

Summary: Janeway offers her new lover a token of her affection.

Content Disclaimers: Sometime in 5th season. Continued from my story "Duty Calls."

GESTURES

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Rylos IV was a perfect place for the combination geologic survey mission and much needed R & R for the *Voyager* crew. A long range scan had picked up this planet, among all its neighbors as having the highest concentrations of tellurite, a mineral ore easily convertible to a power source for the ship's heavier materials replicators. An invaluable useful thing, Captain Kathryn Janeway thought, squinting into the mid-morning sun. Especially if you needed to build new shuttlecraft, or make more permanent repairs to the Intrepid-class starship's duranium hull.

After the last few run-ins with Hirogen and a member of Species 8472, the ship was in need of both, Janeway considered dryly.

But the rotations of Away Teams for the mining, scouting and other mapping and extractions, also meant each shift received one week of shore leave.

Which brought Janeway to the reason she was climbing out of a sheer canyon and shading her eyes against the breeze and sun, searching out the base camp's familiar structures against the horizon. Finished with her rotation cataloging the strata, she had informed Lt. Kim, back on *Voyager*, that he had command.

She was determined to claim her rest and relaxation.

And monopolize the time of a particular person to share it with her. She scanned the quiet settlement area as she approached and finally identified a figure half-buried in the shade of a sunshield set up before one of the cabins.

Even without benefit of illuminating sunlight, Kathryn Janeway would have recognized that profile. Over the last few weeks, she had become intimately familiar with the long-legged, slender woman who stood almost impossibly straight though she was cataloging specimens using a microscope on a small table.

As the distance between them diminished, Janeway traced her gaze over the figure of Seven of Nine becoming more defined with every step closer.

Seven of Nine was a former Borg the Captain had ordered severed from the Collective more than two years ago after negotiations with the technology hungry race went awry during a pitched battle with a formidable organic Species 8472. Since that fateful decision much of the young woman's Humanity had begun asserting itself as more and more of her Borg technology was removed, or deactivated.

Nanoprobes flowed invisibly through her blood stream and likely would forever, regulating everything from her ability to heal quickly to increasing her stamina and endurance. An abdominal implant had been reduced so that her Human physiology could absorb nutrients rather than rely completely on a Borg alcove in Cargo Bay 2 for energy conversion. Otherwise there were very few outward reminders of Seven's former drone status.

As Janeway came up from the left side slowly, she trailed her gaze over the gray ocular

implant arching over Seven's left eye. The implant gave the young woman exceptional visual acuity outside the normal Human range.

A metallic fiber mesh enclosed the young woman's left arm from elbow over her long fingers and enhanced her physical strength. Janeway watched as those fingers closed over another specimen glass and centered it under the microscope's viewer.

Janeway knew the touch of those implants, knew they were warm and even soft in their own way, grazing her skin with the lightest of touches whenever she and Seven managed time alone.

Quick moments here and there flitted through the captain's mind: falling asleep in the captain's quarters entwined one evening after a particularly strenuous encounter, both on the Velocity court and in the big double bed in the captain's bedroom.

Blushing a little, Kathryn realized where her thoughts had taken her. It was certainly not a place she had expected to be six years into a more than 30 year journey home commanding a lost Starfleet vessel in the unknown Delta quadrant toward her home port at the Utopia Planetia shipyard orbiting Mars.

But it was remarkable, and wonderful, and freeing all the same to have fallen in love with the young beauty and discover that the love was returned in full measure.

Dropping her eyes from her lover to hide her thoughts, Janeway noticed the vegetation, and the colorful buds on a flowering bush. Several of the blooms had opened with the kiss of the morning sun. The delicate shade of pink incredibly matched the color Seven's cheeks became whenever the captain had managed to exhaust the inexhaustible Borg.

Though Seven never perspired, exertion could still claim a toll from her lean frame. And occasionally Janeway found ways to make the blonde's breath run short, her blood heating her skin.

She bent over to pluck one of the blooms then felt a shadow drift over her. Rose-like blossom in hand, the stalk velvet in her palm, she looked up into Seven's curious sapphire-blue gaze.

"Captain, do you wish for me to catalog that sample?"

Janeway stood slowly, studying the bloom in her hand before returning her gaze to Seven. She shook her head. "No, I'm sure someone else cataloged it already." She hesitated even as a thought occurred to her.

Would Seven even understand the gesture if Kathryn gave her the flower?

"It's time for your shore leave, I believe," she said, stalling while she tried to come up with an explanation for her next action. She searched for one that would explain and at the same time not make it clinical.

Seven's ocular implant raised slightly and Janeway knew that the young woman realized that had not been what she intended to say. *Better come up with something*, she thought.

She held the flower out. "This has a lovely smell," Kathryn suggested. "Don't you think so?"

Instead of taking the flower, Seven stepped close, intimately filling the captain's personal space. Kathryn felt the air electrify around them. It was both the oddest and the most comforting sensation she had ever experienced, especially sharp when the Borg's hand wrapped around her wrist and lifted the flower for Seven's inspection.

Janeway watched the slightly bent blonde head as Seven sniffed delicately at the blossom. "It has a... pleasing scent," was the analytical reply from the former drone. A blue eye suddenly caught Janeway off guard. "Almost as pleasant as yours," was added in a very soothing emotion-laden undertone that weakened the captain's knees like a tidal wave's undertow.

"W... Would you like to join me for a picnic lunch?" Janeway managed. "I... thought we might spend some of our shore leave together."

Seven straightened up, tucking her hands behind her back and canting her head. "I believe, captain, that you... promised me a lesson... in tree climbing."

Janeway nodded, remembering their conversation in the hydroponics lab. It must have been more than six weeks ago, she realized. "I believe I did," she returned tenderly. "Shall we?"

Seven's fingers closed around the blossom's stem, in so doing she cupped Janeway's fingers. The touch of their skin was electric, drawing them tightly together. The captain lifted her chin and found Seven's lips descending briefly onto her own. It was an almost chaste kiss, promising, compelling and undemanding all at the same time. The captain's breathing was ragged when they finally parted.

With the flower caught in their partnered grip, the two women walked side by side away from the base camp. The captain swept up a pair of lunch pouches on her way past the thermal locker.

Sequel: Tree-tise on a Captain