

Battling the stormclouds

By Carol Sandford

"What's This?"

Deanna didn't even have to turn around to know what Will looking at, or what was suspended in his hand.

"A bikini."

"Going on holiday?"

"Uh huh...I need some time out."

Will studied the tiny scrap of material with interest along with the jealous pang of the image of someone else seeing her in the revealing outfit. He was more agitated about the fact that - he- had never seen her in it. Her words finally registered, -time out-

...He held his breath as he spoke the question, a question that he was sure he wasn't going to like the answer to.

"Time out from me?"

He studied her back intently, bored into her mind, and if he could get there, her soul too. His heart thumped painfully as he watched her slowly straighten. She was going to turn.

"No...no don't turn around...I don't think I want to see what's written in your eyes Deanna. Just tell me."

He watched her shoulders slump again, heard her sigh. Felt her misery saturate through him.

"Will...I don't want to talk about it right now, I might say some things that I don't want to say. I need this time to sort out my mind. I must do this Will."

Will felt a spark of fury ignite, he tried hard to keep it to a smoulder, not allowing it to burst into flame and spend the rest of his life regretting un-retractable words. He picked on her holiday rather than them.

"And you think Risa is the stepping stone? You think that laying on a beach, soaking up the sun, getting your brain fried is going to give you answers? The answers are already in your heart Deanna...if you could just stop and be honest with yourself."

She stayed silent and that irritated him more, but instead of flaring his pulsating anger it did the opposite.

"But you can't, can you Deanna? You can be no more honest with yourself than you could to

me. What did I do that brought us to here Deanna, what in hell's name did I do?"

At last she turned her head to him. Huge obsidian eyes glistened with unshed tears, her rose tinted lips trembled as she tried to contain herself. But for the first time in his life, Deanna's tears didn't affect him.

Didn't grab him by the throat as it attempted to rip out his own heart and experience the pain along with her.

Didn't make him force her into his arms, hold her as she cried as though her heart would break. Kiss away her tears, tell her that he loved her. Tell her that she was his universe. Call her Imzadi.

It was then Will realised what was wrong. He felt nothing, he didn't care anymore.

He didn't care.

He didn't care that she was going on holiday without him, he didn't even care for her reason why. Will just simply didn't care.

And Deanna felt it. She saw it.

She turned away, her heart so heavy with pain, it's beat throbbed along with its agony, her voice, barely a whisper but as clear as crystal had no doubts, no recriminations, no guilt and no hope. "You don't love me anymore."

Her voice screamed in the bleakness as his voice cold with its own misery and resignation came back at her, just as clear. "No, I don't love you Deanna, not as you are now."

The silence lay heavy between them save for the heart-wrenching sobs that shook the tiny frame before him. Will didn't have to see her face to know that her eyes would be a mirror of his own. Wet with tears, heavy with grief.

Shattered.

Will's voice broke as he tried to open his heart to the woman before him, his Imzadi. "The Deanna Troi that I fell in love has gone. The Deanna Troi that caressed my soul with her very presence has gone too. I'm not sure when she went, but she has, and I miss her."

Deanna choked on the tidal wave of despair that bubbled up from deep inside her body, but once it reached it's goal, it broke free from her like a thousand lost hopes and dreams escaping their captivity.

Will went to her, holding her from behind as they both wept for what they had lost. What they both wanted. What they could both have if they searched their souls together. All it would take were words. Words that needed to be said. Words that had to be said. Who would say those words?

Deanna heard the tender whisper against her hair, felt the first stirring's of hope begin to shine through the stormclouds that had surrounded and held fast for so long.

Too long.

"Stay..."