

Divine

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Rating: P6

Summary: In a surreal world, some things are even truer than they would be anywhere else.

Disclaimer: Voyager isn't mine, but the Valeriji Alliance is. Ha. Well, technically it belongs to itself, but... anyways.

Author's Note: This one can be seen as a companion piece to Chances Are; you don't need to read the story to essentially understand this one shot (though I wouldn't mind you reading it ;)). Encouraged by Cerulean.Phoenix7 on FFN, I want to create an own universe out of the story, so I thought this would be a good a start as any...

Evala VI was easily one of the most peaceful planets she had ever visited.

Stretches of lush green grass-land between snow-capped mountains, forests with trees that were hundreds of years old, standing regally proud amidst their younger companions, and here and there small streams of fresh, crystal clear water like silver linings in what had to be the heart and soul of Mother Nature's realm.

She smelled the sweet fragrances, different ones from different flowers mingling in the air and giving this planet the most unique scent, an intoxicating one she only barely kept herself from getting lost in. It probably wouldn't have mattered if she had indulged in it for just a few minutes; after all, they were in friendly territories, had been for almost a year.

It was too good to be true, a voice in her head reminded her repeatedly. But it was *true*. The past year had proven it; all species of the Valeriji Alliance they had encountered and would encounter on their four year journey through the expanse were friendly, peaceful, rational and very generous.

A captain mustn't ever let his or her guard down, the voice remained insistent. It was too easy to get careless.

And yes, Kathryn Janeway, commanding officer of USS Voyager, agreed. It was what she had learned, what she had taught and told herself time and again over the years. Still, this was different. Even her always reliable and never-resting gut feeling was far from warning her of any danger maybe lurking nearby. Instead, it rested contently, just like Kathryn herself.

Originally, she had come to this place, somewhere on the wide plains of green, to have a few moments to herself; to savor nature's calming breath caressing her skin, and it's soft, almost cushy body to relax her strained muscles upon, maybe even let her eyes slip closed for a few precious minutes. Now, however, Kathryn found herself staring into the sky in awe and fascination.

An explorer and scientist she was, she had always had, since early childhood, a special awareness of the wonders of nature, physics, astronomy, of everything divine science held in store for her to find; to touch in her line of interest and work. She had seen a lot, beautiful, breathtaking phenomena, things no one would believe she really could have observed even - especially when they seemed logically impossible or hadn't been seen by many people yet.

As she looked up into the sky and directly at the system's sun, her eyes protected by goggles, most of what she had already been able to take mental pictures of suddenly seemed somehow small in comparison. Certainly being on an alien planet thousands of light years away from Earth increased the impression, but still, what was presented to her from a far distance was nevertheless so unusual and unknown to her eyes that she felt hypnotized by it.

Given everything she knew, had studied so eagerly over the years, what she saw shouldn't have been; it was a rare phenomenon she had never witnessed once in her life, not on Earth and not on any other planet - and she had visited a good number of them. But here it was. Part of a paradise, the queen of the system was adorned by pastel colored rings hugging her. Plainly, it was a rainbow around the sun; but that description just didn't match its beauty. It looked like a colorful halo; like a bridge between the sun's heat and the universe's cold. The red ring was

the innermost, closest to the brightly glowing star, and a bluish-violet ring clung to the green on its one side, while it dissolved into space's eternity on the other.

Kathryn's first impulse had been to contact Voyager and let them scan what she saw; but quickly she had stopped herself. This was a moment to just hold onto as long as possible, and nothing else. This was unique, something not many people - at least not many humans - saw; she would have heard and read of it otherwise. She didn't want to waste a single second of admiring it.

Not even the footsteps nearing her position could distract her. In fact, they were almost soothing and brought a feeling of being secure. She knew the rhythm exactly, would have recognized it like a face, a voice. It was a fingerprint of movement, and it was the fingerprint of someone she knew better than anyone else.

Chakotay, Voyager's first officer, had spent a good while in the nearby village, talking to the natives, tasting their food they offered enthusiastically, chatting with them about everything and anything. Evali people were curious, eager to learn about different cultures, different worlds outside their territories. They listened tentatively as Chakotay told stories, and the Indian had soon felt like a grandfather telling fantastic tales to a group of children.

He loved it.

Evala VI was one of those planets in Valeriji Alliance who knew of space-faring technology and races, but had once decided against traveling among the stars. They didn't resent their own who chose to follow passing ships and explore what lay beyond their world, but most Evali appeared to be happy with the life they had, and only a very few felt the desire to leave; even less really took that step.

For Chakotay they were like an odd phenomenon - curious to learn new things about other species and worlds, but never tempted to go out there and see for themselves.

He must have spent hours sitting on the village's central main square, telling countless stories from years of experience, exploration and traveling, when the inevitable question they had been met with on every occasion came: How, when and where did he get to know his wife?

Chakotay told the carefully constructed story of his and Kathryn's love with a honest smile on his face - and was at the same time reminded that he hadn't seen her once in the past hours. So he decided to look for her. And found her not far from the village in a paradisiacal valley where she was lying on a bed of green and surrounded by what must have been thousands of exotic flowers.

That the colors on the ground were matched by something up in the sky he only saw when he followed her gaze that was unwaveringly fixed to a point above her. Putting on his goggles, he looked up as well - and nearly gasped. If there had ever been a true magical sight, it was this; an inverted rainbow around the celestial body.

Janeway smiled to herself when she heard him stopping dead in his tracks. She didn't need to look to know that he'd just turned his head upwards. This phenomenon was something that would probably make everyone still and stare. The picture in the distance captivated him just like it had Kathryn. The colorful corona offered real competition to the sun's white-golden fieriness.

Chakotay was still stunned when he took another step closer to his captain - and wife - and only then managed to break away from the sight.

"Mind some company?"

"Not at all," she replied, and smiled up at him. He had to admit, she looked adorable with those goggles everyone had been advised to bring because of this system's sun's strength. Others maybe would have found it ridiculous, but to him, it was a memorable sight; one of an utterly relaxed and content Kathryn Janeway, a serene smile filling

her features - visible despite the protective glasses covering half her face. It was something not even he, who spend more time with her than anyone else, saw often, if at all.

Lowering himself next to her to the ground, he laid down closely to her. Even after a year, it still felt strange, being allowed to invade her personal space, especially in moments like this one. But they had to maintain this pretense they had created, and for two who were supposed to be happily married it would have looked suspicious had there been too much distance between them. Not that he minded being close to Kathryn anyways.

It reminded him distinctively of New Earth, this scenery, the peaceful quiet surrounding them. And him and Kathryn lying in the grass, indulging in sweet idleness. Back then, they had watched birds fly by, treetops being moved by a gentle breeze, and fluffy clouds lazily float above them in a sea of various shades of blue. They had never talked, but just been lost in their own thoughts, dreams maybe. The closeness they shared, had and still did, was comforting, something both considered a vital part of their life.

"Just like old times," Kathryn suddenly whispered, and Chakotay's initial shock was soon replaced by the slightest shake of head and a smile. It shouldn't come as a surprise to him anymore that they were both thinking the same, he mused; after all, they did that quite a lot recently.

He didn't answer; it wasn't necessary. She knew that his thoughts were on New Earth as well. It was where this feeling of inner peace brought them back to every time, never once failing to do so, wherever they were.

When Chakotay had lied down, he had mimicked her position and rested his hands, folded together, on his stomach. But when she loosened hers from each other and let them fall to her sides, he followed her example. It was a subtle gesture, an offer he wasn't sure he could take. He felt the heat radiating from her hand as it lay mere breathes away from his. Touching each other when anyone from the Alliance was around, to keep their charade up, was one thing; in private, they had yet kept their distance, wisely so, as their emotional bond grew stronger with every day and slowly but surely began to demand a physical connection as well.

This time, however, they were inspired - inspired by the wondrous world around them, the angelic sun with its multi-colored halo above them, to trust themselves and their common sense to do the right thing at the right time.

So hesitantly, Chakotay took his chance - and her hand. When she didn't pull back, he entwined their fingers in an almost lover's embrace, innocent yet meaningful, and not to be parted by anything.

"It's beautiful," he then said quietly.

"Yes," she responded equally quiet and turned her head to the side to look at him, "It is."

END

*So this is actually another glimpse into my life. At work, I'm sitting at my desk facing the window - a window that looks out towards the south. If it's sunny, the sun is shining directly into my face the whole day. There are no blinds, only curtains, so I made it a habit of wearing sunglasses at work (very relaxing for the eyes while working at the computer as well). This allows me to look directly *at* the sun. And the other day, I spotted this curious phenomenon described here; it was, however, only there for a very short time. But it looked incredibly beautiful. And: Wikipedia says it's a rather rare phenomenon. :)*