

## A Helping Hand

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by [jamaharon](#)

### Summary

When Riker is injured, Troi lends him a hand.

There was no quick-and-easy healing method. The acid wound eating at Riker's arm and shoulder had been left untreated for too long, and Beverly's cellular regeneration technique had little effect on it. She could prescribe him painkillers and abrade the dead skin — and she could keep an eye on it for infection — but other than that, he just had to wait for his arm to heal.

"This uniform is torture," Riker muttered. He rolled his shoulder, nearly tugging his uninjured arm out of Troi's grasp.

"It hurts that badly?" Troi asked.

The uniform fabric was like a million needles sinking into already-irritated skin.

"It's not that bad," Riker said, his arm twitching. "Just ... annoying."

"How's your mobility?" she asked him.

They wound down the corridor to the nearest turbolift, and here Riker took the opportunity to show her. His hand shook as he reached out for the button display. He couldn't extend his arm fully — his elbow always locked up after a few centimeters of movement — so he had to shift his whole body just to press the intercom, jabbing it with a forefinger that trembled so hard he accidentally pressed three buttons at once.

"And Beverly said it will still heal?" asked Troi, looking a little alarmed.

"Full mobility ... eventually," Riker confirmed. He raised his voice a little to speak to the turbolift. "Take us to Ten-Forward."

"How do you sleep at night?" Troi asked, eyeing his wounded arm. "Don't you sleep on that side?"

"Not anymore."

She clicked her tongue against the roof of her mouth sympathetically. When the turbolift doors hissed open, she took a nearly protective stance, guiding him through the light crowd and warding off anyone who got too close to his injured arm. Riker tried to keep his amusement off his face every time an ensign looked into Deanna's dark, flat eyes and balked. They headed for an empty table near the bar, where Deanna finally detached from his side and ... pulled his chair out for him.

"Thank you," said Riker gravely.

"Don't get smart." She bumped the chair against the back of his knees as he sat down, and he collapsed the rest of the way with a yelp. "What do you want to drink?"

"Ah ... Samarian Sunset?"

"And when was the last time you ate?"

Riker's stomach growled, right on cue, and with some difficulty, he put his palms together in a pleading gesture. They'd had to ration out their food during the hunt, and with all the kilometers they'd hiked and the sleepless nights of fighting off predators ... well, he'd probably burned at least 20,000 calories, and he *felt* like he'd burned 40,000. When Deanna returned with a Samarian Sunset and a

heaping plate of food, Riker could have kissed her feet.

...And still might. Later. If she let him.

“Don’t be gross,” Deanna warned under her breath, reading his mind.

“Never,” Riker promised. He took up his fork with his non-dominant hand, holding it at an awkward angle, and prodded the tender fish fillet Deanna had ordered for him. She watched him struggle for a moment, wiggling the flat of the fork against the fish in an effort to cut it.

“Here,” she said.

Riker let her take the fork. He batted his eyelashes at her as she cut his food for him, reducing the beautiful fillet into an economical pile of bite-sized bits. Troi speared one of these on the tines of the fork, smeared it through the drizzle of spicy sauce pooled on the edge of the plate, and held it close to Riker’s lips.

Well, it tasted divine. And it was nice to be fed. Intimate, in a way. Riker chewed slowly, savoring Guinan’s cooking while Deanna selected another prime cut. He could feel half of Ten-Forward watching them, some envious and some frankly a little exasperated. But there was a twinkle in his eye when he took the next bite.

“Thanks, Mommy,” he said.

“I told you not to be gross.”

“Is that gross?” he asked innocently.

Deanna just gave him a look. “One more comment like that and I’m letting you starve. Are you thirsty?”

Riker bit off a laugh and just nodded. She twirled the Samarian Sunset and held the cocktail glass to his lips for a sip, and despite himself, his cheeks heated a little. He’d blame that on the alcohol. As they made their way through the meal and the drinks, that blush settled in to stay. There was something irresistibly nice about being pampered — so nice that he almost stopped feeling the light agony of fabric against his burnt skin, and barely noticed the muscle-deep roar of pain left behind by the acid. He caught himself staring at Deanna more than once, appreciating the play of starlight over her hair, turning the edge of every curl into a blue-black, and the glimmer of it in her eyes, on her lips, over her cheekbones.

*Beautiful*, he thought, not meaning to project it. And this time it was Deanna who blushed. She gave him a stern look and cupped her palm beneath the fork as she fed him the last bite, letting the cool metal tines linger on his bottom lip.

With the food gone, Riker stared down at the table, letting his shoulders slump in a good approximation of shyness. He gave Deanna a vulnerable little look through his eyelashes.

“What is it?” she asked warily.

“I’m almost afraid to ask,” he said. “You’ve been so kind — I don’t want to burden you any further—”

“*Will*,” she said, and he got the sense that she wanted to roll her eyes.

“Okay, okay.” He laid on the vulnerability extra-thick and shifted his arm, wincing at the sudden flare of pain. “It’s just...”

*Just...?* He let the suspense build a little. When Deanna’s exasperation melted — when she looked genuinely concerned — he hung his head and gave her his best puppy-dog eyes.

“Could you hold my trombone for me while I practice?” he asked.

“Ugh!”

“I need someone to hold it!” he said. “It’s easy — left hand at the screw joint, index finger — Deanna, where are you going? Index finger at the mouthpiece! Thumb across the bar — Deanna!”

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