

## Guessing Games

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## Guessing Games

by [jamaharon](#)

### Summary

Are Counselor Troi and Commander Riker dating, or are they just friends?

The crew of the Enterprise tries to figure it out.

### Notes

For beebec76/Lazarus

“They’re definitely dating,” Geordi said. “But it’s a secret.”

“How can you tell?”

He tapped his VISOR. “Easy. Whenever Counselor Troi’s in the room, Riker’s heartbeat skyrockets. It doesn’t do that for anyone else.”

“So he likes her,” said Wesley. “That doesn’t mean she likes him back.”

“Oh no?” Geordi glanced across Ten-Forward, where Troi sat with a group of her friends. Riker had just entered the bar and hadn’t caught sight of Troi yet, but he made his way to the bandstand, where he propped one foot up on the stage and leaned forward, the way he always did to relieve tension in his lower back. Across the room, Troi’s dark eyes were suddenly fixed to Riker, to the slant of his hips and arch of his back, to the thoughtful look on his face and the way his hair fell across his forehead. Geordi focused on her vital signs and sat back with a chuckle.

“They’re dating,” he declared.

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“They’re not dating,” Beverly said, dropping her medical scanner on the table.

Everyone looked at it a touch warily.

“What is this, Doctor?” asked Picard, poking the scanner with his lightpen.

“It’s not contagious, Jean-Luc. It’s Will’s latest results from medical. As his commanding officer, you’re entitled to see them.”

Data cocked his head. Worf shot Geordi a questioning glance. Wesley’s eyebrows were furrowed. But Picard just picked up the scanner and read the results, his face perfectly blank.

“They are not dating,” he confirmed to the table. “Beverly, may I speak to you outside?”

“Of course.”

They exited, leaving the dinner table in total silence, all eyebrows raised. Through the door, they could hear Picard speaking in a hiss.

“Where the hell did he pick up *that* virus?”

“Sir, he just got back from Risa. We know full well where he picked it up.”

Inside, at the dinner table, various faces lit up in the infrared as they realized what kind of virus, exactly, Beverly meant. Worf stared awkwardly at his own hands. Wesley turned a fascinating shade of red. O'Brien hid his eyes behind his hand.

"I hope she doesn't share everyone's results like that," Geordi said, wanting to sink into his seat.

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“They’re dating times a *thousand*,” Wesley declared. “And I have evidence — I made a log!”

The entire engineering crew groaned as he whipped out a padd.

“Stardate 41565.2,” Wesley read. “Spotted Commander Riker and Counselor Troi walking arm in arm through the arboretum.”

“Inconclusive,” Data declared.

“Stardate 42378.8,” Wesley said. “Counselor Troi returned from leave on Betazed. Commander Riker greeted her in the transport room with a kiss—”

“On the cheek,” O’Brien interjected.

“Still!”

“He kisses everyone,” said Geordi dismissively. “He kissed Data on the lips when Data got back from *his* leave.”

“That is a factual statement,” Data said. “I have also witnessed Commander Riker embracing Dr. Crusher and holding Captain Picard’s hand, although I do not believe Captain Picard appreciated it. I have also seen him embrace you, Wesley, and Geordi, and O’Brien, Keiko, Mr. Worf, Lieutenant Bixley, Lieutenant Sheef, Lieutenant Holland, Lieutenant Embassa, Lieutenant Tow, Lieutenant Yarf, Lieutenant —”

“Okay, Stardate 42667.1,” Wesley said. “Commander Riker and Counselor Troi asked Lieutenant Barclay to move to a whole different row so they could sit together at Mom’s play.”

Geordi hummed thoughtfully. “Were there any other seats open? I mean, was their only choice to sit next to Barclay? Maybe they just didn’t want to be next to him.”

Barclay made a wounded sound.

“There were plenty of open seats,” Wesley said. “Just none where they could sit together. And look, Stardate 43943.5. That day our shields kept messing up. Counselor Troi was tossed to the floor of the bridge and Commander Riker—”

“—shouted that weird word—” Geordi remembered.

“Imzadi,” Data supplied.

“—and rushed to her side!” Wesley finished excitedly. “And Captain Picard made that sarcastic comment about abandoning his post, and Commander Riker turned beet-red! But he still stayed and helped Troi to her feet!”

“That’s pretty good,” Geordi admitted.

“And six days later I saw him kissing her hand. And eight days after that I saw her massaging his neck in Ten-Forward. And ten days after that he got injured on an away mission, and remember, she said—”

“*Will, if you don’t wake up, I swear I’ll never attend any of your stupid terrible concerts again,*” Data recited. “A most illogical statement. If Commander Riker had died, of course he would be incapable of performing in the future.”

“So you see?” said Wesley, beaming. “They’re totally together!”

From the maintenance hatch down the hall, there came a sudden banging noise — a cry of pain — an elbow striking metal — a hushed giggle and a whispered admonishment. The hatch slid open and a disheveled alien guest stumbled out, still smiling. She stopped at the sight of them and fixed her hair, and while she was adjusting her hastily-put-together clothing, Commander Riker emerged from behind her.

“Oh,” he said, since all of engineering was staring at him. Then he noticed his fly was down and turned away to fix it.

“Okay,” said Wesley, crushed. “Maybe not.”

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“They are no longer together.”

Everyone’s heads snapped up.

“Evidence?” Data requested.

“Simple.” Worf shook his head, lips compressed into a thin line. “I spotted Ambassador Zebo emerging from Counselor Troi’s quarters.

After dark, and with a particularly smug expression on his face.”

“Damn!” Geordi said while everyone else tsked. “I was certain...”

A hush fell over them as the door slid open and Commander Riker walked inside. He glanced curiously at them but said nothing. Instead, he all but collapsed into his command chair and crossed his legs tight, his chin resting on one hand. His eyes were dark and far away. He was practically emanating a chill. When a technician tried to speak to him, Riker answered in the glummiest tone any of them had ever heard and stared wistfully out the viewport, where Ambassador Zebo's home planet was visible.

“Yeah,” Geordi whispered, “that’s evidence enough for me.”

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“They *are* together!” Ensign Gates exclaimed, bouncing into the ready room. “You won’t believe — oh— sorry, sir!”

Everyone on bridge crew grimaced as Captain Picard raised an eyebrow. “Glad you could join us, Ensign,” he said a tad severely. “Perhaps Commander Riker will deign to grace us with his presence as well.”

Ensign Gates flushed a little as she took a seat. “Actually, sir, I think he’s on his way. I passed him in the hall.”

“Oh?” said Captain Picard. “Do you have a time estimate, Ensign?”

Ensign Gates glanced guiltily at her fellow officers. “Ten minutes?” she said. “He was ... he was coming from *Ambassador Zebo’s* room.” She forced herself to meet Picard’s eyes. “And I think he needs some extra time to get cleaned up, sir.”

Data, who had just learned to wolf-whistle, put his new skill to good use.

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“They are no longer courting,” Data surmised.

“Oh?”

“I have spotted Commander Riker wooing the visiting Doctor from Station Eight,” Data said.

“Maybe that doesn’t matter,” said Geordi. “Maybe they’re in an open relationship. You know, like they date other people.”

“I do not believe so. During the most recent visit from Counselor Troi’s mother, I overheard Lwaxana ask if Commander Riker had proposed yet. Counselor Troi replied—” And here Data did an eerily good impression of Deanna. “—*Mother, you know full well I am dating Iggy now.*”

“Iggy?” said Geordi. “Who the hell is *Iggy*?”

“I believe *that* is Iggy.” Data indicated the far corner, where Troi was laughing along with a tall, handsome Ixnatian who’d recently transferred aboard the Enterprise.

“Damn,” Geordi muttered. He glanced around for Riker — there, by the bandstand, seducing Doctor Himmit with a trombone solo. “I really thought...”

The trombone gave an embarrassingly off-key warble. Doctor Himmit stepped back in alarm, her face wrinkling with distaste. Across the room, Iggy the Ixnatian covered his ears and clicked his tongue, while Troi glanced around — met Riker’s eyes, both of them startled — and then, as one, their faces melted into identical devilish grins and Riker played the bad note one more time, louder than before. Both his date and Troi’s fell back as if physically repelled.

“They’re *so* together,” Geordi said.

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They weren’t together. In fact, it wasn’t clear that they were even friends right now. Commander Riker had been especially stiff and professional with Troi on the bridge, and he’d conspicuously failed to invite her to the last two poker nights. Troi, meanwhile, had reverted to the cool persona she’d worn when she was new to the Enterprise, calling Riker strictly by his rank and surname, never ‘Will.’

The frost between them could freeze a warp core. Things were so tense that everyone on bridge shift with them had upset stomachs.

“There must have been a breakup,” Geordi theorized in a whisper.

“Worse than that. My bet is he cheated on her,” Ensign Gates said.

“I don’t know. You really think Riker would do that?”

Ensign Gates just gave him a look.

“I do not believe he would,” Data put in. “While Commander Riker certainly possesses a ‘wandering eye,’ to quote Ambassador Zebo—”

And what a diplomatic nightmare that had been.

“—there is no evidence his eye wanders, so to speak, when he is romantically involved with someone else.”

“Well, maybe this is the first time,” Gates said. “Or maybe Counselor Troi did something.”

“What could she do?”

“Read his mind,” Gates said, wagging her fingers spookily. “See something she shouldn’t have.”

“That still kinda sounds like a Riker problem, not a Troi problem.”

“Perhaps it is another Betazed custom,” Data said. “Much like her engagement to Wyatt Miller—”

“Surely she wouldn’t be genetically bonded to another guy,” Geordi said.

“Perhaps not,” Data ceded. “In any case, the situation is clear.”

As one, they turned and looked surreptitiously at Riker and Troi. Neither of them would even glance at the other. Their faces were hard, their shoulders tense. They looked like two people on the brink of war.

*I can't believe you ate the last pudding,* Troi said in her mind, absolutely seething.

*I told you,* Riker said back, his jaw tight. *I thought it was mine!*

*It was chocolate-flavored!! You knew it was mine!!*

Riker let out an exasperated huff of breath and massaged his temple, suddenly fighting a killer headache.

“Definitely not together,” Geordi whispered.

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It was late at night, and Commander Riker and Counselor Troi were adamantly not together. In fact, if anyone had asked him, he would have laughed and shook his head ... and probably told Deanna all about it in Ten-Forward later. *You won't believe what Geordi said.* No, he and Deanna were friends — best friends, the type who kissed each other in greeting and sat together whenever possible and frequently walked arm in arm. The type who might have dated once, years ago. And might still call each other ‘beloved’ and ‘my first’ in Deanna’s native language. And might still have a preternatural sense of each other’s emotions and an ability to project thoughts into each other’s heads.

But just friends.

At least, that was what Riker told himself as he stood outside Deanna’s door in his pajamas, shifting anxiously from foot to foot. He’d had trouble sleeping the last ... well, for the last week, ever since that strange disturbance occurred in the cargo bay. But at least now he knew why. Alien abductions. Experimentation. Limb amputation. Just an average week on the Enterprise, and now he could sleep safely, assured that no portals would open up at the foot of his bed and swallow him whole.

That was the theory, at least. In reality he’d been unable to sleep, even when Beverly prescribed him a sedative, and the exhaustion was wearing him down to the bone. He raised his hand and forced himself to hit the door chime.

“Identify visitor,” said the computer in a soft voice, programmed specifically for nighttime.

“Commander William Riker,” Riker said.

And the doors slid open before he even finished saying his name, like they’d been set to let him in. He blinked, eyes adjusting to the darkness of Deanna’s quarters, and stepped inside.

*Imzadi?* he called, stopping in the foyer.

There was a rustle of blankets. A sleepy groan as she stretched. He could just make out her face as she turned to look at him, opening just one eye. Anxiety and uncharacteristic shyness flared inside him; he shouldn’t have come; he shouldn’t be asking her this.

But Deanna just said, *I thought you'd be here hours ago. I tried to wait up for you.*

Will let his shoulders relax. *Can I—?*

She answered by shifting to the side and pulling the blankets back. Will slipped out of his shoes and padded over on bare feet. He slipped into the sleep-warm bed, the sheets laced with Deanna’s natural scent, so familiar to him. By instinct and habit he rolled onto his side and Deanna wrapped her arms around him, her stomach pressed against his back, her curly hair tickling his cheek.

*Your pajamas,* she said sleepily. *Where did you get them?*

“The replicator,” said Will, too tired to project.

“*That* pattern was in the replicator?”

Will tucked his chin against his chest and glanced down at his silky blue pajamas. “What’s wrong with the pattern?”

Eyes closed, voice barely a murmur, Deanna said, “Ugliest pajamas I’ve ever seen, Will. Looks like something Data would wear.”

“Oh, please!”

She trapped his hands in hers and gave him a light squeeze. “No wonder you came to me,” she said. “No sane woman would sleep with a man who looks like that.”

“These are nice pajamas,” Will insisted. “Ambassador Zebo loved them.”

“Ambassador Zebo had poor taste. He wore the silliest yellow thong.”

“Oh, trust me, I saw,” Will said, stifling a laugh. “Although ... he told me he got it from *you*—”

“Go to sleep, Will,” said Deanna hurriedly, thumping him on the chest.

He chuckled to himself, but he went quiet obediently, relaxing into her arms. She must have sensed how uneasy he was. Otherwise she wouldn't have joked around so much; she would have just gone to sleep. But she'd taken the time to tease him, to make him feel better, and suddenly that anxious knot in his stomach was gone. Will closed his eyes and breathed deeply, Deanna's arms a comforting weight around his middle, her hands wrapped around his own. When he shifted a little, he could press her hands against his chest and let her feel his heartbeat, a slow and steady thud.

Comfortable. Warm. Natural.

And absolutely platonic, he insisted when he left her quarters in his pajamas the next day and ran straight into Worf.

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“They are not just together,” Worf announced at breakfast. “They are *fucking*.”

And everyone glanced over at Riker with his bedhead and Troi with that sunny smile on her face and just agreed.

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