

troubles always leave their marks

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by [lilly_c](#)

Summary

Chakotay gently poked at the wrap, making a face at the cheese. “Don’t worry about the cheese Commander, it’s replicated not contagious,” Kathryn said picking up on his unspoken concern about the food.

Notes

Spoiler for Learning Curve with references to Faces and Jetrel. Written for the olive prompt on my summer mini challenge [table](#). The title is from Grow Around by Bernard Fanning. Thanks to Tamara for doing beta for me.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Kathryn was in the mess hall waiting for Chakotay to arrive for the first of what he wanted to be their weekly dinners to discuss ships business. It was a bit of a hundred and eighty degree turn for them starting out as enemies flung in the Delta Quadrant to becoming reluctant allies and now potentially becoming friends.

Chakotay arrived as Kathryn picked up a PADD with a science report she’d already read twice and signed off while she’d been waiting for him. “I’m not late am I?” he asked, taking the seat across from her at the table, apprehensive that his arrival had already made a bad impression of his timekeeping.

“Actually, you’re on time,” she replied, placing the PADD on the table. “I had a little free time after my duty shift and decided to bring the last of today’s reports with me to sign off while we eat.”

Chakotay felt his stomach rumbling at the casual mention of eating, he hadn’t stopped all day and didn’t make time for a light snack. “What are we having?”

Kathryn smiled at the question. “We are having rainbow orzo salad and sweet chilli halloumi wrap.”

“I didn’t realise those were in Neelix’s repertoire,” he said, the teasing tone he was aiming for falling flat. His smile faltering when Kathryn didn’t return is supposedly amusing observations of their wannabe head chef.

“After his experiences with Jetrel then causing the ship to malfunction with his home made cheese, I could see that he was having a hard time. I took some time out of my day to assist with meal prep and help him to deal with any remaining feelings he had over Jetrel’s actions.”

Chakotay shot her a quizzical look at her comments. “That’s a really kind thing you have done for him,” he said, realising that the more he was learning about her as a person from her actions and his former crew, the more he was beginning to feel something stronger than friendship towards her and that falling in love with her was already becoming dangerous territory for him.

Kathryn was about to get up to go to the galley when Neelix signalled to her that he was ready to bring their meals to the table.

Carefully carrying a bowl and two small plates across the room, Neelix placed the items on their table while Kathryn moved the PADD’s to the floor beneath her chair. “These are from the Captain’s own recipes, I hope you enjoy them,” he said to Chakotay rather than Kathryn before returning to the kitchen to serve other crewmen as they arrived for their meals.

Chakotay gently poked at the wrap, making a face at the cheese. "Don't worry about the cheese Commander, it's replicated not contagious," Kathryn said picking up on his unspoken concern about the food.

Taking a mouthful of the salad first, Chakotay made a delighted noise as he tried to pinpoint all of the flavours he was noticing. "The salad is delicious," he said, genuinely surprised by the quality of the food. "I detected tomato, olive, courgette, mint and other fruit, vegetables and herbs that I can't quite put my finger on."

Suddenly feeling shy at receiving praise from him, Kathryn took a bite from her wrap hoping that he would do the same.

"I spoke to B'Elanna a few days ago," he said realising he was close to crossing a line without intending to and needed to change the subject so that he didn't cause a problem with his compliments.

Wiping her sticky fingers on a serviette, Kathryn asked, "How is she doing?" still concerned about the mental well-being of her chief engineer.

"Better," Chakotay replied before taking a bite of the wrap. "This combination is delicious, will you make it again?"

"B'Elanna?" Kathryn reminded him, not wanting to think about future dinners with him just yet.

"She said that you stayed with her and wouldn't leave until she was back to her fiery self."

Kathryn smiled. "What the Vidiians did to her would traumatise anyone. She needed a friend and that's all I tried to be."

Chakotay shook his head at her modesty. "No. You stayed with her, comforting her through the worst of the nightmares, the worst of her self hatred and you opened yourself up to her in a way she hadn't expected."

Kathryn thought of the hug where B'Elanna had clung to her and sobbed until she fell asleep curled up in her arms after The Doctor had managed to reverse the worst of the effects of the Vidiians inhumane splitting experiment to try to find a cure their illness, releasing her to her quarters to recuperate with strict instructions that she not be left by herself.

Retrieving the PADDs from the floor, "We've got these to sign off," Kathryn said hoping to move the topic away from how she looks after members of her merged crew back to the safer topics of ships business. "There's one from tactical, two from science and one from engineering," Kathryn said, handing two of the reports to him.

They read in companionable silence for a time until Chakotay broke it. "I can sign off on these reports," he said, placing them back on the table. "What about yours?"

"I've signed them off too," she replied suddenly conscious that their first dinner together was coming to an end.

"Tuvok's training," he started.

"What about it?"

Chakotay lightly tugged his ear, a habit he started in childhood and hadn't been able stop. "Have you had any input on my wayward Maquis? Duty assignments? additional training?"

"I have. I spoke to Geron, Chell, Henley and Dalby separately about what they would like to do on the ship. They've all got potential chakotay. They're just lost and angry because they're not used to Starfleet structures but that can be good thing especially out here."

"Where will they be working?"

"Geron is going to be working in engineering and in here with Neelix. Chell is going to be in the science lab. Henley is going to be on the bridge for night shift twice a week and taking on some command training. Dalby is going to be in engineering and sickbay, taking on some basic medical training."

"Is Dalby's medical training going to make a difference?"

"He'll be back up for when Kes and Tom aren't available or if we have a medical emergency when we're on a planet."

"Thank you," he said, genuinely happy that she and Tuvok had managed to smooth over the few remaining rough edges of their merged crews without any input from him.

Kathryn collected her PADDs, standing to leave. "Same time again next week?" she casually asked, hopeful that these weekly dinner meetings could become a regular occurrence.

"Absolutely and I'll organise the food. If that's okay."

"Looking forward to it," Kathryn replied before making her way to the door.

End Notes

Recipe links for [rainbow orzo salad](#) and [sweet chilli halloumi wrap](#).

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