recomposed hundred kilometers away.

"Captain, could you wait 2.41 minutes? I have to retrieve my luggage from the storage buffer." Even said as soon as we went down the transporter's pad.

"We will wait for you here."

Seven walked to the small consol to insert her storage code.

"She is stunning, Katie," Phoebe whispered, "and I don't speak only of her appearance. Now, I understand why you wanted to find her. If you weren't in love with her, I would give it a go myself."

"Phoebe," my mother warned before I could find my voice to replied, "don't tease your sister." I relaxed. As usual, Phoebe was only teasing. Could it be so blatantly that I was in love with Seven? "The light is back in your eyes, Katie," my mother continued after a few seconds, "and for that, I am happy."

My face was still flushed when Seven came back with a big trunk and a small duffle bag.

"Are you ill, Captain?" she asked, concerned. "Your temperature has increased by 1.23%."

Phoebe was laughing so hard she was holding her belly.

"It's nothing, Seven, just my mother and my sister making fun of me."

"Why?"

"Because my daughter doesn't like not to be in control all the time. As we are not Starfleet we can tell her even the things she doesn't like to hear."

"I understand."

"Shall we?" I asked exasperated. "We still have ten minutes of driving to get home." Looking at the trunk, teasing, I added, "You used to travel light."

"Those are my belongings." Seven showed me the small duffle bag. "This is my portable regenerator." The big trunk seemed heavy but Seven with her superior strength showed not problem to carry it.

"Do you want me to carry the bag?"

"I knew chivalry wasn't lost on you, Katie," Phoebe teased immediately. "Choosing the lighter item to carry..."

"The Captain is wise. She would not be able to carry the trunk. It is too heavy for her human frame. But I can manage both."

My sister's mouth was hanging open. I laughed. It wasn't often someone could make my sister speechless.

"I think the next few days are going to be very interesting," my mother muttered.

"Do you need to regenerate?" I asked when we entered the house.

"Not yet. Tomorrow I will have to connect the portable regenerator to a source of power but, tonight, I can try to sleep."

"Try?" My mother had been faster than me. Sleeping? Seven slept?

"Sleep is not easy for me to attain. It is an inefficient activity but when I do sleep I do not need to regenerate that often. The Doctor encouraged me to sleep in order to decrease my dependence on a regenerator."

Hearing the Doctor's name put a dent in my happiness.

"Yes, the Doctor. I am so sorry about what happened to him, Seven."

"We will speak about him tomorrow when you will have regenerated, Captain."

"Let me show you your bedroom upstairs. Mine is next door to yours."

I spent the night trying and failing to sleep. I couldn't stop thinking about Seven, about what I had to tell her. Next morning, as I got downstairs for breakfast, the smell of the muffins my mother had made and, of course, of coffee greeted me. I wondered if Seven was already up, if she had slept well.

The answer was in front of me when I pushed the kitchen door. Seven was sitting at the table, a warm muffin in front of her, and she was talking with my mother.

"Good morning, Mom," I said kissing her cheek. "Good morning, Seven." I hesitated and kissed Seven's cheek as well. I heard her intake of breath and my heart fluttered.

"Morning, Katie," my mother smiled, watching us. "Coffee is ready."

"Good morning, Captain," Seven said in a low voice. My brief kiss had surprised her enough to delay her answer. Maybe I shouldn't have indulged but I had wanted to touch her skin for so long that I couldn't resist anymore.

Pouring a big cup of coffee, I asked: "Did you sleep well?"

"Yes. I slept for 1.54 hours. The bed was very comfortable."

"1.54 hours? Is that good, Annika?" My mother was stunned. As well I.

"Oh, yes, Mrs...Gretchen, most of the time I cannot sleep for more than 30 minutes." Seven frowned. "Maybe I was very tired."

My mother smiled gently. I could tell she liked Seven. I didn't know what they had talked about but it made my mother's feeling toward Seven very positive. "I will show you around after breakfast. If you want."

"I would like that very much, Captain."

"Call me Kathryn. I am not your captain anymore."

"You will always be my captain...Kathryn," Seven explained in a voice so gentle my heart expanded in my chest. This sweet voice spoke to me in my dreams. Seven never used it often but, each time, hearing it was like hearing soft music.

"Walk with me, I want to talk to you," I said, showing her the field in front of the house. I was nervous but my Starfleet training was helping me to hide my feelings. I was a starship captain without a vessel but the rules I had abided all my life were still binding me.

"Yes, Cap...Kathryn, I would like to talk to you as well."

Was I hearing uncertainty in Seven's voice? The Borg was nervous. I had never known Seven to be unsure and that made me more nervous...if that was possible. Could she know I was feeling the same?

We walked under the morning sun, silent for a while. Seven was with me and I was so happy. Pointing some spots on the way, I told her stories of my childhood, which tree I used to climb to escape my nosy sister, which pond I used to swim in and, finally, which place I used to hide when life was too much to deal with.

"Every time I had to make a difficult decision, I came here to hide from everything but myself. I just sat there," I sat at the exact point I was showing and indicated with my hand that she should sit as well, "and try to put all my ideas, my feelings, into perspective. It is the place I try to be honest with myself."

"I see." I knew that from Seven's perspective this place wasn't so remarkable and that she didn't really understand this need to regroup. Of course, the tree was old and huge and provided a wonderful shade but the view was not that spectacular, only corn fields and nothing else.

"I often came here these last few months," I started again, looking at the field to keep my nerves under control. What I wanted to tell Seven wasn't easy. How would this beautiful young woman react when

she learned an old Starfleet captain had the hots for her? *The hots for her? Who are you kidding, Katie? You are in love with her and deep over your head, by the way.* “When I couldn’t find you, I was scared and frantic.”

“You were?” Seven was surprised. Had she never imagine I could be scared of something?

“Yes, I was. The idea of not been able to see you again was unbearable. It forced me to ask myself: why.” My voice, usually very husky but strong, was so shallow I couldn’t almost hear myself. I couldn’t expect Seven to return my feelings but I had to express them to be able to let them go.

“Why?” asked Seven after a few seconds. Did I imagine the shaking in her voice?

I took a deep breath more scared than I had been fighting the Borg or the Vidiians. “I was, I am in love with you...had been for a long time now.”

“You are?”

I couldn’t look at her, I was too afraid to see repulsion in her beautiful blue eyes. I felt so old. “I refused to acknowledge it at the beginning. I was your Captain and you were my crewman. But when I couldn’t find you those last few months, I couldn’t let go of a fear that I would never see you again. I hired a private detective to follow your tracks from Risa.” I blushed. “I am sorry I broke your privacy about what you did in Risa.” Ashamed, I hung down my head. “I was so jealous when I read you...” I swallowed the lump in my throat.

“Kathryn, look at me... please” Seven’s finger touched my chin and gently turned my face towards her. I couldn’t breath. I had never seen such a full smile on my Borg’s face. The happiness was obvious. Why was she so happy when I felt so miserable?

“I love you, Kathryn. I want to be with you.”

She loved me? I had no word. Like lightning, happiness pushed the misery away and I found I was also smiling like a fool. This day was fast becoming the best of my life. Seven was in love with me. I wanted to shout, to jump, to tell everybody that Seven loved me. I didn’t feel old any more, I was a teenager again.

Her right hand covered my cheek. I grabbed her left hand, pulled it to my lips and kissed it. Seven tensed and almost removed her hand but I hold my grip.

“It’s Borg,” she finally said in a deject tone.

“It’s you and I love every bit of you.” I kissed her right palm, the one who was still against my cheek, pulled her left hand against my mouth and kissed it. Slowly, keeping my eyes opened, I moved forward, stopped millimeters from her lips. I was waiting. What was I waiting for? Would she cross the last space between us? I was almost surprised when her lips touched mine. It was just a fluttering caress but it was enough for my heart to beat wildly. When I felt her tongue tipping between my lips, I put aside all my reservation and deepened the kiss. Forgetting where we were, desire growing by seconds, I forced myself to pull away.

“Kathryn?” Seven was frowning. She didn’t understand why I was pulling away.

“I don’t want to make love to you here. When it happens, it will be in a nice place where we can take our time, Seven.” My voice was husky, my body felt warm. I was so aroused it took all my will to rein my desire.

“In your room?” Hopeful, Seven brightened. I shook my head. In my mother’s house? No way. The walls were far too thin. I could read disappointment in Seven’s eyes.

“We will find a place, I promise.” I kissed her lightly.

“Very well.” Seven answered in a cool voice. She wasn’t happy with my decision but decided to trust me and stick to it. She straightened up and linked her hands behind her back. I smiled.

“It doesn’t mean we cannot kiss, Seven,” I teased her.

“No?”

“No.”

Suddenly, Seven grabbed my shoulders and pulled me against her. Her lips touched mine, her tongue explored my mouth, her hands caressed my back. I was losing myself in her wonderful body.

When we stopped, I was panting. "My mother will wonder where we are," I said with regrets in my voice. "We have to go back. It's almost lunch time."

Hand in hand we walked back to the house. No cloud in the sky, no cloud on my mind. I was happy. There was so many things we should talk about but I couldn't organize my thoughts long enough to make a full sentence. I didn't know what the future would hold for us but I was certain of one thing, now, I was really home

END

Visit my web page www.kadyan.fr