

MISTLETOE AND KISSES

By Carol Sandford

Guinan had gone all out with the decorations in Ten forward this year. Tiny lights sparkled across the ceiling. She had done away with the lights and replaced them with hundreds of tiny candles, which set the lights off to perfection. It looked like she had managed to bring the stars indoors.

The huge tree dominated one corner of the lounge. Its branches laden with silver and blue baubles, endless miles of red tinsel circled around it like a helter skelter, and on the top, a star. Quietly, in the background, old Earth Christmas Carol's played.

Guinan looked around her, she was pleased with her creation, it had taken hours of studying old Earth customs for a traditional Christmas party, and even longer for the replicator to get it right. She had found a recipe for an old English punch, that she dipped her little finger in to sample... again...she chuckled to herself with glee, then looked up at the ceiling above the bar, her chuckle turning to an excited giggle, 'I can't wait for tonight!...'

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Everyone was in the ready room, discussing the day's events. Picard stopped mid sentence when he heard the hail, 'Guinan to Captain Picard'

The captain looked around his senior crew with mild surprise, they mirrored the look, this was unusual, 'Yes Guinan, what can I do for you?'

'You can bring yourself and your officers to a party, at my place, tonight, casual wear only, Merry Christmas...'

Now they really were surprised, Worf grumbled, 'What is that woman up to now? I hate surprises...'

Deanna grinned at him 'Oh Worf, don't be such a grouch, it IS Christmas Eve.'

He grunted his response 'Christmas means nothing to Klingons, so I shall not go...'

Beverly groaned at him, 'Oh Worf, it's only a party, Deanna's not from Earth but she's going. Data's not from...well...he's going, aren't you Data?'

The android nodded, 'Certainly doctor, I am looking forward to experiencing the Earth tradition of Christmas.'

Beverly beamed, 'Right, that's settled, were all going...'

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Guinan was standing at the Ten forward door to greet everyone when they came in. 'Merry Christmas everyone, welcome to my very own grotto, grab yourself a drink'

The girl's gasped with pleasure as they looked around the lounge, taking in the lights and the candles and they both rushed over to the tree to gently touch and admire the pretty trimmings.

This was all so new to Deanna, and Beverly was as excited just watching the animation upon her face.

The men smiled indulgently at the women, and headed over to the bar, the waiter already ladling the punch into large glasses.

Guinan managed to catch Will's eye and silently beckoned him over. When he reached her, she pulled his arm so that he lowered his head to hear her, 'Do you remember the old custom of kissing under the mistletoe?'

Will grinned, his eyes lighting up at the thought. 'I sure do'

She beamed, and after checking no one was looking, gestured to Will to look up. He did so, then smiled at her, suddenly realising the possibilities that were unfolding before him.

Guinan whispered quietly, 'I thought it would be a good idea to introduce the counselor to another Earth tradition, what do you say Commander?'

He chuckled quietly, as he rubbed his hands together with anticipation, 'This should be fun... Time to get this party underway...'

He walked away from her, his stride now purposeful, 'Counselor, come and try some punch'

He tugged at her arm, and she laughed, 'O.k., o.k. I'm coming, what's the rush, we've got all night. Isn't this fantastic Will? I've never seen anything like it. Is this what they do every year on Earth?'

He smiled at her enthusiasm, 'Uh huh, yep. Only on Earth, there's usually snow, Christmas is not Christmas without snow.'

By now, Will had managed to get her seated at the bar with a glass of punch in her hand. He chatted happily to her about all the different customs, about his own Christmas's in Alaska with his father. Going sledging. Finding the perfect pine tree in the forest, cutting it down and dragging it home.

Getting his first proper grown up Christmas present, a fishing rod, and that very same afternoon, catching his first big fish, taking it home and baking it over the fire. Deanna loved listening to him, watching his face as he remembered his past.

Will kept topping up her glass and before long, her eyes began to slightly glaze over. Eventually Deanna rose to visit the ladies. As soon as she had left the lounge, Will went over to the rest of the group who were sitting around the Christmas tree relating their own stories of Christmas's past.

'Listen guy's time to tease the Counselor. See the mistletoe above the bar?'

They all looked up, and instant understanding registered, all except for Worf and Data, who

were momentarily confused.

' Get the others to explain to you, but I want you Geordie, to go first O.k? But don' t let her know what' s going on...this is going to be a blast!'

Geordie chuckled. ' You got it Commander.'

The door hissed open and Deanna came back in and Will met her back at the bar and refilled her glass, already starting to tell her about the time when he got his first bicycle. When he' d totally got her attention, Geordie casually strolled over, his hand touching her shoulder.

As she turned to look at who it was, he planted a big kiss on her lips. ' Merry Christmas Deanna.'

She looked up at him in shock, quickly glancing back to Will and then stared at Geordie' s back as he wandered back to his seat. Will pretended nothing out of the ordinary had happened and he carried on his ramblings.

Deanna' s mind was racing, but nobody seemed to be making anything out of the unusual occurrence. Eventually, amongst the fog of punch, Deanna pushed the incident to the back of her mind, figuring it was the punch making him a bit frivolous.

Will carried on telling her about the snow and how he used to go skiing, when he suddenly stopped and looked up, when a deep voice broke off the conversation. ' Er herm...'

Deanna turned to look up into the Captains face as he spoke, ' Merry Christmas Deanna.'

And he bent and kissed her quickly on the lips. As he turned away, he winked at Will mischievously before turning away, back towards the table here the others were deep in conversation.

Deanna stared open-mouthed at him as he did so, before turning back to Will. How he didn' t laugh at the expression on her face, he' d never know.

' Did you see that, the captain...he kissed me.'

Will feigned innocence, and shrugged unknowingly. ' Must be the punch...'

Will smirked as she picked up her glass and stared into it, expecting to find...well, whatever it was, it wasn' t in there... Before Deanna had got anotehr chance to gather her wits, she felt a sharp tap on her shoulder,. Startled, she turned to face Data.

' Excuse me counselor, May I kiss you?'

She swallowed noisily, nodding dumbly as she could do nothing more than what his mouth descend to hers. He bent stiffly and planted a rapid, sharp kiss on her mouth,

As Data almost stood to attention after, he added an almost military statement. 'Thank you' Will had to put his fist in his mouth to stop himself from laughing out aloud, and managed to contain himself by the time Deanna turned her questioning look back to him. His hands lifted upwards in a 'beats me' gesture, as his face pulled the same expression.

Deanna had begun to realise a joke was being played on her, especially when she turned and looked at the others who were sitting totally oblivious to what was going on over at the bar.

She began to get rattled, 'Hey, Worf, aren't you going to kiss me too?'

Knowing that he wouldn't, he wouldn't have dared...she visibly paled when he stood and walked over to her. Dragging her up off the stool, he roughly grasped her upper arms, lifting her slightly so that her toes were barely touching the floor and ravaged her mouth with a brutal, hard kiss.

When Worf finally let her plop back onto her seat, he growled, 'Happy Christmas...Deanna.'

Deanna almost fell to the floor, grabbing hold of the table to stop herself from doing so. It was then that she heard the faint chuckles, that steadily turned to full scale laughter. Deanna looked around at her friends one by one, and knew that she had been set up,. Even Guinan was laughing, that in itself was rare.

Her eyes finally settled on Will and he was grinning at her broadly, motioning for her to look up. She did so with a puzzled frown, 'What is it?'

Will stood and gently took her into his arms and quietly told her, 'It's called mistletoe Deanna, another old Earth custom. When you meet someone under the mistletoe, you kiss them.'

He looked intently into her eyes, then lowered his head to hers, his eyes falling shut at what he, at last, had wanted to do for so long. He had been given the chance to kiss his Imzadi, openly, and freely. A chance to set things back on course, like they were supposed to be. Together.

Barely moments later, they broke apart when they felt something cold lightly falling on them. Looking up with surprise, they saw snow. Guinan had managed to replicate snow in the Ten Forward lounge.

Will looked down at Deanna and smiled, with pure happiness as he held her close. 'Merry Christmas, Imzadi...'