

Challenge.

A QUESTION OF LOVE

The Klingon stood stiffly before his immediate superior officer watching the equally tall man pace thoughtfully around the spare expanse of floor before him. It had taken a lot of courage to take the proverbial bull by the horns and get the advice he sought from the man that eyed him warily.

Worf noticed that Will kept a respectable distance away, was he afraid of him?, Worf felt the silent rumble of laughter within him as he answered his own preposterous question. William Riker was afraid of no-one.

Tapping his lips with his fingers, Will continued to ponder the Lieutenants strange question. It taken him completely by surprise, and he was totally unprepared, something that he quickly remedied before losing face.

Never in his life, did Will think that Deanna, his Deanna, would end up in a torrid relationship with Worf.

That first time that he had seen the look pass between the Klingon and the Counselor would remain etched in his memory for eternity. For a while Will was so bemused by the situation that he actually encouraged it.

Until it turned serious.

Until Worf turned up on his doorstep, tonight, asking that question.

"Sir, I know this may seem...inappropriate, but, I need some advice about Dea...Counselor Troi."

Will chuckled at Worf's obvious discomfort. Despite knowing him for a good number of years, Will still considered the huge man a bit of an enigma, bit of a dark horse. Until now.

"It's okay Worf, you can use her name in front of me. I think I've got past the stage of bursting into tears every time I hear her name."

Worf's eyes opened wide with shock and Will watched the red hue creep up Worf's neck as he tried frantically to compose himself to apologise, until he spied the mischievousness that danced in the pale eyes watching him. Worf sighed heavily as he grumbled with a seriousness that was heard but not felt.

"That was NOT funny Commander."

Will held up his hand in mock apology.

"Sorry Worf, couldn't resist, anyway, what did you want to know, what juicy little tidbits can I divulge about our beloved Counselor. Do you want to know what position she favours, or where she likes to be...?"

"Commander, Enough!, I will not allow you to ridicule the sanctity of the woman that I love!"

Will circled around the warrior once more, the joking facade was gone, replaced with a burning curiosity.

"What did you come here for Worf, to gloat, to rub my nose in it a little further, to ask for my blessing!? How could you possibly love her as much as I, come to that, how could she possibly love you as much as she loved me?"

Worf stood his full height and even Will found himself looking up slightly, he silently found himself wondering how that happened until Worf's angry snarl brought him back to the problem at hand.

"Are you challenging me Commander, Do you wish to resolve this in the way of the warriors, the Klingon way, to the death?"

Will laughed in his face at the absurdity of it all, taking Worf by surprise with his sudden change.

"Do you think killing me would make a difference Worf?. Do you think that my death would erase the love that she once felt for me, or the love that I felt for her!?...Worf that would probably be the worst thing you ever did."

Will broke the contact with Worf's eyes, afraid of him seeing his carefully disguised feelings about Deanna Troi. Throwing his heavy body onto the sofa, Will wearily rubbed his hand over his handsome features.

"I'm sorry Worf, that was unforgivable of me...sit down, ask me your question, I promise I won't fly off into another tangent again."

Worf studied Will for several moments before cautiously sitting opposite him, his stance stiff and unyielding. it was many moment more before Worf formulated his mouth to begin.

"Sir...Commander...Will...I need to know how humans treat their women..."

Will blinked in surprise as an easy grin spread across his face.

"That's it, that's the question!?"

Worf nodded abruptly before sheepishly answering,

"Yes, it is. The Klingon way is...very much different. Klingon women behave almost as...wild

as the warriors that they mate with. I am afraid that...Deanna will not endure or, appreciate our way of courtship."

Will was astounded, never in a million years did he expect this. It was several moments before Will could formulate a coherent response. His hand flailed helplessly midair as he tried to gesture his inner puzzlement. He knew he was grinning stupidly, but the severe Klingon did not seem to find the situation remotely amusing.

"Worf...are you asking me about how to treat Deanna physically, or mentally?"

Worf groaned at his feeble admission.

"Both. The only thing that Deanna would endure is the Klingon love poetry, the rest would be too...aggressive. What I wish to know is what she would like, what she would expect...what is expected of me, as her mate."

Will exhaled loudly as he contemplated the task before him, and as much as he hated the idea of them together, as his friend he really had no choice, but more importantly, he was doing it for his Deanna. No matter how many times he told himself that they were only friends he would never ever think of her in any other way but his.

"Okay...let's try this...If Deanna needed comforting, what would you do?"

Worf squirmed in his seat.

"Well I think I would probably talk things through with her, that's right...isn't it?"

Will smiled as he shook his head, pushing himself to a stand, before speaking.

"No, no that's not what she wants, WHEN SHE NEEDS A FRIEND, she needs a personal touch, first you would silently sympathise, then I guess, YOU'D BETTER HOLD HER, because that's what she wants, that's what she needs holding close."

Will waited for Worf to digest his meaning, watching him logging it away for future reference.

"Worf, what would you do if Deanna began crying?"

Clearly uncomfortable with the idea of a woman weak enough to be reduced to tears, Worf visibly paled at the image.

"I...I don't know, I am not accustomed to such...weakness."

Will scoffed loudly as he knowingly relayed his feelings on that particular subject.

"Let me tell you Worf that women, nearly all women cry, sometimes for practically no reason

at all, and Deanna...well Deanna in crying mode is an experience all in itself, but WHEN SHE STARTS TO CRY, then all you've gotta do is OFFER HER YOUR SHOULDER, nine times out of ten, thats all she needs."

Worf nodded, beginning to understand the fragility of the female mind, but he was a long way from accepting it. Will's voice broke in as he carried on.

"When things are going wrong AND WHEN THE WORLD COMES CRASHING DOWN around her ears, AND LEAVES HER FULL OF DOUBT, which I might add, is another female trait, just remember, all you've got to do is TAKE HER IN YOUR ARMS, and she's eternally yours. See it's easy, AND THAT'S WHAT LOVES ABOUT."

Grinning, Will went and sat back down and studied the Klingon opposite him. He could feel let alone see, the uncertainty emanating from him. Will tried again.

"All SHE NEEDS TO KNOW is that YOU CARE, it doesn't matter what else is happening in her life, SHE NEEDS TO KNOW YOUR THERE, and if you have an argument, it has to be you that backs down, it has to be you that does the grovelling, even IF IT TAKES CRAWLING ON YOUR KNEES, you've got TO LIVE UP TO YOUR VOW to be the man that she wants you to be, NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES, YOU WORK IT OUT SOMEHOW, all you've got to remember is TO TREAT HER LIKE A LADY."

Worf grimaced, baring his teeth in that familiar toothy snarl.

"That's it is it, THAT'S WHAT LOVES ABOUT?..."

Will chuckled, "Yep, that's it and if you want her, that's what you've got to do to win her."

Worf studied Will as he languished in the seat before him, noticing that he looked a little too smug, a little too sure that he wouldn't be able to give Deanna a 'proper' relationship, a relationship that was going to mean something to both of them, one day. He also wondered if Will was trying in his own way to warn him off, maybe for his own gains.

Worf felt his insides tighten as he struggled with the knowledge that Will could probably step right in and take Deanna away from him without barely batting an eye lid. Well he wasn't ready to give up on the fragile Betazoid just yet. He forced his anger back and changed his posture to a less aggressive position. Will watched Worf warily as the darker man spoke with a voice that was strained with an emotion that he was barely capable of.

"I intend to do my best Commander, Deanna GAVE TO ME HER HEART and I swear with a Klingon's honour the I HOPE TO NEVER BREAK IT, no matter what happens to us in the future."

Will stopped breathing as Worf continued to speak,

"She...also BARED TO ME HER...SOUL, her innermost desires, I COULD HARDLY TAKE IT in, she a beautiful humanoid woman and I, a Klingon warrior...Commander, Deanna

GAVE ME ALL SHE HAD, I did not understand when SHE SAID THAT SHE COULD DO WITHOUT UNTIL THE END OF TIME...Sir, what did she mean?

Worf was understandably puzzled by Deanna's statement but Will was still too busy nursing his broken heart to answer him.

Deanna, his Imzadi, had given Worf...everything that they had made theirs, and more, he was beside himself as the shock of what he was losing...what he had lost, stared at him in the face. Deanna Troi had given her heart and soul to another, a possibility that he had been confident that would never happen, shouldn't have ever happened.

Worf watched as Will stood and began to walk towards the door. Worf had done it, he had severed the link between his new woman and his greatest adversary, he should have felt relief, maybe even joy, why didn't he?

But as the slumped shoulders of Commander William Riker stepped silently through the door, he answered his own question.

Because he had just shown me what love is.

Worf whispered in awe to the closed doors,

"SO, THAT'S WHAT LOVES ABOUT"

End...