Recurrences

by Socket

Summary

Seven is arrested for attempted murder during shore leave.
It had happened so quickly, so unexpectedly that Kathryn Janeway wasn't sure it had happened at all. What was it people said? Like a dream...

Now Seven was in a cell, being held for attempted murder and she was in negotiations with the Simaga authorities, trying desperately to prove the innocence of her ex-Borg drone. Of course, Seven wasn't exactly innocent. In fact, she wasn't innocent at all, she had attacked Osenu and she would have killed him if Janeway hadn't restrained her.

After the Tsunkatse incident and continued aggressive behaviour, the Captain had recommended that Seven take extended shore leave; but she'd had no idea it would lead to this.

"It's not your fault," Chakotay informs Kathryn. The Captain has become increasingly preoccupied with each day of Seven's detention, he's concerned for her; she always takes everything so personally where Seven is concerned.

"But it is my fault, Chakotay," she argues.

"Kathryn, you couldn't have done anything to stop her! Seven's been erratic since the Tsunkatse affair, she - "

Janeway shook her head and closed her eyes tightly. "You don't understand! She attacked him because of me!"

Chakotay fell silent. The Captain opens her eyes and glances anxiously at her First Officer.

He looks puzzled, "What do you mean she attacked him because of you?"

Janeway sighs wearily. She would have to tell him everything from the beginning.

A WEEK EARLIER

Seven looked so unimpressed, Janeway had to restrain a laugh.

"It is… adequate – for its purpose," conceded the ex-drone.

Credit where credit was due – Seven was the queen of understatement.

Kathryn puts the curly blue wig back on the mannequin. She hadn't particularly wanted to go blue anyway; she'd always preferred her natural hair colour. They continued their stroll through the Simaga market place. Seven's hands are clasped firmly behind her back, while Janeway holds a shopping hamper brimming with goodies.

Noticing the burden of weight, Seven holds out her hands. "Let me carry the basket, Captain," she offers.

Janeway hesitates, the basket is heavy but she doesn't want to trouble Seven, especially since the blonde hasn't purchased anything yet.

Sensing the Captain's tentativeness, Seven continues. "I have superior strength – the weight will make no difference to me."
Smirking, Kathryn hands the creel to her companion, hell – if Seven was going to insult her, the least she could do was carry a basket!

The ex-drone took the hamper gladly, pleased that she could finally be of assistance; she was obviously not gratifying the Captain's desire for her to 'soak-up the atmosphere' of the open market. It wasn't as if she wasn't trying. It just seemed such a futile way to spend her time – only the Captain's presence made the experience worthwhile.

Kathryn stops at a food stall; she gazes in awe at the variety of shapes and colours of fruit and vegetables. Seven lingered beside the older woman and studied her with fascination. She loved to watch Janeway experience something new, there was always a wonderful sense of excitement and joy in her manner; the ex-drone found it very pleasurable to observe.

With a glazed look of delight on Janeway's face, they continued to the next stall, which sold antiques. The Captain's eyes fixed on a statue of two female warriors locked in battle, she moved towards it. Seven's eyebrow arched. It was a coarse figurine with no external appeal that Seven could detect; yet the Captain lifted it off the table and inspected it with admiration.

She turned eagerly to Seven. "What do you think? I have shelf space next to my Shannon O'Donnell family portrait."

Seven did not restrain her honesty. "It is an inferior imitation of an alleged battle that in all probability never took place. The workmanship is substandard, the stone is low-quality and it is displeasing to the eye."

Janeway's smile disappeared; she puts the statuette back and headed for the next stall, several strides ahead of her Astrometric's Officer.

Despite her physical superiority, Seven had trouble keeping up with the Captain. In fact, she has the distinct impression that she has upset Janeway. Then the Captain stopped abruptly, causing Seven to bump into her.

Janeway span on her heel to face the ex-Borg, avoiding eye contact she said. "I think I'll go back to the hotel… I'm feeling tired."

She reached for the basket; Seven refused to hand it over.

"I will accompany you," stated the blonde.

Kathryn makes another attempt to take the hamper, her hands accidentally brush against Seven's; she pulls away quickly and says in an irritated voice. "I'd rather go by myself."

Seven looked hurt.

"You should… do whatever you want," sighed Kathryn.

Seven doesn't answer that she is doing what she wants. She is with the Captain; that's all she ever wants. She allows Janeway to take the basket from her and watches helplessly as the Captain storms off in the direction of the hotel.

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Kathryn sat in her hotel room staring at the hamper on the coffee table. She hadn't the energy to unpack it; she was too annoyed with herself. Seven had upset her and she'd over-reacted.
She wanted to hurt herself: to remind herself. She'd managed so well over the last year to reign-in her feelings for the ex-drone and now, after one day on shore leave together, she found herself right back at square one.

It had taken a lot of self-control for Kathryn to distance herself from Seven and now… all of that was undone. She was acting on instinct – a dangerous thing where her Astrometric's Officer was concerned. Memories of their frequent and heated arguments swamped the Captain's mind. In the early days, she had been so impulsive, so unprepared for Seven, but now she had no excuse. She knew what to expect from the younger woman and yet she had let her guard down.

A knock at the door interrupted her thoughts. She still isn't used to doors that you actually have to open and close yourself, she stands and pulls the handle, opening the door wide.

Seven stands coyly in the entryway, arms behind her back in her customary stance, but there is something hesitant in her manner.

"What do you want?" Kathryn asks brusquely.

Seven seemed to physically shrink back, making Janeway want to put her arms about the ex-drone and comfort her; but she resists this impulse.

"I brought you something," Seven says softly, and then reveals the statute she has been holding behind her back. She offers it to the Captain.

Janeway gasps in surprised delight, then gazes at her friend, eyes shining with a strange radiance. She takes the statuette gratefully and moves to let Seven in, closing the door after her visitor.

Kathryn walks over to the settee; she places the figurine on the coffee table, moving the basket to a chair, and then examines her gift happily.

Seven hovers beside the Captain, undecided whether to sit or remain standing. Humans seemed to favour sitting when in social situations and she wanted the Captain to be at ease with her, so the ex-Borg seats herself on the other side of the settee.

Janeway glances at Seven as if awaiting an explanation.

"I… felt bad," begins the younger woman, this statement seems to trouble the Captain, and so she quickly adds. "I upset you and so I decided the best way to 'make amends' was to purchase it, for you."

Wearing that familiar half-smile, Janeway said affectionately. "Seven, you didn't have to buy it, really –I made a fuss about nothing, I'm sorry if I made you feel bad."

Seven looks confused. "Explain, please..."

Kathryn sighs, then tilted her head. "Humans have a tendency to attach sentimental value to inanimate objects," she pauses, wondering if she should actually be saying this. "The statue reminded me of you… of us… and when you dismissed it out of hand - it hurt my feelings – "

Seven looked devastated. "I hurt you?"

"No! No, it was just me being over-sensitive," Janeway explains, suddenly feeling exposed.

"Then… should I not have bought it for you?" Seven asks uncertainly.
Kathryn smiled warmly. "I'm glad you did, Seven. It was a very thoughtful gift."

Seven smiles awkwardly, letting the praise saturate every pore of her body. Kathryn leaned forward in her seat; Seven notices that she is worn-out and stands up abruptly, making Janeway look up at her with surprise.

"You are tired, I will leave," declared the ex-Borg.

About to protest, the Captain realised that she really was exhausted, but she didn't want Seven to leave. Too late, the blonde was halfway to the door by the time Kathryn stood up. She felt an urge to stop Seven – make her come back, make her stay. "Seven – do you want to get something to eat later?"

Seven froze, those simple words made tremors flood her legs and stomach; she turned to face Janeway. "That would be pleasant."

Janeway smiled. "How about 21:00 hours?"

Seven nodded her consent, then turned and left.

Kathryn felt the clouds beneath her feet. Seven hadn't said 'that would be acceptable' or 'that would be sufficient'. No. She had said nice. 'That would be nice.' Very unborg-like.

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Seven arrived promptly at 21:00 hours; she was dressed casually and wore her hair down. Kathryn answered the door, stunned by the beauty of the ex-drone. So taken aback was she, she forgot to move so that Seven could enter and so her Astrometric's Officer stood self-consciously in the corridor for what seemed an eternity.

Suddenly gathering herself, Janeway shook her head to clear it. "Sorry Seven, come in."

The ex-drone stepped tentatively into the room.


Seven blushed at the Captain's compliment and then felt foolish for doing so. Janeway didn't seem to notice, in fact, when Seven dared gaze at Janeway, she looked rather flushed herself. Her eyes lowered over the Captain's delicate frame and silently praised her choice of attire.

Janeway turned to pick-up her hotel room keys from the coffee table. While her back was turned, Seven admired the full view of her Captain. She wore a long navy blue skirt that had a split up one side, all the way to her thigh, revealing a shapely leg, coupled with a flattering black silky shirt that hugged her figure in all the right places. Not that there were any wrong places on Janeway's body as far as Seven was concerned.

Still searching for her keys, Janeway bent further forwards, as she did so, she became acutely aware of several things; firstly that the split in her skirt was exposing more flesh than was decent, secondly, her rear was facing Seven, and thirdly, and most alarmingly, Seven was watching her, closely.

Seven surveyed the Captain intently… her slightest movement sent shimmers through the silk blouse and the taut skirt was riding further up the Captain's thigh… light flashed before Seven's eyes and a strange warm dizziness threatened to unbalance her.
Locating the keys, Kathryn straightened up. "Ready?" She asked, hoping her voice didn't sound strained.

Seven nodded.

Kathryn led the way out of her room; she had seen a nice-looking restaurant on the high street, it wasn't far.

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Seated at a table by the window, Janeway began to think this hadn't been such a good idea. The lighting in the restaurant was dim, there was soft music playing in the background and all the other diners were couples, occasionally getting up to dance. It was a romantic setting if ever there was one; she just didn't want Seven to feel uncomfortable or think that she was taking advantage of the situation.

A man carrying a variety of flowers approached their table. "Flowers for the pretty lady?" He asks Janeway, indicating Seven.

Kathryn blushed, glanced down at the tablecloth and fidgeted with her fork, then mumbled. "Uh, no… thank you."

Seven didn't see the relevance of flowers but she knew that Janeway enjoyed them; so, she nodded her head and said. "I shall take one - for the lady." Kathryn jerked her head up and stared bewilderedly at Seven.

The blonde gave the man some coins and he handed her a long stemmed purple flower wrapped in a decorative paper. He thanked Seven, then turned and went onto the next table. Seven held the flower out to Janeway.

Kathryn's mouth opened as if to speak, then closed. She smiled self-consciously, then took the flower from Seven's eager hand. She raised it to her nose and inhaled its scent. Seven watched her, captivated.

"Thank you," Janeway said in a low voice filled with sentiment.

They smiled shyly at each other.

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The meal was delicious, both were full, they now sat sipping at their drinks; Janeway had a glass of wine and Seven a glass of water. Absorbed in conversation, neither noticed Osenu advance towards them. It wasn't until he hovered over them, bending towards Kathryn that they fell silent: both stared questioningly at this intruder.

"Can we help you?" Seven demanded impatiently, she did not like her time with the Captain to be interrupted.

Osenu allowed his eyes to travel up and down Janeway's body, then, leaning closer to her, he said in a suggestive tone. "You should be with someone who can appreciate you."

He was drunk, that much was clear. Janeway rolled her eyes, giving Seven a 'don't even bother' look. He turned and staggered away, Seven glared after him.

"I do not like the way that individual behaved towards you," she stated passionately.
Janeway shrugged. "He's not important Seven, besides – I have a feeling you'll be getting a lot of similar unwonted attention when we get back to Earth."

Seven looked defiant. "Irrelevant, I shall damage anyone who does that to you again."

Kathryn smiled at Seven's protectiveness. "Don't worry about me, I can take care of myself."

Seven calmed slightly. "I know but I want you to be safe. I want to protect you."

Janeway put down her glass. "You do?" she asked, surprised by the longing in her own voice.

Seven nodded fervently.

Simultaneously they reached for each other's hand, their fingers embraced and their palms kiss. Kathryn's eyes met that crystal gaze and felt its intensity.

Osenu returned to their table, this time with a chair, he sat beside Kathryn. The two women estrange their hands.

Fixing his eyes on at Janeway, Osenu asked. "How did you get to be so beautiful?"

"I must have been given your share," Janeway answered coolly.

Seven smirked.

"Excuse us," Kathryn said as she stood and indicated for Seven to follow her.

They paid their bill and departed.

Janeway's handling of the restaurant situation impressed Seven, although she would have preferred her method of breaking the mans spinal cord. Less diplomatic, but much more satisfying!

They walk back to the hotel in silence. The streets are quiet; a dim illumination from the street lamps gives the illusion that they are the only individuals in existence. As they walk side-by-side, Seven reaches out and takes the Captain's hand in hers. Kathryn laces her fingers through the ex-drones, enjoying the luxury of being close to Seven.

As they reach the door of Kathryn's hotel room, Janeway pauses. Seven gently tugs the Captain's hand, making Janeway face her. As Kathryn looks directly into those blue eyes, she finds it difficult to breath.

Seven gazes at the older woman, feeling the need to cover Janeway in kisses. Slowly, she leans forward, gently pushing Kathryn's hair back, then places feather soft kisses across her neck. Janeway closes her eyes, allowing herself to be pushed against the wall, suddenly she felt weightless, as though she would float away any second. The soft kisses continued down her neck, then she felt teeth nibbling at her ear lobe and heard shallow breathing in her ear, the sound sends shivers cascading through her body. Then it stops. Kathryn opens her eyes to see Seven watching her. Their faces an inch apart, they gaze at each other with a mixture of wonder and desire.

The younger woman was so ardent, so beautiful, Kathryn leaned forward, cupping Seven's face and slowly drawing herself nearer to those luscious full lips. Seven remained frozen, she has longed for this moment for so long and yet, now it was here, she was petrified.

Janeway's lips pressed longingly to her own. Instinctively, Seven slipped her arms around the Captain, pulling her closer. Mouths and physical hunger merge. Kathryn pulls back, and then leans
her forehead against the ex-drones.

"Seven," she murmured.

Seven tilted her head back and looked into the solemn eyes she adored. "Yes?"

"Will you stay the night?"

"Stay?"

"Yes," Janeway whispered as she stroked the blonde's cheek.

"Only if I can stay indefinitely," the blonde replied.

Kathryn smiled and nodded. She turned in Seven's arms and twists the key in the lock, the door to her room opens. Taking Seven's hand, the Captain led the blonde into her room.

The feel of flesh against flesh, sweat and silk, perfume and arousal fused, until Seven wished only to exist in Kathryn's world.

The sun streamed through a crack in the curtains. Kathryn stirred, she could smell perfume… not her own, sweat… and a sweet scent… she opened her eyes. Seven's blonde locks covered her bare shoulder; the ex-drone's head lay over her heart, listening to its steady rhythm, her arms wrapped securely around the Captain's waist.

Janeway smiled as memories of the previous night returned to her. She kissed the top of Seven's head and was rewarded by a kiss over her heart. The Captain slipped her arms around Seven's smooth shoulders, running her hands across the sleek metal and soft skin, pulling her lover nearer. Seven nuzzled closer, burying her face against Janeway's neck in complete bliss. She had found her home; she was of one mind, with Kathryn.

A distracting noise interrupted their haven. Seven levered herself onto her elbows and looked questioningly at Janeway.

"That's my alarm - I'm supposed to meet Neelix in the Marketplace in an hour," the Captain sighed regretfully.

Seven nodded, lowering herself back against the Captain's shoulder, cherishing the few moments she had left with Kathryn before they resumed the rest of the day.

They arrived early at the rendezvous point; Seven still wore a dopey, lovesick expression and kept tugging Kathryn's shirt, pulling the auburn haired woman to her. She knew Janeway didn't mind, as long as she didn't do it in front of the crew. Taking advantage of the time left, she wrapped Kathryn in an embrace and kissed her cheek, Janeway gave a deep guttural laugh as strands of Seven's loose hair tickled her skin.

They made their way past various stalls, then circled back on themselves, Neelix still hadn't arrived. Janeway stopped at an ornament stall. She glanced over its collection, as she did so, someone approached her from behind, thinking it was Seven she thought nothing of it.

It wasn't until a pair of hands slipped tightly around her waist that she knew immediately it wasn't Seven. The hands belonged to Osenu; he pulled her forcefully to him. She struggled against him, he pinned her arms by her side.
"I'll teach you to laugh at me, you ghud-koudk!" he sneered and then licked the side of her neck.

Kathryn kicked her foot back, booting him in the leg, he winced in pain and his grip loosened, she freed one of her arms and grabbed his left wrist, he grabbed her by the throat and squeezed tightly. Janeway swung his left arm over her shoulder, about to throw him to the floor when a hand pulled him completely from her.

It was Seven.

The ex-drone separated Osenu from the Captain, then punched him several times, her face flushed with rage, she pushed him to the floor, kicked his torso, knelt beside him, lifted his head and hit it against the cobbled pavement.

Kathryn suddenly realised what was happening and moved forwards, catching hold of Seven's left fist as it was poised ready to hit Osenu again. Seven turned with alarm, then seeing it was Janeway, she tried to release her hand but the Captain clung firmly onto her.

"Let me finish!" yelled the ex-Borg, her teeth gritted, murder flickering in her eyes.

"You are finished, he's not going anywhere!" Janeway shouted.

Seven turned to see Osenu, half-conscious in her grip, blood covering his face. She looked up at Janeway. "But he was hurting you."

She tried to release her fist again but Kathryn wouldn't let go.

"Seven… please…" Janeway begged.

Seven stopped at the plea of her lover. She released Osenu and turned to Kathryn. There were crowds of people surrounding them. Seven wrapped her arms around Kathryn's waist and held tightly. Janeway stroked her hair and whispered soothing words into her ear.

People began to rush about. A doctor soon arrived on the scene, followed by two official guards of the Simaga Authority. There were so many onlookers; the guards were inundated with eyewitnesses. Of course, they had only seen Seven's attack, not the cause for it. Seven got to her feet but stayed in Kathryn's protective embrace.

A guard approached them. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to arrest you," he informed Seven.

"On what charge?" questioned Janeway.

"Attempted Murder," he stated gravely.

"What?" exclaimed the Captain. "This is ridiculous – he tried to assault me – she was just defending me!"

The guard tipped the brim of his hat. "You're not from these parts are you?"

"No. My name is Kathryn Janeway, I'm Captain of the USS Starship Voyager and this," she indicated Seven. "Is Seven of Nine, my Astrometric's Officer."

"Looks more like a Borg Drone to me," he said coldly.

"She's a Senior Officer on my ship."

"Why are you two ladies here?" he asked.
"Shore leave," Janeway explained. "Seven has been through a tough ordeal, she was involuntarily recruited for a lethal game called Tsunk- "

"Tsunkatse," the guard finished.

Kathryn nodded, surprised. "How did you know?"

The guard shook his head sadly. "We're the next 'civilised' planet after the Norcadian Home World and so we often suffer the after-effects of Tsunkatse, people becoming excessively violent, happens all the time."

Kathryn sighed, half-relieved. "So you know the extreme conditions leading to - "

"It's also why our prisons are so full, I'm afraid I'm still going to have to take your friend in."

That had been it. They had taken Seven from her there and then.
Chapter 2

Chakotay had listened in silence. She wanted his advice and if confessing everything was what it took to get Seven out of that awful place, she was willing to try.

She was disturbed by his stillness. "Speak to me, Chakotay."

"It certainly explains a few things," he finally managed, then added quickly. "About why she would attack an unarmed civilian, seemingly without provocation."

"Oh, she had provocation alright!" declared the Captain.

Chakotay held up his hands. "I'm not disputing that, but why have you waited this long to say anything? Surely you should have told this to the authorities when she was arrested?"

Kathryn's cheeks burned with rage, she stood up. "I did! And you know what they said?" she stormed out from behind her desk, slapping her laptop closed. "They said that according to Simaga law, same sex relationships don't count as 'proper' relationships – therefore she can't have been provoked at seeing me being man-handled!"

Chakotay stared at her in disbelief.

"I know!" she exclaimed. She stomped up the stairs to her sofa and deflated onto it.

Chakotay stood and moved towards her. "I don't know how we can fight this Kathryn, but we will. We'll get her back."

Kathryn smiled warmly at him; she needed to hear that right now. "Thanks Chakotay."

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Her visits to the prison are the high and low point of each day. Seeing the initial spark in Seven's eyes, the ex-drone rushing forwards; a force field separating them, exchanging looks of love and assured words about the impending trial, which steadily fell into looks of despair and words of pessimism.

Kathryn was only allowed a brief time with Seven and even then, they were never alone. She hated to admit it, but sometimes she was grateful for the restricted visiting hours. The ex-drone was not coping well with her confinement; she was emotionally erratic and prone to temper tantrums; it was difficult for Kathryn to witness.

Janeway couldn't tell where Seven's outrage at being forced to play Tsunkatse ended and her anger for being imprisoned began. Sometimes she thought they overlapped, joining forces and bursting out of her with more force than that beautiful body could handle.

The Captain longed to hold Seven, promise her the universe would be a safe place once again; but it was not in her power.

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Now in her third week of incarceration, Seven had run out of energy, all hope had fallen away and her eyes accepted defeat. Now, with no words that hadn't already been uttered, they sat watching each other. The guard on Janeway's side of the force field didn't understand, he thought she was
insane for showing up every day. But Kathryn couldn't leave Seven; no matter how painful it was to watch the Borg's deterioration.

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Chakotay sat in the Ready Room. His ready room, staring at a padd. Somewhere in the midst of all the chaos, Kathryn had handed command of Voyager over to him and withdrawn into a world of her own. His mind wondered over the last few weeks, how he could have done things differently… better…

They had contacted a Simaga Legal Councillor immediately, one of the best in his field. The outcome wasn't promising; their Councillor had managed to get Seven's sentence lowered from life to five years, should she be found guilty.

Kathryn had taken the news quietly. She had nodded her understanding whilst physically diminishing in her seat. She did not speak for the rest of the briefing. When the Councillor left, she retired to her quarters, not to be seen until her visit to Seven the following day.

Chakotay called by her quarters to check on her; he got as far as the door. From outside he could hear crying and smashing. He consoled himself that at least she was venting some of her frustration; he refused to intrude and left. If he could, he would gladly suffer this grief for her but knew the gesture was meaningless since it was impossible.

He didn't know how to broach the subject or if he even should. What happened between the Captain and Seven was their business, but he wanted to help Kathryn. With every visit to the prison she grew more despondent. She wasn't eating, she could hardly bring herself to drink a cup of coffee, grey circles were forming under her eyes and her dishevelled hair and uniform were becoming a regular fixture.

Only yesterday B'Elanna had informed him that she had seen Janeway wandering the decks at some ghastly hour, mumbling to herself about a statue. He worried that maybe it would have been better if she had retained command of the ship – it might have kept her busy: a distraction.

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They hadn't spoken in four days, twelve hours, sixteen minutes and forty-nine seconds. Seven eyed her lover carefully. "You look pale," she said matter-of-factly.

Kathryn nodded; her Astrometric's Officer was the one person she didn't want to hide from. "Just tired," Janeway replied, attempting that crooked half-smile.

Seven frowned. "I am sorry," she leaned forward, wishing she could touch Kathryn. She knew she could convey all she felt in just one touch.

Janeway scowled. "Sorry? For what?"

"That I brought you to this."

Janeway shook her head fervently. "This isn't your fault."

"But you blame me," stated the blonde.

Kathryn glared at her in bewilderment. "Where did that come from?"

Seven looked at the floor. "From you," she said dejectedly. "You obviously do not want to be here
and I would rather you did not come, if pity is what keeps you with me."

Kathryn recoils, speechless and stung. After a moment, she bursts with rage. "I can't believe you just said that! To me?" she stands up. "Pity you? How dare you – I'm trying to be supportive – trying to show you how important you are to me - and this is what I get in return?"

Seven gazes at Janeway, eyes shimmering with fear.

Kathryn leant forward; she could hear the low hum of the force field as she spoke. "What do I have to do? How can I convince you? Isn't it enough that you're in here – why must you push everything to the limit? Why do you make it so difficult?" the Captain's tone betrayed the nervous tension that had become part of her every-day life, she couldn't rein it in anymore. "Is it easier for you this way? Is it easier to hurt me than it is to let me love you?"

The ex-drone fixed Janeway with a detached stare. "You say I won't let you love me but you are the one who comes here everyday, without your heart in attendance. I think you leave it behind on purpose."

Kathryn sat down, her tone softening. "And why would I do that?"

"To protect yourself… from me... from the probable outcome of my trial." Janeway crossed her arms defensively. "If I were trying to protect myself – why am I here now? If I care so little… Why would I put myself through this ordeal?"

"To alleviate your guilt," came the cool reply.

"What guilt?" Janeway snapped, shifting uncomfortably in her seat.

"Guilt for severing me from the Collective, for forcing me to join Voyager, guilt for making me feel affection for you… of being in my thoughts incessantly. I can endure this place alone, Kathryn, but only if I have the hope of one day holding you again... and you have taken away that hope. You will leave me when I am convicted, you will start your journey back to Earth and I shall have lost you."

Kathryn reached her hand towards the force field; Seven mirrored her action.

"I will not leave you, I promise," Kathryn whispered.

Seven smiled sadly. "I am afraid that you will not be able to keep that promise."

It was the first morning of the trial. Kathryn was edgy. She couldn't do up the buttons on her blouse. Her hands shook violently, her stomach felt hollow. She wanted it to end. Then castigated herself for thinking this. But she did. She wanted it over. Either way. It had to end; she was beginning to forget what it was like not to hurt. Guilt had faded and now grief was her constant companion. Her need for Seven and her desire to get the crew home clashed with what she would have to do if Seven was convicted.

The odds plagued her mind. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and shuddered at the frail woman gazing back at her. She barely recognised herself; her face was drawn, her body undernourished, she looked terrible.

She cursed herself for being so weak. It was a wonder Seven wanted anything to do with her, some partner she'd turned out to be – feeble and emotionally undependable. Kathryn sat on the edge of her
bed, tears spilling onto her cheeks. She felt their salty warmth and didn't react.

Slowly she pulled herself to her feet and dragged her weary bones over to the sink in the bathroom; she splashed cool water over her face. She stared at the haggard woman in the mirror, she had to pull herself together, for Seven.

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Kathryn didn't need to be a Simaga judge to know things weren't going well. There were too many witnesses citing Seven had instigated the attack, no one had heard or seen Osenu attack Janeway.

She sat in the front pew of the courthouse, Seven directly in front of her… almost close enough to touch… if she just leaned forwards and stretched out her hand…

She longed to trace that lean neck with her finger tips, to run her hands through that blonde mane, whisper words of hope in her ear and kiss those soft lips. Instead she glanced down at her clenched hands.

The court hearing lasted two days in all and the judge took another day to make his final decision. As they waited silently in the courthouse, every movement seemed painfully slow.

"The defendant will rise," Ordered the adjudicator.

Seven obeyed.

"I have given this case much consideration, and it is my opinion that the defendant did not intend to kill Osenu Marlejika, however, she did purposefully inflict injuries upon him and that is a crime we feel very strongly about on Simaga. I find the defendant Seven of Nine guilty under Simaga law 28.94.2," the judged looked directly at Seven. "I hereby sentence you to five years imprisonment, pending parole in the fourth year. Motion carried."

The Voyager crew fell into a fearful hush and then the courtroom broke out into a ruckus of objections. Seven leaned forward, resting her hands flat against the bench for support. Kathryn half sat down, half fell. Her back slumped and her shoulders collapsed. Her mind over-loaded with fragmented conversations and images of her life with Seven before the trial… of how happy they had been… of their future together… One instant, one second, one word 'guilty' had taken everything from her.

The ex-drone turned to look at the crushed woman that was her Captain, her saviour – but Kathryn's eyes were dull and empty. Seven felt tears stream down her face, she only cared about being separated from Kathryn.

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She worried him. She was silent on their return to Voyager; he had never seen her this low. She went straight to her quarters, he left her alone for a time, then decided it would be better to monitor her. He didn't trust her alone and so he posted a security team outside her quarters, then paid her a visit. As he entered her quarters, she looked at him with a clear gaze that cut right through him. He had never seen someone in so much pain. He took a step towards her, the doors closed after him. A moment passed in silence and she drew herself to her feet, that old air of authority returning slightly to her frame.

She turned her back to him and looked out of the port window, clasping her hands behind her back the way Seven would have. When she spoke her voice was firm. "I have come to a decision. I will not change my mind."
He heard her inhale, as if for strength.

"I am staying," she said plainly.

Chakotay tilted his head, not quite acknowledging this.

Sensing his uncertainty, Kathryn looked over her shoulder at him. "I am staying on Simaga. I have found an apartment close to the prison, it will do in the meantime. I may be able to get employment at the science facility in the town centre, I'm highly qualified, I'm sure it won't be a problem."

Chakotay shook his head and rushed towards her, she turned and looked out of the window. Her lips pursed firmly together. He already knew there was no use in trying to change her mind, but he tried anyway. "Kathryn – think carefully about what you're doing – what you're giving up!"

"I have," she looked directly at him. "And it's nothing to what I would be leaving behind."

He put his hands on her forearms. "If you stay, you'll probably never see Earth again, your family – friends – the federation… Everything… everything that's ever meant anything to you."

Kathryn took a ragged breath; her decision had been difficult. "None of that matters if I don't have her to share it with," she paused as her friend fell into despair. "Can you understand that? It has no meaning, unless I'm with her."

Chakotay saw she was earnest, he couldn't understand, but he could see how overpowering their bond was. He had to let her make this decision, she had earned that right.

He nodded sadly. "I will agree on one condition."

Kathryn raised an eyebrow. "Which is?"

"You move into this apartment, Voyager will stay in orbit for a month with no contact. If after that time you still wish to stay, I will give the order to resume our course home."

She consented.

He decided to leave while she was still being reasonable, he headed for the door.

"I won't change my mind," she called after him.

The finality in her tone resonated in his ear as he left.

Kathryn returned her gaze to the stars. For the first time since this nightmare had begun, she smiled. She smiled at the thought of seeing Seven everyday, of their being reunited when she was released, of beginning a new life together. She wondered where they would end up. Maybe they would settle on a nearby planet, maybe continue their journey to Earth, maybe… there were many options, she would worry about them when Seven was by her side.

Kathryn's grin widened, to know she had a future with Seven, that was all she needed. She moved into her bedroom and began packing. She would address the crew tomorrow morning, leave Voyager for good, inform Seven of her decision and begin her new life.

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The crew fought back tears as the Captain finished her farewell speech. The crew was deeply grieved; they were losing two members of their family at once. It was difficult to bear. They watched as Kathryn stepped down from the podium, wiped away tears and turned from them for the last time.
She walked into the corridor, the doors closed behind her and no one spoke.

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Kathryn waited in the prison cell, twirling the long stemmed purple flower playfully between her thumb and forefinger. She breathed in its scent and smiled faintly to herself.

Seven entered her side of the barrier. She was in a standard green Simaga prison uniform. Her tall form was slouched, her eyes showing evidence of crying. Kathryn's heart immediately constricted within her chest. She held the flower up; Seven gazed without understanding at her lover.

Kathryn smiled warmly, the joy reaching her eyes and sparkling in a way Seven had almost forgotten.

"I brought this for you," Janeway said softly.

Seven took her seat, Kathryn also sat.

"A 'going-away' present? I do not want it," Seven retorted; too weary to sound snappish.

"I told you, I'm not going anywhere without you," replied Kathryn.

Seven watched her closely. "My sentence is four, maybe five years," Seven stated, as if Kathryn had forgotten.

Janeway nodded, she knew the time would pass slowly but she would be patient, she would keep herself busy.

"You will be home by the time I get out of here," Seven said disheartened.

"I am home," Janeway corrected.

Seven looked startled.

Kathryn broke into an enigmatic grin and tilted her head. "I came to tell you… I'm staying. I have an apartment a few streets from here, I've got a job with the National Simaga Science Team and I have a life-time supply of coffee unpacked and ready to go!"

Seven stared at her in astonishment, finally managing to stutter. "But… Voyager…?"

"Will be setting sail without me," Kathryn's smile faded. She knew she was making the right decision but she would miss her substitute family. They had pulled her through some rough times.

"The crew?" Seven read her thoughts.

Janeway gazed into the crystal eyes that had captivated her from the first. "I think they understand," she replied. "I'm staying and when you're released, we can begin again."

Seven laughed with relief and then wept for joy.

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