

Captain

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Captain

by [nostalgia](#)

Summary

Voyager is Kathryn's ship: Kathryn is Voyager's captain.

Notes

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

Harry says, "Captain," and the silence that follows is thunderous.

Finally Chakotay rescues him: "What is it, Harry?"

"There's a vessel on long-range sensors," is the too-quiet response.

"Scan it when we're in range." Probably nothing. It's usually nothing. He stands, glances at the empty chair to his right. "I'll be in her ready-room."

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Voyager is Kathryn's ship: Kathryn is Voyager's captain. It's not a complicated statement, or at least it didn't used to be. It remains true even if she isn't giving out orders right now. She'll be back, they all know that. It's simply a matter of waiting.

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"I'm not the captain," he explains, for the third time that week.

The alien on the viewscreen flushes red. "I won't deal with an underling!"

"I assure you, I have full authority to -"

The screen goes black. Chakotay looks round at Harry.

Harry is apologetic: "They cut the transmission, sir."

Chakotay shakes his head. "Their loss," he says, though Voyager could have done with the supplies. "Resume course."

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"How is she?"

“No change since the last time you asked,” says the Doctor. You wouldn’t think a hologram could get stressed.

Kathryn lies on a biobed under a thin blue sheet, sleeping. Probably sleeping. Nobody’s sure, exactly. Chakotay takes his place at her side. “Captain,” he says, in case she can still hear the outside world, “we’re going to have to change course to avoid a region of protostar formation. It’ll add a few months to the journey,” he admits, “but I didn’t think we had any alternative.” He likes to keep her updated, it might save some time later.

He doesn’t like to entertain the idea that it might not.

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He tried his best to wake her when it happened: he held her hand; he called her “Captain” and then “Kathryn”; and when neither of those worked he even tried an almost-silent “I love you.” (He hopes nobody heard that, but he thinks that Tom did.)

The Captain is asleep, half-alive but certainly not half-dead. Chakotay’s job is to keep the ship in one piece and the crew together until she gets back.

She once asked him if he was ready to captain Voyager. He’d said yes to the hypothetical, but now that feels like a betrayal.

Voyager is Kathryn’s ship: Kathryn is Voyager’s captain.

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“We should discuss the possibility that Captain Janeway may not regain consciousness,” says Tuvok.

“No,” he says, “we shouldn’t.”

“Commander, it is only logical to plan for all plausible outcomes.”

“Desperate for my job, Tuvok?” he snaps.

The Vulcan raises an eyebrow. “I have no desire for personal advancement, especially if it requires the loss of Captain Janeway. You are not the only one who considers her a friend.”

Chakotay nods, contrite. “I know. But I’m not ready to replace her. Not yet.”

Not ever.

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Kathryn’s chair stays empty for another week, and then a month. Two months. The crew start gossiping amongst themselves about her replacement. Chakotay hears a rumour that she has already died, and puts the fear of God into the crewman he heard it from.

He still reports to her every day in sickbay.

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The Doctor comes up with an idea to use Borg nanoprobes to revive the Captain. Chakotay vetoes it as too dangerous, then changes his mind two hours later. It’s worth the risk to get her back, and Kathryn has always been lucky with the Borg.

It doesn’t work.

Kathryn sleeps through her birthday.

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“The ship’s running at peak efficiency, you’ll be impressed when you see the improvements B’Elanna and Seven have made to the warp core. We should get home a year or two earlier than we expected.”

“Commander,” - the Doctor is at his side, voice low – “I need to run some tests.”

“Now?”

“Yes, now.”

“I’ll be back in a few hours,” he tells her. He leans down to whisper in her ear. “Please, Captain. We need you.”

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There is dust gathering in the captain’s chair. He wipes it away with his sleeve.

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Tuvok is the one to end this liminal state of existence. He does it without emotion - of course - after walking from sickbay to break the news about Kathryn.

Chakotay is surprised by how calm he feels, and by the fact that his eyes remain dry. “Gather the crew,” he says, “I’ll tell them myself.”

“This means -”

“I know.”

Tuvok nods. “Aye, Captain.”

End Notes

Sorry about that, I was thinking about how I’d write Janeway/Voyager as a pairing and then this happened instead. Oops.

(Also I don’t know if captains work like monarchs and you get a new one as soon as the old one dies but whatever just go with it okay. It’s artistic licence or something, right?)

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