

Kiss

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by [jamaharon](#)

Summary

She didn't mean to kiss Commander Riker goodbye. It was just a habit.

...But she did still kiss him.

He'd been in her quarters for hours. Deanna had been ready for bed for hours, actually, and she could tell Commander Riker was too, but both of them kept ignoring it. He'd shift in his seat and adjust his uniform, start to say his goodbyes. Then one of them would change the subject and they'd find themselves lost in yet another conversation — about a crewmember they worried for, or a planet they'd been to and the people they'd left behind — and they'd speak until their throats were sore.

Before, when they were young, they'd have these conversations in bed. He'd throw his arm around her waist and hold her close, his bare chest warm against her back. She'd feel his breath against her hair as he spoke; she'd trace patterns on his palm while she listened.

But that was then, and this was now, and when Deanna yawned twice in a row, so hard her jaw creaked, Commander Riker chuckled to himself and stood. He stumbled a little, his back aching, and Deanna caught him by the arm as she stood, too.

They balanced each other out.

"I ought to be going," he said, smiling an apology.

"Probably," Deanna agreed. "It's rude to keep a lady up so late. Some of us have work in the morning."

Her hand was still on his arm. He studied her face, memorizing it. She could tell from the way his gaze lingered here and there.

"You'll have those personnel reports ready by noon?" he asked.

"Of course," said Deanna. She nudged him toward the door and he went readily, but Deanna never took her hand off his arm. She walked with him instead. "Be sure to look them over carefully. Give them your full consideration."

"I'm always careful," he said. "And considerate."

She wrinkled her nose. "I saw you playing your trombone in Ten-Forward just last night. That wasn't very considerate of you."

"Well, I was doing Guinan a favor," Riker said. "She needed someone to keep her awake while Lieutenant Rodd talked her ear off."

Deanna rolled her eyes. She stood on tiptoe to kiss him, and he bowed his head by habit, and their lips touched — soft and warm, a chaste goodbye kiss — and it was only when Riker stiffened and froze that Deanna remembered they weren't together anymore. That they didn't kiss. She rocked back on her heels, eyes wide, lips pressed into a thin line. Riker stared back, his expression identical.

"I'm not complaining," he said quickly. "But—"

Deanna covered her face with a groan.

"Oh, surely it wasn't that bad," said Riker, teasing now.

"I'm so sorry, Will. I—"

His hand caught hers in a light squeeze.

“Forget about it,” he said warmly. “I promise not to hold it against you. Few can resist my charms.”

“Ugh.” Deanna slapped him lightly on the chest, still blushing, but feeling a little bit better now. The faux-cockiness always helped. “Get out of here, Commander. It’s so late I’m sleepwalking.”

He bowed out with a laugh. She could hear his chuckle echoing down the hall as the doors slid closed behind him. Deanna crossed her arms tight over her ribcage and stared at the blank wall, no longer smiling. Her gut was a tight knot. She bit the inside of her cheek.

She could still taste him on her lips.

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