

A CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALE

By Carol Sandford

"Where are you taking me Will?!" Deanna's excited chuckle rang through the Enterprise's corridors as Will dragged her along at a rapid pace, almost as excited as she was.

"I want you to meet someone Deanna. Someone who was very special to me in my past."

"Do I know her?"

Will laughed, "Why do you always assume its a woman?"

Deanna grinned mischievously at him, "You mean it isn' t?"

Will rolled his eyes, "No, it is not."

At last, they arrived at the holodeck and Will continued to pull her into the stores where he promptly began to pile clothes onto Deanna's body as she stood there with a bemused smile on her face.

First came a long woolly scarf, then a thick knitted bobble hat. She smacked Will's hand away as he miserably failed to tuck her long curls into its confines. "Leave it be Will! I'll look stupid enough as it is."

Moments later he helped her into a very long warm coat, and last but not least, extra thick mittens. Deanna stood, barely able to move with just enough of her face showing to be able to see where she was going. Will couldn't understand her muffle until he pulled the scarf away from her lips, "Sorry darling, what was that?"

"I said...I guess we are going to get cold..."

Will beamed his famous poker grin, pulled the scarf back over her mouth and said in a rather over-bright way. "Only for a little while, Darling."

Deanna watched as Will began to pull on his own ensemble, until like her, only a piercing blue gaze full of mirth remained to be seen.

Together they waddled out to the holosuite door and Will spoke to the console before him. "Computer, run programme, Delta seven, authorisation code Riker Omega one." Moments later, the monotone voice told him the programme was ready and opened its doors for them to enter.

Deanna gasped in awe at the scene before her. Snow as far as the eye could see covered the countryside landscape and waiting a few feet away, two white horses, reigned up to an odd looking carriage on ski's. A driver sat patiently waiting for them to climb aboard, which they

did so when Will lightly touched her back, urging her forward.

She looked up into his face, seeing only an eagerness for her to enjoy whatever was coming. Reaching up her hand, the driver heaved her up onto the carriage, and handed her a blanket to cover her and Will's legs, once he climbed aboard and settled beside her, draping his arm around her shoulder and pulling her close.

And then they were off. Deanna squealed as the horses moved off with a sudden jerk, but her unease vanished as they began to move through the breathtaking vista. Will had deliberately chosen the route through a forest, and before long they began to spot animals out searching for food. Deanna was entranced with the deer with huge antlers. The tiny brilliant white rabbits, almost invisible against the sparkling glow of the snow. But her absolute favourite, was the robin, perched on a branch weighted down with snow. Its red breast as vivid as a beacon against its white background.

Deanna was beside herself with joy at the perfect gift that Will had shown her. But only minutes later, she had a feeling that her surprise was not over. In the distance, they spotted a plume of smoke coming from a large shack half hidden in the dense forest, its roof blanketed in snow, but its windows glowed with yellow light, welcoming them inside.

As the carriage pulled up outside, Will climbed down and helped Deanna off, keeping her close to his side as they stepped towards the warmth. Will gave a loud knock and opened the door, which creaked and groaned with age. Stepping inside, they banged off the film of snow from their shoes and gasped in awe at the sight that greeted them.

A huge wood fire dominated the entire room, throwing ribbons of colour around the walls. Lanterns blazed from various niche's around the room, and the aroma of hot roasted coffee tickled their noses, making them groan with desire.

But it was the man who sat in a huge overstuffed chair by the fire's hearth that captured their attention. And it was this man that Will pushed Deanna towards with a huge grin upon his reddened face.

"Deanna, I want you to meet Santa Claus, a very dear friend from my childhood."

Before she could say hello, a very robust and warm voice boomed throughout the room. "Ho Ho Ho, Merry Christmas! Come and sit on my knee, and tell Santa Claus what your heart desires."

Deanna stepped back startled. "Excuse me?" She turned her wide eyes to Will. "Did he really just tell me to sit on his knee?"

Will was very serious as answered her, "Oh yes, you have to sit on his knee."

"You do! Did you when you came to visit him?"

Will was very serious with his answer, "Of course! You can't tell him what you want without

sitting on his knee Deanna."

Deanna thought about it for a moment, before she found herself having to ask, "Didn't you find that a little...strange?"

Clearly Will didn't understand her misgivings as he frowned openly at her. "Of course not, he's Santa Claus! Everyone had to sit on his knee!"

"Everyone?..."

"Yes, everyone."

Santa's voice made them both jump as they stood in silence contemplating the strange conversation that they were having. "Come child, come and tell me what Santa Claus can do for you. Have you been a good girl this year?"

Deanna was mortified, "I beg your pardon!" before turning open mouthed to Will, "What is he implying Will?"

Will sighed with frustration before patiently trying to explain the tradition to her. "Santa Claus can only give you what you want if you been good. If you've been naughty he doesn't come to visit you Christmas eve."

"He comes to visit you, at your home?"

Will nodded innocently. "Of course! When your asleep in your bed, he creeps into your house and leaves you a present."

Deanna snorted indignantly. "I'll just bet he does!...Will, get me out of here...NOW!" Will was amazed when she turned about face and headed towards the door. "Deanna! what's wrong?!"

She suddenly spun back to him, anger radiated from her as she almost spat at him, "How could you Will, how could you encourage a dirty old man like that. And with me! how could you?!"

The silence was deafening as the impact of her words filtered through the befuddled minds of the two men that stared at her as though she had lost her mind. Until first Will began to laugh, and then the old man. Hearty rich loud gwafts of laughter rang throughout the cabin and beyond its walls to the stark bleakness outside.

Deanna waited patiently until the laughter subsided enough for them to explain themselves.

"Oh Deanna, I am so sorry, please forgive me. Please, come and sit down and we will explain."

Deanna eyed the two men warily before sitting a very chaste distance from Santa, her hands

folded demurely in her lap as she waited for Will to explain.

"Deanna, we have a legend on Earth that spans back, oh...generations and generations. Every year, at Christmas time, children would go to visit Santa Claus, sit on his knee and whisper to him what they would like for Christmas... Of course, most parents would already know what their child wanted, so they nearly always got it, so it looked like their wish had come true. The legend goes that Santa Claus lives at the North Pole, with all his elves who make all the children's toys for Santa, and his magical reindeer to deliver them Christmas Eve.

Deanna looked from one man to the other as she tried to digest what she had just heard. "Are you pulling my leg?"

Santa roared with laughter. "Ho, Ho, Ho! Come and sit on my lap and make a wish, and we'll see if we are really pulling your leg or not."

Deanna was bemused once more, "But...I'm not a child."

"It doesn't matter, its if you truly believe that counts...Come."

His huge chubby hand beckoned her towards him and Deanna felt the pull of his magic, and before she knew it, she was balancing precariously on his knee, scared to death of hurting him. But he showed no indication of her being too heavy. "Tell me, my child, what is it that your heart desires?"

Deanna leaned towards the white whiskered face and whispered into his ear. "I wish that Will and I were one, forever."

A tender smile crept on the old man's face as he hoarsely whispered back to her. "Your wish has been granted my dear. Christmas morning will come and you will find your wish under your pillow."

As Will and Deanna climbed back aboard the carriage and set back off for home, through the trees they heard a faint tinkling of bells."What's that Will?"

"That's Santa setting off to deliver his gifts, he has a busy night ahead."

Deanna laughed, "Oh Will, you didn't really believe all that as a child did you?!"

Will was chagrined, "Of course! If there was nothing else stable in my life, I could always rely on Santa coming."

They travelled in silence for the rest of the journey until at last, it all came to an end. Stepping outside the holodeck door, Deanna took one more look back at one of the most amazing days of her life.

Slipping the scarf from her face and neck, she reached up and pulled Will's face to hers. "Thank you, Imzadi..." Their lips touched briefly, but as they pulled apart, they found they

both wanted more. Will wove his hand into the heavy mane of her hair and pulled her flush against him for a searing kiss. She tasted of snow, but he soon melted her heart as he delved into the hot recess of her mouth, leaving no doubt that the day was not over for them yet.

When Deanna dreamily woke the next morning, she was instantly reminded of what happened only a few hours ago when Will had taken her to bed and reclaimed her love. The perfect ending to a perfect day.

Deanna slid to the edge of the bed and sat in a daze as she recounted how much had happened in the last twenty four hours. An amazing adventure to meet an amazing man, in an equally amazing location.

And that wish...Deanna chuckled as she remembered that wish. Santa was right, it had come true, but she wondered what he had meant by finding it under her pillow, especially when she had found it ON her pillow, in the shape of Will's head. It had been more than she could have ever wished for.

Almost.

It was then she understood what the old man had said, and her heart stopped beating. Tentively, her hand slipped under the pillow, her delicate fingers fumbled around, eventually finding nothing. Deanna sighed with disappointment. The conversation came back to her. * You'll find your wish under your pillow...*

Deanna moved across to the other side of the bed and slid trembling fingers under her own pillow, dragging them slowly across the silky material. her heart pounded with anticipation, and then despair when she found nothing. Sighing defeatedly, she pulled her hand out from beneath the pillow, but gasped when her finger tip suddenly touched something tiny.

Grasping the object within her now sweaty palm, Deanna finally pulled her hand out and stared at the object on her open palm, tears instantly springing to her eyes. It was a gold ring with one solitaire diamond glinting like a captured star. She slipped it onto her finger, and lifted it to her lips and placed a tender kiss to its ice cold surface, something that would always remind Deanna of her trip in the snow.

Suddenly she felt the bed give way as Will came and planted a tender kiss to the hollow of her shoulder blade, both admiring the gift that spoke so much...reminded them of so much.

"See, I told you he was real. Merry Christmas Imzadi..."

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