

A Warrior's Prank

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A Warrior's Prank

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Summary

"They'd planned it this morning before Riker took the day shift, and after a brief break, he and Worf returned to support the Captain during his respite.

And for a bit of nonsense."

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"Worf, I've given this a lot of thought. You're the only one I can trust with this particular operation."

Worf's features were difficult to read--a major problem for a man like Riker, who generally prided himself in his ability to case others. The only change he noted in the Klingon's face was a very slight tic of a muscle near his left eyebrow. Could mean annoyance. Or curiosity. Hard to say. "I think you are mistaken, sir. Counselor Troi is a far better actor than I."

"That's the problem. Everyone knows how Deanna and I are close. They'd know we were up to something. You, though? Nobody would suspect you. It's perfect."

"Perhaps. I don't understand the purpose of this... I hesitate to call it an operation, sir. It's far outside the bounds of our duties to Starfleet. In fact, it seems rather childish."

"Yes! Of course!" Will clapped his hands, tried to keep the anticipatory smirk down to a little smile. "Nobody on the Bridge expects that out of you. Yes or no?"

"Of course they don't." Worf's chest visibly swelled, as though all that honor and pride strained his ribs.

"So if you go along with my little--my plan, if you like that better--it'll surprise them. Yes or no?"

Worf closed his eyes. Opened them again. "I suspect you're right."

"It'll change the way they think of you. They'll realize they can't anticipate your actions in the future. That's basic psy-ops, Worf. You can't tell me a warrior like yourself can't see the value in keeping your friends on their toes."

Now the Security officer's eyes widened. The darkness of each iris caught a secret flame. The corners of his mouth very nearly turned up, a smile so vague it easily hid behind his mustache. Riker wondered if Worf felt the hook catching him by the lip. "... a warrior's prank."

"Is that a 'yes' I detect?"

"It is. I will go along with your script." Worf then tilted his head, a move Riker had seen him pull at the poker table when considering a bluff. He kept his own poker face, but he thought that, maybe, Worf was about to talk him out of it. "... Commander Riker, I would never question your own capacity as a warrior. But you are not Klingon. I do not understand what you will achieve by such trickery."

Will let the smirk fully bloom. "I get to make everyone's day a little more surreal."

The turbolift carried Commander Riker and Lieutenant Worf towards the Bridge. Riker heard the lift click and shift as it changed directions, seeking the fastest route, as always. He heard it clearly since neither he nor Worf were speaking. Wasn't necessary. They'd planned it this morning before Riker took the day shift, and after a brief break, he and Worf returned to support the Captain during his respite.

And for a bit of nonsense.

The lift's ambient pneumatic travel-sounds slowed. Both straightened up; this was it.

Riker turned to Worf. The Klingon's eyes glowed, his upper lip curled in a snarl, his chin raised to accentuate the picture of furious disdain.

Riker assumed his own position: He stepped close enough to Worf to kiss him, leering over him, taking advantage of every centimeter he had over his inferior officer. Riker held his breath for several seconds, forcing his face to redden. His eyes widened, that ancient human expression of emotional overload, and as the turbolift door opened, he jabbed a finger directly in the middle of Worf's chest.

--can't believe you would ever suggest that, Lieutenant! You know what?"

"What, sir?!" Worf bellowed. Nearly took out Riker's hearing.

The Commander hissed--loudly enough for the Bridge crew to overhear, naturally: "That's it. You're cut off, Worf. No more hugs for you! That hug list I've got? You're off it! Permanently."

"Sir, that is a drastic--" Worf looked to his left. Pretended to perceive the turbolift's door, now standing wide open. In a brilliant moment worthy of Welles, Worf lowered his head, as though in shame. "We are at the Bridge."

Riker cleared his throat. "So we are."

He stepped out onto the Bridge. God, he loved having every eye on him when he entered a room, and here was no exception. The Captain stared at him from his seat of honor. Deanna craned her neck to peer over the top of her own chair. The Ensign posted at Ops stood with her hands hovering over the computer panel, her mouth open. Ensign McKnight realized Riker had noticed her, and she spun around in her chair, focused back on the comm.

About the only one who didn't look up was Data. Ah, well. Can't win 'em all.

Riker stormed down the ramp and, having arrived at his chair, practically threw himself into it. He sat with arms crossed over his chest, head down. He'd never been so grateful to have the beard. Half-hid his smile. He heard Worf arrive at Ops and stonily request the Ensign clear out for the moment. Just the right amount of feigned anger.

Sure, Deanna already knew they were full of shit. But she had a pretty good poker face, too. He sneaked a glance in her direction. She delicately covered her mouth with one hand and averted her eyes.

"Everything all right, Number One?" the Captain said. He looked to be questioning Riker's fitness for duty.

"It'll be all right, sir."

"Commander?" Data. Still not looking up.

"Yes, Data." He let the anger drain from his voice, as though he was trying to recover from the deep wound Worf dealt him, one worthy of the worst of punishments, never getting another patented Riker Hug.

"Have I done something to offend you, sir? As far as I am aware, I, too, am not on your hug list."

Riker drank for a month on the story of how he got the entire Bridge crew to crack up for a solid minute (well, Picard for twelve seconds, but that was as good as slaying a whole comedy club audience), but he never quite forgave Data.

Damned android didn't even understand humor, and he came up with a better punchline.

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