

~ The Search for a M-Class Planet ~

by Red Hope

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Copyright: I don't own any of the Voyager characters or Voyager concept. I do however own the story plot.

Violence: None.

Subtext: This story has lesbian context.

Pairing: Janeway/7of9

Summary: Just a regular day on duty for both Janeway and Seven of Nine however when Janeway requests Seven to find an M-class planet, Seven goes overboard. How does Janeway react as a captain and make up for it as Seven's girlfriend?

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Seven of Nine, late of the Borg Collective, retracted her borg tubules after just turning the gravity off in the Jefferies Tubes. She watched Lt. Torres hover down into the replicator system to ready the repairs of the main hydrogenation pipe.

"So how was the dinner with the captain?" called B'Elanna from in the replicator.

"Sufficient," answered the borg in her normal cool tone.

B'Elanna's eyes narrowed and she asked, "Just sufficient?" She shook her head.

"What'd you have for dinner?"

"Burgers and corn," curtly replied Seven.

The Chief Engineer huffed in response and removed the spanner from her side as she floated upside down. She reached up and started working the pipe's connection free.

"Talk about anything interesting?" she curiously inquired.

Seven already knew B'Elanna's proficient habit of gossiping and snooping. "We had an in depth discussion."

Lt. Torres perked up at the information. "About what?"

A faint grin crept along Seven's lips. "About the Borg's quest for perfection." And it wasn't a lie either just a mild glazing of the more detailed truth.

B'Elanna let out a frustrated sigh but continued to wrench free the pipe.

Seven noted B'Elanna was going further down inside the replicator so she helped

guide her deeper. Her left arm now stretched down into the hatch of the replicator while her hand tightly clasped the lieutenant's ankle. "If you're curious as to if anything happened nothing was accomplished."

"Accomplished?" repeated the confused engineer. "Seven, it wasn't a science experiment."

"Perhaps but I was conducting a type of test," further revealed the borg.

"Oh?" B'Elanna had a smirk. She was now using her spanner to free the bottom portion of the pipe from the main system with plenty of ease. "What'd you test the captain for?"

"To prove or disapprove your hypothesis about her interest in me."

The lieutenant chuckled to herself but it wasn't lost on Seven. "Did you draw a conclusion?"

"Yes," answered the borg, "and I've concluded I must continue to test her."

"Kahless," grumbled the Chief Engineer. "She is that stubborn."

"Indeed," agreed Seven.

B'Elanna shook her head yet smiled when she finished disconnecting the pipe. She attached her spanner back to the small magnetic belt she wore for her tools. "I'm tellin' yah, Seven... Janeway has it for you."

Seven of Nine's metallic implant instantly rose up at Lt. Torres's statement. "Indeed," she whispered as her eyebrow lowered back down.

The lieutenant came up a little way until she was halfway up the pipe. She then grasped the pipe but before she removed it, she asked, "Don't you find the captain attractive?" She was trying from every angle to see not only what Seven knew but how Seven felt about the captain.

"Captain Janeway has aesthetically pleasing physical attributes."

B'Elanna rolled her brown eyes and suddenly jerked the pipe free with more force than needed. "Here comes the pipe, Seven."

The borg released her human hand from the floor of the hatch and lowered her hand down into the replicator. She grasped the pipe when it was in reach and she pulled it out of the replicator. She quickly noted the repair portion of the pipe but didn't take the time to inspect it. Instead she moved it a little ways down the tube to get it out of the way. She then picked up the newly manufactured pipe and brought it down into the replicator. "Here's the new one, lieutenant."

"Thanks." B'Elanna had tucked her head up to the point her chin almost touched her chest so she could see the pipe coming at her. She wrapped both of her hands around it and carefully drew it downwards. She dipped her head back down and took a second

to let her head readjusted to the movement and upside down sensation. Finally she started to insert the pipe and instantly the pins at both ends of the pipe popped out and linked with the main system. "I love it when something works."

Seven had a half amused expression because she could completely agree with B'Elanna.

The Chief Engineer pulled herself down towards the bottom of the pipe and freed her spanner from her side. She started locking the pipe into its new home. "So are you attracted to the captain, Seven?"

Seven of Nine's eyes instinctively narrowed at the abrupt and forward question. "As I said-"

"Yeah, yeah, Seven I heard you so cut the crap." Lt. Torres had finished the bottom portion and now used her hands to draw up to the top of the pipe. Her feet now touched the top of the Jefferies Tube. "I want your damn opinion not some factual observation. I think anybody would agree that Janeway looks good."

Seven took in a quiet but deep breath as her mind quickly thought of a way to answer. "The captain is attractive however she is not a suitable mate when I logically consider it."

B'Elanna paused and took a second to ask, "Suitable mate?" She finished tightening the pipe into place.

"Yes," answered the borg, "first she is a female."

"Oh come on, Seven two women do... um copulate."

Seven restrained from smirking and kept her voice an even monotone. "Perhaps but her gender was the least of my concerns."

"Then what is it?" persisted the engineer. She'd just finished hooking the pipe in and now worked on returning the flow of hydrogenation to the correct, new pipe.

"It is a long list," heavily replied the borg. "Do you wish to hear it all?"

B'Elanna actually laughed. "Just the big ones, Seven."

"Of course." Seven's mind quickly and logically ran down the list and she recited a few. "First, she is the captain, which purposes a problem. Second, she is overly argumentative and extremely frustrating at times."

"Go on," urged B'Elanna and she believed every word because she had to simply agree. Janeway would physically be a catch but mentally she would be a pain in the ass to date in B'Elanna's opinion.

"Third, she is too self confident and that makes her almost obnoxious." Seven shook her head then added. "Fourth, she breaks her own personal protocol by saying one thing but acting in another manner."

"Ah yeah," agreed B'Elanna, "you mean she talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk."

Seven considered the engineer's words. "Exactly."

Lt. Torres had a lopsided grin as she brought her spanner to her belt after she finished with the pipe. "Any others?" She stretched her right hand out and pressed the button to initiate the flow of hydrogenation into the pipe.

"Yes, she is pigheaded."

B'Elanna broke out into a fit of laughter at the honest statement. "I could not agree more!" she bellowed from inside the replicator.

Seven huffed and that old quote Janeway had taught her came to mind. B'Elanna was the pot calling the kettle black. "Are you finished, B'Elanna?"

"Yes, Seven... bring me up."

The borg didn't hesitate to extract the Human-Klingon from the replicator and spun her around until she was upright again.

The engineer slowly opened her eyes when her spinning world finally settled. She grabbed her toolbox but this time she erred on the side of caution and kept the box away from her feet. She quickly disconnected the small belt and put it into the box with her spanner.

Seven was busy with returning the gravity into the tubes.

Just as B'Elanna had her tools put away and lid shut, the gravity returned. Her box dropped to the floor and in the background she heard the broken pipe clink against the tube floor. "Let's get out of here," she complained, "I'm cramped."

"I believe you're comfortable compared to me." Seven was already crawling and she made sure to take the pipe with her.

The lieutenant offered a teasing grin. "Yeah it must really be a bitch to be that tall in here."

The borg refrained from commenting but she gave B'Elanna a faint grin.

The engineer actually saw it and she felt a little relieved to see a more human side of Seven. When she got to the end of the tube, she put in the code for the small door to open. She slid out, dropped her box, and retrieved the pipe from Seven.

The tall woman finally got out and like a ritual, she stretched her legs. When she was about to offer to take the pipe to Engineer's recycling, she was interrupted.

"Janeway to Seven of Nine."

Seven quickly tapped her commbadge. "Seven here."

"When you have a moment, Seven please stop by my Ready Room."

Seven faintly lifted her metallic eyebrow. "I will be there promptly, captain."

"Thank you. Janeway out."

B'Elanna had listened to the entire exchange and finally decided there was nothing unprofessional or between the lines in the conversation. "Thanks again for the help, Seven."

"You are welcome, B'Elanna."

Lt. Torres gave a warm smile then started to walk off but she looked over her shoulder. "Tell the captain I said 'hi,'" and her voice was filled with pure mischief.

Seven made no clear reaction and her monotone reply was, "Perhaps."

B'Elanna rolled her eyes and called out, "You're no fun, Seven." She turned her head around and continued back into Engineering.

Seven of Nine curiously watched her go then she decided to head to the captain's Ready Room. It didn't take her long to arrive on the bridge and she received a glance from the commander. She gave him a faint nod of greeting then went directly into the captain's Ready Room.

The captain peered up from her computer when she heard the door swoosh open. A smile tried to pull at her lips at seeing Seven but she contained it. "Good morning, Seven."

Seven stopped in front of the desk and stood tall with her hands behind her back. "Good morning, captain."

Janeway folded her hands as she put them in her lap. "I need you to start a search for a M-class planet."

The borg was immediately intrigued. "Shore leave, captain?"

"Yes, I think the crew could use it." The captain paused then suddenly she grinned. "I know I would not mind."

Seven flashed a very brief grin before she went serious again. "Of course."

"Let me know what you find, Seven." Janeway straightened up in her chair. "I expect a report by the end of your shift."

"Of course, captain." Seven dipped her head in acknowledgement then decided they were finished. She turned on her heels and briskly walked out.

Janeway peered up with hooded eyes and watched her Astrometrics Officer leave. She let the smallest of grins pull at her lips as she went back to work.

The rest of the Alpha shift continued without an incident, which seemed fairly rare on the *Voyager* considering the past few weeks' events. In a lot of ways, the crew was relieved to deal with a mundane shift than having to worry about coming up with a survival tactic against an enemy.

Seven had spent most of her shift scanning the surrounding space and only came upon one M-Class planet. Despite its relevance something didn't sit well in Seven's mind about the planet. She decided to do more detailed scans of the planet right down to the biology and geology of the planet. She discovered that the terrain was perfectly suitable except maybe a little warmer than necessary but there seemed to be no formative species on the planet. Yet as she came the last of her biology scans, it was revealed there were numerous species of animals that were approximately nine meters to twenty-five meters in height and could weigh up to 45,300 kilograms. It was not a suitable environment for shore leave in Seven's mind but she put it into her report for Janeway.

Seven noted it was coming close to the end of her duty shift but she wasn't prepared to hand over her report without finding a suitable M-planet. She knew she could scan further ahead but it would require more power and it was power she would have to reroute within Engineering to Astrometrics. Seven considered her options then decided she would go with her concept of rerouting the power. Before she left Astrometrics, she grabbed a tri-recorder and quickly went down to Engineering.

As soon as Seven entered Engineering, she was looked at by everybody in the department. She kept her expression even and continued on her way to the Jefferies Tubes. Within a minute, she'd accessed the Jefferies Tubes and crawled down the main power routing area for the ship. Seven sat down Indian style and gazed at the computer box for the controls of the power routing system.

The borg lifted her tri-recorder to the computer box and it immediately connected with the box through an inferred beam. First Seven rerouted the power from the messhall to Astrometrics but made sure to only take a certain voltage before moving to the next power target. She now shifted the link to the Engineering power and recalculated it quickly and decided on a lower voltage. As soon as the Engineering voltage was depleted by two thousand watts, the Jefferies Tubes lights dimmed considerably. Now Seven shifted her attention to the power within the cargo bays to reroute most of their power since she knew her Borg Alcove used a significant amount of power.

Just as Seven finished rerouting the cargo bays' power, the small door to her left swooshed open and B'Elanna appeared on the other side.

B'Elanna was remotely surprised but recovered quickly. "Seven, what are you doing?"

The borg regarded the engineer momentarily then went back to her work. "I'm rerouting power from various places to Astrometrics."

Lt. Torres's eyes instantly narrowed. "What?" she growled and crawled through the doorway. "Damn it, Seven!" She sat while swiping the tri-recorder from the borg. "My warp engines just lost three thousand watts worth of power because of you." She

shoved Seven out of the way and started to break the rerouting path Seven had created. "The engines dropped out of warp 6 because of that stunt." She was breathing a little heavy as she raced to reprogram the network of power.

Seven had moved the opposite wall and had her back pressed against it.

B'Elanna glanced at the borg then back at the tri-recorder screen. "What? Sorry isn't in the borg vocabulary?"

Seven lost her eye contact with the angry engineer.

"Next time, Seven ask me before you do anything that relates to Engineering. I am in charge of this department and if anything screws up its on me." The Chief Engineer had finally fixed the problem and now looked at the young borg. "That's why there is a chain of command here so we can all work together."

Seven swallowed as she realized the mistake she'd made.

B'Elanna shook her head at the silent woman. "Not to mention I got my ass chewed out by the captain because we suddenly dropped a warp." She sighed and handed back the tri-recorder. "Why were you rerouting the power anyway?"

Seven peered up from the tri-recorder and replied, "The captain requested I scan for any M-planets. I needed more power so I could broaden my scans."

B'Elanna let out a heavy sigh because she knew how hard the borg worked to please the captain. "Where else did you take power from?"

"Mess hall and the cargo bays."

A smug look crossed the engineer's face. "I'm sure Neelix loved that."

Seven revealed her own grin. "Perhaps."

"Look, Seven how much more power do you need?" Lt. Torres was serious again.

Seven quickly did a mental calculation. "Another thousand watts or so should be sufficient."

"Take it from the holodecks," suggested the lieutenant. She paused as she considered the younger woman and her earlier actions. She wasn't angry anymore but still a bit annoyed. "As I said, next time come to me first if you do anything relevant to Engineering. If you can't obey by the chain of command then you shouldn't be here on *Voyager*." She tilted her head a little and quietly added, "The captain taught me that."

Seven slowly nodded her head then she sincerely said, "I'm sorry, B'Elanna. I will check with you next time."

"Thank you," whispered the engineer. She took that as the end of the conversation so she got back onto her knees and hands. She crawled through the small doorway but paused and looked back at Seven. "See that you return everything to normal after

you're finished your scans."

"I will do so promptly," agreed the borg.

B'Elanna slightly grinned and added, "It might be a good idea to finish up before Neelix starts dinner."

The borg slightly grinned. "Of course."

The Chief Engineering though chuckled and crawled off after the door swooshed shut.

Seven curiously thought about the confrontation with B'Elanna and was remotely surprised the Human-Klingon hadn't been angrier. She continued to consider this as she rerouted the power from the holodecks to Astrometrics. When she was finished, she lowered onto her hands and knees and began crawling back to the entry of the Jefferies Tubes. She now could increase her scans by many light years. She was determined to do those scans before she handed over her report whether she went into the Beta shift or not.

Captain Janeway slowly strolled through the halls until she came to the door of Astrometrics. She was a mix of concern and slight annoyance because she hadn't received any word from her Astrometrics Officer. She knew she'd clearly expressed to Seven she wanted a report of any M-Class planets by the end of the Alpha shift but she hadn't received one. And what made matters further concerning was the fact Seven had yet to log off duty.

The captain now stepped into Astrometrics to find nobody around except the tall blond borg at the front controls. "Seven."

Seven of Nine only momentarily paused in the middle of her work and took a quick glance at the captain. Within that quick second, she could tell the captain was a bit ridged and her tone very stern. She wasn't sure exactly what that meant but when Janeway came closer, she saw how stormy her grey eyes were. "Can I help you, captain?" inquired the borg, her tone even.

"Why haven't I received that report?" urged the captain. She came up to the side of the control console and folded her arms against her chest. "And why are you still on duty?"

Seven now understood why the captain was so agitated and she considered the best way to reply. "I was fulfilling your request for the scans of any M-planets."

"That was due when?" probed the captain.

The borg looked directly at Janeway, her face was neutral. "Seventeen hundred hours."

Captain Janeway tilted her head to one side. "What's the delay?"

Seven of Nine wanted to sigh but she wasn't sure why. Instead she ignored the impulse and simply looked back at the screen several feet ahead. "I am almost finished the second set of scans, captain."

"Second?" repeated the captain.

"Yes," answered the borg, "the first set of scans revealed a M-Class planet."

The captain was finding her annoyance growing and not necessarily at Seven's lack of response to her duties but because she didn't understand Seven's actions. It wasn't normal for Seven to ignore one of Janeway's requests when she agreed to it. "So why didn't you hand that over in your report?"

Seven glanced at the captain then back at the view screen. "The planet was insufficient."

"I make that call, Seven," reminded Captain Janeway.

"Of course," agreed the borg, "however I assumed you wouldn't agree to the planet's environment." Her hands were flying across the control panel as she looked for the data on the earlier planet. "So I decided on a second scan to find a more suitable M-planet." She had the data up on the first M-class planet and she peered up at the scan. "Here is the data on the first planet."

Janeway let it go for a moment and humoured the borg by looking at the screen. She stepped around the console and came to the front of the console. She leaned back against the console and she scanned over the data. "It's an M-class planet similar to Mars, Seven." She turned her head sidelong to the borg. "I do not see anything insufficient about it."

Seven lowered her head to the console and quickly pulled up the data that had induced her second scans earlier this afternoon. "Perhaps," she whispered as the view screen flickered to change data.

The captain quickly read over the information about the various biological animals that inhabited the planet. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary and she was about to say something until she saw what was at the end.

"Amphibolous creatures," informed the borg, "and rather large."

"I would say so," quietly agreed the captain. She finally absorbed all the information and finally looked at Seven. "Have your second scans brought up anything new?"

"Yes," replied the borg. She quickly brought up the data of a second but further M-Class planet.

Janeway looked at the screen and leaned back against the console. She looked over the data and slowly a smile eased across her lips. She realized the planet was very much like Earth and still in its infancy. On the second set of data, she realized that the species that inhabited the planet were very much like Humans. "Do you know anything about this species, Seven?"

Seven took in a deep breath then reported, "Species 2512... the Borg encountered them ten years ago and found them insufficient to assimilate them just yet."

Captain Janeway quietly grunted and continued to read over the data. "Any particular unique qualities?"

"Yes," replied Seven, "they seem to have an ability to both survive on land and in water."

Janeway furrowed her eyebrows. "Lungs and gills?"

Seven nodded then replied, "The Borg considered assimilating them for this quality however they found no use for it."

"No, I suppose not," agreed the captain.

"But the sheer knowledge of their biological make-up intrigued the Borg," continued Seven. "I believe the Borg assimilated three hundred life forms of Species 2512 to achieve this knowledge."

Captain Janeway's eyes were slightly wide as she looked at Seven now. "Three hundred just to understand their biological make-up?"

"Of course," replied the borg in her matter of fact tone. "It is the most efficient way to come to a positive conclusion for their research."

Janeway said nothing in response as she looked back at the data on the screen. "I assume the Borg will be back for them?"

"Of course," replied Seven, "they seem to have an intriguing evolutionary future ahead of them. The Borg will wait for several centuries before returning. The Borg deduced Species 2512 will loose their gills and fully adapt to living on the terrain."

"Interesting," quietly whispered the captain. "It looks like a suitable place for shore leave."

"I believe so," agreed Seven. "Especially since Species 2512 tend to remain on this sector of the planet." She quickly punched in a set of commands.

Janeway watched as the screen revealed the planet from a space view. In the lower right hemisphere was a red box that represented where the species currently inhabit. She smiled to herself at the thought of shore leave but she lost the smile as her thoughts went back to the present. "I want both of these M-planets in a report so I may look over them in greater detail." She was coming around the console to look at the borg.

"Of course, captain. I will do that now."

Captain Janeway studied the younger woman then she shifted her weight to her right foot. "And next time, do not do a second set of scans without speaking to me first."

Her hands instinctively went to her hips. "That was not your call to make, Seven. You know that."

Seven opened her mouth to refute the charges but she faltered when she realized the captain was right. She took a deep breath then nodded. "Of course, captain."

The captain felt a pin of guilt wash over her when she saw how icy Seven's eyes turned. However she knew she couldn't be lenient if she ever expected Seven to learn the chain of command and her own position as the Astrometrics Officer. "I'll expect that report within an hour, Seven."

The young borg merely nodded then when Janeway started to leave the reminder about chain of command brought her back to B'Elanna's predicament earlier. "Captain?" she called.

Janeway was near the door but paused and turned back around.

"My... apologies about earlier today."

The captain suddenly became confused, her expression tightened together.

"I was responsible for the warp engines falling out of warp six," clarified the borg.

Captain Janeway gradually lifted an eyebrow. "Lt. Torres failed to mention this."

Seven kept her shoulders square under the captain's stern look. "Regardless of that, it was I who caused the power shortage in Engineering and not Lt. Torres lack of abilities as the Chief Engineer."

The captain's expression had hardened a little and she stepped up closer to the younger woman again. "Exactly what were you doing, Seven?"

Seven inhaled deeply as she prepared for another possible retribution. "I was in the Jefferies Tubes and rerouting power to Astrometrics."

Janeway's eyes instinctively narrowed. "Why?"

"I required more power to boost my scans by several light years, captain."

Janeway knew the damage had already been done and there was no sense in getting angry about it now. She let it go for now and decided when Seven would bring her the report she would lecture her about command. "Apology accepted." She dropped her folded arms from her chest. "See that I get that report by one hour. Understood?"

"Of course, captain."

Janeway briskly nodded, turned on her heels, and quickly left.

Seven dipped her head a little and realized the line she'd crossed today; crossed twice. She'd never seen it when she'd set her mind to accomplish the mission on finding a suitable M-class planet. The thought of a lecture from Janeway crossed her mind as

she went back to detailing her data of the two planets.

It took Seven about forty-five minutes to put in the data and uploaded it to a PADD. She collect the PADD from the console and made her way out of Astrometrics to the bridge. When she entered the bridge, she ignored the odd looks from the various Beta shift crewman and just went to the door of the Ready Room.

"Come," ordered the captain. She was expecting Seven and when she saw the borg, she was remotely relieved. "You have that report, Seven?"

"Yes, captain." Seven approached the desk and handed the PADD. After the captain took it, she took a step back and stood stiff with her hands behind her back.

Janeway just glanced over everything then gave an approving nod. "Good." She set the PADD aside on her desk and peered up at the young woman.

Seven felt a little uneasy under the captain's stare however she never showed her uneasiness. She clenched her hands behind her back then relaxed them as she spoke first. "Should I be expecting a punishment for my actions today, captain?"

The captain folded her hands in her lap and finally relaxed back in her chair. "Do you think you deserve one?"

"I am not sure," honestly replied the borg, "since I seem to have a minimal understanding of protocol I should not be the one deciding."

The captain actually felt that one somewhat sting. She let out a faint sigh and stared at her computer screen for a moment. When she looked back up, she said, "I do not believe a punishment will serve any purpose when it comes to you, Seven."

"Why?" prompted the borg.

"Because as you said, you do not understand protocol." Janeway thoughtfully studied the young woman and considered her next words carefully. "I cannot punish you for something you did wrong when you do not understand why it was wrong."

Seven's jaw locked a little but she slowly nodded her head.

"I think it would be a better use of time to see that you do understand what you did wrong." Janeway tilted her head a little to the side. "Then hopefully we can correct the problem from happening again."

Seven of Nine took in a deep breath then finally said, "I understand my errors, captain."

"Do you?" prompted the captain, her tone serious but hidden in it was a certain amount of hope.

"Yes," answered the borg. "Lt. Torres corrected me."

"And what did she tell you?" inquired the captain.

Seven's mind quickly ran through the dialogue she'd had with the Chief Engineer. She finally came along the information and repeated it to the captain. "Next time I am to report to Lt. Torres when I do anything relevant to Engineering. If I cannot obey by the chain of command then I should not be on *Voyager*. The chain of command is established so that we can all work together as a team." She paused and curiously looked at the captain. "Lt. Torres said you taught her that."

The captain nodded her agreement but she remained silent for awhile as she considered the borg and her words. She shifted some in her seat then locked eyes with Seven again. "This chain of command involves the entire ship, Seven. Not just for Lt. Torres or Engineering."

"Yes, I realize this," agreed the borg. "That is why you were annoyed I did not contact you about my second scans."

Captain Janeway nodded and felt relieved Seven had understood her mistakes today. "Good." She sat up more in her chair. "I'm glad you understand this."

Seven merely nodded her head.

A second thought occurred to the captain and she looked back up. "You did return power to normal, correct?"

"Of course, captain. I did so after I was finished my second set of scans."

"Excellent." Janeway went silent for a moment.

Seven knew the captain was thinking about something but she already had a question of her own. "Captain?"

"Yes?" prompted the captain.

The Astrometrics Officer inhaled deeply then finally asked, "If I come upon the same particular events and am unsure who to speak with about them. Who shall I go to?"

Janeway gently smiled at the borg's cautious concerns and she rested back in her chair again. "Start with me, Seven." Her smile shifted into a small grin. "I'm at the top of the pecking chain." Her joke was lost on Seven, whom only nodded. The captain hid her sigh but she was relieved to see Seven better understood the use and need of a chain of command. It was just another step for Seven. "Go and log off duty, Seven. You're finished for the day."

"Of course, captain." Seven dropped her hands from behind her back and she was about to leave. She hesitated and noticed the captain's inquiring expression. "I am sorry for not speaking with you first before doing a second set of scans, captain."

Janeway almost felt a smile come on but she restrained it. "Accepted." She paused then added, "Thank you, Seven."

The borg merely blinked in slight confusion for receiving the gratitude.

The captain let it go and just said, "Dismissed."

Seven nodded then took the order to leave the captain. She briskly walked out of the Ready Room and went back to Astrometrics to close down her work station and log off duty.

The captain however sat there in her chair and stared across to the opposite side of the room. She still could not quite understand why her Astrometrics Officer would not speak with her first before doing a second set of scans. In past times, Seven had been required, on several occasions, to do second scans but she'd always contact Janeway first. It seemed a little out of the ordinary for Seven and she wanted to know why. Janeway considered that Lt. Torres may have more insight since she was the first to come upon Seven's error.

Janeway quickly tapped her commbadge. "Janeway to Lt. Torres."

There was a pause then the engineer's voice replied, "*Go ahead, captain.*"

"Do you have a minute?" inquired the captain.

"*I have a few of them,*" gently teased the lieutenant. "*Do you need some of them?*"

Janeway smiled to herself and replied, "Yes if you don't mind stopping by the Ready Room."

"*I'll be there in a few minutes, captain.*"

"Thank you." The captain then cut the connection and decided to look over the M-Class planet data. After about five minutes, her Ready Room chimed and she ordered entry.

Lt. Torres stepped into the room and approached the desk.

"Sit down, lieutenant."

B'Elanna nodded and took a seat in front of the captain's desk. "What can I help you with, captain?"

"First, I apologize for snapping at you today, lieutenant."

The Chief Engineer tried to hide her look of shock but she couldn't help it. She was relieved when the captain just softly laughed at her reaction.

"Seven cleared things up as to why we dropped out of warp," clarified the captain.

B'Elanna blinked and shook off her astonishment. "She did?" she prompted.

"Yes," answered the captain, "and she apologized for it."

"Oh," whispered the lieutenant, again surprised by the borg's actions today.

The captain finally leaned back in her chair to gain some comfort. "She mentioned you found her in the Jefferies Tubes."

"Yes," replied the Chief Engineer, "she was rerouting the power supplies to Astrometrics."

Janeway nodded but remained silent for awhile.

B'Elanna noted the slight confusion on the captain's face and she wondered what it could be about. "What is it, captain?"

The captain shook her head and her eyes focused on the Human-Klingon. "Seven was rerouting the power so she could boost her scans, correct?"

"Yes," replied the engineer. "She'd mentioned you'd requested her to find a suitable M-Class planet."

"A M-class planet," agreed the captain, "not a suitable one."

The Chief Engineer has a confused expression but quickly lost it. "Captain, I believe she was trying to please you."

"What?" The captain was now more concerned.

"Yes," countered the lieutenant, "she has always been determined to meet your expectations." She tilted her head a little and added, "You should know that, captain."

Captain Janeway did know that from almost the start of her friendship with Seven. "You're right." She felt a frown develop on her face. "I'll have to speak to her about it," she mumbled quietly. She quickly looked up from her desk and nodded. "Thank you, lieutenant."

"Is that all, captain?" insisted the Chief Engineer.

"Yes, that was all." The captain straightened up in her chair. "Thank you, B'Elanna."

"You're welcome, captain." Lt. Torres stood and flashed a toothy smile. She then quietly left the captain to her thoughts.

Janeway stood up from her chair and crossed over to the upper level to stare out her window. She quietly watched the stars streak across the window and she quietly considered Seven's actions today.

Kathryn soon realized the change in their relationship would certainly affect their working world but she wasn't sure how it would do so. Now she already knew of one affect and it was the borg's higher determination to please Kathryn with or without regard to protocol. She knew in some sense she owed some type of apology to Seven but not one that would seem to disregard the need for command.

After a long sigh, Kathryn straightened her shoulders and decided it was time for her

to get off duty as well. She needed to catch up with the young borg and make sure she further explained things. She had a feeling this might be a long night and she could only hope she could end it with a more pleasant atmosphere.

The captain stepped down a level and came around her desk. She quickly looked through the roster and saw that Seven was now logged off duty. She then logged herself off duty and left her Ready Room to go to her quarters. Once she made it to her quarters, she went to her ensuite and decided to change out of her uniform top and grey sweater. She put them into the recycler and went back into her bedroom and to her closet where she had a few items of clothing. After the small door opened, she settled on her usual white button up blouse and pulled it on then buttoned it.

"Computer, where is Seven of Nine?"

The computer chirped and replied, "*Seven of Nine in Cargo Bay 2.*"

Kathryn's jaw locked and unlocked several times then she finally asked, "*Is she regenerating?*"

"No," chirped the female voice.

The captain felt a bit relieved. "Thank you." She'd just finished buttoning the last top button just between her breasts. She walked back into her ensuite and collected her commbadge from the sink then attached it to her left chest. She then headed out of her quarters and to Seven's cargo bay below deck.

When she entered the cargo bay, she could hear two voices; one was Seven's and the other was Naomi Wildman's voice. Kathryn softly smiled at knowing Seven was spending time with the young child and she felt it warm her. She came closer to the pair that sat at a small table but she remained quiet as she watched them.

Seven was sitting directly beside Naomi and was pointing at something on a PADD. "You must think of it like this, Naomi. The 'x' is merely a blank within the function and you must plug that function into the 'x'."

Naomi's lips were pressed tightly together and to her right side on the table was a binder with lined paper and in her hand was a graphite pencil. "But why would you plug that function into that function?"

Seven peered over at the child from the PADD. "It is the property of Difference of Quotients." She tilted her head a little. "It is a very simple concept once you understand it."

Naomi rubbed her ridged brow and stared at the PADD that was closer to Seven. "I am unsure how to plug it in, Seven." She pointed at a problem that was displayed on the PADD. "Like number three... how do you plug $f(x) = x^2$ into $f(x) = (x + h) + f(3)$ which is divided by h." She shook her head and looked up at Seven with pleading eyes.

The borg sighed and said, "You must think of it like this, Naomi." She reached over and took the girl's pencil and binder. She glanced at the problem to memorize it then

she wrote it down on the paper and then looked at Naomi. "This will be simpler to see." She looked back at the paper and rewrote the problem as $f(x) = []^2$ so that the squared x was now a box and then she said, "You must now plug in the $(x + h)$ into the box."

The girl's expression was confused and tight but then she suddenly brightened up. "Oh wait, I get it." She pointed at the $f(3)$ and said, "And you plug that into the box too but as a separate equation?"

"Correct," agreed Seven. "It is very simple." She quickly rewrote the problem so that everything was plugged into x^2 function and was divided by h . "Then you must simplify the problem."

Naomi was smiling as she nodded her head. "That's the easy part."

The borg somewhat smiled and nodded her head. "Do you understand the Difference of Quotients now?"

"Yes," quickly replied Naomi. She took the pencil from the borg's human hand and quickly went through the rest of the problem. But as she did the work, she mentioned, "Pre-calculus isn't so hard."

"No it is not," agreed Seven, "however it is important to understand every concept."

"That's what mom says too," idly mentioned the girl. She was finishing up the problem. "She said everything builds on itself."

"It does," confirmed the borg. She was about to add more but she finally realized there was another presence in the cargo bay. She lifted her head and her eyes met soft grey-blue ones near the door. "Captain," she greeted and started to stand up.

Janeway held up her hand to stop Seven's proper attitude.

Seven had already noted the change in the captain's attire and realized she was off duty.

"Hi, captain," greeted Naomi, a smile on her face. "Seven was helping me with my pre-calc homework."

The captain softly smiled at that as she approached the two friends. "Shouldn't you be asking your tutor for that help, Miss Wildman?"

The child froze for a moment but quickly came up with a response. "I normally do but she could not explain it right so I came to Seven." She kept herself very serious so that the captain would take her seriously. "Seven can explain things much more logically than my tutor at times."

The captain gently laughed at the child, whom smiled back at the captain's relaxed attitude. "Yes she does." Her eyes flickered to Seven then back to Naomi.

"Well I'm okay now," stated the girl. She closed up her binder and grabbed the PADD

to place it on top of her binder. She looked at Seven and smiled. "Thank you, Seven."

"You are welcome, Naomi." Seven then was suddenly pulled into a warm hug from the child and she gave a tight squeeze back.

Naomi ended the hug, grabbed her stuff, and hopped out of the chair. "It is good to see you, captain."

Captain Janeway softly smiled as she knelt down and became more eye level with Naomi. "Its been awhile since we've seen each other."

The young girl slightly frowned. "Yes," she confirmed.

Janeway's smile only grew at the child's concerns for the lack of communications. "Have you been well?"

Naomi brightened and nodded her head. "Yes and my classes are excellent."

"I'm glad," agreed the captain but she tilted her head and asked, "And what are you studying other than Pre-Calc?"

"Well my tutor has me learning about Human literature, Human Latin, and my science is astronomy."

"Latin?" prompted the curious captain.

"Yes," agreed Naomi, "she said despite it's a dead language that it would... behove me to learn it because much of Human science uses words in Latin." She paused then quickly added, "And she said it would improve my English."

"She's right," agreed Janeway. "And how is Astronomy?"

"It is very interesting," agreed Naomi. She suddenly grinned and said, "I learned that when Humans first started studying the stars they use to make images out of the stars in the sky."

Janeway now softly laughed then nodded her head. "They're called constellations."

"Yes," agreed the child.

Janeway smiled and then her focus went to the quite borg then back to Naomi. "Maybe Seven can show you some things around Astrometrics when she has time."

"Really?" asked the excited the girl. "I would find that quite intriguing."

The captain grinned at the use of Seven's infamous word 'intriguing,' which the child was picking up anymore. "Ask your teacher first then I'll see if I can give Seven some time while on duty to show you around more."

"That'd be wonderful, captain. Thank you." Naomi suddenly jumped forward and threw her arms around the older woman.

The captain smiled as she hugged the girl back. When she separated from Naomi, she stood back up and smiled down at her.

"It was good seeing you, captain." Naomi stepped around the older woman.

"You too, Naomi."

Naomi stopped and looked back at Seven. "Thanks again, Seven."

The borg smiled and nodded. "You're welcome, Naomi."

Naomi went to the cargo bay doors but turned and waved at the two women. "Bye, Seven. Bye, captain."

"Bye, Naomi," called back the two women in unison.

After the doors closed, Janeway returned her full attention to Seven of Nine. She grabbed the chair that Naomi had been in earlier and pulled it out further. She sat down and faced the younger woman. "How are you doing?" she asked in a soft tone.

"I am running at acceptable levels," honestly replied the borg.

Kathryn chuckled a little but she reached forward to rest her hand on the borg's leg. "I meant, how are you feeling?"

Seven understood the difference between the context and she slowly nodded her head. "I am fine." She then sighed and for the first time today, she relaxed back into the chair. "However I am displeased with myself about today." She linked her hands together and rested them on the table top.

Kathryn let out a sigh and freed her hand only to rest it on top of Seven's hands. "I know and that's part of the reason why I am here."

Seven merely lifted an eyebrow at her girlfriend to prompt her.

Kathryn now was rubbing her thumb across the borg hand that was under hers. "I talked to Lt. Torres after you left and she brought some light onto things."

Seven didn't say anything at first. Instead she took a moment to analysis the data she was receiving from her left hand that was being touched by Kathryn. "What did the lieutenant have to say?" She didn't look at Kathryn as she pulled her left hand free of Kathryn's.

Kathryn didn't reply as she noticed Seven was switching hands so that now her hand was clasped in Seven's human hand. She found that interesting and she made a mental note to ask Seven about it later. Instead, she went back to her caressing and the topic. "She thinks you did what you did because you were trying to please me." She gradually lifted an eyebrow. "Were you?"

Seven was staring at their hands and she quietly responded with, "Perhaps."

Kathryn stopped her caress; she quickly locked their hands. "Seven, was that it?"

Seven studied soft grey eyes that sparkled with shades of blue. "Yes, Kathryn." She straightened up in her chair. "After you mentioned you could also use the shore leave much like the rest of the crew I suppose I became determined to find a suitable M-class planet."

The captain inhaled deeply as she considered her girlfriend's words. She tried to determine the best way to approach this without breaching her duties as a captain and her perspective as Seven's significant other. She could tell this may be the start of the two relationships mixing together. "Seven, I appreciate what you were trying to do."

"But I acted out of protocol," summarized the borg.

"Yes," slowly and carefully agreed Kathryn, "but that doesn't mean I don't appreciate your efforts." She squeezed the larger hand that was laced with hers. "You remember last night we said we will try to keep our personal and professional lives separate?" After her girlfriend nodded, Kathryn continued with her explanation. "At times, I admit it will be hard especially when certain things happen it'll be almost impossible. But we must try to not let our personal lives influence our professional lives."

Seven considered Kathryn's words then she finally said, "As you said, that's almost impossible." She then tilted her head a little. "And may become harder over time."

"I know," uttered the captain, "but we must promise each other to at least try." She peered up into blue eyes that were softening. "That's all I ask, Seven."

Seven was quiet then she finally nodded her head. "I will comply, Kathryn. I will try to separate our personal and professional lives."

"Thank you." Kathryn squeezed the larger hand again. "I will try as well." She then lifted her left hand from her lap and she gently pressed her fingertips under Seven's chin.

Seven followed the signal to lean in when Kathryn had done the same. She leaned into a warm and attentive kiss that left her feeling better about today's events. She knew she'd learned something new and had made extensive notes of it in her mind to make sure she did not repeat it unless it some how deemed necessary. After all, she wasn't Starfleet and protocol truly held no bearing in her life but it meant something to Kathryn so it meant something to Seven.

Kathryn pulled back and mirrored the smile Seven had. "Are you hungry?"

"I believe so," agreed the young borg.

"Let's go see what Neelix is serving," suggested the captain.

Seven nodded then stood up when Kathryn did the same. She noted Kathryn still held her hand as they walked through the cargo bay but when they came to the doors, she was given a gentle squeeze then their hands separated.

Kathryn went through the doors first followed by her girlfriend. Seven walked along side her as they went to the turbo lift to catch a ride up to deck two for the messhall. When they entered the messhall, everybody stole a quick glance at the pair then returned to their meals and conversation.

"Good evening, captain." Neelix gave one of his warmest smiles then his attention shifted to Seven. "I'm surprised to see you here, Seven."

The borg remained cool and stoic. "It was not my choice, Mr. Neelix."

The captain quickly looked up at her girlfriend and gave an offended look.

Seven caught the look and when she lowered her gaze to the captain, she said nothing but the corners of her lips twitched with a grin.

Kathryn quickly realized Seven was trying to tease her and her expression softened. "Unfortunately I spoiled Seven last night with an Indiana dinner," she mentioned to Neelix.

Neelix's eyes widened briefly and he asked, "Seven was spoiled or the food was?"

Janeway quickly caught the joke and gave one of her annoyed looks.

"The captain can make an exquisite meal," informed the borg.

Neelix chuckled at Seven's protest. "I bet."

"Thank you, Seven." Kathryn arched an eyebrow at the chef to refute the borg's claims.

"Well let's hope I can live up to your skills, captain."

The captain kept all her sarcastic remarks in her mind as she politely asked, "What's on the menu?"

Neelix brightly smiled at the interest and replied, "The usual Leola root stew, chadre khab, gagh, gladst, and something you might like, captain... blackened redfish."

Captain Janeway had carefully listened to the food and her stomach almost pitched at hearing the gagh but she was relieved to hear the blackened redfish. "I believe you're correct. I'll have the redfish."

"May I suggest some asparagus with it, captain?" Neelix looked hopefully since it was one of his sides for the meals.

"That would be excellent," agreed the captain.

Neelix smiled then he looked at Seven. "Seven?"

"I believe I will have the same," eventually agreed the borg.

"I'll prepare them for you both."

Janeway smiled and nodded. "Thank you."

Neelix was headed in the back but he called, "I'll bring your coffee too, captain."

"No, no, Neelix," cut off the captain.

The chef hesitated and looked back around the corner to the captain. "No coffee?"

"Not with dinner." Janeway peered up at her girlfriend and asked, "Altair water?"

Seven considered it then nodded.

"Altair water," repeated Janeway but to Neelix this time.

"Of course, captain." Neelix then hurried to prepare the two alike dishes.

The captain and Seven shifted through the messhall until they found a suitable table a little further from the rest of the crew. They both sat down comfortably and were silent for a bit.

"Have you decided whether we'll take shore leave?"

The captain relaxed back into her chair and studied the younger woman. She slowly nodded her head. "I believe we will." She tilted her head to the right. "Do you have an estimate on how long it'll take to get there?"

"It is in the report," replied the borg.

Janeway softly grinned and replied, "I haven't looked through all of it yet."

Seven lifted her metallic eyebrow but she replied, "One week, captain."

The captain slowly nodded and she suddenly smiled past Seven when she saw Neelix coming with their food. "Thank you, Neelix."

"You're welcome, captain." He put the plate down in front of her then handed Seven's hers next.

"Thank you," quietly said the borg. She then helped Neelix with the two glasses of water and she placed one in front of her and the other in front of Janeway.

"Enjoy," offered the chef with a smile then he left.

Seven of Nine curiously inspected the fish with her fork.

"Just try it first," urged Kathryn.

Seven's metallic implant gradually lifted up again but her eyes lowered to the fish. "I

will comply."

Kathryn merely chuckled and took her knife and fork to begin her dinner. "I haven't had redfish in a long time."

The borg stifled her grin but she teasingly replied, "I believe I can see why."

The captain peered up with hooded eyes, a grin played on her lips. "Eat it, smartass."

Seven grinned to herself and decided to cut the white fish meat into smaller pieces. As she did so, she considered Janeway's earlier remark and finally stated, "I do not see how my gluteus maximus could be smart."

Kathryn blinked, lifted her head, and she replayed what Seven just said. She suddenly laughed and lowered her head to cover her face with her hand.

Seven tilted her head a little and watched her girlfriend finally settle down. When she was settled, she further persisted the topic. "How could my gluteus maximus be smart?"

Kathryn just shook her head, a laughing smile on her face.

Seven poked her fork into her redfish tidbit but her eyes were on Janeway. "However having a smart gluteus maximus must be more efficient than an obtuse one."

Kathryn yet again shook her head and her body shook with inward laughter. She leaned back into her chair and just stared at her food as she tried to calm down.

Seven found this curious but she was enjoying her girlfriend's reaction nonetheless. "I believe I misinterpreted your use of 'smartass.'"

"Yes," whispered the still chuckling captain. She took a calming breath and sat up again. She cut a piece of redfish and pierced it with her fork. "It's a slang word on Earth."

"What does it mean?" prompted the borg.

"The dictionary definition?" asked the captain and after Seven nodded she stated it. "It's a term used on somebody who makes an obnoxious display of knowledge." She paused when she saw the curious look on her friend's face. "However it is used in other more affectionate ways." She tried to think of a way to explain it then it came to her. "It's sort of like when somebody gives a remark that is a joke that jabs at somebody or something."

"Ah," confirmed the borg, "I see." She nodded her head a few times then finally ate a piece of the fish. She thoughtfully ate the fish tidbit.

Kathryn carefully watched her then asked, "How is it?"

Seven had swallowed the fish and quickly nodded. "It has a pleasing taste."

The captain chuckled and finally took a piece of her own fish. She was quite content with it but she'd had better down in Louisiana during her visits there.

"Do you like it?" questioned the borg.

"It's fairly decent," whispered the captain so that nobody else could hear her, especially Neelix. "As I've said, nothing beats the real thing though."

Seven of Nine considered the statement since she had no real experience between the difference of replicated food and real food. She could only hope one day she would have a chance to experience fresh foods and not something a machine had reproduced off of molecule structure.

The captain and Seven continued to eat quietly and found the meal to be satisfying. After they returned their dishes to Neelix, they quietly left the slowly emptying messhall. When they stepped outside into the hallway, Janeway captured Seven's bicep with her right hand.

"Do you feel like going to the holodeck with me?"

Seven peered into warm metallic blue eyes and she couldn't help her soft smile. "I will accompany you."

Kathryn squeezed the warm arm then relinquished her hold as she headed for the turbolift. When she got inside with Seven, she ordered the lift to take them to deck six. After the door swooshed open, the pair stepped out and approached holodeck one, which was free. Together they stepped inside of the grid like room.

The captain took a deep breath and ordered, "Run Janeway Da'Vinci program, computer."

Suddenly the room transformed into a dark but warm fifteenth century room with a fire place that was flickering by flames. Off to the left was a doorway into an artistic room that Janeway often visited and tried to persuade Seven to do the same.

"Come on," offered Kathryn. She held out her hand.

Seven slowly took the smaller hand and felt their fingers thread through. Immediately her borg hand began scanning for data about Janeway. She concluded her girlfriend was calm and relaxed by how even her pulse was and her temperature warm but Seven already knew that by just studying the captain's face.

The captain led Seven into the artistic room, her walk slow but powerful.

"Will the maestro be upset we're here so late?"

"Nah," brushed off the captain. "He'll be asleep and won't notice." Janeway entered the room, which was lit by another fireplace and several candles along the walls. She gazed about the room quickly and found what she was looking for.

"Will we try to accomplish 'sketching' again?" inquired the borg. Her voice was

remote because she wasn't too enthusiastic about painting or sketching despite she'd tried to understand the concept.

"Oh no, something better," promised Kathryn. She came to a stop in front of an odd looking wood table that was small and round and two stools in front of it.

Seven frowned and wondered what it could be used for.

Kathryn smiled at the small table but turned to her girlfriend. "We haven't worked with clay yet."

"Clay?" prompted the borg, her ocular implanted lifted high.

"It's another art medium," explained Kathryn, "an area of art called ceramics."

"Ceramics?" repeated the borg as if she was trying to dissect it.

"Yes," persisted Kathryn and she shifted around to direct the table on the floor. "And we'll use this to make a round ceramic item."

"Round?" repeated Seven yet again. She tilted her head and stared at the small table. "Such as a bowl?"

"Yes," quickly answered Kathryn, feeling slightly excited Seven was trying. "A bowl, vase, pots, mugs... anything of that nature."

"I understand," agreed the borg. She then frowned and asked, "How do we accomplish that on this small table?"

"I'm glad you asked." Kathryn grabbed one of the stools and situated it directly in front of the small table. "Sit down, first."

Seven obeyed and situated herself comfortable on the stool. She watched Kathryn put the second stool behind her then she sensed Kathryn directly behind her.

"This table is called a wheel and it's where the clay is thrown," explained the captain.

Seven slowly nodded her head in understanding. She glanced to her right when Kathryn's hand appeared on the top of a large wood bowl that was covered by a lid.

Janeway freed the lid to reveal a bowl of moist and soft clay. "Here's the clay and we'll need..." She didn't finish her statement as she leaned forward but to the right as she pulled another bowl closer. When it came into view, Seven realized it had water in it. "Okay, first we need to get the wheel spinning." She shifted some on her stool and brought her right foot forward to a pedal under the wheel. She started pumping it.

Seven curiously watched how the wheel's top was now spinning and she understood why it was labelled as a 'wheel.' "Intriguing," she muttered.

Kathryn chuckled and grabbed Seven's right hand into her own. "It gets more fun."

Seven's metallic eyebrow slowly lifted as Kathryn guided her hand into the bowl of clay. Her nose slightly crinkled when the cold, wet substance came in contact with her skin. "This is most unpleasant."

The captain merely smirked but she ordered, "Take a large amount of it, Seven."

Seven let out a dramatic sigh knowing it would bother her girlfriend.

"Go on," ordered the captain.

Seven grinned and brought her left hand over as well. She helped Kathryn scoop out a large quantity of the clay. As Seven's left hand dug into the substance, her borg implants did a quick research on the material. "Its consists of hydrated aluminium silicates," she explained in her normal borg tone.

"Thanks for the information, Einstein," gently teased Kathryn as she brought their hands and the clay to the slowly spinning wheel.

Seven slightly grinned at Kathryn's teasing manner. She'd seen it numerous times in the past but not quite as prolific as now. It helped her realize that Kathryn was already growing closer since it meant that Kathryn could readily tease her.

"Okay," broke Kathryn's rich voice through Seven's musing, "first we need to form it." She brought her left hand forward now and leaned more into Seven's back.

Seven smiled as Kathryn's left hand laced with hers and they both held the cool clay with their hands. She watched as Kathryn showed her how to mould the clay into a round object. Janeway guided Seven's hands up and down the body of clay as it began to slowly shape into roundness. She tilted her head a little and tried to explore the wheel throwing technique more so she pressed her left index finger in tighter and noted that it induced a dent into the round object. She then sensed Kathryn's chest shaking with a laugh.

"Don't mess it up yet," gently teased Kathryn.

Seven briefly closed her eyes when Kathryn's warm voice caressed her ear. She subsided the warmth shooting through her body and tried to remain focused on the mission at hand or rather hands.

Kathryn was thoroughly enjoying this with Seven and she wasn't sure which was more exciting: Seven's hands against her own or Seven's body pressed against hers. She hadn't expect this lesson to get quite this desirable however she wasn't disappointed either. "What do you want to make?" she whispered.

Seven was quiet for awhile as she just enjoyed the warm sensations she was feeling. She stared at the clay and their hands as they ran up and down the clay. She mentally went down the list of items they could produce and she finally settled on one. "I would enjoy doing a mug." She paused then turned her head sidelong. "If that is acceptable...?"

Kathryn smiled and leaned her head in to place a gentle kiss to Seven's temple. "Of

course."

Seven faintly smiled then turned her head back.

Janeway slowed the speed of the wheel's rotation and said, "First we need to wet our hands more."

Seven understood and together she and Kathryn put their hands in the water bowl to wet them. She then brought her hands back with Kathryn's and captured the wet clay again. She now noticed their hands moved along the clay much more smoothly than when they were dry. "I believe this clay will be forever lodged in my borg hand."

Kathryn softly laughed and smiled at the comment. "A sonic shower should get it out," she offered.

"I concur," whispered the borg. She said nothing else as her girlfriend laced their hands together and brought it up to the top of the clay.

"You need to use your thumbs and push down into the top." The captain demonstrated as she pushed her thumbs down some.

The clay instantly started opening up to the depth that Kathryn's thumbs reached. It then started widening when Seven began pressing and pushing her thumbs through. The clay soon had a deep and fairly large opening in it but it wasn't deep enough yet.

Seven realized her hands were starting to dry out and that it was a little harder to mould the clay. So she reached over to the water bowl to soak them again. She quickly smiled when Kathryn had done the same and together they brought their hands back to the clay. Seven continued to mould the clay into a round mug with Kathryn's help.

Kathryn fell into a quick rhythm as they worked the clay together. She was enjoying this and even more so because Seven was as well. She couldn't have hoped for this art lesson to turn out any better. She breathed deeply and she took in the smell of Seven; a sharp metallic almost spicy sent that thrilled her. She leaned in even more and pressed her breasts against Seven's back.

The borg picked up on the suitable changes in her girlfriend's demeanour and wasn't sure how to respond. The only thing that came to mind was to follow her own instincts and her body urged her to lean back into Kathryn. Her urge was almost a burning need and it excited Seven so she slowly leaned back more. She even slouched a little so that it would allow Janeway better access.

Kathryn took the invite and brought her head forward. Her lips brushed against Seven's warm neck.

Seven inhaled sharply and her eyes threatened to close. She tried to remain in control but when Kathryn's lips pressed more against her burning skin, she lost the battle. Her eyes shut and she tilted her head to the left.

Kathryn grinned as her lips travelled up closer to Seven's ear. She brushed her lips to

the Seven's ear and her tongue glided along the outside rim of Seven's ear.

Seven moaned and she lost complete focus on the clay on the wheel. She was too wrapped up in the numerous sensations that travelled through her body that Kathryn induced upon her.

Kathryn pulled back from Seven's ear and her lips started travelling back down Seven's neck. She came about midway down Seven's neck and she paused as she stole a quick glance at the wheel with the clay. She chuckled when she saw the producing mug was now slanted to the left side. She tilted her head forward again and gently nipped Seven's neck. She then placed a tender kiss to the same spot and lifted her head some but brought her lips against Seven's ear again.

"Kathryn," whispered Seven, her voice deep and husky.

"Our mug is not turning out so well," whispered Kathryn in a very deep rich tone.

Seven forced her eyes to open and she took in the mug that was now bending to the left. "I am sorry." She started to straighten up.

"It's okay," reassured Kathryn. She placed a kiss to Seven's temple in reassurance. "And easy to fix."

Seven remained relaxed and slouched in Kathryn's arms as she helped fix the mug. She felt relieved when the mug was now straight again and never showed being bent to one side.

Kathryn smiled at how perfectly and almost logically the mug was made. The mug was entirely even and had no real character to it much like Seven had been when she first came on board *Voyager*.

The borg studied the clay but she didn't feel quite satisfied with it despite its dimensions were perfectly accurate. She wanted it to have something else, something was missing to it. "Kathryn?" she quietly asked.

"Yes?" whispered the older woman.

"It is missing something," stated Seven in an odd almost sad tone.

"What do you mean?" urged Kathryn, although she suspected what Seven meant.

Seven stared at the mug as it spun around and around on the wheel. "I am not sure. I cannot seem to find the correct terminology." A frown developed on her face. "It is very plain and I do not enjoy it being that plain."

"Oh," whispered Kathryn, "you want to add character."

The borg slightly brightened at the word. "Yes, I believe you're correct."

"Do you know what you want to add?" prompted the captain. "Maybe experiment with the clay."

Seven tilted her head some and thought about it. She decided maybe she was thinking too much about it and should just experiment as Kathryn suggested. She freed her hands from the clay and dipped them into the water.

Kathryn quickly did the same and brought them back to the clay with Seven's hands.

Seven laced her hands through Kathryn's and this time she guided Kathryn's hands.

Kathryn smiled and carefully lowered her chin down onto Seven's shoulder. She just let her girlfriend work the clay to her heart's content.

Seven came to the middle of the mug and pressed their hands in closer.

The clay instantly dipped inwards but only so much.

Seven then glided their hands upwards with a certain amount of pressure that eased as they got closer to the top. When they reached the top, she brought their hands back to the base and gently glided their hands across the clay. Seven took a moment to appreciate how the mug now flared out starting from the centre to the very top. She decided it now had more character but she wanted to still add one more thing.

Kathryn remained quiet as she appreciated the new shape of the mug. She had to admit, she preferred the wider mouth and how it slipped inward to the middle then stayed straight down to the base.

Seven tilted her head a little and freed her right hand from Kathryn's. She pointed her right index finger out and pushed her nail gently into the clay to create a small indent in the clay.

Kathryn liked the idea so she lifted her right hand to the middle and pressed in her fingernail into the clay carefully. She smiled as the ring was developed around the mug.

Seven smiled at Kathryn's agreement to the idea. She recaptured Kathryn's hand and brought their hands up to the top of the mug. "Together," she whispered.

Kathryn's lips pulled with a grin as her index finger outstretched underneath Seven's. Together their fingernails pushed in and created two rings parallel together in the clay.

Seven then quickly pulled their hands away so they wouldn't erase anything they'd done.

Kathryn stopped pushing the pedal and the wheel finally came to a stop.

Seven could tell Kathryn was waiting for some kind of response. "I believe I am satisfied."

"It looks beautiful," complimented the captain.

The borg nodded her head and a smile grew on her face at the mug.

"Come on," urged Kathryn. She reluctantly stood up and came over to the wheel. She grasped both sides of the wheel and lifted up the top of the wheel like it was a dish.

Seven was intrigued what Kathryn had in mind now. So she stood as well and followed her girlfriend to the table in the certain of the room.

Janeway slid the disc onto the table and carefully inspected it at the base. "We need to loosen the base a little so it doesn't stick when it dries."

The borg now understood and she noted the putty knife resting on the table. "Will this be sufficient?" she offered.

The captain smiled and took the offered tool. She carefully aligned the knife horizontally between the base of the mug and the disc. She pushed the knife forward and it went directly between the clay mug and the wet disc to separate them. "Perfect," she whispered then held both ends of the putty knife.

"Grab that piece of paper, Seven."

The young woman had spotted it earlier and picked it up.

"I'm going to lift this and you need to put the paper underneath. Okay?"

Seven merely nodded and when Janeway had the mug hovering above the disk, she quickly slid the wax paper underneath.

The captain then lowered the mug back down and carefully extracted the putty knife. "Now it needs to dry a little before we can paint it." She picked up the disc again and brought it over to the fireplace that had a small ledge. She carefully lowered the disc down near it and scooted the mug across the disc, closer to the fire. "We'll give it twenty minutes."

Seven nodded her head and followed her girlfriend to another water bowl on the table but it was filled with clean water. She and Janeway quickly washed their hands then Janeway led her back into the main living room where they'd first entered.

Kathryn still held onto Seven's hand as they took a seat on the couch in front of the fireplace.

Seven could sense a little of the clay in her left hand but she decide to leave it until she could clean it later. She knew it was no use commenting on it when she could do nothing about it.

The captain sat back into the sofa and noted Seven remained rather ridged. She reached forward and rested her hand on Seven's thigh. She gave a gentle squeeze.

The borg lifted her metallic eyebrow in question.

Janeway softly laughed and whispered, "Relax, Seven."

"I will comply," agreed the borg. She leaned back and let her shoulders loosen. She enjoyed the sensation of Kathryn's fingers idly drawing circles against her leg; she could feel the warmth even through her biosuit. She looked down and watched Kathryn's hand. She considered what it would be like to return the sentiment back to the captain and it was as if Kathryn had heard her thoughts.

"You can touch me, Seven," carefully offered the captain.

"I..." Seven now frowned at her lack of inability to have understood that sooner. "I am sorry. I was not sure."

Kathryn had a gentle smile because she adored the borg's inexperience. It was one of the rare moments she'd ever seen the borg show any lack of skills because she was so knowledgeable. It created a tingle in Kathryn's stomach to know that it would be her that shared in Seven's new experiences in a romantic relationship. She then pushed her thoughts away and returned to the conversation at hand. "Don't apologize, Seven... you have a lot to learn." She paused then added, "Even I do."

Seven's eyes immediately brightened at such a statement she'd never considered. "However you have been in relationships before."

"Yesss," slowly agreed the captain. "But you have to understand that each relationship is different."

The young woman's face shifted into curiosity. "Why is that, Kathryn?"

"Well think about it like this," started Janeway, "when one person dates another they learn about each other's characteristics... their needs, desires, dislikes and likes." She tilted her head a little.

Seven slowly nodded her understanding, it made perfect sense.

"However," interject the older woman, "when they separate and date new people, they must relearn what this new person's characteristics are like."

Seven now clearly understood what the captain was explaining. "That can also change the relationship style too," she mentioned.

"Yes, very much." Kathryn smiled at her girlfriend's understanding but her smile disappeared. "I cannot treat you the way I treated... Mark Johnson. You're not the same people and the relationship I had him would not suit what we have."

"I believe I understand," agreed the borg. "It is like having a particular program suitable for each relationship."

Kathryn chuckled at the attempted analogy that Seven's logical mind worked out. "No quite but almost." She paused and then decided to add, "You must keep in mind that you will always learn new things about your partner as well as the relationship. And also keep in mind that people do change and so will the relationship... even in friendships."

"That is true," agreed Seven, "I believe B'Elanna is beginning to enjoy my presence more." Her eyes lowered from the fire and captured Janeway's. "I expected her to be much more furious about the rerouting of the power. She was angry but not as much as I expect her to be."

The captain slowly nodded her head. "It will not surprise me if you and B'Elanna become closer overtime."

Seven's ocular implant quickly lifted at the statement.

Kathryn laughed at the look and grinned. "You will see," she promised.

"Perhaps," quietly relented the borg. She then studied her girlfriend and felt a desire to kiss her. Seven urged herself to follow the urge so she leaned forward and captured Kathryn's lips.

Kathryn softly moaned when Seven entered her mouth. She enjoyed the careful exploration that Seven did and she moved her hands to grasp the borg's sides. When they separated from the kiss, she whispered, "Lay down."

Seven was intrigued by the request but she sat back into the sofa and onto her back. She felt excitement shock through her body when Kathryn lowered herself down onto Seven's body.

Kathryn smiled at her girlfriend then lowered her head to kiss Seven.

The borg closed her eyes and let Janeway control the long, sensual kiss. She did slid her arms around Kathryn's waist and she sensed Kathryn shifting her body some to become more comfortable.

Kathryn pulled back from the kiss and brought her head further down to Seven's neck. She softly kissed Seven's neck and trailed her lips down to the dip in the lower part of Seven's neck.

Seven released a soft but deep moan. She instinctively arched her neck and her eyes closed. She now felt a dull ache start between her legs and she noted her desire only fuelled it into a faint hunger.

Kathryn brought her lips back up and she kissed Seven's jawline. She lifted her head some and offered a smile when Seven's metallic blue eyes opened to her.

Seven couldn't help but return the smile. She then felt a little uneasy as Kathryn seemed to stare at her as if she were inspecting her.

Kathryn chuckled at Seven's uneasiness. She dipped her head and kissed Seven's nose in a teasing manner. "It's okay," she whispered, "I'm just admiring you."

"You are more aesthetically pleasing," assured the borg.

Kathryn softly laughed and replied, "But I've been looking at my face all my life."

"I hope I have just as long," whispered Seven in a longing voice.

Kathryn felt her body warm at the need her girlfriend expressed. "I'm sure you will," she expressed in a warm voice. She then lifted her right hand and brought her fingertips close to Seven's ocular implant. She hesitated because she wasn't sure how comfortable Seven felt about her touching it.

"It's okay," reassured the young woman.

"Thank you," uttered Kathryn. She carefully touched the cool metal and her smile returned when her fingers ran down and around the implant.

Seven's eyes closed as her implant warmed from Kathryn's touch. Her implant was already collecting data about Janeway but it wasn't as detailed as her borg hand could be. She then noticed Kathryn's gaze shifted to the starburst on the back of her jaw so Seven turned her head to the left side.

Kathryn warmed at Seven's offer and she warily touched the starburst and traced each arm of the star. She smiled at the implant and for whatever reason it created a burning sensation in her stomach. She knew they were permanent reminders of Seven's borg half and it seemed to thrill Janeway.

Seven turned her head back and felt relieved to see the smile yet she was still unsure. "Do they trouble you at all, Kathryn?"

The captain was staring at the eyebrow implant again but her eyes locked with Seven's. "No," she sincerely whispered, "I find them interesting." Her eyes flickered to the ocular implant then back to Seven's eyes. "They only enhance your beauty."

Seven genuinely smiled at Kathryn's honest opinion.

Kathryn had never seen a more amazing and beautiful smile in her life. She mentally captured the image of Seven smiling and it was locked in her heart. "You should smile more, Seven."

"I will," whispered Seven, "but only for you."

The captain appreciated the promise but was remotely curious. "Why only for me?"

"Because I know how much it pleases you," quietly stated the borg.

"It does," agreed Janeway and she dipped head down for a long kiss. After awhile, she forced herself to end the kiss and she whispered, "We should check the mug."

Seven nodded and relinquished her hold on Janeway.

The captain kissed Seven's ocular implant then rolled off her to land on her feet on the floor. She straightened up to her full height but she soon realized how much shorter she was when Seven stood up.

The tall borg peered down into soft mercury blue eyes. And she knew despite her

greater height that she did not glow with quite the amount of power and strength that Janeway always did.

"Come on," whispered Kathryn. She patted Seven's stomach then headed for the art room.

Seven quickly followed, her long strides catching up to Janeway. She became a little excited when she saw that the mug was in fact now dried.

Kathryn had picked up the disk and brought it back to the centre table. She gingerly picked up the mug from the disc and carefully inspected it. She then handed it to Seven.

The borg's hands carefully wrapped around the now dried clay mug. She also inspected it and decided it was acceptable.

Kathryn chuckled and put it back on the disc. "Now we need to paint it."

Seven thoroughly agreed that it lacked colour. She saw Kathryn was gathering some paints and several brushes from across the room. Seven decided they would need more of the waxy like paper so she unrolled some and stretched it out over the table to the right of the disc.

Kathryn smiled at the gesture and she peered up at Seven. "Any idea on colours?" She lowered the jars onto the right side of the wax paper that had all the colours. She then placed the brushes to the left side.

"Yes, I believe I have an idea." Seven switched places with Kathryn and she opened the lids of the seal jars. She picked up the jar when she found the colour she was looking for then carefully poured some onto the wax paper at the left end.

Janeway smiled at the rich red colour Seven had selected. Next she noted her girlfriend poured out white and black into separate blobs.

Seven then poured a little black on top of the white blob. She also poured a small amount of black onto the red blob.

The captain remained quiet as she curiously watched Seven take a brush and mix the red, black blob until it turned into a deeper maroon shade.

The borg then mixed the black and white blob that shifted into a grey shade. She was satisfied and looked at the mug curiously. "You will assist me?"

Kathryn chuckled and nodded her head. "Of course."

Seven smiled and picked up a brush that had a very fine tip. "Use the dark red and paint the ring you made in the middle."

Janeway received the brush from Seven and she dipped the tip into the maroon red.

Seven took another fine brush and dipped it into the rich grey shade.

Together the couple painted in the rings that they'd made in the mug. Janeway's rings were the deep rich crimson red while Seven's were a greyer metallic colour.

"What's next?" quietly asked the captain. She secretly enjoyed how Seven was taking charge of their ceramic piece.

Seven answered by taking the brush from the captain and dipping a thicker bristled brush into the black blob. She handed the brush to the captain. "Now the body." She took another brush and also swirled it in the black paint.

Again the pair carefully worked to paint the rest of mug in a midnight black. When it came to the inside, Janeway was able to stretch her smaller hand inside and get the bottom portion and inside without a problem. Then she and Seven painted the rest of the inside mug black and they smiled when it was complete.

"What do we do next now that it's painted?"

Kathryn smiled at her girlfriend's persistence in finishing the piece successfully. "Don't you think we should paint the bottom?"

The borg's mouth open but closed as she recalled that dilemma. "You are correct."

Janeway chuckled but went a little serious as she gently touched the rim of the mug. She smiled at the paint being dry already so she lifted the mug and turned it upside down. She and Seven then painted the bottom black as well. "We should sign the bottom," she suggested.

Seven gave a confused look to her girlfriend.

Kathryn grinned and explained, "It's a piece of artwork... every artist signs their work."

"I concur," now agreed the borg. She then quickly plucked Janeway's brush from her hand and handed her back the crimson tipped brush. Seven though took the grey tipped brush.

Together the couple signed their names on the bottom and it was Seven who scribed the word 'and' between 'Kathryn' and 'Seven' on the bottom. Kathryn smiled and decided to add something more logical that Seven would enjoy. She painted on the official stardate.

"That was a excellent idea," agreed the borg.

"I thought so," teased Janeway.

Seven merely smiled and took the captain's brush. "What's the next step, Kathryn?"

The captain smiled at the use of her first name. She always enjoyed how Seven expressed her name. "Now we need to put a glaze on it to protect it. After that we fire it and it'll be finished."

Seven merely nodded and she helped Janeway clean up the mess they had made. Seven also put away the jars of paint while the captain grabbed the jar of glaze for the mug. When they both returned to the mug, they inspected it to see that the paint was dried. So now they were able to dip clean brushes into the glaze jar and take a few minutes to evenly spread the glaze over the mug but they weren't able to glaze the inside of the mug. Janeway reassured they would be able to after they fired it once.

The captain lifted the disc and carried it to the small door that was apart of the kelm in the art room. After Seven opened the small door, she was able to slide the disc in and Seven reclosed the door. "Computer, fire the kelm at a low temperature."

"Acknowledged," replied the feminine computer voice. After a few seconds it chirped, *"Complete."*

"Thank you," replied the captain and she opened the door.

Seven instantly lifted her eyebrow at hearing the captain's gratitude to the computer system.

The older woman caught the look from the corner of her eye as she pulled the disc out. "Don't ask," she teased. She was relieved to find the disc was actually cool and she pulled it out all the way.

Seven slightly grinned but it shifted into a smile at seeing the glossy mug. "We must glaze the inside."

"Yes," agreed Kathryn. She carried it back to the table and they turned it over so they could glaze the inside. Once it was completed, Kathryn carried the disc to the kelm once again and ordered the computer to fire it. Once the mug was fired it was pulled out by Kathryn and she held the disc towards Seven.

The borg took the offer and gently picked the finished piece off the disc.

Janeway smiled but said nothing as she returned the disc to the wheel. She came back over and saw how Seven was carefully scrutinizing it for any flaws. "How is it?"

Seven lifted her head from the mug in her hands. She held out the mug to Kathryn and replied, "Perfect."

Kathryn chuckled and took the mug. She carefully turned it over in her hands and found she was quite content with the piece. It'd turned out far better than she had expected it and actually the entire lesson with Seven had been amazingly wonderful. "I concur," she whispered. She lifted her head and stated, "You did an excellent job."

"I have a remarkable teacher," factually stated the borg.

The captain warmly smiled and lifted up onto her tiptoes.

Seven dipped her head down and met Kathryn halfway. She returned the tender kiss and thoroughly enjoyed it and how it warmed her.

Kathryn pulled back from the kiss and smiled at the younger woman. "Are you ready to go?"

"I believe so," agreed the borg. "It is late."

The captain nodded her head and started for the living room where the door for the holodeck would soon appear.

Seven noticed that Kathryn failed to leave the mug in the art room since it essential was apart of the Di'Vinci program now. She wondered what her girlfriend had in mind.

"Computer," ordered Janeway, her eyes lowered to the mug in her hands, "use my rations to produce this mug."

There was a pause then the computer chirped. "*Operation complete.*"

Kathryn happily smiled then held out the mug to Seven.

Seven was shocked but she took the offered mug.

"Computer, end Di'Vinci program."

The hologram abruptly ended and the grid like room appeared with the overhead lights on.

Seven still stared at her hands where the mug rested, real as life itself. She lifted her eyes to Janeway and she said the only thing that came to mind. "Thank you," she whispered.

Kathryn felt her knees weaken at the very emotional expression on Seven's face. She'd never seen anything like it and it touched her heart much like her early actions to save the mug touched Seven. "You're quite welcome, Seven."

Seven's eyes lowered to the mug in her hands and she quickly realize just how much this mug meant to her. It already held so much meaning within a couple of hours and she knew it would forever hold memories for her. She then looked at Kathryn again and she felt something deep in her ache; it was a new sensation and it burned within her. She couldn't quite understand it but she knew that Kathryn was the only one that created that powerful feeling deep in her.

"Come on," whispered the captain. She touched Seven's elbow in signal.

The young woman followed the captain out of the holodeck and into the turbolift. She soon recognized the deck they stopped on as the cargo bays' deck. She followed Janeway out of the turbolift and down the corridor to Cargo Bay 2 where they went inside to the semi-green lit room.

Seven ordered the lights a little higher as she neared her alcove. She stopped in front of her alcove and faced the captain. "I enjoyed tonight, Kathryn."

"I did too," happily agreed the older woman. She stepped closer to Seven and put her hands on Seven's waist. She noted how Seven still studied the mug as if expecting it to disappear from her hands. "Thank you for coming with me."

Seven lifted her gaze and met Janeway's. "I was happy to accompany you."

"I know," whispered the older woman.

Seven enjoyed Kathryn's relaxed expression and knew it was a rare condition to see the captain in. She made a mental note to see that she endeavoured to make sure the captain always enjoyed herself. She lost her eye contact with Kathryn briefly as she studied the mug yet again but then she returned her attention to her girlfriend.

"Kathryn?"

Kathryn slightly tilted her head to the right and had a curious expression.

"I would like for you to keep this." Seven now held up the mug in offer.

Now it was Kathryn's turn to be shock, her mouth slightly opened and her mind completely blank about what to say.

Seven had never seen the captain that surprised and she was secretly thrilled by look on Kathryn's face. She also knew Kathryn wasn't sure what to say so she continued to talk. "I know you will use it and it would be more efficient if it were used."

Kathryn glanced at the mug then back up at Seven. "Seven, I..."

Seven started to smile at how astonished her girlfriend truly was now.

The captain finally recovered and finished her earlier statement. "Seven, I can't... you made this, it's yours."

"We made it," correct the borg. She held out the mug more and a grin curved her lips. "Resistance is futile." She then lowered her head as her grin formed into a soft smile. "And it would please me greatly if you kept it and used it."

"I-I..." Janeway wasn't sure what to say as she finally gave in and wrapped her hands around the mug. Her hands touched Seven's and she watched as Seven released the mug into her smaller hands. She lifted her head and whispered, "Thank you, Seven." She inhaled deeply and she actually felt her eyes sting. She'd never felt this emotional in a long time. "This means a lot to me," she quietly added, "and I will take great care of it."

"I know," softly admitted the borg. She then bent her head down for a kiss.

Kathryn tightly held onto the mug as she sealed her lips with Seven's in a long and entirely emotional kiss. She'd never felt so good in a long time and she knew it was only because of the younger woman before her. She'd always known how Seven stirred something in her but she never knew how much until tonight.

Seven pulled back from the kiss but kept her head low as she whispered, "I should regenerate as should you."

"I think I might sleep," teased the captain.

"Acceptable," state the borg in her usual monotone but her twinkling blue eyes gave her away.

Kathryn chuckled and felt her body cool when Seven stepped away from her. She almost felt her body ache in need as Seven climbed up to the top of the dais. As Seven situated in the alcove, she went to the work station and punched in the commands for Seven's cycle to begin in one minute. She then hurried up the dais and didn't waste a second to pulled Seven's head down with her freehand.

Seven savoured the slow kiss as the seconds counted down to her regeneration cycle starting up. As she pulled back from the kiss, she whispered, "Sleep well, Kathryn."

"I will," promised the captain and she sensed Seven's hands losing its grip from her side. She watched as Seven's eyes closed and she went into hibernate mode. Kathryn leaned in and just touched her lips against Seven's full lips in a goodnight kiss. But as she pulled back, she was sure she'd heard a small moan of protest from Seven but she wasn't quite sure. Kathryn's heart ached this time as she cupped the other woman's cheek. Before she stepped away, she stretched up to kiss Seven's forehead and she whispered, "I think I'm in love you with you, Seven of Nine." She then turned and stepped down the dais to return to her quarters. She stopped near the cargo bay door, glanced at the mug in her hand, and then she looked back at Seven. She furrowed her eyebrows when she realized there was a smile on Seven's peaceful face, something she'd never seen in all the times Seven had been regenerating.

Kathryn lost her confused expression and just appreciated the view; forever logged in her mind. She then finally left the cargo bay and headed to the turbolift for the upper deck. And as she rode the turbolift, she studied the mug in her hand and reread the bottom with their signed names and the stardate. When she turned it back on its side, she tried to consider why Seven had selected the colour coating that she had. Then it suddenly occurred to her why.

Her fingers touched the bottom ring, which Seven had originally made and painted. "Seven," she whispered and her finger travelled to the middle ring. "Myself." Then her finger came up to the top two rings they'd made together and painted together. "Us."

Kathryn gave a happy chuckle and her face was lit up by a smile. "God she is more clever than I thought." Her mind then reprocessed the evening and another thought occurred to her. She now knew Seven had intended from the start to give her the mug whether it was now or later because Seven had selected a mug to make together. Seven knew a mug was something Kathryn could use for her coffee and it had been Seven's every intention to make something that would be practical for Kathryn.

Kathryn now stepped out of the turbolift and started for her quarters. She couldn't believe that Seven had been this thoughtful and planned it so well. She had to make sure to thoroughly thank her girlfriend again the next time she had a chance.

When the captain went into her quarters, she walked up to her work desk and gently placed the mug there for tomorrow. She planned to use it as she promised to Seven no matter what people may ask or say about it. She was already mentally coming up with answers to possible questions she may receive tomorrow. She then decided it was definitely time for bed and she got changed in the ensuite after replicating her work clothes for the morning.

Once again, Kathryn found herself alone in bed but now quite content to take on a night of fitful sleep. Tomorrow she would speak with her commanding officers and plan on a route to Seven's suggested M-Class planet. She had a feeling tomorrow would be a good day but only better when she'd see Seven. Kathryn had to admit that seeking out the M-Class planet today had brought some hopes of relaxation in the near future.

The End