

The Confrontation
by Carol Sandford

"Its okay, Will, I understand. These things happen."

The door bell chimed as I severed the link, just as I was about to be reduced to a puddle of tears. I knew who was on the other side of door; I didn't want to see her right now, but I knew she wouldn't go away. I sighed heavily as I issued the command, "Come in, Beverly."

Beverly Crusher almost 'bounced' as she came into the room and threw herself down on to my couch, her face was slightly flushed as though she had been running and I wondered if she had heard something. Everyone knew that Beverly loved a good piece of gossip.

Noticing my finger still poised on the switch off button on my vidi-screen, she asked breathlessly, "Hi Deanna, was that Will calling through, How's he doing?"

As I stared into her face, I felt the lump forming in my throat as I battled against the tears that were beginning to well. I could only shake my head at her.

"What did he say, Deanna?"

I felt one solitary tear break free and felt it trickle down to my chin, the lump in my throat became a boulder. Even Beverly looked scared, just for a moment, and then she obviously decided to take control as she reached over and removed my hand from the panel. She never released my hand.

"Tell me about it." she suggested. That's what I'm here for - moral support and all that. Is Will staying on the Starbase longer than anticipated, is that why your sad?"

As I shook my head, sending the rest of the tears cascading down my face, I could only blubber my answer, but she seemed to comprehend my words, "Its over between us, all over."

Beverly could only stare at me numbly. God, I was totally numb myself. I ~knew~ that we were having some problems, and I ~knew~ Will was still struggling with his own inner turmoil. But I never thought it was this bad. The least I expected was for us to become simply friends again, but I didn't expect this to happen, ever.

I faintly heard Beverly's voice and I snapped my mind closed to hear her questions, "What, did he actually say, Deanna? Did he give you any indication at all? I mean, did he say you just needed a break from each other for a while or what? Come on, Deanna, talk to me." she pleaded.

I took a deep breath, even though it hurt. My heart ached so much after wards that I didn't think I'd ever take a deep breath like that again. "He said, it wouldn't be fair to me to continue our relationship with all that was going on with him. He said, he needed to be free, from me."

And that was what hurt most of all, he wanted to be free, from me. Not free to go and have relationships with other women. Or free from a deep relationship with me, a progressive relationship, like we always thought would happen. He wanted to be free, of me. I almost choked on the pain and tears that welled up from somewhere deep inside of me, and at that moment, that instant, I hated him.

Beverly let out her breath on a little sigh. "Did he say there was someone else?" she asked.

Releasing her fingers from mine, I pushed myself to a weary stand, folding my arms protectively against my body so that my shaking hands were hidden. I couldn't answer her then, I needed a few moments to think about ~us~. Think about the past few months and wonder if I had missed something. Well, I obviously had, I just don't know how. Will was almost as good as I was at blocking his feelings and thoughts from me. I shivered involuntarily at just how much he had hidden from me.

I stared unseeing at the objects around my quarters. Some were from Will, some were even from Beverly. Little trinkets and love tokens that I treasured. For now they were just a painful reminder of betrayal.

I mentally kicked myself for not asking a long time ago if there was a problem between us. But I, like every other person on the other side of a relationship going wrong, ignored it. I was too scared. Coward its the word that mocked my thoughts. Yes, I was a coward.

I could feel Beverly's apprehension from across the room. As I glanced over my shoulder could see her watching me, waiting. I smiled grimly at her as I turned and too slow steps back towards her. She sat deeper back into the couch.

"I should have known. And I call myself an empath. I should have known that he wasn't in love with me anymore. I'm beginning to wonder if he ever was."

Beverly chuckled nervously, "Of course he was. At first anyway, it was written all over his face. He wanted to be with you all the time."

I conceded at that, "Yes...yes he did didn't he? I said, remembering, "I wonder what happened to change all that?"

Beverly fidgeted restlessly for a few moments, before giving up and abruptly jumping to her feet, quickly going over to a large display of flowers and began picking and moving the stems around. Deanna watched her quietly. Waiting.

I didn't wait long. "Well, at least you know now. At least you won't have to sit around wondering, you know the worst now."

I went and sat where Beverly had been sitting. Outwardly I was calm, too calm. But inside I was a coiled spring. But she didn't know that. "I don't know that I wanted to know. At least while he hadn't told me I could still hope...pretend to myself that everything was alright."

"But what good would that do Deanna." Beverly muttered impatiently. "You've got to face up to things...that Will wanted out a long time ago."

I stared at her in puzzlement, "Did he, Beverly? Why couldn't I tell. Why couldn't he tell me?"

Beverly continued to flit around the room, touching this, fiddling with that. "I guess he found it too hard. he knew what it would do to you, and to your relationship, not only between you, but to your positions on this ship. I'm surprised you didn't notice how much time you actually spent together. Hardly ever these past couple of weeks...or so"

"Hmmm," I wondered out aloud. "I wonder if he has got someone else, another girl?"

Her face gave nothing away as she muttered non-committedly, "I wonder..."

I pushed my luck further. "If he had, it would be interesting to know who don't you think?"

"Does it really matter, how can it affect you now?"

I pursed my lips as I slumped into the chair further, "I'd just like to know what sort of woman could take him away from me, especially as we ~are~ Imzadi."

Beverly's perusal of the room came to a slow halt, leaving her to turn and watch her friend. "I don't know, Deanna, I really don't."

I had got her. "I mean, she might even be someone I knew, someone I trusted. Imagine that, Beverly."

She looked everywhere and anywhere other than Deanna's face. I kept on. "Though you wouldn't think a ~real~ friend could do anything as mean as that, would you?"

Finally, at last she looked at me, head on, her cheeks high with colour, her voice shaky as she spoke, "You know, don't you. How did you find out?"

I let go the breath that had been scorching my lungs, but it didn't stop the pain that burst forth with it. I'm not sure how I managed to stay calm. Must have been the Betazoid in me I guess. Or the knowledge of ~knowing~ at last. At long last.

"Will told me; He told me just before you came in here. That was a coincidence wasn't it, you turning up like that. Out of the blue? He told me that he had been having an affair with you for some time...just a couple of weeks after Odan had ~left~. He told me that he had fallen ~in love~ with you when he still had the symbiant within him. He told me that you wouldn't let go, that you wanted to carry on the affair and that he wanted it too."

I didn't flinch an inch when Beverly threw herself at my feet, grasping for my hands, as the tears streamed down her face, along with my own that had begun when I recalled and related

Will's words. How could he have hurt me like that, and with my best friend. How could he?

Beverly's pathetic snivelling washed through me, numbing me as she attempted to make me understand, when in reality, she only made it worse. "He said he wouldn't tell you. He said he'd...Oh, Deanna, we didn't mean it to happen!"

I hiccupped as I laughed bitterly, "Oh, not that old line, puh-lease!"

"But, Deanna, it's true...!"

But I'd finished hearing, I just wanted her out of my quarters. Out of my sanctuary. Out of my life. Finding the strength to push her away, I found myself sobbing as I did so. God, how she had hurt me, I could never forgive her, never. "Please go, Beverly, there is nothing more you can say or do to make this any easier for me. I trusted you. God, I even ~encouraged~ you to be intimate with MY man. With MY soul mate. With MY Imzadi! You have no idea...NO idea what you have done to me. Beverly Crusher!"

I didn't realise that I had rounded on Beverly, pushing her further and further towards the door until I heard it swish open. I was so angry that even after she had stepped backwards through them, I went after her, but only as far as the door jamb. I remained on my turf, I felt safe there. My knuckles hurt from the continuous clenching, but I didn't even notice the cuts on my palms from where my nails had cut in. The only pain I noticed...that I wanted to notice, was the one in my heart, the one that they had left me with. The one that would be with me forever more. The one where my soul had been.

We stood facing one another for many moments; Beverly unwilling to leave me in this condition, and me trying my hardest to not fly at her face to rip her eyes out. But even after everything, I didn't hate her that much, and I didn't even hate him. The betrayal over took the hate.

Eventually, Beverly turned and began to walk away, but I had to have the last say, I just had to. I was aware that I sounded awful as the tears still ran freely, and the sobs still made me choke, but I had to get the last word in. "Just remember, Beverly, when your done with Will, when the novelty has worn off, he'll come back to me. He always comes back to me. And I'll be here. I'll be here, Beverly Crusher!"

But as I shouted my parting words, they were to an empty corridor. She had gone, probably to lick her wounds, maybe even to be with him. For now I didn't care, I didn't give a damn. Now I just had to sit back, lick my own wounds, and wait...