

No Pictures

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Summary

Before the battle hull reconnects with the saucer, Picard finds a quiet place for Beverly to rest.

There was no sickbay in the battle hull. When they beamed up, with Beverly in Commander Riker's arms, Picard had little choice in where to leave her. Her quarters were in the saucer, with everyone else's – everyone else except Picard.

"The aft-bridge office, Number One," Picard ordered.

If Riker found the choice odd, he didn't show it. He shouldered through the doors, careful not to jostle Beverly's wounded leg. In the low light, Riker located a fold-out bunk, the one that Picard slept in some nights, when work kept him late, when he couldn't be bothered to leave his duties behind—

"I've got her," Picard murmured. He eased Beverly down onto the thin mattress, close enough to smell the ferric tang of blood smeared across her forehead. Riker backed off – through the open doors, back to Data and Lieutenant Yar, and with a pneumatic hiss, Picard and Beverly were alone.

He brushed her hair back from her forehead. Strands of it stuck to the drying blood across her brow, her skin cold and damp, aftereffects of shock, of blood loss. Her eyelids slid shut.

"I have to—" Picard whispered, eyes darting across her face.

Her fingers twisted in his sleeve. "I know," she said. But she didn't let go. She let Picard smooth her hair back and straighten her injured leg, and she didn't let go. In the darkness, her glassy eyes slid over his possessions – the impersonal rows of PADDs and data cylinders, nothing here to mark it as his own, not even a fish tank – or a photo from home.

"Easier to sleep here," Picard said, answering a question she hadn't asked.

Beverly dipped her chin in a nod. "No pictures," she said.

She understood, then. Maybe her quarters didn't have pictures either. At least not in her bedroom, where she might lay awake at night, haunted by the photo of Jack. Delicately, Picard covered her hand with his own and loosened her grip. She resisted; then her fingers relaxed and she lay back with a sigh.

Eyes closed, she said, "I didn't know you slept here." Her lips quirked into a one-cornered smile – a smile that faded when her hands began to shake. "There must be a lot of things about you that I don't know," she said.

Picard watched her, his chest squeezing tight. "Quite a few," he said.

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