

Summary: Janeway and Seven's interactions during the episode "Collective".

Content Disclaimers: These scenes take place amid the events in the Voyager season 6 episode "Collective".

COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS

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Part One

It only took a casual hand, in the common gesture of 'come on, we're leaving', for Captain Kathryn Janeway to realize just how tightly wound Voyager's Astrometrics officer was as they both cast one last glance back at the motley assembly of pre-adult drones.

A former Borg drone herself, Seven of Nine had lunged forward when the leader, First, had moved more quickly than either woman had expected and shoved the captain against a maturation chamber wall. Seven had given the captain her knowledgeable look even as their eyes met past First's shoulder. They had argued on the way over because the tall blonde had believed exactly this would happen.

"You will provoke them. In some way we cannot predict. It is dangerous. You should not go. I will handle this."

"They deserve the respect of negotiating, if it's possible."

"They are neonatal drones, Captain. Insignificant."

"I don't believe that. We can delay them until we have the pathogen isolated, or we talk them out of their demand."

It was only through careful responses that the captain had gained her own release. Janeway sighed as they moved out of sight of the drones, into an area unshielded enough to request beam out. She began to reach up and rub lightly at the slight headache starting at her temple. A long-fingered, gentle hand closed over her fingers instead.

"I am sorry I could not stop him, Kathryn. Does your head hurt much?" Tenderly Seven's fingers moved through locks on the left side of Janeway's head, the intimate touch instantly easing the captain's mild discomfort.

"No," Janeway looked up as they turned around in the opening the corridor junction afforded. She cupped Seven's palm and looked up into ice blue eyes. "I'm all right." She squeezed the slender boned fingers lightly and asked a question of her own. "Will you be able to continue alone?"

"It will only take two hours to complete the repairs."

"I'll have something for you before then," the compact woman promised, her body moving with an intimate intensity as she leaned forward, welcoming Seven's hands as they wrapped around her.

The kiss was lingering and tender, relaxing both women. Tensions in the nursery control room had made them keenly aware of the other's discomfort. Here, alone for the briefest of moments, they spent precious seconds in reassurance.

Finally, Janeway stepped back, leaving Seven's warm personal space. Her voice was strong, renewed purpose gained from the private moment with her lover. "Voyager. One to beam out."

Just before the beam took her in its grip, she murmured one last request, low enough only for her lover's ears.

"Be careful, Annika."

Part Two

"Sickbay to the captain."

Out of habit the captain looked away from Chakotay, with whom she'd been talking on the bridge, up toward the ceiling. "Janeway here. What is it, Doctor?"

"There's something here I need to show you."

Janeway immediately headed for the turbolift. Seven had been gone for almost half of the two-hour time limit. She wondered if the Doctor had finished replicating their ace in the hole, the Borg toxin.

Entering sickbay she was surprised to see the front examining room empty. "Doctor?"

"Over here, Captain."

She followed the sound and rounded a corner to see the Doctor emerging from his office. "What is it, Doctor?"

"This way." She could hear the formality in his voice and suppressed the uneasy feeling it immediately engendered in the pit of her stomach.

A powder blue blanket-wrapped bundle caught her attention as she approached the nearest biobed and the captain felt her chest tighten.

"We've had a bundle left on our doorstep," the Doctor reported wryly. "I turned around and suddenly there she was."

Immediately Kathryn thought of her partner. "Seven must have sent her."

"Good thing too. Another few minutes and I might not have been able to help. She was in considerable distress."

As if to prove her earlier condition, the baby, for even with its liberal scattering of Borg implants that was indeed what it was, began to fuss. Janeway took a step back as the Doctor leaned forward and retrieved the baby.

Janeway couldn't take her eyes off the infant, which reminded her of 'One', Seven's 'child' from a mishap with the Doctor's holo-emitter.

The baby continued to fuss. She drew close again, observing. The Doctor tried for a moment to soothe the child, but determined that he could not both scan the baby and hold it. "Captain, would you hold her for a moment while I run a few scans?"

So in another instant, Kathryn Janeway found herself holding a squirming bundle of baby Borg. She felt the definite weight and looked into the curious blue eyes, noticing only peripherally the faint clicks and blips of the Doctor's tricorder. Fascinated with her face, the baby quieted gradually while their gazes continued to hold. So normal, Kathryn thought, feeling her command mask slipping in response to the baby's intense study.

"Seems all she wanted was to be held," the Doctor mused. She could hear the faint pleasure in his voice and inwardly groaned. Her arms tightened around the baby bringing it into the warmth of her body.

The Doctor left her presumably to enter the readings into the computer.

His voice was grave when he returned. "I have something else." She looked up at his approach and studied the vial he presented. "I have finished replicating the pathogen." Disapproval laced his voice and she felt aggravation.

"Work with Tuvok on a delivery method," she responded curtly, keeping her voice steady, if low, so as not to wake the infant that had begun to doze in her arms.

"You can't mean to go through with it, Captain." He glanced significantly at the baby. She frowned at him. He didn't have to make this harder. She was the captain. It was her responsibility to do her best for everyone concerned.

"Have it ready, Doctor." And her tone brooked no argument. The baby stirred and she lifted it, exchanging her hard expression for a softened one. Taking a few steps away from the Doctor she spoke to the infant. "Let's just hope your brothers and sisters don't give me any reason to have to use it." There was a real plea in her voice.

Part Three

As it turned out, she didn't have to use the pathogen. With a quiet command to Tuvok, however, Janeway ordered the chemical stored in stasis for possible use at another time.

Immediate responsibilities concluded, she had logged off duty and returned here, to her quarters, for some much-needed sleep.

She began stripping out of her uniform. Only now, with her adrenaline down and her concentration allowed to unfocus, did her muscles announce the results of their earlier abuse by First, when the adolescent threw her into the wall.

She was in the ensuite beginning to draw a hot bath when she heard the doors to her cabin swish open, admitting the only person Janeway had given the access code.

She looked up through the gathering steam in the small room to see crystal blue eyes framed in a porcelain smooth pale face and white-blonde hair. "Seven." She turned from the sink counter and held out a hand. Seven stepped forward, and their hands met and held in grateful reunion. The Borg's gaze slipped over her nude body possessively, making Janeway blush.

Seven's hand slightly stiffened as it wrapped around hers. Janeway knew then, before her own eyes came back up to meet Seven's, that her lover's acute vision had noted the bruises splashed across her collarbone which Janeway had been treating with a liniment with the help of the mirror.

"Kathryn, you are damaged."

She shrugged, wincing slightly at the pull of an abused muscle around her ribs. "I was just about to take a bath."

"I will assist you. Are you hurt anywhere else?" The captain submitted with bemusement to Seven's careful examination of her body, turning in the Borg's light grip.

Gentle kisses pressed to faint marks everywhere on the smaller woman's body. Kathryn felt the telltale signs of beginning arousal between her thighs. "He was a lot stronger than I thought he'd be. I didn't brace myself very well." She could hear her voice fading on the last words.

Seven's lips caressed a bruise across her lower back as fingers, one hand cool and metallic the other hot and Human, traced over the captain's bare hips. "He is dead," Seven reported. "One of the feedback pulses from the deflector dish blew out the panel where he was standing."

Despite his aggression toward them, Janeway knew Seven had come to care for First, as much as the others she had been able to save. She cradled Seven's head against her stomach, communicating her empathy. "I'm sorry," she offered, running her fingers into the white-blonde

tumble as she freed the woman's hair from its pins. Seven's cheek pressed harder into the swell of her stomach, the only outward sign of the former Borg's emotional turmoil. Kathryn soothed her fingers into soft tresses as Seven came to her feet, her lips leaving parting kisses across Janeway's torso.

"The other children are regenerating," Seven murmured. "I... gave them their names, as you suggested."

"Were they pleased?"

"I believe so. I... felt a connection begin between us. I believe they... trust me now."

"You gave them back a part of themselves they had lost, Seven. It makes all the difference in the world in how they'll respond to you." She trailed her lips over Seven's throat. She eased apart the clasp of the soft dark blue biosuit. The form-fitting garment peeled away to reveal Seven's own remaining implants. She kissed a starburst cradled in the front hollow of Seven's shoulder.

Kathryn drew her arms around Seven's neck, tugging the taller woman's head down for gentle nibbling kisses. Her fingertips soothed over the remaining bands of Seven's abdominal implant. She pushed the biosuit away, releasing it past Seven's hips, as she trailed her palm over the electrical offshoot from the implant that snaked its way down Seven's right thigh.

"It is, after all, how I reached you... Annika." Her voice lowered until the sound of her lover's birth name was nothing more than a breath on her lips.

But Seven of Nine heard and her heart expanded, as always where the compact auburn-haired captain was concerned, rising up in answer, bringing with it desire and love. With her Borg-enhanced strength, she lifted the captain of *Voyager* in a soothing cradle-hold.

Then Annika and Kathryn sank together into the heated water, their mouths coming together in relieved sighs.

Seven retrieved the washcloth from the side and soaped carefully over the captain's torso, washing away the strain of the day, and returning a measure of peace to herself, despite the anxiety she was feeling about the four young Borg.

The contemplation must have shown in her face, because Janeway's fingers trailed soon over her brow and then tucked under her chin, lifting it so their gazes met.

"Tell me."

The command was soft, encouraging rather than demanding, and Seven sighed. "I am afraid for them. We have hopes to return them to their families. What if they do not wish them back?"

"Seven, if their parents are alive, they will want them back. We just have to find them."

"What of the baby?"

"I don't know. The Doctor hasn't identified her race yet." Kathryn soothed her hands over Seven's shoulders. "But we will do our best."

Seven accepted the slight nudging and rested her head against her lover's bare shoulder. "I know."

"You will be able to help them, Seven. Your own adjustment was remarkable. I have no doubts you will succeed."

"Thank you, Kathryn. For your... faith in me."

"I will always have faith in you." She nuzzled Seven's hair inhaling the Borg's unique scent, lavender with the slight tang of metal. "I love you."

She had told Seven this before but offered it again in words to reassure the young woman. A month earlier when the *Voyager* crew encountered a catapult that shaved 3000 light years off their long journey home, an accident with Seven's cortical implant had driven the former Borg to attempt

suicide. Only the captain's beam over to the Delta Flyer and careful pleas had prevented it.

Afterward, spurred by a nightmare of her own because of the realization that she could have lost the young woman in addition to having lost, however briefly, her trust, Janeway had finally admitted her feelings.

A physical joining had followed, but it had been love that kept it alive more than a month later. Each woman had found in the other an emotional support they had been unable to allow anyone else aboard Voyager to provide.

The relationship had helped Seven discover within herself the power to reach out and empathize with others, now that she was more secure in her own emotional well-being. It had helped the captain, too, to handle the stresses of command by giving her a safe haven for maintaining her own emotional health.

"Do you need to regenerate tonight?" Kathryn asked, nuzzling her cheek against Seven's breasts, luxuriating in the heat of the water sluicing between their bodies as Seven poured water over her back with her cupped hands.

"I will not be required to regenerate for another 24 hours," Seven replied. "Also, I must see that the captain's injuries are tended. The Doctor charged me with that task since she will not seek out his assistance." There was only the slightest reprimand in the Borg's gentle voice.

Caught by the loving concern emanating from ice blue eyes, Kathryn quirked a sensuous smile as Seven's fingers now began trailing with very unmedical authority over her body.

With a splash, the Borg lifted Janeway from the water, immediately wrapping the smaller woman in a thick towel. She bore the captain to the double bed. With tender patience each patted the other dry with the thick linen.

Kathryn laid back on the thick comforter and sheets, her hands drifting over Seven's body in a reminder that their connection was not a dream. Seven retrieved a vial of massage oil from the head of the bed. Its sandalwood scent drifted over Kathryn's senses even as firm, loving hands began a journey over her body. Kathryn's voice was faded from pleasure, but the deep affection in it radiated warmth through the room. "I'll take your bedside manner over the Doctor's any day."

The young woman's fingers released tension and aroused passion with the same touch. Rolling onto her back, Janeway arched into the younger woman's hands until the anticipation grew nearly unbearable. "Annika," she breathed. With rapidly dwindling patience, she drew the nude woman over her.

Seven answered the plea with an absorbing kiss, eliciting throaty groans from her captain, even as the wine-colored lips trailed away from her own and began their own tantalizing dance on Seven's heated flesh.

The smaller woman's hard-muscled thigh nudged between her knees pressing pleausably against the throbbing heat of her center. Small hands and gentle fingers moved over Seven's hips and teased at the small bundle of nerves at the top of her crease.

"Yes, Kathryn," she moaned, bringing her own fingers to the smaller woman's breasts and tweaking the nipples. Janeway's fingers below slipped partially into the Borg's wet opening, and her mouth immediately returned to Seven's. "Oh, Kathryn."

Janeway smiled against the Borg's full lips and then pulled back, nudging the larger woman onto her back. Pleasure shaped in the fine features and anticipation as well.

Seven submitted, aroused immeasurably by this one individual's commanding touch. Carried along on wave after wave of sensation and emotion, she kept her gaze locked with Kathryn's as the woman's fingers did the most incredible things to her body. Suddenly emotional resonance

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exploded from her chest, as physical release exploded through her muscles.

"Kathryn!" She hoped the single expression could properly convey her complex emotions to this wonderful woman.

The captain's own eyes filled with moisture hearing the tearing sound of her lover's orgasm ripping raw emotion from her long elegant throat. Kissing from chin to chest and back up to capture a panting mouth, tenderly she cradled Seven's body as the young woman drifted down from the precipice, easing now with caresses that had aroused only a moment ago.

Gradually her breathing returned to normal and Seven became intent on wringing the same completion from Janeway's compact form. Kathryn writhed in pleasure, her emotions and the sensations caused by Seven's loving touch driving her toward fulfillment even as she tried to stave off the inevitable pinnacle and the loss of control that accompanied it.

But Seven wouldn't have it. "Kathryn, I will protect you." She felt Seven's lips brush over her fading bruises. "Let go."

At last she did, giving herself over to the pleasure, to the abandonment of release. She had faith that the young former Borg would catch her, cradle her safely in arms far stronger than they appeared, protected by a heart far bigger than anyone imagined. Kathryn's cries peaked over and over again, as she could verbalize only one thing, one name.

One love.

"Annika!"

THE END