

Cold Feet

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Rating: R / P16

Summary: Because, after all, 'cold feet' weren't as bad as their reputation.

Disclaimer: It's all Paramount, UPN and... I don't know. At least it's not Pocket Books', definitely a consolation if you ask me.

A/N: I've always been one to have my life inspire my storylines... ;)

Captain Kathryn Janeway, tough commanding officer of the Starship Voyager, had faced many threats, difficulties, challenges and obstacles in her life; especially since she'd taken command of Voyager.

She was head of a crew that was ten thousands of light years away from Earth, alone, lost in space. A crew formed of Starfleet and former Maquis members who, first and foremost, had to learn to work and grow together before efficient traveling was possible - in a region of the universe no known individual from their home quadrant had ever gone to before, much less come back.

In now more than five years, no one had been able to defeat or even intimidate her - not the Kazon, not the Hirogen, not Species 8472, not the Devore - not even the Borg. Captain Janeway had a mission to bring her crew home, and nothing and no one would ever be able to stop her every effort to do so. Short of her death, perhaps.

But what she was facing now was worse than anything she had ever encountered.

Her feet were cold.

For three hours now she lay awake in her bed, for once trying to get some well-deserved - and well-needed - sleep, but because of these ice *rocks* that obviously were enclosing her feet she couldn't find any rest.

She had tried additional blankets, pillows surrounding her feet, thick woolen socks, the latter which had cost her three days worth replicator rations. A hot bath plus an extra foot bath had only helped for a very short time before these annoying walking equipments had turned into ice again. She had tried to raise the room temperature, but soon realized that while her feet were completely unimpressed by that effort as well, the rest of her body and especially her head didn't like it at all - for it was too hot to sleep.

The cold was slowly creeping up her legs, was already halfway up to her knees, and she couldn't seem to find anything that would help. She had thought about consulting the Doctor, but hadn't been able to bring herself to leave her quarters. Now, however, she was seriously considering it. Maybe this was the work of some alien bug she had caught *wherever*. She couldn't imagine it to be the reason since they hadn't left the ship or encountered any other species in some weeks, but then, she had seen far weirder things happen since their arrival in the Delta Quadrant.

She barely felt her feet - or her shoes and the floor, for that matter - when she got up, and the very few nerve endings still working only gave news of pain to her cerebral cortex.

She must have given a funny picture when she carefully tried to walk, step by awfully slow step. As she was on her way to her quarter's exit, slipping into her satin robe and attaching her communicator at the usual spot, she thought about the usefulness of a site-to-site-transport, but then decided against it, assuming that maybe walking a bit would make her blood circulate and bring some warmth back into her legs and feet. As long as there wasn't an *ice virus* in her lower limbs.

So slow that it would have put a turtle on a lazy afternoon walk to shame, she made her way out of her quarters and headed for the turbolift. Just as she was about to reach it, the doors slipped open and one Commander Chakotay in too-tight sportswear came into sight.

She felt warmer already, thank you very much.

"Captain!" he greeted her, surprise apparent, as well as a bit of concern, "Shouldn't you be asleep?"

"I should," she agreed, her eyes following him when he left the lift, "my feet, however, don't seem to agree." She almost laughed at her second-in-command's look of confusion. His mouth opened and closed again without a single word leaving it, and on his forehead formed a deep frown.

"Captain?" he then managed.

"Never mind, Commander. What about you, why aren't you asleep?" She looked tired and exhausted, maybe more than he felt right now after spending about two hours with his favorite sports program on the holodeck. So he simply ignored her question, the concern for his friend's well-being more important to him at that moment.

"Kathryn, are you alright?" he asked, his voice gentle, and laid a hand onto her shoulder, making her shiver because of the warmth it caressed her skin with through the thin material of her robe. Maybe she should borrow Chakotay's hands for her feet... *Oh, shut up.*

She saw no use in keeping the truth from him; if this was some kind of disease, he might very well be informed now. After all, it wasn't anything embarrassing that was plaguing her. "My feet are cold."

Now it was the commander's turn to do his best to not laugh. "Your... your feet are...?"

"Yes, Chakotay, I have cold feet, and now I'm going to consult the Doctor. So if you'll excuse-"

"Wait, wait," he interrupted her. "You go and visit the Doctor just because you have cold feet?"

"It may very well be some kind of alien virus, made to paralyze an enemy by 'freezing' its body," she reasoned, shooting him a dirty look when he couldn't suppress a grin anymore. "I won't take the risk of infecting the crew, so stop grinning, Commander."

"I'm sorry, Kathryn, but this sounds..." He stopped himself and coughed to buy himself some time and clear his mind. "I have some experience with cold feet. They often follow lack of sleep and food, and lots of stress. I guess that sounds familiar, doesn't it?" She only gave him a half-sigh, half-grumble kind of sound as an answer, at which

he smiled slightly. "So, may I try something first? Before the Doctor comes to the same conclusion and locks you away in your quarters for three days with the order to rest?"

She eyed him critically for a moment, considering her options. Chakotay was right, this probably was simply a result of her not very healthy way of living, and the Doctor would have another reason to reprimand her, if not finally playing his "higher rank than the captain" card as chief medical officer.

On the other hand, if this really was some alien virus, she didn't know how contagious it was and whether it would infect Chakotay as well. But then, if she was honest to herself, she didn't really believe that it was anything else than some unfortunately timed revenge of her body. So her decision was made.

"Be my guest."

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Janeway didn't know what she expected when she let Chakotay and herself into her quarters and sat down on the couch like he asked her to do. But it certainly didn't include the commander taking seat in one of the armchairs and pulling her bare feet into his lap.

At first, she was shocked when he started massaging them. For three reasons. One, a small voice in the back of her mind *screamed* at her that this was highly inappropriate. Added to that, her memory presented her with very vivid pictures of a certain 'massage session' on New Earth; though she wasn't sure whether this should have made her stop Chakotay or encourage him. And three, because it felt *so damn good*.

His hands were hot, and compared to her icy feet, it felt as if he would burn her skin off her bones. And still, it wasn't unpleasant. The temperature contrast caused some pain in her feet, but other than that, she was more comfortable than she had been in the past few sleepless hours. Or in the past years, for that matter. Besides, his calming presence and his relaxed features covered partly in shadows in the semi-darkness of her quarters made every bit of stress flow from her body. She could have fallen asleep right there and then, and only the fact that she was the captain, the one who never let her guard down, kept her from just letting her head roll back and close her eyes.

Instead she watched him carefully, curiously, as he studied the foot his hands were just tending to. She already felt a change, warmth building up from the inside as his thumbs pressed certain points at the back and sole of her foot. Janeway first wondered what he was doing, assuming that he was trying to get the blood to circulate better and faster than it did now, but then she remembered that she had once read about Chinese healing methods and so-called 'acupuncture' that relied on stimulating certain energy points on a human's body by piercing it with a fine needle. Obviously that method worked by only pressing and messaging the points as well.

Chakotay changed between her feet every other minute, and slowly but surely, they were warming up. Relishing that comfortable quiet of the room and the healing touch of his hands, Janeway eventually allowed herself a moment in which she closed her eyes and leaned back her head, thinking that her first officer was concentrated on her feet and wouldn't notice.

He, however, did notice it the moment her head moved. With pleasure he took in the picture presented to him; one of a completely relaxed Kathryn Janeway with a content smile like he had never seen one before on her face. He studied her features, marveling not for the first time at how beautiful she was. Maybe he shouldn't have

thought like that of his commanding officer, but then, in his mind he, *they*, had long left those barriers behind - ever since their two and a half faithful months together on New Earth.

All of a sudden, he couldn't help but lift her foot and kiss its back, gently, lovingly, like he would kiss the back of a hand. Immediately, her eyes snapped open, and she wriggled under his touch. Had there been anger in her eyes, or only the shock he saw something of, he would have apologized and instantly let go of her. But there was more in her look, and so he took his chance.

"Ticklish?" he asked, his voice low and deep, and a mischievous glint appeared in his eyes, betraying the innocent smile on his lips.

Right then, she should have thought how completely out of line his behavior - and hers as well - was. That whatever they were doing just then, starting in this moment, mustn't be continued. And yet she didn't voice the protest she, for reasons unknown to her, didn't, *couldn't* agree with; she only raised her eyebrows, a faint smile tugging at the corners of her mouth.

"Don't you dare, Commander," she warned playfully and tried to pull her foot away. Instead of just letting it go, he followed the movement - and within moments, she found him leaning over her, his hands left and right of her on the sofa's back. It wasn't that she was trapped; she could have easily ducked away under his arms or pushed him from her.

There was only one problem.

She didn't want to.

"How are your feet, Kathryn?" he asked, his voice not more than a husky rumble, his breath as hot on her face as his hands had been on her feet.

The terrain was so dangerous that both could hear warning horns blare all around them. This would have been the perfect time to pull back and blame the moment, the atmosphere, and that carefully suppressed attraction between them. They were grown-ups and thus very well capable of clearing their throats, looking a tad embarrassed, saying their good nights, and forgetting it ever happened. Just another episode to leave behind and never take a look back at; an episode to lock away in the cabinet that contained all their memories of shared moments better forgotten, and throw away the key.

They did neither.

Two objects with great gravitational force could only so many times pass each other and be not pulled to the other, but at one time or another, there was no way to withstand the inevitable anymore.

Finding the courage to step beyond their self-set barrier, Kathryn let her hands hesitantly touch Chakotay's chest before they wandered downwards towards the hem of his shirt, and then beneath the clothing. Her fingers were cool, though not as cold as her feet had been, and he shivered - less because of the coolness, but of her touch and the arousal spreading through his body. He closed his eyes momentarily, resting his forehead against Kathryn's, only to then meet her gaze, full of want and desire.

Her fingers ghosted over his skin, the firm muscles of his stomach tightening under her touch, until it became too much to bear; he didn't trust himself to not give in to his longing to take her right there and then. Falling to his knees between her legs, he lowered his arms to grab her hips and pull her to the edge of the sofa, pressing a lingering kiss to the satin covered valley between her breasts. Kathryn hissed, her body overly sensitive to any kind of intimate touch after years of quasi-celibacy.

His face remained buried in her cleavage as he breathed her in, the intoxicating scent of her skin and clothing, until she brought her hands to his head, making him look at her. The burning that showed inside his now dark orbs had her swallow hardly. But she didn't move; couldn't do more than to just stare at him, not daring to believe that this was really happening.

She had denied *this* to herself, to them for far too long, knowing that once they started it, they would never be able to stop. *She* wouldn't be; she wouldn't want to either. But they had responsibilities, and there was a whole crew, a crew of more than one hundred and twenty people trusting them to be fully capable of doing their jobs at any time. Taking their relationship to the next level would only distract them, wouldn't it?

A few years back she would have firmly answered with a 'yes', no doubt in her mind that it was the correct and only answer. After their arrival in the Delta Quadrant, she had wanted to hold on to these principles, burying her emotions and desires.

But she was only human. Simply, plainly human. She was the captain of a starship far away from home; she fought and negotiated with hostile alien species, or she searched for supplies and traded food and other goods with more friendly cultures - and all that on a daily basis. And after the end of a shift... shifts that often ended after several *days* in times of war... there was no one to find some love and affection in, and no one to give her soul and body the attention they were demanding. Sure, she had the love of her crew, the people she considered family; but there was no one to take care of the human being, the *woman*, behind the captain.

She was so tired of that unfulfilled longing for strong arms to hold her, comfort her when needed, for the kisses and caresses of a man who loved her being a constant companion to her.

Chakotay waited patiently while she pondered her situation and the next step. Whether to take this step. His eyes were full of expectation, but also of understanding for whatever decision she would make. Mostly, however, they were filled with love. Unconcealed love.

Faster than either one of them was able to realize Kathryn's head moved forward and her lips met his. The touch was soft, shy almost, and for a few seconds, they simply savored the sensation of that first contact, of what they had been yearning for all those years; perhaps since their very first meeting.

Kathryn felt a tingling sensation forming in her stomach, slowly spreading through her whole body into every last cell and nerve, when Chakotay began to move his head the tiniest bit, brushing her lips with the hint of a touch. Oh yes, her body was starved - for exactly that kind of caress from a living human being and someone who truly loved her for who she was. No vision, no hologram, no alien man with shady intentions, but a person who was real and whose interest was honest. A man who had loved her for years, despite her every hesitation; her rejection.

Her hands still resting at the back of his head, she pulled him even closer, molding their mouths together, nudging his lips open with her tongue when her impatience got the better of her, and then he deepened the kiss further on

an account of his own, feeding from the sweetness of her mouth that was such a special and unique blend that he knew he wanted to forever feast on it.

Their mouths moved together in the most erotic dance, lips grazing and meeting, teeth nibbling and gently biting, tongues exploring and tasting. They lost themselves in the passion their first kiss created; not even their hands needed to roam, their fingers to explore, or their bodies to press together. For the moment, the union of their lips was enough.

They took their sweet time before they ended the kiss, both feeling equally breathless and mindless afterwards. Their hearts were racing, and their grips on each other's bodies tightened, like they needed something, someone to hold on to as to not get lost in the bliss that consumed them.

Only after a good while Janeway gently pushed Chakotay away, and stood up. His heart sank; he knew she would tell him now that this was the first and last time this had happened. It was a moment of weakness, even if much needed weakness, but they couldn't repeat it. He braced himself for the words...

...that never came. Even after a few seconds, probably minutes, there was no sound from her, other than her still quickened breathing. Instead, she made him almost jump in surprise when she leaned down and took his hand that lay on the edge of the sofa.

"Come with me," she said, her voice a mere whisper, and he stood up, following her as she lead him, his hand still firmly held in hers, into her bedroom.

He was weighing the obligatory question whether she was really sure she wanted that on his tongue when they entered the adjoining room and came to stand at the foot of her bed. She remained with her back to him for a few moments, and he could see her taking a deep breath before she turned around to face him.

"I don't want you to ask me if I'm sure about this," she read his thoughts. "I've waited far too long, and, what is worse, I have made you wait. I've always been terribly dutif-" She was stopped by Chakotay's fingertips covering her lips, a light pressure keeping them closed.

"*I know you.*" He said nothing else; but it was enough. There was so much meaning to his words that tears threatened to pool in her eyes. Somehow she managed to swallow most to them; and the single one that found its way down her cheek was gently brushed away by Chakotay's hand.

While her eyes, in the amazing blue of the depths of an ocean, locked onto his, his fingertips began to trace the lines of her face, exploring and learning every feature, every dimple, memorizing by touch what his eyes had long since taken in in detail so often.

Kathryn leaned into the soft caress, the sensation it created, and how it made her skin tingle. Her eyelids became heavy as she felt her features relax, and she let them shut while she allowed her lips to open when Chakotay's thumb brushed them, just like his mouth had done before. Meanwhile her hands found their way back to his body, seeking out the lower end of his shirt once again and pulling it up, urging him to refrain from his tending to her face for a moment so she could get the piece of clothing off him.

He complied immediately, and the garment landed on the ground next to her feet, only to be joined by her robe he pushed from her shoulders. He paused to take a look at her who was left in her dark green satin ensemble of a

knee long nightgown, held only by thin straps, and long pants; to admire how it hugged her womanly curves, how it stood in contrast to the porcelain skin of her arms and shoulders and to the soft reddish hue in her otherwise dark blond hair that was slightly tousled. He had always known she was beautiful, but this was threatening to rob him of his sanity. Not because of the sight only, but also because he knew it, she, was now his to see, and to worship.

He snapped out of his reverie when her hands framed his face and pulled him to her again to claim his lips in another devouring kiss, and his arms encircled her and pulled her with him as he laid down onto the bed and let her cover his body with hers. She never lost contact to his lips, and the intensity of this intimate gesture they shared had them spiraling into a bottomless depth that were their feelings.

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"Your feet may be warm, but your toes are still a bit cold, Kathryn," Chakotay mumbled into her neck, and she laughed heartily. They lay beneath tangled sheets, sated and exhausted after their love-making, holding each other close, never getting enough of touching the other, of caressing and kissing each other now that they finally allowed themselves what seemed like such a luxury.

"Then maybe you should do something about that," she suggested with a purring note in her voice, and sighed when he kissed his way from her neck up to her lips.

"Be assured, captain, I will." He claimed her lips in a short, but passionate kiss. "I will."

And here she had always thought that cold feet ended relationships rather than started them.

But then, everything was a bit different in the Delta Quadrant.

END