

## Paradox

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Rating: R / P16

Summary: Why sounded Janeway's 'After dessert.' so meaningful when she said it to Chakotay in Timeless?

Disclaimer: All Paramount.

A/N: This one has an open ending and leaves it to the reader where it might go afterwards. I put that here as a warning, just in case.

"You can give them the news yourself. After dessert."

The way she said those last two words already gave him a strange feeling in his stomach. The way she looked at him while saying it even more. But when she got up and offered her hand to him over the table, he felt paralyzed. Was she really offering what he thought she was? Was she really finally willing, ready, to take this step he had hoped for all those years?

His breathing was shaky, ragged, when he slowly lifted his hand and took hers. Then he stood up, his legs as shaky as his breath, and followed her lead as she guided him around the table until he came to stand before her.

"Our last night in the Delta Quadrant," Kathryn repeated, her voice a whisper.

Chakotay's mind were still processing the words when her lips met his.

It was strange. He had so often fantasized about this - how would it be, what would they do? Would they devour and ravish each other, living out a too-long suppressed longing, or would they take their time, make slow, sensual love, explore every feeling they had been harboring for more than four years? In his head, he had played through each scenario countless times. And still, he was unprepared.

Her lips, so soft and warm, gently, if not shyly, moved against his; and still there was something incredibly erotic to her touch. Her tongue tasted him and let him taste her, touching and playing, and he forgot to breathe when her small hands pressed against the back of his head, pulling him even closer, while her delicate form molded into his large, muscular frame. They were made for each other.

She gasped and moaned into his mouth at his ministrations, at how his hands began to wander over her body, instinctively knowing exactly where to touch, massage, rub, even twitch. Their lips seemed unable to part, even when she walked him to her bedroom; their first kiss still lasting when they surrendered to their passion.

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They were both breathing heavily, heartbeats almost audible in a room filled only with the sounds that remained after a passionate encounter like they just shared one. Kathryn lay sprawled over Chakotay, their sweaty bodies clinging to each other as they tried to climb down from a high that suddenly appeared bottomless.

"It's after dessert, Chakotay," Janeway finally managed to find her voice, raw from her repeated climatic screaming. She felt weak and it took her much effort to detach herself from him, push up on her arms and let herself fall next to him on the bed. "You need to tell the crew."

Chakotay gave her a long, thoughtful look. She wasn't up for a talk, a discussion, he could see that. But that didn't mean that they wouldn't need to talk. After all, what they had just done was at least for him a commitment. If she thought she would get away so easily, she was wrong.

"Am I supposed to return afterwards? Am I expected - or allowed - to?"

"After we've brought the crew home." It was a promise. And he would be damned if he wouldn't hold her to that.

"And if we don't bring them home?" She closed her eyes he saw a flash of pain in her features.

"Then everything will be as it was before. This was our last night in the Delta Quadrant, Chakotay. There can only be *one* last night." Even though he didn't feel it, he still nodded his understanding. She was taking the easy way out indeed. But when he looked into the depths of her eyes, for just a moment granting him a glimpse into her soul, he knew that this was the best and most she could give him now, and that she needed him to accept it.

This was her personal back door, her way to trick her own mind and principles. Telling herself that they were practically home already, that he would be her first officer for just another day... and if they didn't make it, it was how she would argue with her mind, how her guilty conscience would excuse her behavior. And how she could still have this one special memory, even if it would remain a sole one.

Slowly he got up and searched for his clothes. She stayed where she was, lying gloriously and unashamedly naked on her bed, watching him. She didn't move when he was fully dressed again and turned to leave, didn't hold him back or offered him a goodbye.

It would never be enough.

Thinking the better of it, he turned and confidently strode back to the bed. She eyed him with open curiosity; when he leaned down to claim her lips in another searing kiss she immediately responded to him. Only then he walked out of her quarters.

And prayed to every God he knew that they would make it.

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