

Closure

by Carol Sandford

She felt his eyes boring into her back as she prepared herself for surgery. Ten minutes, just ten more minutes and her life would never be the same again. Odan would be gone, Will would be back to his old self within no time, and she....she didn't know what tomorrow held.

Will was dying before her very eyes and she died along with him. How did she manage to fall in love so deeply with the being within him? How could she let her life to be shredded into painful bits again?

She felt the sting of her tears and angrily batted them away with unsteady hands, silently cursing herself for being unprofessional and damn it all, female. Right then, she would have done almost anything to stop the pain that was squeezing her heart tighter and tighter as she battled with herself to stop being a woman about to lose the other half of her soul and to become the doctor that she was.

Will's voice and Odan's words were husky with pain and fatigue, but she heard Odan's quiet plea as though he had just screamed it from the roof tops, "Doctor Beverly, please...look at me, let me touch you one last time before I leave Commander Riker's body."

But she couldn't turn to face the being that she loved and the man that she had accepted as her lover. Facing Odan was hard. Facing Will Riker was even harder, and no matter how much she tried, and she did try, so desperately hard, Beverly could not look into Will's knowing blue eyes and tell the being within him that her heart was breaking in two.

Nurse Ogawa glanced uncomfortably at the couple and then decided to discretely slip away until either they'd had their say or the doctor was ready to operate. Neither Odan or Beverly noticed that she'd gone and that they were now alone.

She felt him touch her arm and knew that he had dragged his exhausted and fevered body upright to do so. Catching the sob in her throat, she swung around, instantly sorry that she had caused him even more pain just so's that he could get to her. Her trembling hand slipped into his and as her heart squeezed away the shot of pure agony, her fingers mimicked the movement. Everything hurt so much.

(In the following paragraph, I would suggest that you might wish to re-think the 3rd person omniscient point of view and stay with Beverly. She has powerful control of this story already, and I think it might continue to be powerful to stay with her POV. Your choice, however!)

Suddenly, Beverly could almost imagine a spark of hope surge through the consciousness that resided in Will Riker's body. But that hope became despair as she bitterly dropped his hand as though it burnt her; as though touching him would reveal her true want. A moan crackled in her throat as she turned away from him again, unable to let him see the devastation in her eyes, or her trembling chin as she valiantly tried to hold on to the tiny shred of strength that she had left, strength that she was going to need to perform the surgery. Afterwards, it didn't matter. Afterwards she wouldn't care if the entire ship's accompaniment stood by and watched her dissolve into a miserable puddle on the floor.

"I...I can't, Odan, I just can't take any more pain right now, I have a job to do. I have to keep you alive and you know you must leave Will's body before you kill the both of you. Please, just leave me be and let me do my job, Odan."

She despised herself for not being strong enough to have this one last moment in Odan's arms, or to let his lips touch hers, but god, she wanted it, so much. But more than that, he was conscious of her needs and she despised herself even more for denying him.

But his next words made her spin on the spot, her turquoise coat fanning out like the instant flare of her anger as she faced him with her eyes wide and her mouth open, aghast, "No. I'd rather die, Beverly than let you do this without giving me a chance to make my peace."

Anger turned to Amazement as her eyes and her words followed his painful descent to become prone on the bio-bed again, his face pale and damp from the exertion, "What about Will Riker. What about him. Are you going to kill him too!?"

He smiled knowingly, resolutely, "You won't let Will die, Beverly. I know humans can survive for some time after death, whereas I..."

"No! no, don't say it, Odan!" her eyes sparkled with fear, her words desperate, "I won't let you do this to us."

"Then let me say goodbye to you. Let ~me~ say goodbye."

Odan thought for a moment that he had gone too far as he watched her visibly fall apart before him, unsure whether to stay or do what her heart truly wanted; run away. Frustration ate at her soul and he wasn't sure why until she finally cried out passionately,

"Why are you saying goodbye to me, Odan? You're going to be implanted into another host. Maybe a better host. I may even love you even more than I already do! But you are saying goodbye as though I am never going to see you again, or...or that something dreadful is going to happen and you are going to die!"

The man she knew as Will Riker writhed uncontrollably upon the metallic slab, his adrenalin levels increasing along with his anguish, his body contorting painfully as he struggled to maintain life. She was losing him along with losing herself and she was immediately sorry that she was causing Will so much pain.

Quickly picking up a hypo she pressed it to Will's neck, her heart lurching as he grimaced against the intrusion into his blood stream, "Shhhhhh, shhhhhhhh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I don't know what to do, Odan. I don't know what to say to you anymore. One moment I am so angry I could hit you and another moment I want to pull you into my arms and never let you go."

Will opened his eyes, their blueness more bright and alert now his pain was subdued once more. She was barely a hairs-breath away from his face and he couldn't stop his hand from reaching up and tracing her cheek. Her eyes fluttered shut with the intimate contact and the memories that coursed through her making her catch her breath, letting it go with a shuddering sigh.

How could this be happening to her? Did she not deserve happiness in her life. Had God really decided that she was to spend the rest of her days with nobody to love, nobody to call her own. Nobody to remind her that she was a woman?

Unconsciously, Beverly's face closed the gap between them until finally she could feel Will's—No, it was Odan's--breath upon her lips, breathing life into her soul once more. And as he did, everything became crystal clear; she wanted to say goodbye. She wanted to be absorbed within him one last time.

His lips felt cool despite his body's heat, a sure sign that all was not well within him, but nothing could prepare her for the feeling as she moulded her mouth to his for the last time. The pain, the ecstasy, the reasons and the answers all lay within the kiss and even as she felt the tip of his tongue tenderly begging for admission so that it could dance with hers, the rightness of the intimate act outweighed the futility of their doomed relationship.

Trembling fingers settled upon Riker's heated chest, the hair beneath her hands, softened by a sheen of perspiration, felt familiar, and comforting. It felt warm from his an inner fever, and tiny convulsions rippled through Riker's torso as Odan, and his valiant host struggled continuously for life.

Beverly's efforts were steadfast, but all of it turned to a single purpose, as he felt her fight against the situation she had willingly placed herself in. But all that was forgotten as he bequeathed himself, and his body to the touch of her desperate ministrations; determined to take with him everything that he ever loved about Doctor Beverly; her taste, her scent, her love. Especially her love. It was the one continuous reason to fight for his life. This life.

It was a battle he was losing. Beverly's fingers nearly froze. In a moment of startling realization, it was clear to her that Odan was afraid. He didn't know what his fate was going to be once he'd been removed from the Commander's body. For all he knew, his new host might not make it on time. Or it might be a mismatch, and he could die from the prolonged absence of his life source. For all his reassurances and pride, the unbreakable Odan ... was frightened.

Beverly immersed her heart and soul to the man beneath her hand, heedless that it was Will Riker's body she was touching; Will Riker's skin she stroked as a lover's. It had taken her a very long time to not see her commanding officer and to see the being that she had fallen so in love with, but if she closed her mind and her eyes and remembered the man that had stepped off the shuttle when he'd first arrived, she could almost, but not quite, believe that it was he that she was worshipping. She wasn't quite sure how she was going to deal with the "real" Will Riker when life got 'back to normal', but for now it didn't matter, nothing mattered except for the moment and the moment was ~them~.

But fate, it seemed, had chosen this moment to be unkind to them once more, and Beverly felt Will's body begin to spasm; his breath against her lips became laboured and desperate. She was losing him again, only this time it was to be for the final time. She could not pump any more medication into his body without it causing some severe, if not fatal repercussions. The symbiote had to be removed from Will's body, now.

Odan felt the chill as soon as Beverly's lips left his and his eyes, laden with pain, fluttered open. His relief was evident when he saw she still hovered close to his face and he knew that she had something to say to him. He also knew it was going to be goodbye.

He watched as her eyes filled with tears. They reminded him of bluebells after a drenching rain and it would be that memory that he would cherish most of all. Her eyes were like the mirror to her soul; crystal clear, welcoming and full of love, for him.

Gripping his hand which had risen to capture hers, forcing her to remain until the very last moment, her voice crackled as she whispered, "I can't wait any longer, Odan, you've got to come out of Will's body right now."

He grimaced as he nodded, resigned to the fact that he had pushed his luck as far as he was able. He'd gotten what he wanted; a chance to make his peace along with another precious memory to take with him, wherever he was going to.

They both heard the bustle of other medical staff bringing themselves back into the room. Will lifted his non too steady hand and brushed away her teardrops with his thumb. His eyes locked with hers and jointly, their linked hands squeezed harder, readying themselves for the final wrench as they pulled apart.

The machine at Will's feet began to bleep alarmingly as his body responded to the heightened distress, not only of Odan, but the physical body in which he resided: Will Riker. Beverly's eyes held him fast, wanting - needing this last treasured moment, until finally Odan--somehow dredging up the very last ounce of strength he possessed--spoke loud and clear, "I love you, Doctor Beverly, always remember that."

Beverly choked back the sob that had risen, along with a pain that her heart no longer cared to confine any longer. She felt his hand loosen within hers and knew that he was slipping away from her. It was that single truth that forced her grief and pain back down into the pits of her soul and bring her back to reality. She had two lives to save, and to do that she had to become a doctor again and not a woman.

Momentarily unable to sever their linked hands, she barked out her orders to the somewhat embarrassed nurse beside her until at last, with a final, lingering look at Odan's now unconscious form, Beverly reluctantly released

his hand. She took the laser scalpel from nurse Ogawa's outstretched hand, and set to work... on the matter of Commander William Riker.

It had ended.

Or had it just begun?