

Lost and Found

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by [jamaharon](#)

Summary

Deanna's never liked the holodeck, but after Tasha dies, she finds herself visiting more often.

If you looked too much into the holodeck's programming, it started to feel a little incestuous. The nameless people who populated these holo-locales weren't made from nothing. They were harvested from the scans uploaded to the computer every time a crew member was transported planet-side. A smiling, flirty holo-Risian might be composed of Will's sense of humor and Beverly's gymnastic experience; a rough-talking bartender might have Geordi's extensive knowledge of cocktail-making baked in, and Worf's innate ability to break up a fight.

Some crewmembers could simply ignore this uncomfortable knowledge. Deanna Troi was not one of them. During her first two years on the Enterprise, she avoided the holodeck entirely.

But now, three months after Armus, now that the sting had faded...

Deanna stepped inside.

She'd never been to the planet Utrax IV, and to her knowledge, neither had Tasha. That was why Deanna chose it. Salt deposits lined the shore, giving rise to wet, green sea plants, nipped at and bowled over by the frothy slate-gray waves. Deanna picked her dress up and stumbled across a shoreline made of pebbles and crushed shells. She kept her head down, a cool wind blowing her hair into her eyes, so focused on keeping her balance and making it away from the cold water that she almost didn't notice anyone approaching.

A sense of warmth. Of curiosity and excitement, a thirst for adventure, leaping out of a scarred heart. Age-old hurt and bubbling youthful joy.

Tasha.

A strong hand closed around Deanna's and led her to the smoother field of scrubgrass and sand, where it was easier to walk. She pushed the dark curls from her face and glanced up: at sparkling blue eyes and windswept blonde hair, cropped short — at the boyish smile and the soft pink lips she knew so well.

"You're here," Deanna said, her voice snatched away by the wind.

"Where else would I be?" Tasha said, and the sound of her voice — pitched low, but still so young-sounding, so innocent — tightened Deanna's throat. She blinked away the sting of tears and squeezed Tasha's hand.

"I'm sorry I didn't conjure up someplace nicer," she said.

"What could be nicer than this?" said Tasha with a grin. "Strange new worlds to explore, and a friend at my side—"

"Just a friend?" asked Deanna lightly, heart thumping. She couldn't make a holo confess to things the real Tasha never said, could she? She couldn't force an imprint left behind by a transporter beam to tell her what she needed to hear. But Tasha's smile softened. She looped Deanna's arm around her shoulders, half-playful and half-gentle, and then she stooped and hooked a hand under Deanna's knees.

"You're not dressed for the beach," she said. "I'll carry you."

She looked into Deanna's eyes, suddenly close enough to kiss. To smell the faint clean scent of her skin, the scent of standard-issue Federation soap — to feel her warm breath on Deanna's lips, the heat of her skin, the steady rise and fall of her chest.

Alive. Deanna closed her eyes and tucked her face against Tasha's shoulder struggling not to cry. She held her breath until the tears passed.

"Let's go," said Tasha's holo cheerfully. "We've got so much to do!"

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