

Souvenirs

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Souvenirs

by [jamaharon](#)

Summary

Worf and Riker are sent on a week-long diplomatic mission. There's no danger this time, and not much to do except attend festivals and visit the marketplace.

...and Counselor Troi would just adore these earrings, Riker decides.

She would love it.

It wasn't the type of add-on typically approved for Starfleet personnel to wear on duty, but he knew the Enterprise was a little too cold for Troi's tastes, and this shawl would suit her perfectly. It was thick and warm without being too bulky, and there was something about the material — the softness, the shimmer to it, the shifting colors — that Riker could picture all too well wrapped around Troi's shoulders, bringing out the sparkle in her dark eyes.

"How much?" he asked the alien vendor.

"Six nubles."

Riker had no idea how much six nubles were really worth, but he knew he had a ten-nuble coin in his pocket, so he flipped it over and tucked the shawl against his elbow, practically beaming. He hadn't exactly flown the shuttle down here expecting to find gifts for anybody — but he'd scarcely been here ten minutes, and already he could mark Troi off the list! Now, that was efficiency.

"For Troi," he said to Worf, who had stayed back from the merchant's stall as if it might bite him. Worf eyed the shawl as Riker held it up, his expression unreadable.

"I advise you not to weigh yourself down with souvenirs, Commander," said Worf stiffly. "If a fight breaks out—"

"Simple," said Riker. He shrugged into the shawl — a little tight-fitting, and Worf looked mortified to be seen with him. "See? Hands free."

With a grumble, Worf turned away, probably just trying to hide a Klingon blush. Riker eased out of the shawl carefully and inspected it to make sure he hadn't strained the stitches. Delicately, he folded it over the crook of his arm again.

At least he'd stopped Worf from asking questions. That was a plus.

"Oh, she would *love* this," Riker muttered to himself, agonized.

"Commander—"

Riker tossed Worf a pleading look. It paired well with the commanding little gesture he made, ordering Worf to keep walking. With a rumbling growl, Worf obeyed, and Riker was left alone on what appeared to be an artist's walk, both sides of the street lined with native painters and their canvases. Most of them were impressively skilled; all of them were at least better than Riker could paint. But one in particular caught his eye.

It was abstract. Swirls of color, masterful depictions of light and shadow. Riker had never understood abstract art, but Troi loved it. She'd taken him on about a million dates to art museums on Betazed, back when they were still...

Riker stepped up to the canvas that caught his eye. The artist's careful, casual stare hung on his shoulders. If he let his mind relax and his eyes unfocus, like Troi had always urged him to, then the paint seemed almost to shift, to breathe. Images were hidden in every brushstroke. Curls of dark hair, soft skin, long lashes...

"How much?" asked Riker.

"Eighty decnubles," the artist said.

Which ones were the decnubles again?? Riker dug in the damnable little fanny pack he'd been forced to wear for this mission, since Starfleet uniforms didn't have pockets. Eighty decnubles ... those were the little pink coins. And the little pink coins became the big gold coins if you had enough of them. Right? He hesitated over a pair of gold coins and then held them up questioningly.

Luckily, the artist took pity on him. She inserted her long multi-jointed fingers in the pouch and removed three green coins instead.

"Be more careful with those," she advised him, guiding his hand back down to hide the gold coins in his pouch.

"Thanks."

Riker watched as she wrapped the canvas, hiding those glorious swirls of paint. When he left, he had to tuck the massive painting under his arm and jog to catch up with Worf.

"...It's for Troi," Riker said.

Worf just rolled his eyes.

It was a native custom — hand-carved beads and luxuriously soft ribbons and chains of metalwork flowers, all delicately woven into the guest of honor's hair. Each one symbolized a treasured trait of the guest.

"For you, your courage and strength," said the local ambassador to Worf, his wrinkled face so grave you'd think this was a funeral. The ambassador's servants rushed forward to weave golden ribbons in Worf's hair. "And for you," said the ambassador, approaching Riker, "it is your *ckhismo*."

"*Ckhismo*?" Riker repeated, tapping his translator.

"It is a local word, difficult to translate," said the ambassador. "In essence it means ... you have very charming eyes."

He could live with that. He shot Worf an amused look, trying to keep his smile in check as the ambassador's servants braided a lurid pink ribbon into the hair just above his ear. They kept an open box, like a tacklebox, full of trays and drawers to hold a veritable kaleidoscope of colors. Beads in the shape of alien animals, thin twists of metal in the shape of flowers and trees.

"What does this one signify?" Riker asked, lasering into a flower so delicately shaped that it looked like velvet. A powdery blue color suffused the petals, darker at the center, light as a summer sky toward the end.

"This one signifies aristocracy," the ambassador said. "Someone a step up from the rabble, you might say."

Now Riker really had to fight back a smile. He could just imagine the look on Troi's face if he came back with one of those. First the softening of her features, the appreciation of beauty, the realization that it suited her skin tone and her hair so perfectly ... then the sour unamused look she would give him when he told her what it meant.

"Is it — is it for sale?" asked Riker, a little shy to ask the ambassador, especially with Worf's disapproving scowl in his periphery.

"No," said the ambassador. "But for you, Commander, it is free. A token of our appreciation."

Riker tried not to look too smug. He accepted the gift with a deep bow of the head and settled in next to Worf, stroking the metal petals with one thumb.

"It's my *ckhismo*," he muttered. "They couldn't resist."

Their fifth day on the alien planet, they were treated to a traditional "*gkhismet*", a dinner of sweets. Pastries and jams, sugary spreads, glistening fruits and hard candies, all of it was paraded before them. Neither Riker nor Worf cared much for sweet things — but they did their best to sample every dish, from the bowls of cream to the sugar crystals bigger than Worf's head.

Then, at the very end of dinner, Riker saw it. It was a towering monstrosity in a parfait dish. Light brown scoops of frozen cream, dark specks of shaved cacao, rich nuts and liquid fudge, chunks of coffee-flavored chocolate bars and dollops of rich truffles with their thin shells and delectable filling nestled inside.

There were five of them. Carefully, Riker sampled the one nearest to him. It looked like chocolate. It tasted like chocolate, but with a native twist. Spicy peppers ground into the solid bars; a bitter bite to the nuts; an almost citric sting to the truffles. He glanced at the four uneaten dishes and met Worf's eyes almost guiltily.

Like a man facing execution, Worf just sighed.

"Troi would love it," Riker said in defense of himself. "Hey, waiter, can we box these up to go?"

Worf muttered something that sounded astonishingly Terran: “Christ’s sake.”

The shuttle, when they returned, was stuffed full with souvenirs. Riker’s elbow kept jamming up against a stuffed *cawacka* as he piloted the ship back toward the Enterprise. He deliberately avoided Worf’s gaze.

But he was starting to sweat.

“You know, it’s normal for humans to bring back souvenirs for their friends,” he said, keeping his eyes trained on the viewport.

Worf grunted in acknowledgment. Then he asked the damnable question:

“Did you buy anyone else souvenirs, Commander? Or just Counselor Troi?”

Riker considered the question, his lips tightly pursed. He squeezed his hands tight on the steering stick.

“How about we stop talking for a while?” he said.

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