

SECRETS AND LIES

By Carol Sandford

The end of the shift beckoned the weary crew of the Starship Enterprise D. Deanna Troi had been relieved when the away team reported back on board. More importantly, her very precious Will was also back and safe and sound once more. Her level of anxiety rose tenfold when he was away from the safety of the ship.

No one knew the perils that lay beyond its metal hull and no one knew who was friend or foe, until it was usually too late. So far, life had been "kind" to them, but they all knew that one day, someone or something wouldn't be kind enough to spare their lives. Deanna fretted with these thoughts every time her Imzadi went on a mission.

Will wearily sat back in his chair as he relaxed after the mission which, for a pleasant change, went without any hitches. However, he also felt it was one boring trip out and a waste of time. William T. Riker lived for the promise of adventure. Secretly, it was one of the main reasons he didn't really push for promotion. Once he was Captain, he would be stuck on board with his executive officer getting all the juicy assignments, and, most of the time, having all the fun.

His eyes briefly glanced over to Deanna, who was staring off into space. As he yet again sat and admired her, he felt himself grow warm with the glow that existed even if they weren't strictly a "couple".

But as much as he loved her, and as much as he would like to become as intimate as they were on Betazed, he wanted things to stay just as they were. The concept of Deanna becoming his wife made him break out into a cold sweat. The very thought of him not returning to her one day from an away mission was more than he could bear to think about. No matter how much he loved her, he was determined that on board, friends was how they were going to stay.

Deanna caught Will's glance and threw a teasing smile his way. His eyes sparkled in response, no doubt with his own brand of mischief, and she knew that he was thinking about her, and them. Will Riker had become her closest buddy, and he was there for her...always. Sometimes, they came so close to crossing over the barrier from friends to lovers, but they both always managed to stop themselves, mindless of their bodies screaming out for the loving they both wanted so much.

Deanna hated it when Will went on away missions. Not knowing if he was coming back alive left an ache that reached down to her very soul, which felt just as intense her relief when he shimmered back into existence on his return. For this reason alone, she refused to contemplate taking the relationship any further than it already was...

~*~*~*~*~ Deanna watched him as he walked along the edge of the shoreline, the frothy surf washing away his footsteps almost before he had left them. She admired his tall, lean body, bare except for the shorts that hugged his never-ending long legs, she ached for him before he had even reached her.

"Hello Will, you took your time tonight, I was beginning to think you'd stood me up."

Her eyes teased him as she watched him walk up to her and soon she found herself gathered within his arms. As Will swung her around, Deanna's laughter was swallowed in their deep kiss. Deanna clung to his body as she slowly slid her down his length, enveloped totally within his embrace. Will's hunger for her echoed in the groan that found its way up from deep within him. He brought his hands up to gently cup her face, placing tiny kisses all over her face as he whispered urgently,

"I love you Deanna, I need you... let me love you Imzadi."

And by the time they had both sank to their knees onto the soft, damp sand, they were free of the few scraps of clothings that had separated them. And as the moonlight shadows danced over the now re-united lovers bound together in that intimate dance, the gentle waves washed over their bodies, trying its best to tug apart the two spirits that had melted into each other but failed to cool the hot desires that poured from deep inside their very souls.

The roar of the distant surf drowned their cries as they exalted in the ecstasy of their secret love...~*~*~*~*~

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## Chapter 2

Will watched her from the bar as he drank with one of the visitors that had come aboard two days ago from a ship in need of repairs. They had been very pleasant guests, and one in particular had obviously become attracted to Deanna, much to Will's chagrin. He now found himself watching them, wondering if they had become lovers.

"Does their 'attraction' to each other bother you Commander Riker?"

Will looked back to his companion, startled from his reverie and slightly embarrassed at having been caught mulling over something that was not his business, his response coming out harsher than he intended,

"Of course not, Ranshell...Counselor Troi and I are purely business colleagues, I have no claims on her what-so-ever, Whoever she chooses to be 'intimate' with, is fine by me..."

The elder man studied the handsome man across from him, noting that he had glanced back to check on the couple, who had now risen from their chairs. He also watched Will stiffen as Jaran placed his arm around Deanna's shoulder as he pulled her towards him to whisper into her ear. Clearly, their relationship had reached intimacy, and now they were going to explore that intimacy in the privacy of their own sanctuary.

He looked back to Will, who had turned back to face him, with a nervous, and very fake grin now firmly placed upon his face. "Pardon me for being blunt sir but... That is one of the biggest lies I think I have ever heard...Sir."

Will stared at him open-mouthed and astounded as the tiny man slid off his stool and made his way over towards Geordie. My god, was it THAT obvious so that a stranger could pick up his feeling for her? He was going to have to try harder to mask his emotions; otherwise everyone

was going to know how much he really felt for her, and he didn't want that to happen...ever.

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~*~*~*~*~Deanna propped herself up on her elbow, her fingers automatically tracing a path down his chest, coming to settle low on his stomach. Will reached down to pick up her hand and cradled it upon his chest.

Each looked into desire filled eyes, hers dark and sultry, his blazing blue, both reading the rapture that radiated from within them. Moving together, they tasted each others lips, tentatively at first, and savoured the sensation that rapidly built before hunger took over. Deanna found herself being dragged on top of his body as they began that age old familiar embrace. Throughout the universe, there would never be anything to take over this sacred act of intimacy of hearts and minds and body and souls joining together for the ultimate act of love, made all the more precious because they were Imzadi. ~*~*~*~*~

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### Chapter 3

The two women sat opposite each other in their aerobics class, stretching tense, tired muscles and relaxing their minds. Beverly Crusher noticed that Deanna looked almost serene as she wandered off into her own little universe, her movements automatic from the constant sessions every week. Usually, they exercised in relative silence, but the secretive little smile on her friend's face intrigued her.

"So...How are things?"

Deanna glanced at the strikingly beautiful redhead, surprised at her question. "What do mean?"

So, it was going to be like that was it, Beverly wondered to herself. "Oh, I just wondered, you know, are you happy? How are things are between you and Will?"

As soon as she had said Will's name, she knew Deanna was hiding something. Again Deanna feigned innocence, "Wha...What do you mean? What makes you ask?"

"Oh, just curious...I haven't seen you much outside of working hours, and come to think of it... I haven't seen much of Will either."

Beverly looked quickly at the darkly mysterious Betazoid for the blush that was sure to give the game away, inwardly triumphant at the telltale red spot that appeared on Deanna's high cheekbone.

Deanna felt her pulse quicken as she realised she was digging herself into a deep hole. She knew Beverly had picked up on her flustered embarrassment. She had been taken by surprise and hadn't managed to mask her feelings in time. The mere mention of Will made her heart race, though they'd had this conversation numerous times before. Until now, her feelings had been kept well and truly buried, but now she was worried. Because it was the last thing she wanted anyone to find out, she tried to bluff it out.

"Well, I can't say for Will, but I've been...taking piano lessons. Someone recommended me to try it, apparently it's great for relaxation."

She quietly looked to her friend to see if she'd brought her story, her heart hitting the floor as Beverly enthused, "That's great. You'll have to do a show for us in Ten Forward, maybe Data can accompany you..."

Deanna held up her hand to stop Beverly in her tracks. "Whoa Bev, It will a 'long' time before I try anything like that, I've only been practicing for a couple of weeks."

Beverly looked crestfallen, but soon picked something else to discuss, her face brightening again, "So... How are things between you and Will?"

Deanna sighed. \*This was going to be very long aerobic class...\*

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Chapter 4

As all the members of the crew filed from the bridge at the end of yet another uneventful day, Deanna walked behind Will and the Captain, chatting amicably with Data, they all stopped in their tracks to face her when they overheard Data's casual question.

"Dr. Crusher has informed me that you are learning to play the piano, Counselor. Maybe I could be of some assistance, since I am fully adept at various forms of the instrument."

Deanna physically paled as the consequences of her lie was about to be unfolded in front of the entire senior crew, including an amazed Will Riker, who was first to pick up on the conversation.

"Piano? did we hear you right, your learning to play the piano Deanna?"

Deanna decided her only course was to brave it out, and she was also slightly rankled that her fellow comrades were under the impression that she wasn't able to learn such an object.

"Yes, it's true...I...wanted to learn something about music. I figured a piano was a good start, it...it also helps me relax."

Will grinned from ear to ear, the Captain showed an amused bewilderment, and Worf looked at her totally unbelieving. Now she was cross. "What's so funny? Don't you think I'm capable of learning such a thing?"

Will laughed outright at her, but then tried to make amends for his audacity by apologising as they all started to walk away from her, knowing that they were about to be assaulted with her wrath. "I'm sorry Deanna, but don't you think a piano is a bit...difficult for a first instrument...most people usually start with a... recorder."

She stood there, open mouthed and gob-smacked, the nerve of these guys, well, she'll show them.

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"Counselor Troi to Commander Data."

Deanna knew this was going to be the only way out of her predicament and keep up the charade that she'd managed to land herself in.

"Yes Counselor, Data here, how may I help you?"

"Could you meet me in Holodeck Two, please, in ten minutes, if you are not doing anything of course?"

"Certainly Counselor, I will be there."

As Deanna approached the holosuite, she was sorry she had started this. The last thing she wanted to do was learn how to play a piano, but now that she had no choice other than confessing her sins, she braced her shoulders and barked out her command,

"Computer, run program Troi Delta 3 omega 1... and add a piano"

The computer acknowledged its order with its customary bleep, and Deanna entered the huge metallic doors and stepped into a 1940's New Orleans bar scene. Jazz music blared from the band quartet in the corner, and the room was already heaving with men looking like Al Capone and women looking like they belonged propped against a solitary lamppost out in the street.

"Computer, remove people."

Another bleep, and the room went silent as the people disappeared into thin air. Deanna spotted the piano beside the stage that held the band. She casually strolled over to it, lifted the lid, and tentatively pushed one ivory key. She jumped as the sound echoed throughout the empty room. Data entered just at that moment, and walked over to her, he smiled his own particular smile and asked her,

"What would you like to play Counselor? Would you like to accompany me with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or perhaps Chopin, or..."

Deanna cut him off with a nervous chuckle. "Data, I want you to teach me how to play a piano."

He stared at her slightly bemused, his confusion written all over his pale face, "But I thought..."

Deanna shook her head, her regret at her blatant lie evident on her face,

"Oh, Well" Data said. "Let's start right from the very top then, shall we? First we pull out the chair and find a comfortable position so that you can touch both ends of the keyboard within your own arm span..."

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Chapter 5

~*~*~*~*~Locked away in their own private world, Will put his head onto her lap, a restful, happy smile lit up his face and Deanna smiled at his obvious pleasure. Her fingers began to play with the errant locks that teased his head. She looked down at him thoughtfully; his eyes now shut, and dared to break the quiet, reflective mood that had embraced them.

"Will... How much do you love me?"

He opened one eye to peek at her unusual question. His grin widening at the serious look on her face, he gently teased, "You mean, you really don't know?"

He watched her smile sadly and pushed himself up onto his hand to look at her straight in the face, his other hand gently lifting her chin to make her look at him. Her breath became shallow as he exposed his love to her with his eyes.

"Deanna Troi...I love you more than words could ever say, you are my whole universe, you are all that I live for, and for you alone, I would gladly die...because without you, there is no point in my existence...you are my life Imzadi..."

Will watched the tears trickle down her face. He could feel her uncertainty, but was not sure what was causing it. Whatever it was, she knew that he would always be there for her. One way or another, he would always be there. Will gathered her within his arms and let her quietly sob into his shoulder. His own emotions eventually quieted her as she truly realised just what she meant to him. He felt her lightly kiss his cheek and pulled back to look at her, her eyes still shimmered with unshed tears. Will gasped as he could feel Deanna's inner most desires filtered through his own yearning. The need to have her within him became second to her own needs, he barely heard her choked whispered plead,

"Will?"

It was all he needed, the meeting of their lips opened the floodgate for every need, desire, and ache that surged throughout their bodies, both in tune with one another, both minds in perfect harmony. Together they soared and together they reached out and took the love that was theirs for the taking.

They were one again~*~*~*~*~

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"So, Deanna...How's the piano lessons coming on, are we up for a debut show yet?"

Deanna looked nervously around her friends as they all looked expectantly at her. She lowered her eyes to watch Data deal out the cards, she caught his quick glance, but knew she had no fear of being rumbled by him. Data was sworn to secrecy. Her voice sounded over bright even to her own ears,

"Heavens No! I've only just about mastered chopsticks!!"

They all joined her nervous laughter, but as Deanna stared at the cards within her hand, Will

studied the face that had become a permanent fixture within his head, and he suddenly realised that she was lying! As the game wore on, Deanna slowly came to realise that Will was watching her intently; she threw him a grin occasionally, hoping to throw him off. As time went on an overwhelming dread began to settle throughout her, he knew she was lying.

Deanna entered her quarters relieved that she'd managed to escape the inquisition. Her hurried departure brought surprised glances from her comrades. Now Will knew there was definitely something wrong. Deanna nearly always stayed behind and had a drink with him.

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~*~*~*~*~>The moonlight was especially enchanting tonight, the sky was ablaze with almost every shade of pink ever discovered, a sky for romance...

"Hi Deanna, are you O.K.?"

Deanna walked into his waiting arms and hugged him close, savouring his warmth, his ability to wash away all the day's wrongs for her. She loved these special intimate moments that they had come to depend on. "Oh Will, I'm so glad that I have you...I don't know what I'd do without you, your so right for me, I wish we didn't have to hide."

Will squeezed her tight as his feelings mirrored her own. "I know...I know, but I don't want to spoil what we have, and we both know that it wouldn't work any other way...you do know that don't you Dee?"

He held her away from him so that she could see the sincerity of his words, he saw her sigh, resigned to the knowledge that he was unquestionably right. "Yes...I know..."

They looked longingly into each other's eyes, reading the love that shone from within their depths. "Kiss me Will, please...kiss me."

And once more, he drew her into his embrace, this time to show her how much he wished it could be any other way...~*~*~*~*~

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## Chapter 6

Captain Jean-Luc Picard summoned his senior crew, all but one to the observation lounge. They had arrived at the edge of what appeared to be a wormhole, one that had never been charted.

All the crew agreed that a probe was the first option to see what, if anything lay on the other side. The probe was launched and they all sat and watched its progress on the view screen. The wormhole appeared to remain stable and the crew sat in silence to see what would transpire when it reached the other side.

At first nothing seemed to be amiss, in fact, it appeared to be exactly the same space as they were already in. That seemed odd to the crew even though the probe's data banks didn't show any abnormalities. Nothing solved the mystery as to why the wormhole was there. The captain asked Deanna if she could sense anything. She shook her head,

"No, nothing, I sense nothing at all, it seems to be totally devoid of...anything."

The captain sighed as he turned to his right-hand man,

"What do think Will, shall we go in and have a look? I for one am curious. It's an unusual phenomenon: a wormhole that leads to...the same place. >It's certainly intriguing."

Will stared at the view screen as he considered the options. Maybe a shuttle would be wise for a first entry, but then the probe had been perfectly o.k. He could see no valid reason not to go in, but then, what was the point if there was nothing to see except the same bit of space?

He glanced at Deanna to gauge her feelings. Her face held no fear and she didn't seem concerned, which settled his dilemma.

"O.K. Sir, I can't see any harm in having a look...ensign, take us in, half impulse power."

The giant Starship entered the anomaly at a snail's pace and the crew sat in awe as the walls shimmered with various colours, almost like a rotating circular rainbow. The entire bridge crew was transfixed with the sight that revealed itself before their very eyes. On reaching the exit, Deanna turned to her fellow crewmates to share the experience. Her blood-curdling scream echoed throughout the ship at the horror that stared back at her...

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Chapter 7

Her beloved Will sat in his chair, his own horror reflected upon his face, and she realised why. Deanna's hands flew to her face, and even without a mirror, she knew that she had aged. Her eyes never left Will's as she reached for a lock of her hair, almost crying out loud as she looked down at the almost white, tissue thin limp hair that had once been her crowning glory. Will saw her despair, but as he tried to stand to offer her some comfort, his now scrawny, weak legs gave way and he collapsed into an undignified heap on the floor. It was then they noticed the fine powdery substance that covered the floor and looking up, noticed it on the Captains chair. And worse than that, his uniform was lying in the same position as if he was still sitting there.

As realisation sunk in Deanna cried out, "Oh my god...the Captain...he's gone!"

As Will and Deanna looked around the bridge, it was eerily silent as other members of the crew stared back at them, all aged and all in deep shock. Will noticed that the others on the bridge weren't quite as old as himself and Deanna appeared to be. The tactical station was devoid of a controller, and Will racked his brains to try and remember who was manning the communications console...Worf!

Will dragged himself around the tactical stations structure, the effort almost making him pass out with pain as the rigors of arthritis seized his joints up beyond recognition. Groaning with the exertion, he finally crawled around enough to see Worf's body on the floor, curled up into a fetal position. Will could see that Worf was breathing, but very raggedly, like a man about to die...

Will tapped his comlink badge, hoping there were people alive elsewhere on the ship.

"Riker to Crusher."

His voice barely sounded like his own, but was just close enough for the computer to acknowledge it.

A few moments later, an equally crackly voice came back, "Crusher here...What the hell happened?"

Will smiled painfully, still trying to catch his breath from the struggle to see Worf. "I think we've jumped into the future, but Worf is in trouble! Can you get down here to see if you can help?"

It was a long moment before she answered, "I'm sorry Will, but I'm crippled, my legs won't take my weight...tell me...How's Jean-Luc?"

Will caught Deanna's eye as she too had slowly and painfully made her way over to see Worf for herself. Somehow she had painfully managed to nearly stand upright. The long silence was enough for Beverly to know their answer.

"He's dead...isn't he?"

Will felt her loss almost as if he'd lost his own father. His heart was heavy when he finally replied, "Yes, he is Beverly. I'm sorry. I think it must have been because he was older than the rest of us. I'm not sure what's wrong with Worf. I know he's a little younger, but he appears to be dying Bev."

Beverly Crusher told Will that it was probably Worf's Klingon physique causing the trouble. Since his genetic make up was totally different than theirs, there was probably nothing they could do. Deanna had sat down beside the giant man and was gently stroking his face. It was the only comfort she could give him, and she was elated when his breath quieted to a more peaceful, almost sighing, rhythm. Beverly dared to ask Will if he'd checked on the rest of the ship. She heard the uncertainty in his voice when he answered

"No, not yet..., I've not had the chance yet, I'm about to do it now, Riker out"

WILL had been watching Deanna's quiet ministrations. She had shut her traumatised mind down and seemed to be stroking Worf's face on auto-pilot. Will's heart ached as he tried to imagine dying without her beside him, doing the same thing. He shook himself out of his agonising to reach across and gently rouse her. Her blank eyes, huge with fatigue looked back at him.

Will tenderly halted her hand from its ministrations and as he did so, he whispered "Deanna...he's gone."

Deanna blinked as the words sank in, then sobbed as she looked down onto Worf's face. Will's own grief broke through as he watched her despair, Will needed to get her away from

Worf .

Between them both, they managed to make it back to their chairs. The ensigns at the helm looked to Will for any kind of solace. Will looked from one to the other, his bewilderment evident on his face. His mind kicked in when he looked to the young ensign and registered the fact that Data usually sat there...DATA!

"Computer, locate lieutenant commander Data."

"Lieutenant Commander Data is currently in his quarters."

All eyes looked urgently to Will once more as he spoke to thin air, "Riker to Data."

A huge sigh was heard when he responded, "Data here Sir."

Will almost held his breath when he asked him "Data, are you all right?"

"Yes Sir, I am fine, however, you sound a bit strange Sir, is there a problem?"

Will almost laughed out loud. "Yes Data, there most certainly is a huge problem! Can you make your way to the bridge pronto?"

"On my way Sir."

Data walked onto the bridge five minutes later, his yellow eyes taking in the scene before him and his purposeful stride coming to a full stop in front of them. "Commander, what happened...and where is the Captain?"

All eyes looked towards the chair, no words were needed, and after a moments silence Will quietly looked back up to the android and his eyes begging, "Find out what the hell happened here, Data, and try to get us back to where we came from, ASAP."

Before Will finished speaking, Data was at his console, his hands flying over the controls, trying to make sense of the situation. All waited with bated breath for his explanation.

Finally, Data turned to them ready with his hypothesis. "It appears that we have jumped approximately forty two years and eight months into the future. The wormhole is still stable. If my calculations are correct, we should be able to return back to our original destination and our original time line, Sir."

Will sighed. Reaching over to clasp Deanna's hand, they both silently looked at the rapidly dispersing dust that once was their beloved Captain. Will quietly, but anxiously gave the order. "I hope to god you're right, Mr. Data. Make it so."

Data swung back around to face his consul and prepared to turn the ship around, heading it back into the black abyss, and hopefully, back to how they were. Now it was Data's turn to admire the beauty of the inner wormhole. The rest of the bridge crew now saw it in a whole new different light; the registered minutes it took to travel through it became a lifetime of

anguish. Data witnessed as he watched his fellow cremates miraculously changed back to their former selves. These images would be permanently etched in his fantastic positronic brain as one of the great wonders of the universe. Will and Deanna stared at each other waiting for the changes to start, still unaware of the time lapse the left them to the mercies of the unknown. It wasn't until they had come out the other side that they saw that were truly back to their original state.

Also restored was a bemused, and slightly bewildered Captain, who watched his finest crew members leaping about in front of him, crying with tears of joy and relief. He looked around to Worf, who appeared to be happy, but quietly amazed. Picard stood to approach the group who were still frantically hugging and laughing. Everybody was so emotional, no one could speak.

"Did I miss something here? Number one, What's happened?"

The Captain's two senior officers managed to contain themselves enough to face their captain, but Picard noticed that they still held on to each others hands as they did so.

Not quite knowing where to start, Will hesitated while he thought of the simplest way to explain.

"Well Sir, we went through the wormhole, and come out on the other side...in the future."

Picard looked at him, still slightly bemused, not quite understanding the situation. "In the future eh? So, how come I didn't get to see this miraculous event?"

He watched the look between the two again, but Beverly's arrival on the bridge put paid to his eagerly awaited answer. "Oh, Jean-Luc, I'm so glad you're alive!"

He looked at her startled, his face draining of colour, "Alive...are you saying I was... dead?"

Data felt it was time for his explanation, and approaching the foursome he readied himself for a full detailed report. "May I suggest we go into the observation lounge Sir, I think it maybe better if we were all sitting down."

Picard nodded his ascent, and they all proceeded to enter the observation lounge, Will and Deanna still clasped hands...

Chapter 8

When they finally emerged from the conference, Picard was a different man. In fact, they were all different, the incident making a profound effect onto everyone on board the Enterprise, except Data. It made everyone think of their own mortality now they had seen their future lives in full glorious colour.

Deanna knew she was going to be very busy in the upcoming weeks.

Picard ordered warning beacons to be placed in various locations around the wormhole to warn off any other unsuspecting ships and had already relayed a communique to Starfleet to spread the information to the relevant sectors.

Deanna sat opposite Will in the Ten Forward lounge, quietly talking over the last few days events.

Although they felt a kindred spirit about knowing how they were going to be when they eventually grew old, it raised some worrying doubts about their own deaths. Could either watch one or the other go? The very idea terrified them, but neither one admitted out loud that they wouldn't want to go without each other there.

~*~*~*~*~*~Later, tucked up in the huge cosy bed, both lost in their own thoughts until Will broke the silence, "Deanna, don't you ever want to have a family one day?"

Deanna looked up at his face, amused at the sudden question, "Is that a proposal Commander?"

Will chuckled at her response, surprised at her humour, "Why Councelor, would you accept?"

Deanna hugged him close, slightly swaying him back and forth, looking around him, anywhere other than his face, as she pondered his question. "I don't know Will, I mean...why spoil a beautiful friendship, we have practically everything a married couple have, love, admiration, respect, careers, in fact, were even better, because were Imzadi."

Will scowled at her, his mouth turning into a pout, "You' re avoiding the question Deanna Troi, I asked you to marry me, and all you've given me is an excuse... I want an answer."

Deanna visibly squirmed. she wished she were anywhere but here right now. She hated it when he put her on the spot and groaned when he answered for her.

"Forget it Deanna, I was only teasing you. I don't want to get married any more than you do, but, I would like some children...a child, wouldn't you?"

Registering what he was asking her, she grinned, "So...what would you like, boy or a girl...or both?" ~*~*~*~*~*~

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Life slowly got back to normal on board the Enterprise E. Deanna continued on with her piano lessons. Data had become an excellent confidante, never getting cross at her numerous mistakes, and never getting frustrated as she failed to master even the basics. Best of all, he never revealed her secret.

One night Will sought her out. He arrived at the holodecks and was surprised to find the entrance well and truly locked. He was puzzled.

"Computer, location of Counselor Troi?"

"Counselor Troi is in Holo-suite Two."

"Computer, access Holo-suite Two, authorisation code Riker Beta four alpha two."

"Access denied, password required."

Now Riker was intrigued. Why was she hiding away to take piano lessons, and more importantly, who was teaching her? He wandered back along the corridor determined to get to the bottom of her secrecy. He was convinced now that things weren't as they seemed. She was very evasive, not just with him, but with everyone. He wondered why she avoided him. True, in some ways, he avoided her, but only to keep his traitorous feelings under wraps. When he was around her, she could read him like a book and he suspected she felt the same way. He had his own way of dealing with his dilemma, and it sure as hell wasn't learning to play the piano!

Will began to keep an eye on her times spent at the holodeck, several times he had been flummoxed when she'd gone to the holosuite, stayed for maybe half an hour, leave for a while, and then go back. He'd gathered enough information now to know her routine and the next time that she visited them, he was waiting, around the corner, out of sight. Deanna approached the holosuite and barked out her request, furtively looking around to make sure no one was within ear shot,

"Computer, run programme Troi Delta three Omega one, plus piano, minus people."

She walked inside and Will stepped out from his hiding place, his grin braking across his face,

'So the lady really is taking piano lessons'

He started as he heard another set of footsteps come along the corridor. Will jumped back to his hidey hole, he heard Data's voice request entrance to the holosuite, and Will all but laughed as he visualised him teaching the tone deaf Deanna Troi how to play what he considered to be one of the hardest instruments ever.

Will wandered off to ten forward mindfully keeping an eye on the time, making his way back just before Deanna predictably turned back up at the same holosuite. "Computer, run programme Troi Alpha five Omega two, password secret."

Deanna entered her own little world and Will stood and watched her go, he had a strange feeling, but shrugged it off as silly, but determination now surged through his veins to find out just what Deanna's little 'secret' was.

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Chapter 9

As the rest of the senior crew slept and after he had ensured Deanna was safely tucked up in her bed, Will made his way down to the holodeck. Beads of sweat broke out on his brow as he relayed Deanna's secret code into the computer banks, relieved when the doors sprung open and shocked when he saw the scene playing out before him. It was a beach, a tropical beach, complete with coconut trees, the softest sand he'd ever seen, and a surf that just begged to be dived into. What really took his breath away was the sunset. He had never seen anything like it, a mixture of pinks and lilacs played across the sky, and the moon, so low you could almost

touch it, glowing like a beacon. His attention was attracted by a movement from along the shoreline. As the figure approached, Will felt everything fall into place.

Deanna could not wait to escape into her own little world, this was the only way she was ever going to have the best of both worlds. Will as her best friend in real life, and Will as her lover in her secret life, and now it was time for her secret life. She approached the holosuite and dished out her usual command, tonight she had made a particular effort, she had replicated a sarong and her mane of black ringlets had been pinned back above one ear and a large lotus blossom graced her head. She entered in breathless anticipation. She never tired of this beautiful scene. Besides having Will to share it with, she loved the peace and serenity she felt whenever she was here,

which was becoming more and more frequent, especially since the wormhole incident. Time had become precious and she needed him more and more to fill the void that the experience had left. Sadly she also knew she was going to have to cut back before it started invading her real life. She made herself comfortable on the sand and watched the surf roar to the beach, she felt herself relax, and right on cue, he came along the shoreline.

"Hello Will, here, come and sit down." She patted the sand beside her, and he plopped himself down beside her, throwing her a grin.

"Hi...This place is fantastic isn't it?"

He saw her nod her agreement, and together they watched the sunset, marvelling at the array of colours that played before them.

After a while Deanna turned and asked him, "Will...don't you ever want to have a family some day?"

Her question took him by surprise, "I guess so...why, do you?"

He watched her nod again as she looked into the distance, lost in thought, "Yes I do. Will, what would you say if I asked you to marry me?"

She turned to look at him head on, and knew that she caught him on the spot. "Well...I'd probably say yes...I think! Why, are you going to ask me Dee?"

She frowned at the shortened name, then thought better of it as she pondered his turned-about question. "I don't know, what would you really say Will?" "I...I need to know."

Will reached across to gently caress her face, her sighing into his hand as she closed her eyes to wallow in the sensation that coursed throughout her body at his touch. "Deanna...I love you. I want you to be my wife, I want to have babies...I want all of it Deanna."

As his lips touched hers, he gently laid her down on the sand, the kiss deepened, and they were lost once more to the magic of the moonlight...

Much later, they both stood to say goodbye, Deanna kissed him and turned away, her heart heavy, but she knew it would only be for a short time before he would be in her arms again.

As she walked away from him she spoke to thin air. "Computer, end programme'."

The room shimmered back to its yellow squared grid. As the doors opened, something made her look back. She thought her eyes were deceiving her as she stared at the man standing in the middle of the room. Time stood still as they looked at each other, emotions played across their faces as the whole story unfolded before them.

Finally Will broke the silence. "Deanna?"

He was left speechless when she turned and walked away from him, the holodoors closed shut as she disappeared around the corner out of sight. It was several moments before he berated himself and set off after her. He knew she would head back to her own quarters, and knew that she wouldn't acknowledge him until they were behind closed doors. He used his own override access code to enter her quarters, knowing that she wouldn't willingly let him in.

Will found her staring out of her porthole, her misery radiated all around her, her voice quiet as she finally plucked up the courage to ask him, "How long have you known?"

He wasn't quite sure if her problem was his knowing about the programme, or the lie. Whichever it was, he had to be very careful. "Not long. You know Deanna, it's o.k...I understand how you feel."

She whirled around, her embarrassment giving her a faint pink glow. "How can you possibly understand Will? You don't want a relationship, you've never wanted a relationship with me, you left me behind Will Riker...you left me behind."

Her voice broke on her last words.

Will was mortified at her outburst. He thought she'd understood why he'd left her and that they'd overcome that hurdle. He hurried over to her and caught her in his strong arms as she let her grief finally release.

"Oh my god Imzadi, I am so sorry...I never meant to hurt you. I thought we had something better than that. I swear to you, I wanted to, I truly wanted to come back for you, but I was too late. You had already left for the academy and I didn't want to ruin things for you, so I left you alone. I knew I'd blown it and I also knew you wouldn't have taken me back. But I never forgot you Deanna. It was you who kept me alive on dangerous missions, I was determined to find you again and put my mistakes to right, I had every intention of being with you again one day, Seeing you on the other side of that wormhole made me realise how much I want us to be together. I want us to be together 'til the end Deanna. I want it to be you who comforts me as I take my last breath."

Deanna had stopped crying and watched his face intently as he poured out his heart to her. Will's truthfulness was unquestionably honest, and she found herself crying again as she thought of him dying in her arms. However, she too now wouldn't want it any other way. Now they just had to deal with the dilemma that they were in. Will hugged her until she quieted and decided it was time to let her in on his own secret.

"Deanna, I want to show you something. Will you come with me?"

His eyes begged her to follow him. She sniffed and nodded. They headed back towards the holodeck, and Deanna stood with wonderment as Will entered his own personal access code, "Computer, run programme Riker, Gamma Echo one Alpha three, password dreams."

Deanna looked into his eyes as he spoke, her curiosity well and truly piqued. As the doors opened, Will added "Computer, remove Deanna Troi."

They entered Will's own fantasy world. Deanna stood in the centre of the huge room, surprised as she came face to face with a huge double bed inside a rustic log cabin. A roaring log fire blazed in the centre of the wall.

Her eyes fell to the large fluffy hearth rug, her heart doing a little flip at the image that immediately sprung to mind. She looked up to Will's face, her astonishment evident, his face apprehensive. "Are you telling me you've been doing the same thing Will?"

He nodded, his own voice breaking slightly. "Y'see Deanna, I can't live without your love either, I wanted...needed, the best of both worlds too."

As they both walked into each others arms once more, they knew then that they had come full circle, and things were never going to be the same for them again, and most of all, there was going to be no need for any more secrets and lies.

The End