

## Four Times They Didn't And One Time They Did

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## Four Times They Didn't And One Time They Did

by [nostalgia](#)

### Summary

Kathryn has always been strangely drawn to terrible ideas.

1.

Something hits the ship on the starboard side and everything rocks with it. Kathryn loses her balance, starts to fall towards the floor of her ready-room.

Chakotay steps forwards and catches her, holds her upright with his hands on her upper arms. Before she can thank him for the save another violent shake comes and she falls against him, full-bodied.

She looks up – they are so, so close. She'd barely have to move to be kissing him. It's the kind of thought that she should never have, but there it is and the idea is appallingly appealing. Circumstance has literally thrown them at each other, and she could so easily take the opportunity it has offered.

Chakotay stares back at her, apparently as stunned as she is. And as tempted. His lips part.

She's the one to pull back before the mistake can happen. She pushes herself away with the hand that rests on his chest, takes the smallest step backwards to open a gulf between them. "I'm fine," she says, as though he had asked.

He blinks once, then nods. He checks that she's standing steady and then releases his grip. He lets her go.

Kathryn heads for her bridge to find out what's happening. She doesn't stop to check if he's following her – of course he is, it's what he does.

She always takes the lead, one way or another.

2.

He was just standing too close to her, that's all. She turns around and he's too close and she is suddenly pressed up against him, accidentally.

The contact is electric: it shocks her. She freezes in place, completely fails to move away from him as she absolutely should.

He looks surprised too, but he's the one who was standing too close and surely something like this was always a risk with that proximity. Maybe he didn't realise. Maybe he was too focussed on the other distances that they keep between them.

In the silence there are sounds – beeps and boops – Seven is a few metres away, working at a console. If she raises her head, if she looks round... Kathryn isn't even sure what she would see. The Borg live inside each other's heads, physical distance might mean nothing to them.

And maybe there's nothing to see. Maybe she's imaging all this tension, making up the silent crackles and invisible sparks. Maybe there's nothing to worry about after all.

She wants to ask. She wants to know if the feeling is mutual. But they have an audience, however distracted Seven might be, and that keeps her sensible. She raises her eyebrows, pointedly.

They both move at the same time, away from each other and back to propriety. Everything goes back to normal, to the way it should be.

She hopes he won't stand too close to her again.

And she hopes that he will.

3.

They're alone together often, and neither of them thinks anything of it. Why would they?

And sometimes they are close, for one reason or another. Again, it means nothing.

This time it does not mean nothing. This time it means too much.

There is a bare centimetre between them, if that. They're not touching – yet – but she can feel the heat radiating from him, can feel his breath against her skin. She isn't even sure how exactly they got this close, but she knows that it's a terrible idea to stay like this, to take it further.

Kathryn has always been strangely drawn to terrible ideas. In a moment she'll have acted on another one, the latest in a long line.

The door hisses open and Tuvok appears in the gap.

She has never been so glad to see him, nor so frustrated by his presence. He has stopped her from doing something stupid, and she hopes that he'll never know. She turns towards him, turns away from temptation. She takes a step, and then another, moving ever further from ruin.

She glances back, which is never to be recommended. Chakotay looks guilty, and she assumes that she does too. She resets her expression carefully, tries to appear unworried and uncompromised. She greets her old friend with a smile on her face.

The smile is as artificial as the gravity, and it feels as heavy.

4.

This time it's her fault, and – worse – this time it's deliberate. She takes advantage of the privacy of her quarters, tells a risqué joke and leans towards him when he smiles at it. There is alcohol on his breath, and on hers as well. That's deliberate too – she wants to have an excuse.

If anything happens, someone will find out. That's what she has to assume, anyway. Someone would know, someone would talk. There would be gossip.

But there is always gossip, there are always rumours. Who would know if they were true or not? Who would believe something so scandalous? Surely her crew think that she is better than this?

So she leans in close, touches his hand. There is nobody around to remind her that she can't have him.

And this time he's the one who pulls back. He stops her falling again, and in the moment she hates him for it. How dare he be stronger than she is?

She knows that she'll forgive him for all of this eventually, and she knows why she forgets his transgressions so easily. Some might call it love, but she prefers to call it weakness. Why give something an attractive name if it's ugly and painful?

1.

Kathryn touches a hand to her mouth, surprised. Finally he has kissed her. She has kissed him. They have kissed each other. She has been waiting years for this, although she'd never admit that to anyone.

She expects more, but it doesn't come. He's waiting, she realises. He's leaving this up to her: whatever she says next will decide how they continue.

Her muscles tense – fight or flight. This is a moment that will only come once. She has to act now. She has to say the right thing. She looks at him carefully, calculating the risks.

She loves him. She know this. She loves him as much as she has ever loved anyone.

She also loves her ship, and her crew. They need her. What *she* might need isn't important. It is, as the Borg would say, irrelevant.

So she just says, "Commander," in her most formal tone of voice.

It takes him a moment to hide his reaction, and in that moment he looks devastated. It breaks her heart, but that will heal as it always does. He steps back, away from her, fleeing. He says, "Captain."

She nods, dismissing him. It doesn't even hurt as much as she'd have expected.

He pauses at the door before he leaves and says, "I'm sorry."

So is she.

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