



Episode 8-12 – Soul Searching

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The last couple of weeks had been quiet, and Captain Kathryn Janeway was glad for the rest. It gave her time to catch up on reports, and entirely too much time to think.

"Torres to Janeway."

"Go ahead," she replied, thankful for the interruption.

"I've been doing a routine purge of the data base, and came across a holonovel called Gothic London."

B'Elanna must be really bored to be going through the database, she thought.

"The last time it was activated was almost seven years ago. Since it was your program, I thought I'd find out if you wanted to keep it."

Seven years, Kathryn mused - time does fly. "Go ahead and keep it for now. Is there anything else Lieutenant?"

"No ma'am."

"In that case, I'll let you get back to work."

"Yes Captain, Torres out."

Picking up her cup of coffee, she took a sip and leaned back in the chair. The last time she ran the program, she kept seeing items and characters from the novel appearing on the ship. At first she thought she was suffering from stress and anxiety, when it turned out she was a victim of some aliens telepathic game. That is if he was using telepathy, but she had never had the chance to find out properly. After that, she had abandoned the holonovel. Perhaps after my shift, I'll give it another try, she thought, then got back to work.

The long full dress made her feel encumbered, but not overly so; it would just take some time to get used to it again.

Accessing the program, she skipped to the next chapter, having no desire to reenact the scene where Lord Burleigh professed his love for her. It made her feel uncomfortable considering what happened afterward.

Once it was running, she entered to find herself standing in a long hallway. Lighted oil lanterns lined the walls as she proceeded to her bedchamber. Just as she was about to enter, the familiar sound of a piano broke the calm silence. Listening to the melody, she eventually recognized the tune as being Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata".

Heading down the hall for the music room, she wondered why no one else seemed to be hearing it. Reaching the door, she grasped the ornate silver handle and turns. As she opened it, the music stopped abruptly. Inside, a large grand piano graced the moonlit room. On the left, three sets of French doors hung open, a gentle summer night breeze billowing the thin silk drapes.

Stepping inside, she scanned the room with her eyes before calling out.

"Hello? Is anyone here?" She received no response. She crossed over to the first set of doors and was closing them when, out of the corner of her eye, she saw movement. Turning her head to look, she saw a beautiful red-haired woman wearing a long blue flowing gown standing behind a veil of billowing curtains.

Taking a step toward her, she was about to ask who she was when the woman faded before her eyes. Who was that? she wondered, then her thoughts are interrupted by the sound of Chakotay's voice over the com.

"Chakotay to Janeway."

"Yes, Commander?"

"I hate to bother you during your time off, but we've just detected a planet that sensors indicate has possibly been recently attacked by the Sernaix."

"Alter course. I'll be there as soon as I've changed back into uniform."

"Understood, Chakotay out."

"Computer, save current position and end program."

"Position saved," it replied, and the holo-grid appeared.

"Report," Janeway said upon entering the bridge.

"We're just about to drop out of warp," Paris replied.

When they did, a barren planet loomed before them. "Scan the surface, Mister Kim," Janeway ordered, taking her seat next to Chakotay.

Harry looked down at his console and activated sensors. "There's no life on the surface," he reported. "Trying underground..."

Janeway looked back at him when he offers no further information and saw a look of puzzlement. "What is it?"

"Sensors are being deflected by some sort of dampening field about forty meters in," Harry reported dutifully.

Janeway appeared both thoughtful and intrigued. I wonder if there was something the Sernaix wanted and, if there was, what was it? "Is there anything that could prevent an away team from transporting to the surface?"

Harry used the targeting scanners to attempt transport. "Yes ma'am - the beam is being scattered. I can't get a safe lock."

"Then I guess we'll have to take the Flyer. Paris, Tuvok, you're with me."

Tapping her combadge, she continued, "Janeway to Seven."

"Yes, Captain?"

"Report to the shuttle bay immediately for an away mission."

"Understood."

"Commander, you have the bridge," she said, before leaving with Paris and Tuvok close behind.

The ride down to the surface was easy, and Paris sat them down about twenty feet from one of the cave entrances. When they got out, Paris took a look around, surveying the landscape. It was harsh, barren, and with very little plant life. If there were signs that anybody lived here, he couldn't see it.

"Let's get going," Janeway said, making Tom refocus his attention on the group once more. "I want continuous scans while we're in the cave. Whatever's producing the dampening field may be dangerous and I don't want to be caught flat footed."

"Yes, Captain," the group intoned, and set their tricorders to active scan. It had been hot, and Tom appreciated the cool breeze rushing through the cave mouth. Then almost fifteen feet inside, they had to turn on their wrist beacons in order to be able to keep going. Everything was going well, at least to him. It wasn't until the group stopped that he looked up from his tricorder to see a dark figure standing less than fifteen feet away. Why hadn't their tricorders detected the life form?

Janeway stepped forward and addressed the figure. "Hello, we mean you no harm. My name is Captain Kathryn Janeway, we're not going to hurt-" she began, cutting herself off as the figure ran across the tunnel to a rocky slope. "Wait! We just want to ask you a few questions!" she managed to get out as she stood staring up at where the figure disappeared over the ledge.

The next sound they heard was of loose rock growing louder. Large rocks began tumbling over the edge. "Run!" Janeway ordered, and Tom found himself running like mad.

He could see Tuvok's familiar form running beside him as he followed Janeway. Seven was behind them, or so he thought. It would be hard to hear her footfalls over the sound of the rockslide.

When Janeway finally stopped, so did Paris and Tuvok. They stood for a moment, catching their breath.

"Where's Seven?" Janeway suddenly asked as she noticed her absence. "I thought she was behind me," Tom replied, then turned around to look down the tunnel.

"Seven!" Janeway called, shining her beacon along the ground as she walked back down the tunnel. Paris and Tuvok did the same, spreading out down the tunnel, calling as they went and playing their beacons over the rocks.

"Captain!" Tuvok called, kneeling down. Janeway and Paris moved to join him to see a slender body with blond hair poking out from amongst the rubble. Tuvok was feeling for a pulse. "She's alive," he confirmed, then said, "Mister Paris, assist me."

Tom stepped up to help him dig Seven out as Janeway shined her beacons on her so they could see what they were doing. They worked carefully, trying not to move her too much in case it worsened any problems. When they finally had her out, Tom reconfigured his tricorder to scan for injuries. Among minor cuts and bruises, there was a large gash on her forehead, and there was something else. "Her skull's been fractured," he reported with a frown. "We need to get her back to Voyager."

They knew they couldn't go back the way they came. Tons of rock blocked the exit, so they'd have to find another way around, and Janeway hoped Seven would survive long enough.

Carefully, Tuvok picked Seven up and carried her, following Paris and Janeway as they searched for another means of escape.

Hours seemed to pass, and no matter how many turns they made or tunnels they passed through, they hadn't made any discernible progress. Tuvok noted how anxious Janeway was, and Paris too, and even though he was Vulcan, understood how they felt. Seven was apart of their collective family, and over the years, had become a vital member.

Light, there around the corner. The tricorders had become useless awhile ago, unable to function the closer they seemed to be getting to where the dampening field was being generated. The light grew brighter, suggesting that maybe someone was approaching.

Paris and Janeway drew their phasers, aiming down the tunnel. It wasn't a certainty they would work, but if it was another dark man, seeing the weapons might make him think twice before leaving and possibly cause more harm. There were no rocky slopes this time, so they wouldn't have to worry about another rockslide.

When the person behind the light came into view, it wasn't the same man they'd encountered. In fact, he appeared to be of a different species all together. He possessed silver skin, gold eyes, and copper hair. Still, there as no point taking chances.

"That's far enough," Janeway said, and he stopped cold. "We're not going to harm you, all we want is a way out."

"Who are you?" he asked, unable to see them clearly beyond the light of their wrist beacons.

"My name is Kathryn Janeway. We came to investigate a recent attack on your world."

"The Sernaix?" he asked.

"You know them?" Kathryn asked, probing for more information.

"Yes, they've been attacking us for centuries," the man replied. "Are you a friend or foe to them?"

"Neither, but we'd like to make peace with them."

It was clear, at least to him, that they didn't know them well. "The Sernaix do not make peace, only disrupt it."

"Sounds to me that you know quite a bit about them."

"I know enough," he replied. "I will be happy to continue this discussion if you would lower your weapon and remove the light from my eyes."

"All right," she said. She did as asked, then indicated that the others should too.

When his eyes cleared, he stared at them and gasped in disbelief.

"What is it?"

"Please," he said, gaining his senses. "Follow me. I will take you to see Roush, the Elder. He will answer all your questions."

Janeway looking to Paris, then Tuvok. If nothing else, they might be able to treat Seven. And they were still lost - they had nothing to lose from following him.

"Lead the way."

He nodded reverently before turning back around. Tuvok found his behavior curious at best, but no longer perceived him as a threat. In some strange way he did not understand, he felt that he truly wanted to help them. How could he, considering that they were strangers?

Approaching what at first glance was to be an ordinary rock wall, the man lifted his arm and waved it across him, as if he were performing a magic trick. The wall disappeared, revealing a thriving metropolis.

When they entered, one person stopped mid-sentence and stared. Then there was another, then another; and soon, all was silent and every eye fixed in awed rapture. It made both Janeway and Paris feel comfortable. Then there was movement as someone weaved their way through the crowd. A young girl emerged holding what looked to be a white rose as she headed for them.

Paris thought this all familiar somehow, but it wasn't until the girl offered the flower to Janeway that he remembered with a start - he'd seen this before in a dream. Why or how he didn't know.

Janeway smiled as she took the flower. Before she could say anything, a man dressed in red robes approached. "The ancients have returned to us," he said, bowing his head.

Janeway, Paris, and Tuvok looked puzzled.

"I'm afraid you must have us confused with someone else. We've never been to your world before," Janeway explained.

The man acted as if she hadn't spoken. "Your companion has been injured. Please follow me so that she may be healed." He turned, and they followed, at a loss for anything else to do.

Entering a small dwelling, he asked them to lay Seven on the bed. Tuvok looked to Janeway, and she nodded. Carefully, he laid her onto it.

Touching the area around the gash on her forehead with his fingers, the man closed his eyes and concentrated. The away team watched in disbelief as Seven's gash closed, healing itself before their eyes. They were amazed, to say the least. All except Tuvok, who was fascinated by what had happened: already, his mind was formulating theories and explanations.

"Your companion will recover," the man said, looking slightly worn out. "She will be asleep for awhile, I suggest you allow her the rest."

"Thank you," Janeway replied, and the man smiled, bowing his head.

Standing, he said, "You must be hungry, thirsty, please follow me." They followed him into the next room, where food and drink had already been prepared and placed on the table. "Please sit," he said, indicating to some chairs, and they did. Paris scanned the food and drink first, determining if it was safe to ingest as Janeway watched, waiting for an answer. Paris looked up

and gave the all clear with a smile.

"Of course it's safe," Roush replied. "We would never dream of harming our protectors."

"We weren't suggesting otherwise, but what's safe for you may be harmful to us. Since we are obviously of a different species, there may be amino or nucleic acids that are bodies can't process." He nodded, appearing to understand. "Earlier you said you know us?" she continued, hoping for further explanation.

He nodded. "Yes, others of your kind came to our world to protect us from the Sernaix. If you hadn't intervened, we Newmari would be dead now."

"I don't want you to think that I doubt your claim, but we have a rule called the Prime Directive. It prevents us from interfering with the normal development of any species civilizations. So I find it unlikely that I or my people helped you, especially considering that 100,000 years ago, we didn't possess our current level of technology. We were bound to our world in much the same way you are. At that time, the thought that one day my people would venture into space wasn't thought of, much less viable."

"We have records, ancient texts that have been kept and preserved for centuries that document your arrival to our world. No one besides the Elders have access to these records. I can take you to our library, show you the texts. It will prove I speak the truth."

"Could you give us a moment?" Janeway asked.

"Of course," he replied. "I will wait outside."

"Thank you," she said, and the man stood, nodded, and left.

"What do you think?" she asked, turning to her Security Chief.

"At this time," Tuvok began, "I have seen no evidence that he is trying to deceive us. Furthermore, I believe it would be wise to accept his offer. If nothing else, it may provide some insight as to who this race was, even if it may be our own."

"Are you saying you think it might have been us?" Paris asked.

"It is plausible that we may have traveled back in time to protect these people. At this moment, the reason for such an undertaking is unclear. Perhaps these records will provide the answers we seek."

"I agree," Janeway replied. "Tom, I want you to stay with Seven and monitor her condition. Tuvok, I want you to see if you can find another way out of here. In the meantime, I will accept Roush's offer and go with him to review the texts."

Both Tom and Tuvok nodded their consent. For the first time in a while, Kathryn felt a sense of direction.

The library was huge, much larger than Janeway expected. "This way," Roush said, and she followed.

Crossing the cavernous room, he led her to a door scribed in writing she couldn't understand. Opening it, there was a dimly lit tunnel. "Please be careful," he cautioned turning on his flashlight. "We discovered the texts 30,000 years ago. The tunnel had been closed off at that time in order

to protect those documents from the Ree'na."

"Who are they?" She asked following.

"They are a race who are followers of the Sernaix. We believe they were brought here to destroy us, but have failed, obviously. The dampening field along with the cloaking technology prevent them from finding us."

Janeway nodded. "What do these people look like?"

"Black skin, grey hair, and white eyes. Truly hideous."

"I and my..." she hesitated, searching for the word. "...companions encountered an individual in the tunnels earlier who matches that description."

"It was the one responsible for your companions injury?"

She didn't want to add to his already hateful feelings of those people. "Not directly."

"That is how they strike, making an attack appear as an accident. They are devious, and you are fortunate that none of you were killed."

"Yes, I suppose we were," she replied, and left it at that.

The tunnel, after several more meters, opened into a cavern. In the center sat a large stone table with benches on either side. Behind it, shelves were chiseled into the rock, and carefully bound books rested inside.

Stepping into the room, Janeway marveled at the murals painted along the wall, telling a story. They appeared extremely old, but looked to have gone through several restorations. The first panel was of a ship she recognized as belonging to the Sernaix. The artwork was incredibly detailed, and it left Janeway in awe. The ship was on what appeared to be the surface of the planet.

The next was of one of the Newmari healing an injured Sernaix. Moving on, the next panel showed the Sernaix enslaving several of the Newmari. A group linked together by what could be chains, although that could have been artistic interpretation. In the next frame, it showed the Sernaix attempting to force the Newmari slaves into healing their injured, but instead, they were doing the opposite, depicting a Sernaix to be in pain. The next showed the captives being slaughtered.

Moving on, Kathryn saw the next panel, depicting the Sernaix ship firing on the surface, hovering over a city as the Newmari run into the caves to escape. The next frame showed the Sernaix leaving as another ship she didn't recognize landed on the surface.

The last frame was the Newmari standing before a group of people that looked remarkably like humans, except for their clothing - and not to mention that their ship didn't resemble anything her people had constructed to her knowledge, leading her to conclude that whoever these people were, they weren't human. "Kathryn Janeway," the man said, calling her attention back to him.

She turned to see him setting several books on the stone table. "Kathryn will be fine."

He nodded, then indicated the books, opening one of them. "These texts will prove that your people visited our world."

"These murals," she said, walking over to join him, "tell a different story."

"What do you mean?"

"These murals are very detailed, and despite the fact that we look extremely similar to the people depicted in them, my people do not possess ships that resemble anything like those, nor do we have clothing that resemble what they're wearing."

"Perhaps when you read the ancient texts, they will convince you?"

"I can't read your language."

He smiled. "I am aware of that. Come, sit." She did, then looked down at the page before her, thinking that he would translate. Then she felt his hand on the center of her back. She turned to face him. "It's all right Kathryn, I am going to give you a gift, do not be afraid."

She wasn't afraid, just startled by the unexpected touch. "What is this gift?"

"We have the ability to impart knowledge. Since you are of a different species, the knowledge will be temporary. I would not harm you, or any of your people. Please." Eventually she nodded, and he smiled. "Please look at the text."

Turning, she did, and felt his hand return to the small of her back. "What am I supposed to be looking at?"

"You will know momentarily," he replied, and closed his eyes, concentrating.

Her back began to feel warm, and the warmth spread through her body. Just as she was about to look away, it seemed as though a thick fog had been lifted from her brain, and the once alien text made perfect sense. "This is incredible," she said in awe. "I can read this."

Several seconds later, the hand was removed. "Good." Then he walked around the table and sat on the bench across from her.

"How long will this last?" she asked, looking up at him.

"A few hours, maybe less," he replied.

Looking back down, she began to read, not wanting to waste this opportunity. He sat silently, just watching. Twenty minutes passed this way, with Kathryn poring over the books and he content to simply sit, and wait. Then, another man entered the cavern.

"Forgive my intrusion," he said.

"What is it, Ladon?" Roush asked.

"One of the patrols have captured a Ree'na."

Turning back to look at Janeway, he said, "If you will excuse me." Roush stood, and moved towards the exit.

Curious, she stood and followed. What she'd read convinced her that it couldn't have been her race or ship, there were just too many inconsistencies. As they neared the door, she could hear the sounds of people chanting.

"String him up! String him up!" The words echoed, over and over again, bouncing off the walls, transformed into an eerie and horrifying call.

Once she'd stepped back into the main square, two Newmari were stringing up a man matching the dark figure she'd seen earlier. She wasn't the only person disturbed by this chain of events, she could see it on Paris' face when he approached. Then one of the Newmari pulled out a pulse whip.

"They're going to beat him," Tom said horrified. "Are you going to stand there and let them?"

"Certainly not," she replied, trying not to think of the Prime Directive. She stepped forward. "Roush? Why are going to allow your people to beat this man?"

"He is one of many who I'm certain is reasonable for the recent attack. If we let him go he'll only try to find a way to do it again."

Since he had refused to believe that her people are not the same race they encountered 100,000 years ago, she decided to use it her advantage. "I want you to stop this and release him to us. We will determine if he is indeed responsible." He didn't reply, only stare at her as if he were thinking it over. "Now," she said, nothing in her tone or stance indicating that she was anything other than deathly serious.

He didn't like it, she could tell, but he obeyed. "Release him." Without question, they did. Tuvok, who she'd not seen until now, stepped up with Paris to help the man to his feet and to the hut where Seven had just recently awakened and was now on her feet as they laid the man in her place.

"Captain," Tuvok began, approaching her. His voice was low as he reported, "I have found another exit."

"Good." She looked to Tom who was attempting to scan the dark man and failed. "How badly is he injured?"

"I'm not sure. We'll have to wait until we're back on Voyager "

Roush stepped into the room and Janeway looked to him. "We're going to return to our ship. I will return once I'm finished questioning him."

He nodded.

The trip back to the Flyer didn't seem long, but did at the same time. Once they had brought power up, it wasn't less than a couple of minutes that both she and Tuvok hear Paris' voice over the internal com. "Captain, I think you better get back here."

"Tuvok, take over." She said standing and headed for the aft section."

"Aye Captain."

Once there, she saw what the call was about without having to ask. It was a little girl, the same one who gave her the white rose.

"What do you want to do?" He asked.

"Keep her with us for now. If we return to the surface this man will most likely die." The girl appeared frightened of the dark man who was unconscious at the moment. "Do what you can to keep her occupied while we return to Voyager." He nodded. Then just as she was about to leave, the child ran up and grasped her arm.

"Are you the Elder?" the girl asked.

"In a manner of speaking," Janeway replied turning to face her.

"Please don't leave me here with him," she said, fear creeping into her voice.

"You won't be alone. Lieutenant Paris will be here with you."

"No, please. Let me go with you," she pleaded.

She hated this, but agreed, taking her back to the forward section. When they rendezvoused with Voyager, she had informed the Doctor that he had a patient, then transported the dark man there. Tapping her combadge, she said, "Janeway to the bridge."

"Chakotay here, Captain."

"I want you to try contacting the surface and let them know we have a young girl who stowed away on the Flyer."

"Captain?"

"I'll explain later. If you need me I'll be in my quarters."

"Understood."

Entering her quarters, the child stepped in cautiously. On their way here, Kathryn had learned that her name was Ellone, but little other information had been forthcoming. "Have a seat," she said, then asked, "Are you hungry? Thirsty?" The girl shook her head before taking a seat on the sofa, Kathryn sat in the chair caddy-corner from her. "I couldn't help but notice you were scared of the man we brought back with us. Why?"

"They are friends with the Sernaix and want to hurt us. I was told to stay away from them."

"Who told you?"

"The Elders, my mother."

"If these people want to hurt you, why did you risk your safety to hide aboard our shuttle?"

The girl smiled, and it was the first sincere one since she gave her the rose. "I knew you would protect me, just as you came to protect us many years ago; especially now that my parents are dead."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Janeway replied, and she truly was. Even though she hadn't lost her father until she was a young woman, it still hurt her none the less, and she felt a surge of sympathy and understanding towards this young, alien girl.

"I never knew my father, he died when I was a baby. And my mother..." Her voice trailed off, her eyes filling with tears. Janeway moved to the sofa, taking Ellone in her arms. "It was during the last attack. I tried to help her but I didn't know what to do. I tried!" She cried into Janeway's chest. "I really did!"

"Shh," she said stroking her hair. "I'm sure you did." Holding her, the young girl's grief intensified, and she comforted her.

Several moments later, the Doctor's voice erupted over her combadge. "Doctor to Captain Janeway."

The girl separated herself from her in surprise. "It's all right. It's just my personal communication device." The girl calmed somewhat as Janeway responded to the Doctor's hail. "Janeway here."

"I've finished treating our guest, and he's asking to speak with someone in charge, so I thought you would be the proper choice."

"Thank you Doctor, I'll be right there."

"You're not going to leave me here are you?" Ellone asked, with a worried look.

"No, I'll have someone look after you for awhile until I've finished. There's a woman on board who has a little girl around your age. I'm sure she would like to meet you." She could tell she didn't like the idea. "I'll come back to pick you up when I'm finished, all right?"

Eventually the girl nodded.

Entering sickbay, the dark man they brought back stared in uncertainty as he looked from her to the Doctor and back again. "If you're going to kill me just get it over with."

"No one's going to harm you," she replied stepping up to greet him.

"Why? Are you not the race who protected the Newmari?"

"We've been getting that a lot lately," she replied trying to make a joke to relieve the tension. It didn't. "They have mistaken us for someone else."

"Since you haven't killed me, perhaps you are not."

"What's your name?" she asked, trying to keep the ball rolling.

"Teno."

"Kathryn Janeway," she offered in return. "The Newmari claim that your people are in league with the Sernaix."

"I'm sure they've convinced themselves of that over time."

"If you're not here because of them, then what are your people doing on the planet?"

"This is our home." Janeway's brow furrowed, making him uncertain as to whether she believed him. "We've lived here for centuries, co-existing with the Newmari. There was a time - before the Sernaix came - that we used to live underground while they lived on the surface. When the Sernaix came, they forced them to retreat underground. In their quest for survival, they sacrificed ours. We didn't possess the number of people they did, so it was easy to slaughter us - most of us. We had no choice but to flee to other areas to avoid extinction."

"Why would they do that?" she asked, appalled.

"The Sernaix believed that they could control the Newmari and use their ability as a tool. To heal them, but they couldn't, discovering that they could use that ability to kill. The Sernaix saw the

potential, and couldn't allow someone to succeed with the Newmari where they couldn't, and sought to destroy them. They would have succeeded had it not been for you-" He cut himself off before continuing. "The race that resembles yours - to step in and put a stop to it."

"Did this race know of your people's existence?"

"No, the Newmari made sure of that. Had they known? Well, I don't know what would have happened. So instead of taking chances, every Newmari born there after were taught to fear us. They were ashamed of what they'd done, and did whatever they could to suppress that secret."

"How much do you know about this race who came to their aid?"

"Only what I've told you. If anyone knows more, it would be the Newmari."

"They claim not to know who these people are."

After several seconds the woman did not reply, so he asked, "What do you plan to do with me?"

"Take you back to your people. I will not turn you over to the Newmari."

He looked somewhat relieved, but not entirely. "Until we're ready to return, it looks as though you'll remain onboard." He nodded, and Janeway left.

In the corridor, Chakotay's voice came over her combadge. "Chakotay to Janeway."

"Go ahead."

"I've finally managed to contact the surface and inform them about the girl. They want to know when you're planning to return."

"Tell them we'll be back in the morning."

"Yes Captain, Chakotay out."

When Samantha Wildman opened the door, she wasn't expecting to see Kathryn Janeway standing before her.

"What's the matter Ensign? You look surprised."

"I thought you would have contacted me so I could have Ellone ready when you got here. Please, come in."

Janeway offered her a smile, which was returned as she stepped inside. "Where is she?"

"In Naomi's room playing caught is caught."

Janeway spoke softly, and tried to avoid standing in view of Naomi's room. "Has she been any trouble?"

"No ma'am. She was skittish at first, but it didn't take long for Naomi to get her out of her shell."

Janeway's smile broadened. "She does have a way of doing that."

Remembering her pet she had to ask, "How did Ellone respond to Ratty?"

Samantha's expression turned to that of amusement. "I wish you had been here to see that, Captain!"

Now she was intrigued. "What happened?"

"I thought she would be disgusted by Ratty, but it was the complete opposite. She was utterly fascinated by him. And he seemed fascinated by her as well. It was as if they could communicate, not with words, but the most basic of emotions. Naomi and I were completely enthralled, and she kept looking to me as if to make certain we were both seeing the same thing."

"I'm sorry I missed it," Janeway said. And she was.

"Captain," Naomi said exiting her room with Ellone just behind. "Ellone thought she heard your voice, and I guess she was right." And she seemed a little disappointed, hoping that Ellone would be staying a little longer.

Picking up on it, Samantha said. "If you like, you could stay the night with Naomi, I'm sure she'd love to have you stay awhile longer," she offered, and looked to Janeway, her smile insinuating that she thought it was a great idea. Ellone, on the other hand, didn't agree. Not wanting to make her uncomfortable she continued. "Perhaps another time. Would that be all right?" The girl nodded, looking relieved.

"Thank you both for taking good care of her." Janeway said with a smile and a nod, letting Samantha know she appreciated the try.

Turning to face Naomi, Ellone lightly touched her fingers to her forehead before reaching out to touch Naomi's. "Good journey."

Naomi copied the gesture. "Good journey."

With a smile, Ellone approached Janeway and went with her to her quarters.

After eating dinner, Janeway made a pallet on the sofa for Ellone. Before retiring to her quarters to change she reminded her, "If you need anything, I'll be in the other room."

Changing into her nightgown, Janeway slipped under the covers. Resting her left arm above her head on the pillow, the other rested on her stomach above the blanket. Letting out a weary sigh, she looked up to stare at the stars through the curved windows over her bed. She had hoped, especially after glimpsing Earth for those very brief and exhilarating moments, that it would be the stars above her childhood home in Indiana, and not the unfamiliar ones she was gazing at.

There were times she wondered why she kept trying to reach that familiar place when it seemed destined that she'd never get there. Maybe she was cursed to spend the rest of her life searching for it; just as people searched for centuries for the elusive holy grail only to continually return empty handed. No matter how many leads - promising or otherwise - they failed. But still, they continued to search for the impossible.

Is that what she was doing? Searching for the impossible? She didn't know where they were, or if they were on the right path. One could reasonably surmise that they were indeed stumbling blindly from star to star, planet to planet, hoping that there might be one clue which would bring this journey to an end.

Movement in the doorway caught her attention. Sitting up, Ellone stood quietly, as if she were

waiting. "Do you need something?" Janeway asked, unable to see her face clearly among the shadows.

"This-" She stopped, her throat tight, straining to contain the hurt she was feeling.

"What is it? What's wrong?" She asked, becoming concerned.

Taking several deep breaths to calm herself, she tried again. "This is the first night I can remember, that my mother wasn't-" And that was as far as she got before her throat clenched shut and tears forced their way from her eyes.

Tossing the covers aside, she crossed the room and knelt before her. Sitting on her knees, she took the grieving girl in her arms. "Let it out," she said softly, stroking her hair. "It's all right." All her hurt, doubt, mixed feelings; appeared insignificant compared to the grieving child in her arms. This child who'd lost the one person that loved and nurtured her all this time, until today.

After several minutes Ellone spoke softly against her shoulder, her throat still wrought with the pains of grief. "I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to be sorry for," Janeway replied, rubbing her back lightly. "You just lost your mother, it's only natural to be upset." Ellone pulled back sniffing as Janeway gently brushed the tears from her silver cheeks. When the light filtering in through the windows touched her face, the wet streaks look like glistening jewels, a sight that both saddened and enthralled her. "I know what it's like to lose someone you love, as much as I wish I didn't."

"Who did you lose?" she asked between sniffs and uneven breaths.

"My father and fiancé. I was a young woman at the time."

"How did they die?"

"In a shuttle accident - that's a type of spaceship. We crashed on a planet. I was thrown clear, and they weren't. The shuttle sank under a polar ice cap and they both drowned," she replied, trying to state it matter-of-factly, busying herself by reaching up to brush the long copper hair out of Ellone's eyes. It still hurt, and no matter how old she got, some pains would never go away, physical or otherwise. But it was the emotional pain that could hurt just as deep as it did the day it happened. Those pains, more than any other, are the most vivid and stick with you for the rest of your life.

Ellone could tell how sad she was by the memory, and knew enough to not question her further. "You must miss them a lot."

Taking a breath, she grasped her arm lightly and stared her in the eyes. "Every day."

"Does the hurt ever go away?"

"Eventually it lessens, although it never goes away entirely. But as the days pass, it will get easier to handle, they'll always be apart of you."

"Just like your father and fiancé."

"That's right," she replied, then smiled, making Ellone smile back. "Now I think it's time we both got back to bed." Ellone nodded.

Stroking her hair one last time, she pushed herself up to her feet and headed back to bed. Turning, she grasped the blanket and slipped underneath before noticing that Ellone had not

moved. "Is there something else you want to say?"

She looked down with her hands behind her back, dragging a silver foot across the floor, pulling it toward her. "Would you mind..." she began softly, then let the words trail off.

"Would I mind what?" Kathryn encouraged.

"If I slept with you tonight?"

Normally she wouldn't have shared her bed with anybody, especially with someone she hadn't known existed twenty-four hours ago, but this situation was different. With a soft look, she agreed.

Ellone looked up in surprise, having resigned herself to a no. "Really?"

Janeway smiled, laughing softly. "Yes, really." Then as if to prove it, she pulled back the covers on her left and patted the bed. "Come on," she encouraged, and Ellone's face lit up. Seeing it warmed her heart, but, under the warmth, there was a sadness, too.

Nearly leaping across the room, the young girl practically jumped onto the bed. Janeway covered her up before laying back down. When she did, Ellone snuggled up, and Janeway lifted her arm as she wrapped both arms around her, her head resting on Janeway's shoulder. Lowering her arm, she held her back, and it seemed as natural as breathing.

"Thank you for coming back to protect us," Ellone said after several moments of silence.

Knowing from her limited experience with these people, it was pointless to argue when they had their mind made up there wasn't anything that could change it. Using her free hand, she smoothed the hair away from her face and said.

"Close your eyes and go to sleep." Nodding against her shoulder, Ellone did as told, releasing a contented sigh.

When Janeway closed her eyes, it was easy to imagine that this child could have been her daughter if she and Mark had married. If she hadn't been stranded in the Delta Quadrant for seven years, they would have.

He had asked her to marry him two weeks before she learned she would be in command of Voyager. The night he asked, they had spent a lovely evening at her apartment in San Francisco. It was the first time they had been able to see each other in weeks. If she wasn't stuck in some meeting or having to put in some extra time at the office, he was either giving a lecture at any number of universities or engaged in research with the Quester Group which kept him busy. When they were finally able to see each other, they practically fell into each other's arms.

He had been unusually passionate that evening, as if he were trying to make up for all the time they'd missed. Later that night, they lay in each others arms; sweaty, but happy. She could remember the look of love in his eyes as they lay facing each other, the feel of his thumb caressing her cheek. He told her that she was beautiful, and how incredibly sexy she was. She could remember how her skin flushed, and how he knew she felt awkward hearing him say it. How he had smiled at her, and the feel of his hand on her hair as he brushed it back. How his expression grew serious moments later as they stared at one another. When he broke the silence, it was then that he asked her to be his wife, and she accepted.

Yes, her life would have been much different if she had returned as planned, but in exchange she would have had to give up the family Voyager became. She had grown closer to people than she ever thought possible. Still, the thought of what could have been continued to weigh heavily on

her mind, especially now that she held this young girl in her arms.

Who knew... perhaps there would still come a time when she would be able to settle down and raise a child of her own, maybe. It seemed unlikely with no man in her life, but did she really need a companion? Yes, only if she wanted to conceive a child of her own. But there was an alternative: adoption, and that led her back to Ellone.

If she didn't have any family, or someone who would be willing to care for her, she might request to do it herself. What are you thinking Kathryn? You can't seriously be considering raising a child. You're the Captain of a starship stuck in the middle of nowhere. You have enough to worry about without bringing a child into the picture. The voice of reason spoke up, and it was right. She had enough to worry about. It was just a silly one minute fantasy. Take your own advice, Kathryn, and go to sleep... you have a lot of work tomorrow. Forcing the thoughts aside, she sought sleep, and after much soul searching, eventually found it.

With a yawn, Janeway took another swig of coffee as she sat behind the desk in her ready room. For the moment, Ellone was at the Wildmans' with Naomi for a couple of hours, until she was ready to return to the surface.

The door chimed.

"Come in," she called, looking up at the door and taking another swig from the metal coffee mug. Chakotay entered. "What can I do for you, Commander?"

"I just finished reading Tuvok and Paris' report on the away mission. These Newmari seem pretty interesting."

"That's one way of putting it," she joked, and he smiled.

"Have you decided on who you're going to take back with you?"

"Why? Are you volunteering?"

"You could say that." His smile broadened, which caused hers to do the same.

"We'll be leaving in a couple of hours. Meet Paris, Tuvok, and me in the shuttle bay." When he didn't move to leave she asked, "Is there something else?"

"Yesterday you said you would explain the man and girl you brought back."

Standing, she held her mug and drained the last of the pleasingly bitter black fluid as she headed for the replicator. "Coffee?"

"No, thanks."

Placing the empty mug inside, she recycled it before ordering a full one and moved to the sofa below the row of windows that normally gave her a fantastic view of the stars; now there was an unremarkable brown planet in its place. Sitting, she indicated that he join her.

Their friendship was still in the healing stage, and they were talking again, but it was still a far cry from where it had been several months ago. She cared about him, and she still did. A part of her felt betrayed by his relationship with Seven, even though there wasn't any justifiable reason why she should. They weren't together, but there was this part of her that believed he'd wait until she was ready. Then the Admiral arrived, and from that moment, everything changed.

She told her that Seven was going to die, and it felt as if she'd been punched in the stomach when the words raced to her brain, and the impact of them left her speechless. Then, as if that little gem were not enough, her older self informed her that she would die in her husband's arms. That was - Chakotay's arms. At that point she may as well have slapped her, because that's what it felt like: a verbal slap to the face. What was she trying to accomplish by telling her about Chakotay and Seven? Why didn't she just tell her about Seven and leave Chakotay out of it? She knew why; the Admiral spoke it clearly, and she could still hear the precise tone and inflection she had used to convey those feelings. 'He will never be the same again, and neither will you.' That future had changed, and it changed her on more than one level. And it left her, once again, picking up the pieces of her life.

Taking the seat she offered, he sat on the edge leaning forward on his knees with his hands clasped together. It was that image which kept her mindful of their fractured relationship, and how far they still had to go before it would become whole again. That was if it ever could. She knew it might never be the same.

She took a sip from the warm mug in her hand. The dark hot liquid cascading down her throat, leaving behind a warm sensation that expanded outward. "I haven't had the chance to read either Paris' or Tuvok's reports. What did they say?"

He shifted slightly as he checked his mental index before answering. "There wasn't much to Paris' report. He mostly commented on the Newmari's ability to rapidly heal injuries, and wondered how far they were able to go with that ability. Then he touched on how convinced the Newmari are that we are from the same race who came to protect them from the Sernaix."

She let out a breath and said, "He wasn't exaggerating about that."

Chakotay smiled. "He also mentioned how they feel about the Ree'na and what they were about to do to one of them if you hadn't intervened. Tuvok's was more precise. He also spoke of the rapid healing and the Newmari's belief about who they think we are and about the man they captured. But he also spoke of the girl who'd stowed away on the Flyer and how quickly she attached herself to you." He paused, wondering if he should say anything further, but his curiosity about her lead him to chance it. "I understand she stayed with you last night."

"Yes, she did."

"Did she tell you why she stowed away on the flyer?"

"She said that she knew we would protect her."

He nodded. "Her parents must have been worried when they learned she was missing."

"I don't think so," she replied, then took another sip from the cooling mug. He seemed puzzled by her response. "Why?"

"They're dead. Ellone-"

"Is that her name?" he interrupted.

"Yes," she answered. "Last night in my quarters, she told me that her father died when she was a baby, then how she lost her mother in the recent attack."

He was silent for a moment, taking it all in as she watched his face. He felt for the child - she could tell. He possessed a great empathy for people, no matter what race, creed, or color they were. It was one of the many qualities she had come to know and admire in him.

"How's she taking it?" he asked, turning his face back to her.

"As well as can be expected. She cried, and I tried to comfort her as best I could."

"I'm glad she had you to turn to," he said with a soft smile, and it made her feel good. "What do you think will happen to her?"

"I don't know, but that's one of the things I plan to find out. Teno, the man in sickbay," she added before he asked, "told me a very different story as to how both the Ree'na and Newmari co-existed for centuries. I received a report from the Doctor confirming their genetic heritage from a medical standpoint, which confirmed what Teno said and what I suspected."

"That the Newmari are lying." He finished.

"Not all of them," she was quick to point out. "Ellone truly believes that they're evil incarnate and that we're the devine intervention her people had prayed for after the Sernaix came to their world. But I'm certain Roush is one of the few who know the truth."

"You're probably right," he agreed. "What do you plan to do with our guest in sickbay?"

"Take him with us and have Tom drop him off in another location so he can rejoin his people. He'll have to remain in the aft section with either you or Tuvok keeping an eye on him, or I'll be stuck in the aft with Ellone. As frightened as she was when we first met, she seemed to immediately cling to me. The more I think about it, she may have chosen me because I was the only female who didn't look strange."

"With Seven's implants I'm sure a child would be frightened of them."

Janeway nodded, then let several seconds pass before speaking again. "I still have some reports to catch up on before we leave."

He stood and replied, "Well I'll let you get back to it. See you in the shuttle bay." Then he left her alone.

She really didn't have anything that couldn't wait until she got back, but she needed time to herself to think, to reflect. Laying her head back against the sofa, she closed her eyes and allowed her mind to drift.

Once Tom dropped off Teno, they proceeded to the entrance they'd used yesterday to leave, and headed back to the colony. When they arrived, they were welcomed with open arms. Remaining polite and tactful, Janeway asked to see Roush. Her request was immediately granted. Before long, she and Chakotay were sitting across from him while Tuvok, Paris, and Ellone remained outside.

"What may I do for you Kathryn?" Roush began with a smile.

"I spoke with the man your people captured. Teno is his name by the way."

The smile faded immediately from his lips. "His story about who his people are and how they got here is very different from what you told yesterday, and before you say that he's lying, our Doctor has confirmed that both your people evolved on this planet." She paused, giving him a chance to respond. When he didn't she asked pointedly, "Would you care to change your story?"

He looked down at his clasped hands on the table, his shoulders slumped in defeat. He appeared as a child who'd just been caught in a lie and could think of no believable cover. Taking a breath, he replied, "You are correct. The Ree'na and ourselves have shared this planet for centuries."

"Why would you lie to us about it? Why not tell us the truth?"

Lifting his head, he gave her a incredulous look. "If you were us, could you admit to anyone that you almost eradicated an entire race in order to survive? We would be a dead people if we hadn't forced the Ree'na out."

"I don't deny that what your people did, they did out of fear. But that doesn't justify what you've done, nor does it justify the ignorance you've perpetuated in order to keep that secret. You have your people believing that the Ree'na are evil and should be feared. How, as a civilized society, could you allow it to continue?" she demanded, saddened and angered by what they'd done.

"When I was a boy, one of the Elders, Nemis, tried to set things right. He tried to explain that the Ree'na were not our enemy, and how we used to co-exist. And do you know what happened?" Janeway and Chakotay shook their heads. "He was beaten to death. He tried to tell the truth and was killed for it. My people have believed this lie for centuries. Then all of a sudden, someone they looked to for wisdom and guidance was all of a sudden telling them that everything they knew was a lie. Tell me, honestly, would you give up centuries of supposed fact and believe the word of a man - no matter who he was - that you were believing a lie?"

"I suppose not," Janeway replied softly, and it made her think back to her own people's history, and the lies people took for fact. The Jews being slaughtered during World War II, the removal of the Native Americans, the slave trade... a thousand examples came to mind.

"What do you know of this race that came to your planet 100,000 years ago?"

Chakotay asked, changing the subject, knowing that there was nothing they could do about the Newmari's relationship with the Ree'na. If it could be solved, Roush's people would have to be the ones to do it, not them.

Janeway, as angry as she was, knew what he was doing and was thankful for it.

"As I told Kathryn, we don't know who they are or where they came from, we don't even know their name. All the information we have are in the ancient texts kept in the sacred library, and only the Elders have access to those texts. That is until

yesterday when your people came to our world."

"So you finally believe we're not the same race?" Janeway questioned. He nodded. "According to the ancient texts, it states: 'You will know us when we return, for we will touch your minds, and share our wisdom'," he quoted.

"They're telepaths?" Chakotay stated.

"Yes. I knew when I transferred knowledge to Kathryn so that she may read and understand the texts that she was not one of the ancients," he answered. Chakotay looked to Janeway puzzled. Seeing it, she explained. "After he'd touched my back to transfer the knowledge, I was able to read and comprehend their language and writing for a short time. By the time we returned to Voyager, it was gone."

He nodded, not particularly thrilled that she hadn't told him about it.

"There's something else I want to ask you," Janeway said as Roush leaned forward in his chair.

"And that is?"

"The girl who stowed aboard our shuttle, Ellone, she told me that both her parents are dead. Her mother died during the recent attack, and has no one left to care

for her. I'm curious to know what happens to her now?"

"Until a family can be found, I'm afraid she will be on her own."

"What?" Kathryn was shocked.

"Isn't there someone who can look after her until then? Perhaps one of the Elders for instance?"

"No one besides the Elders are allowed here, except for your people, who I thought were the ancient ones. As for somewhere else, we're still trying to pick up the pieces from the last attack. And I'm afraid this girl is probably not the only child who has lost their parents. We will feed and clothe them of course, but we cannot force a family to take responsibility for them."

She didn't like his answer, just as she was certain Chakotay didn't. There was nothing she could do to change it, but she could for Ellone. "If you have no objections, I would like to care for Ellone until a family can be found."

Roush looked as shocked as Chakotay did by her request. "Are you certain you want to do that? It could be days, weeks, months, maybe years before a family can be found."

"I realize that, but I can't, in good conscience, knowingly leave her to wander the tunnels until someone can take her in; despite the fact that your people will feed and clothe her."

"If you want to incur this responsibility then I have no objection," Roush said. "If you have no questions, I have work that requires my attention."

"Thank you for being honest with us."

"You're welcome," he replied with a nod. "I trust you know the way out?" Janeway nodded.

Returning the nod, he left.

When he was gone, Chakotay asked, "You really care about this child don't you?"

"Of course I do. I can't very well leave her here knowing she has no one to care for her."

"That's not what I meant."

"I know," she replied. Looking away, she let her eyes wander to gaze upon a picture across the room. "She needs someone right now, and she's comfortable with me." Turning her head, she looked back at him. "I'm not prepared to leave her to fend for herself; a child shouldn't have to be forced to do that. I'll keep her onboard and hope she's placed with a family."

"If that doesn't happen?"

"Then I'll raise her myself," she said, with a simple determination. He nodded in understanding. Standing, he did the same, and followed her outside to where Tuvok, and Paris were waiting. "Where's Ellone?"

"She attempted to enter the building you and Commander Chakotay entered when she was stopped by one of the Elders and taken to that building," Tuvok replied, gesturing to a rock structure across the library.

Janeway nodded. "Wait here, I'll return shortly."

"Yes Captain," he replied before she took off.

Once inside, a Newmari male approached, bowing his head reverently.

"Ancient one, how may I serve you?"

"A young girl has been brought here. I have been given permission from Elder Roush to take charge of her."

"Of course, I will have her brought out at once. What is she called?"

"Ellone."

With another nod, he turned and entered the doorway behind him. Moments later, Ellone appeared with the man. Janeway knelt down as Ellone approached. "I just spoke with Elder Roush, and he's agreed to let you come stay with me until a family can be found. That is if you want to."

A slow smile spread across her face as her eyes lit up. Throwing her arms around her neck, she gave her a kiss on the cheek then said. "I'd like that more than anything."

Janeway smiled, holding her back. "I'm glad the idea appeals to you." She replied, letting Ellone hug her a little longer before detaching herself and stood. Ellone reached to take her hand, smiling up at her. Allowing it, Janeway smiled back. "Come on. There's something I have to do before we return to the ship." Ellone nodded.

Hand in hand, they exited the building and back to the group.

As they had traversed the tunnels, Ellone hadn't asked a single question, even when everyone pulled out tricorders to scan. She already knew what they were, but wasn't sure what they did. Almost twenty minutes had passed before she asked, and Janeway was surprised it had taken so long for her to pose a question.

"What are you looking for?"

"Not what, who. We're trying to locate the Ree'na."

She stopped dead in her tracks, causing Janeway to stop as well. "Why?"

"Because they may have answers to some of the questions your Elders couldn't answer. You don't have to be afraid of them, they won't hurt you."

"They're evil," she replied as if the mere mention of these people left a bad taste in her mouth.

"No, they're not," Janeway said before kneeling down to face her. "I know you've been taught to believe that, but your people don't understand them. They only attack when they feel threatened, so as long as you don't do that, you'll be fine. All right?"

She nodded, but was not convinced in the slightest.

Standing, they resumed walking as Janeway thought. Maybe when she meets and gets to know them a little better, she'll realize that I'm telling the truth. She'd have to wait and see.

"Captain," Tuvok began. "I'm detecting a life signs that are consistent with the bio-energy the Doctor discovered when he treated the Ree'na we brought on board.

"Distance?"

"Approximately ten meters ahead," he answered.

"Good," she replied, and felt Ellone's grip tighten.

Continuing forward, they came to what appeared to be a dead end. "This rock," Tuvok said, "is a holographic projection."

"They stole it from us!" Ellone cried angrily.

Janeway ignored the outburst, having expected such a reaction. "Can you disable it?"

"I believe so, Captain."

"Do it."

Tapping commands into the tricorder, seconds later the wall destabilized to reveal at least thirty surprised Ree'na.

Some of them began to scatter as Janeway stepped up and released Ellone's hand. "My name is Kathryn Janeway, and we mean you no harm. Yesterday we rescued one of your people named Teno. All we want is to ask some questions." Although most of them she could see had taken off, a few stayed. Seconds later, Teno stepped out of the shadows and moved toward her.

"Your presence has put us in great danger. Especially since you've brought that child. She will inform her people once she's returned and we will be attacked."

"This child is under my care, and will not be returning to her people anytime soon. Please, let us enter and speak with you."

Giving a quick nod, he still didn't look happy about it.

Janeway, along with everyone else, entered. "Thank you."

"Why have you sought us out?" he asked rather harshly.

"I was hoping that one of your people may have more knowledge on the race we discussed. Who they are, where they came from."

"I've told you all I know, and it is unlikely that any of us would know more.

All we know is that they resemble your species," he replied, and could see the venom in the Newmari's young eyes as he stared at him.

"Have you-"

A blue bolt whizzed through the air behind her, hitting Teno in the chest, knocking him to the

ground.

"Take cover!" she ordered, and pulled Ellone along with her as she retrieved the type two phaser from her belt before moving behind a large rock. The remaining Ree'na scattered as blue bolts sliced through the air. A Newmari male rushed through the opening, followed by five others.

Janeway, Chakotay, Paris, and Tuvok began firing in order to protect the Ree'na.

Some of the Ree'na returned, using weapons they'd recovered from the previous encounters they've had with the Newmari, and fired back. Bolts of blue, mixed with streams of orange, hurled from every directions.

Some of the Ree'na who had no weapons, fought hand to hand, and were immediately killed the process.

Ellone sat with her arms around Janeway's waist, her face buried in her chest, frightened and crying. Janeway held her head with her left hand, keeping it down as she fired.

More Newmari spilled through the opening.

Ellone screamed against her chest, feeling someone trying to pull her away, and the force nearly made Janeway fall back. Lowering her arm, she held Ellone more security as she turned to see it was one of the Ree'na. "Let her go!" she demanded, swinging her arm around to point the phaser at him.

The man grabbed her arm and twisted. Janeway fired, but the shot missed as the pain in her arm forced her to drop the phaser. Ellone lost her grip on her as well and was pulled away from her.

Twisting in the man's arms, Ellone reached for her, hands and fingers outstretched. "Kathryn!" she screamed, frightened. Tears streamed down her cheeks. Leaning forward, Janeway reacquired the phaser. Using both hands, she held it up and aimed at the man's head so she wouldn't hit Ellone. Just as she fired, a blue bolt hit Ellone's chest at the same moment she hit the man's head.

"NO!" Janeway screamed as she scrambled to Ellone, who was now laying face first on the dirt floor. She rolled the limp girl over and saw a large burn with copper blood, contrasting garishly with the material of her blue jumper.

Janeway felt tears face as she pulled her into her lap, pressing her tiny lifeless body against hers as she rocked her back and forth. The violence happening around her was no longer of any consequence. All that mattered was the dead child in her arms, this child, who only moments ago, was full of life and unlimited energy.

It wasn't until she felt a hand gently grasp her shoulder, that she was brought back in touch with the rest of the world. The sound of weapon discharges had ceased only moments ago, but to Janeway, it could have been hours.

Tom Paris knelt down before her. "Captain, let me take her, I may be able to help..." he offered.

She let go, letting Paris take her into his arms and set her on the floor as he opened his emergency med kit, and she watched, still feeling the hand on her shoulder, but didn't turn to look. She was completely focused on what Paris was doing.

He scanned her to determine where her heart was. Finding it, it was five inches lower and to the left of where a human heart would be. Setting down the tricorder, he pulled out a hypospray and loaded it with a pure boost of adrenaline that he hoped would help kick start her heart in

conjunction with CPR. He pumped the girl's chest, then paused to force carbon dioxide into her lungs from his own before pumping her heart again.

Still kneeling beside her, Chakotay could see the child's copper blood stained on Janeway's hands and uniform before looking back to Paris as he reopened the tricorder and began scanning Ellone again.

A long continuous beep mocked him as he knew it would. He knew from the first scan that he couldn't save her, but had to try for the Captain's sake. Closing it, he looked up to see Janeway's grief stricken face and shook his head.

"No," she choked out.

Chakotay wrapped his arms around her, pinning hers down in order to keep her from grasping Ellone. "Let her go, Kathryn," he said softly against her ear, knowing that if he let her take Ellone's body back into her arms, it would only serve to keep the wound open.

Paris gently lifted Ellone into his arms after repacking the med kit, and carried her into the tunnel.

"Commander," Tuvok said, making Chakotay look to him.

"Go with Tom back to the Newmari colony, tell them what happened and that we will be leaving. The Captain and I will meet you back at the Flyer."

"Yes sir," he replied, then entered the tunnel.

Janeway's arms bent up to hold the strong arm stretched across her, leaning her head against his chest as she cried, the strength in her body leaving quietly and without a fight.

He held her, letting her grieve as he offered support.

Their encounter with the Ree'na and Newmari was one week old now; and Janeway continued to feel the effects its people had on her, one child in particular. The Doctor had relieved her of duty temporarily, giving her time to come to terms with the experience, but she didn't want the time; she wanted to get back to work rather than dwell on what happened. But this time, she couldn't talk her way out of it, and knew - even though she didn't want to admit it - that she needed some time to herself.

As the week drew to a close, she decided to use some of her holodeck time to finish the gothic holo-novel. Right now she was ready for a little distraction. Stepping up to the holodeck door in her Victorian style dress, she activated the program and stepped inside, right into the moonlit music room.

Slowly she crossed the room and pulled the middle set of French doors closed before moving to the last set. When they were secured, the once bellowing silk drapes fell still. And in the corner of her eye, on the floor beside her, was a glint of moonlight reflecting off metal. Looking down, a shiny brass church key lay new and untouched.

Bending down, she recovered the object. Holding it up in the moonlight, and inspected it.

A voice, sighed so softly against her ear that it would have been easy to miss if there were any other sounds. "The fourth floor."

Grasping the key firmly in her hand, she stood up and stepped out into the dimly lit hallway. At the

end was a door, the door Lord Burleigh had forbidden her to enter, the door which held a secret he wanted to keep hidden.

Quietly, she walked up to it and inserted the shiny key into the lock. It turned easily enough, offering no resistance. Pulling it out, she grasped the ornate silver handle and opened the door. Darkness, punctuated by a set of narrow steps. Carefully, she climbed above the crest and saw a stained glass window that allowed little of the moonlight to seep in.

Reaching the top, a large flat object loomed before her in the darkness. Light from several candles placed around the room, leapt from one to the next, lit by some unseen hand.

When her eyes focused, she opened them to spy the large object that had loomed in the dark before her: a coffin.

Slowly she approached and grasped the section of the lid that would reveal the face of the person who lay inside. Lifting, the hinges squeaked loudly before it was up. Then there, laying still and lifeless, was the body of Lord Burleigh's late wife, Elizabeth.

"I warned you, Ms. Davenport, to never come to the fourth floor."

Startled, Janeway turned to see Lord Burleigh, and in his right hand, was a black powder pistol.

"I meant it when I said I loved you Lucy, but you have put me in an extremely difficult position. That is why killing you will be so very hard, but I have to protect my secret."

"Why did you kill her? What could she have done that would merit her death?"

"She was planning to leave me after she caught myself and Mrs. Templeton in a rather compromising position. The scandal of the divorce would ruin my reputation. My business would suffer, and I would be reduced to nothing. I could not allow that to happen."

For a moment, his words made her think back to the secret the Newmari had kept about what they'd done to the Ree'na. "Lord Burleigh, you have nothing to fear from me. I will keep your secret, you can trust me. Please, let me go," she said, looking for a means of escape.

"I am truly sorry Lucy," he replied, raising the pistol and pulled back the hammer with his thumb. "I cannot afford to take that chance."

Behind him, she saw movement. A figure appeared, drawing closer. It was the ghost of Elizabeth Burleigh. The spirit held a silk rope and looped it around his neck. Kathryn - Lucy - watched in horror as she pulled it back, strangling him.

Janeway moved quickly to the side just in time as he fires. Both his hands flew up to grasp the rope around his neck and he dropped the pistol, trying to pull the suffocating rope away as he tumbled backward down the steps.

Janeway moved to the entryway to see him laying at the foot of the steps, unmoving. A girl's scream echoes through the room, and it gives her pause, making her think back to Ellone's frightened tear stained face, her hands reaching out and screaming her name. Then the voice of Lord Burleigh's son, Henry, returned her to the present.

Moving to the bottom, she looked up to see the stoic young boy try to comfort his sister just as Mrs. Templeton emerged from her bedchamber holding a small oil lamp. Seeing the children, she looks down the hall to see Janeway staring back at her before refocusing her attention to the children.

Janeway kneels beside Lord Burleigh to search for a pulse, and finds none. "Is he . . . ?" Mrs. Templeton asks, unable to bring herself to say dead.

"Yes."

"I will wake one of the servants to summon the police," she said in her stiff, clipped voice before herding the children downstairs.

Looking down at the body, Janeway saw a figure out of the corner of her eye standing on the steps. Elizabeth. The woman smiled, then faded from view. Seconds later, the holodeck grid appears, indicating that the story has concluded.

Standing, Janeway took a deep breath. She felt, quite naturally, unsettled by the whole experience. It took her a few seconds to regain her calm. When she felt reasonably balanced, she exited the holodeck without a backward glance...Making her way back to her quarters, she headed for the turbolift, only to see Chakotay stepping inside.

"Enjoy your holonovel?" he asks with a dimpled grin.

"Not really."

He nods, seeing the haunted look on her face and hearing it in her voice. "I was on my way to my quarters. Why don't you come by and have a cup of coffee?"

Until recently, she would have told him no. But at the moment, she didn't feel like being alone. "All right. Let me change and I'll meet you there."

"I'll be waiting."

Sitting on the sofa, they drank coffee as he watched her stare out the window, silence engulfing them until he broke it.

"I'm sorry about Ellone."

Turning her head, she looked over at him. "Thank you."

"Can I ask you a question?" he asked, leaning forward to place his mug on the coffee table.

"That depends."

He nodded, knowing it was fair. "You really didn't plan on returning her to her people did you?"

"I would have. But I have to admit that there was a part of me who wanted to keep her." she replied looking down at the coffee mug in her hands. "I've always wanted to have a child someday, and I realize, now more than ever, that it may well never happen."

"You don't know that for certain. You're still young, and having a child of your own isn't impossible."

She nodded, then polished off the last of the coffee. Setting it on the table next to Chakotay's, she stood awkwardly. "It's late. Thanks for the coffee."

"You're welcome." Moving to the door, he called after her. "Kathryn." She stops, turning to face him. "If you ever need to talk, my door is always open."

"I'll keep it in mind. Goodnight Chakotay."

"Goodnight. Pleasant dreams."

With a nod and small smile, she left.

Leaning back against the sofa, he looked out at the distant stars as they streaked past. For the first time in many months he felt a glimmer of hope. It is said that time heals all wounds; and at this moment, Chakotay felt that their friendship might not be irretrievable after all.

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