

Summary: Janeway and Seven attend a new year's eve party in holographic costume, freeing themselves to be publicly intimate. This story was part of the JDI Challenge in February 2005

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

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"It will be perfect, Seven, you'll see. It was brilliant of you to agree with Tom's suggestion that we really masquerade ourselves with holo-projections!"

Already attired as she wished for the "New Year's Masquerade" devised by Neelix, as an excuse for yet another crew party, Seven of Nine watched her chosen partner for the evening primp before the mirror. "If you do not increase your speed we will be late."

"Ah, but that's 'Captain's privilege'."

"Not tonight," Seven said, straightening imposingly and drawing attention to a cutlass swinging from her belt while her voice deepened. She could see her point was made, and something more appealed to Kathryn's mind as a chastened look was soon followed by a look of familiar lust.

Seven looked down her body to the leather pants, past her bosom restrained in a tight blouse and leather vest. Her partner intended to reverse their roles for the evening "to further fool them, darling." Seven doubted that Janeway could *not* be commanding for very long, despite the beautiful, demure attire she had chosen for her role as the pirate's captured prize.

Each woman wore a personal holo-emitter, disguised as part of their costumes. Janeway's was a gold-encrusted emerald brooch at her throat. A gold medallion rested heavily between Seven's restrained breasts.

When they activated the holo-emitters, their appearances would alter to a dark haired pirate with "rakish" stubble, and Kathryn would become his match, a dark haired beauty. The facade was right off a picture from the cover of one of Kathryn's bodice-ripper novels, a secret vice much like their relationship. Something she intended no one to know.

Seven rolled her eyes as Kathryn turned yet again to the mirror and checked her appearance. "You are perfection," she assured the skittish captain.

Despite her belief this role reversal would fail, Seven would give Kathryn anything, including her whimsy for keeping their affair private. Despite her own preference for the unfettered truth, she had allowed Kathryn to dictate that their relationship of six months would remain a secret from the crew.

However, Seven did hope that this dance would provide a chance for them to be out among the crew for an enjoyable evening, convincing Kathryn that they could bring their relationship into the open.

At last it seemed Kathryn was ready. When the captain touched her holo-emitter, Seven also engaged hers. To prevent being caught in the corridors, coming out of this or that particular quarters, all of the crew would be beaming directly into the holodeck party.

Seven took Kathryn's hand and called for the intra-ship beaming. "Computer, two to beam directly to Holodeck 1."

The pirate and his lady materialized in the wings of a grand ballroom. A footman stepped

forward and asked for their coats. Carrying none, they walked into the main room.

Tom's programming is exquisite, Kathryn thought as she studied the grand double staircase which curled up each wall.

Her crew had done grandly with their costumes, she marveled, not recognizing a single person. A little knot of anxiety she was hoping had not been conveyed to Seven in her quarters began to loosen. Tonight she could truly be just a woman not their captain. She touched her companion's shoulder and asked, "Will you take me dancing?"

Even to her own ears, her masqued voice was unfamiliar.

She floated up the stairs alongside the sure striding Seven. It thrilled a part of her how easily Seven could lead, possessing a very natural air of command, even when her body was quaking inside, she realized, feeling a slight quiver under her palm. "Are you nervous, love?" she asked.

"This is new for me," Seven said quietly.

"Ah, but that's the theme of the evening. 'A new year, a new you'."

Warm greetings flowed as the two stepped out through the throng and began to dance to the music from a five-piece chamber orchestra. Sweeping around the floor to the music, the two melted together, and soon all else faded from their perceptions.

Song after song, dance after dance, the night passed in the safety of anonymity and the pleasure of each other's arms. Addressing each other with only endearments, they kept their identities unknown even as others tried to entice the information out with admissions of their own identities to the couple.

The couple was surrounded by a gentle buzz of conversation, guesses at their identities, compliments on their dancing, and the speculation of whom among the crew could be in such a close relationship without the infamous faster-than-warp grapevine knowing about it.

Kathryn was smiling like the Cheshire Cat as she once again danced, ensconced in Seven's arms. Abruptly she was startled by an irrepressible dapper dandy in Brummel suit and cravat leaped to the orchestra stage. "All right, folks. It's nearing midnight."

Knowing at once it was Tom Paris, Kathryn stopped dancing. "We should go," she whispered to Seven.

"I know you believe we should," Seven replied softly. "But I wish to see this event to its conclusion."

"But we'll be..."

"Yes, I know."

"Seven..."

"You have been happier without the burden this evening," she said. "I will never leave you." She leaned back. "No matter what happens I love you, and it is better everyone know it."

Kathryn bit her lip. Seven kissed it.

"8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1," intoned their master of ceremonies. "Computer, holo-emitters off."

Seven claimed Kathryn's lips, giving the woman a reason to close her eyes, as their masques faded away.

The room erupted in applause. Slowly it filled Kathryn's ears over the pounding of her heart.

Gingerly she eased back from Seven's mouth, hands lightly fingered the softness of Seven's vest. She looked up as Seven nodded in support.

Slowly Kathryn turned to take in the faces of her crew. Tom didn't seem surprised, grinning broadly as he took B'Elanna in his arms. The Klingon-Human engineer's jaw hung open. Tuvok in

the togs of a footman nodded slightly as her gaze passed over him. Neelix clapped his hands together. Harry Kim stood up from the orchestra, his clarinet in hand. The Doctor looked distressed and tucking his hands behind his back, turned away and disappeared among the other crew.

Not a single face looked angry. Seven's grip on her hips kept Kathryn upright. "Happy new year, Kathryn."

Kathryn turned to look up at her lover and nodded slowly. "I love you, Seven."

As they kissed again, the crowd, now all appearing in their normal guises, circled round their captain and her lover, and proceeded to dance the rest of the night away.

THE END