

Ghost of a chance  
by Carol Sandford

"Ghosts." Will said. Just one word, but I knew exactly what he meant. My eyes flickered open, guiltily, to meet his. His kiss had been so gentle, so tender and I'd tried so hard to put everything I'd felt into it, but he'd known. The memory of another's kiss was getting in the way and spoiling it for the both of us. It was all so unfair.

"You just can't forget him, can you?" he said sadly. I could only nod. How could I lie to Will? Of all people, he was the last person I could lie to. I felt the tears begin to spill down my cheeks and suddenly as Will pulled me back into his arms, even more memories came flooding back to torment me. To torment both of us.

"I can't forget him, Will. Tom was everything I wanted, and more. I know he changed, he had to, for you...for himself, and for us. I had to let him go. I had to give him his freedom. He'd been so long caged up on that planet, I couldn't hold him here no more than I could have held you, Will."

I saw the hurt in his beautiful blue eyes, I felt it in my soul too. But even so, I knew he understood. I'd never kept my feelings for his brother away from him. Even if I'd wanted to, I could never have done that. Tom was a part of Will as much as Will was a part of Tom. They both loved me, and I, God help me, loved them both.

But it wasn't until Tom had left for a life upon the Ghandi - a life without me, that I truly realised just how much Will felt about me, even though he'd never said a word. Never told me how much seeing Tom with me, hurt him in such a way he didn't think he could have bared it for long.

The silly thing is, is that if Will had made one remark, given me clue that he wanted to further our relationship, I would have, in a heartbeat. But then Tom came along, offering me everything that I'd wanted from Will, and I took it. I took it, treasured it and lost it, and Will had to stand by and watch it happen. It must have killed him.

I guess I was stupid to think that I could go from Tom to Will when he'd gone. Even though they'd been the same person, there had been so many minor differences. So many things that Tom had remembered and Will had forgotten from our time on Betazed. I soaked them up. I clung onto a memory when I should have been looking at the present.

I liked the way Tom kissed me; with an aggression that always left me aching for more. Will kisses me with his heart and soul, leaving me feeling cherished and satiated. When Tom had made love to me, I always found myself screaming for mercy. Will loved me until tears of happiness were streaming down my face.

When I was with Tom, I always found myself wondering when he was going to say goodbye. Will always made me feel like I was home, and he was home with me, with no intentions of going anywhere.

So why do I crave the man that seems only half of the man before me?

I felt Will's finger tip lift my chin high enough so that he could see my eyes. I watched his face slowly lower to mine. Heard him whisper my name. Felt his warm lips touch my trembling ones, so, so lightly. So lovingly. So Will like. But I wanted a Tom kiss. I'd always want a Tom kiss.

But why?

I guess it's because I can't have him. Because I miss him so much, it makes my heart break thinking about what might have been. Because Will isn't like him at all, not really, and I wish he was. God, I wished he was.

"I'm not Tom, Deanna, I never will be, and I know how much you want to be with him." he choked. It broke my heart to do this to him, but I couldn't stop myself. I couldn't erase Tom from my mind. I didn't want to, and that's what hurt him most of all.

But he was wrong, I didn't want to be with Tom, I wanted to be with Will, "No Will, that's not true. I love you. I love you so much, I think I would die if you weren't here with me."

"If I wasn't here, Deanna, Tom would be." And there it was, in a nutshell. The truest words ever spoken. The cruellest words ever spoken, because he was right. Because if he wasn't here, it would be Tom in my arms, not Will.

But the thought of not being with Will hurt so much. Much more than not being with Tom. The realisation stunned Will as much as me, and I found myself pulled hard against his body as it sunk in just what was at stake. Just what we could both lose.

Us.

I didn't have time to yelp as I suddenly felt Will's hand thread through my hair, clasp it roughly. Yanking back my head, I whimpered first with pain and then with shock as he fastened his mouth onto mine, his tongue forcing its way inside. I felt his hardness against my stomach as he held me fast. I had no choice but to hang on and accept the brutal kiss that he was intent on giving me.

But it wasn't long before my lack of choice became a desperate want. I wanted this kiss. I wanted my body to feel violated by a man who loved me beyond distraction. I wanted more and Will gave it, willingly. Urgently. Desperately. When he momentarily broke away and we gasped for air, he searched my eyes and begged with his heart, "Give me a chance, Imzadi, that's all I ask." I gave it when I pulled his lips back to mine.

I barely knew when he'd torn away my clothes along with his own until I felt him enter me. But not like Will would have done, with tenderness and slowness. As he pushed his way inside and swallowed the shocked scream that left my lungs, I felt him. I heard him. I heard him moan my name. I heard him utter words that I had never heard fall from his lips when he'd made love to me before. Words that only passion could reveal. Words that I'd only ever heard one other use. Tom.

How did he know?

Of course he knew. He was Will, just as Will was Tom. They were created from the same being, the same man. The same thoughts, and the same needs. Only Will had let his fall asleep for a while. Responsibility had carved out a man that had learned to control his most basic urges. The other had lived without for so long he'd only survived because of his basic urges.

All it had taken for Will to remember was what it was like before. All it needed was for Will to remember that he was a man that was insanely in love with Deanna Troi and not someone who was second in command of a Starship. All it needed was to just remember that he was a man.

My man.

A Riker.

William Thomas Riker.