

Challenge Response:

Being There

by Carol Sandford

"Deanna!, wait up!"

Deanna slowed her hasty retreat, but couldn't bare to actually stop, turn and face him. Having just gone through one of the most humiliating experiences of her life, the last thing she wanted to do was have a heart to heart with Will Riker. To look into his eyes. To see that pain.

Gentle fingers tugged at her shoulder, forcing her to turn around, her heart pounded in her ears as she finally came about. Deanna tried to look up into his face, but she couldn't do it.

Instead her head fell down along with her eyes.

Her name fell from Will's lips in a hushed whisper as he lifted her chin with his finger.

"Deanna..."

Will's breath caught in his throat when Deanna's eyes finally met his. Shimmering with unshed tears, it washed over him like a wave of despair. She was hurting, he had to find some privacy.

"Come on, lets get you home."

Turning her about and wrapping his arms around her shoulders, the two friends made their way to Deanna's quarters. No words were spoken, none needed to be spoken.

In the safety on her lounge, Deanna let go. Tears cascaded down her face and Will could do no more than hold her close as the events of the last few hours catapulted her into a bottomless hell-hole.

Sobs wracked through Deanna's slender frame. Will could feel her shake as he hugged her as tightly as he could without hurting her. The damp patch on his huge, barrel chest grew larger and larger, but he didn't care, he just wanted to ride the pain out along with her, no matter how long it took.

Will struggled with the raw feelings that coursed through his body. He had never considered how he would feel if Deanna ever got pregnant with

another man's child. But it had happened...it was happening, right now, and he was consumed with a jealousy that made him cling on to her even tighter.

Unconsciously, his arms wrapped around her completely as he found himself struggling to hold back his own tears. The stinging behind his eyes angered him as he battled with his attempt to help her when all he wanted to do was throw a tantrum and demand some answers...tell her how angry he was that it wasn't his baby...wasn't him that had taken her to heaven and back as they had created the new life form within her...wasn't him that was going to help her push their son into the world.

It wasn't him.

Deanna froze as she felt the dampness on her head. Her own misery was forgotten momentarily as Will's own torment filtered through the stunned stupor that had been with her since the whole nightmare had begun.

She moved slightly so that she could look up into his face, but he held on fast. his name broke from her lips.

"Will...?"

Will sniffed at he he tried in vain to control himself, his voice was hoarse with emotion when he spoke.

"I'm sorry Deanna, I didn't mean it to happen like this, it was just..."

Deanna broke him off by placing her finger to his lips, Will watched her remaining tears glisten as she smiled gently at him.

"Shhhh...I know Will, I know. This must be as hard for you as it is for me."

Will went to deny her claim, but the words stuck in his throat and found himself nodding instead.

"I always imagined it to be me to be the father of your baby...I...I always hoped that someday...that we could resume our relationship, maybe have got married, in time..."

And despite already knowing the truth, it still hurt as though a knife had been plunged into his heart when she shook her head.

"We've moved past that Imzadi, you know that. This child has changed everything for me...for us. This child must have all my love, for however long I am blessed with him, and for whatever reason he is here...and I do

believe with all my heart that he has a reason...and I will be there for him...You understand that, don't you Will...don't you?"

Will turned away from Deanna as the image of her nursing her soon to be born child flitted before his eyes, twisting the knife even further.

"Yes...I do."

Deanna's breath caught when Will turned back to face her. Crystal blue eyes sparkled as he searched her own still misty eyes, but his words, although did not come as any surprise, shook her to her very core at the intensity of his feelings.

"I'm being there Imzadi....If I never do anything selfish in my life again, I will not miss this experience for anything. Please don't let me miss what should have rightly been the most magical experience of my life...please."

Deanna stepped into his open arms again. Two friends reunited to take on an miracle that would bring them closer than before.

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