

## Moment of Truth

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## Moment of Truth

by [ChrisQ](#)

### Summary

Jim Kirk finds a moment to tell Will Decker the truth about his father's act of sacrifice.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" Will Decker stood in front of Jim Kirk in the *Enterprise's* observation lounge, eyeing him warily.

The wariness was one-way. Amiably Kirk replied: "What's the latest on the repair work?"

"Lucky for us Mr. Spock showed up when he did, or Pluto would be as good as done for." Will's eye turned quizzical. There didn't seem to be much of a point to Kirk's query until Spock and Scott had finished their work.

"You never knew Spock before now, did you?"

"By reputation only. To hear the stories, you and he were the best of friends during your first mission. But I can't help noticing something - everyone seems....uncomfortable around him. As if he's not the same man any of you served with before."

"You're quite perceptive, Mr. Decker. He isn't behaving at all like the Spock I, or any of us, know. Since you weren't with us on our first mission, your point of view is important, so I'm glad you said something."

Will paused, took a breath, held it, and then let it out slowly with: "If I may ask, sir, do you have a reason to think this could present a problem for the ship?"

Kirk raised his eyebrows - Will had just darkened the door of the very subject that was on his mind. "As it happens, Will, that's one thing I wanted to discuss with you. Have a seat." He reached over and picked up a padd on the end table as Will sat across the couch from him.

"Yes, I do have a reason." The sadness was evident in Kirk's eyes as he looked at the padd. "Your father underwent a profound personality change at some point after he and I went our separate ways. You might recall I was his first officer before we were both assigned new commands. And, you know as well as most of us how his life ended."

"Your log said it all," Will said quietly, nodding. "Dad blew up his ship inside that alien weapon, but your transporter was malfunctioning and you couldn't beam him out in time."

"No." Kirk's voice was equally soft and his eyes equally sad as they met Will's. "That's not precisely how it happened. My log stated only half of the truth because I wanted him to be remembered appropriately."

"What are you talking about?" Will shook his head in confusion.

"When I found him alone aboard the *Constellation*, he wasn't the Matt Decker I knew at all. He was....broken, to put it quite bluntly. Distraught, devastated by what had happened to his crew, and worst of all, he blamed himself for it. I had him transported back to the *Enterprise*. But once here, he was so hell-bent on revenge he seized command and ordered an all-out attack on the weapon."

"Are you serious?" Will's confusion had given way to disbelief.

"I wish it had happened the way I said it did. But Matt....I never found out what changed in him while we were on our separate missions."

"You think it was something that clouded his judgment and motivated him to put his ship and crew at dire risk," Will hazarded.

Kirk paused to sigh. "Forgive me for bringing this up, Will. But how did he handle it when your mother died?"

At this, Will glared the same glare he'd given Kirk when he learned he was being demoted from command. "Well, now there's a question I

hoped I'd never hear again."

"Why's that?"

"When the *Constellation* went missing after the Organian War, it got to a point where I was ready to swing on the next officer who asked me about it. And I almost did, on my C.O. on Delta Four at the time."

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*"Lieutenant Decker reporting as ordered, sir."*

*Since his promotion a couple of years prior, Will had learned that he didn't have to stand at stiff, rigid attention in every senior office. All he really had to do was stand there and look like he was paying attention - especially to Captain Archambeau, the head liaison officer with the Deltan Institute of Astrometrics. He always appeared enamored with the sky of Delta IV, which was as purple as the passion for which the natives were now renowned.*

*"Stand easy, Mr. Decker." Archambeau, a short, mustachioed character whose voice reminded Will of a tricycle horn, stared out the window at the deep purple sky for another moment and then turned to face him. "Sorry to interrupt your date."*

*"My date, sir?" Will appeared confused.*

*"Oh, yes, she's quite the looker, even by Deltan standards. What's she called, Ilyana? Illyria, or something like that?"*

*"Sir, I'm sorry, I don't know who you're talking about." Will didn't like Archambeau's leer any more than he liked his personal life being pried into by his superior.*

*"Well, no matter. I'll peg her eventually." Archambeau waggled his eyebrows and motioned for Will to sit down. "Have I ever told you your father and I served together on the Nimitz some years ago?"*

*"I...do seem to be hearing that from a lot of people lately," Will said with a forced smile. He'd known where this conversation was headed as soon as he heard "your father and I served together", and he wasn't eager for it to continue.*

*"I often do wonder what he's gotten up to right as he's about to make the events column in Regulus Institute Proceedings. When did you see him last?"*

*Will side-eyed him. "Face to face, just about four years ago, sir. It was when we both returned to duty after my mother died."*

*"Can't have been an easy time for you."*

*"No, sir." Will glared at the desktop. Any second now, Archambeau would ask him about whatever psychological changes his father had undergone.*

*"How'd he take it?"*

*"I suppose not very differently from any man who loses his life partner before her time," Will said, getting annoyed.*

*"Well, wasn't he upset by it? Depressed? Angry at the uni - "*

*"Permission to speak freely, sir!" Will fairly jumped to his feet.*

*Archambeau frowned at him for a long moment, then nodded. "Go ahead, Mr. Decker."*

*"I'm getting a little sick and tired of senior officers pretending to know my father so they can pump me for information!" Will's voice was loud, but he had to fight to keep it level. "It's always how did he react to my mother's death, and never how did I handle it! Not very well, I'm obliged to add! If you want to know something about my father, either ask him, or tell me what it is you want instead of dredging up our family tragedy all over again!"*

*"Oh, I'd love to ask him, Lieutenant, but nobody's been able to contact him for weeks," Archambeau said without hesitation. "Starfleet Command has been trying to hail him on all frequencies and he hasn't answered or sent any transmissions. But according to what information we have, he seems to have taken his ship and gone renegade. So you'll forgive us senior officers who are trying to use you as a conduit to get in contact with him, since there's obviously no point in denying that that's what we're doing. We need to find out what's happened to him, Will, and help him if we can."*

*Will was silent. Weeks of unrelenting reminders of the loss of his mother, and now this. He glared at the desktop again and then turned the glare on Archambeau, shaking his head. "Sorry, Captain. There's no private frequency, no secret family code, no coffee cans on a string, none of that. If you can't reach him, then as much as I'd like to, I can't help you."*

*"Well, that's a damn shame, Mr. Decker. Because I'd just as soon you don't have to worry about another family tragedy that we could have helped you prevent."*

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*"If only a one of them would have told me why the hell our family matters were suddenly a matter of interstellar security, that would have made all the difference," Will muttered darkly. "But even if they did, it wouldn't have helped. The God's honest truth was that I never knew what Dad was up to."*

*"To this day," Kirk recalled, "no one knows what happened during the three months that the *Constellation* was incommunicado. There were signs of a time distortion nearly a light-year beyond the L-300 sector that could have provided the answers, but....obviously no one on board*

lived to tell the tale."

"Now you said you only told half the truth in your log entry about the planet killer incident."

"Matt told the rest of it." Kirk passed him the padd, whose small winking display light indicated an audio recording.

With a quivering thumb, Will pressed the playback button and hunched over the padd. He caught his breath, hand rising to his face, eyes filling with moisture as he heard his father's voice for the first time in over a decade: a voice so despondent, so depressed, so thoroughly drained of hope that now he understood why Kirk had barely recognized his old commanding officer. Meanwhile, Kirk watched him as they both listened, saw Will's deepening respiration, saw him swipe at one eye and then the other. Will gulped hard when he heard his father asking Kirk to be honest with him about the fateful decision Matt Decker had made: and at long last, it came into focus, it all made sense, even though it flew in the face of everything Will had believed about his father's death, revealed to him Kirk's hidden motive for replacing him in command of the *Enterprise* on this mission.

Will's tongue slipped out between his tightly pressed lips as he tried to swallow his emotions. "Years ago, men would leave written notes explaining why they didn't feel they could go on living," he said in a thick voice. He looked up from the padd with glistening eyes. "He made a suicide run, didn't he?"

Kirk nodded. "Hijacked a shuttlecraft. I tried to stop him, Will. But with your mother and his crew dead, and all those planets destroyed right in front of him, he'd endured too many tortures of the mind. There was no talking him out of it."

"Then how did...." Will turned to look at him, his eyes still shining.

"His sacrifice seemed senseless at first, but our sensors detected that the weapon had lost a minuscule amount of power. That was what gave me the idea to use the *Constellation* to finish the job. I barely escaped with my life," Kirk added with a wry smile. "But the rest is history, and I chose to record it so that Matt would be properly remembered as the hero of the hour."

"All those officers who asked me how he took my mother's death, all those admirals, Dad's old shipmates....they never would have believed that it ran that course. I'm....even having heard this after all these years, I'm not sure I believe it myself."

"People believe what they want to believe," Kirk said. "As long as you know now what really happened, then if I were you, I would go on believing that Matt died a hero instead of a failure."

"What could have driven him...." Will spoke distantly, shook his head as if he'd dreamed the last twelve years.

"That's one of the many questions that has no definite answer - what drives any of us. I have yet to find out what brought Spock back to us and why he's behaving the way he is, but I know the depth of the grief your father was grappling with."

"This is another reason you bumped me out of the center seat," Will said, holding up the padd.

"One I didn't want to state without privacy. Will, this intruder, whatever alien force it is - it's consuming everything in its path, from ships to space stations to whole planets. To have you on this mission...."

"I understand, sir. I'll be the second Decker to face an unstoppable alien entity that's devouring entire worlds. But tell me you don't honestly think that I'm going to follow Dad's footsteps all the way to the end. I would have thought both of you would have more faith in me than that."

For a moment, Kirk was silent. Then he shook his head slightly. "Well, I'd just as soon history doesn't repeat itself...." He paused, just long enough for the whistle of the intercom system to interrupt.

"Engineering to Captain Kirk," Scott's burr filtered from the communicator encircling Kirk's wrist.

"Kirk here."

"She's up to high-doh, sir. Blest if I know where the plasma stream'll take us next, but Mr. Spock seems satisfied as ever with his calculations."

"Thank you, Scotty. Stand by. I'm on my way to the bridge." Kirk turned the communicator off and rose, facing Will as he stood up alongside him. "Well, at least that's one trait of Spock's that hasn't changed."

"Some moments in history are worth repeating," Will said with a faint smile.

"Some, not all. Matt felt he'd failed irredeemably. He didn't want his actions to tarnish the rest of your career, and I felt I should honor his last wish and ensure that you safely completed this mission. So I need to know you're of sound mind and judgment."

"You wouldn't have kept me on as first officer if you thought otherwise," Will said knowingly.

"Fair to say." Kirk smiled somewhat more broadly and patted him on the arm. "Come on, Will. Let's go for a warp."

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