

Two

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by [jamaharon](#)

Summary

The last-minute hotel room came with two separate beds. There was no need for Commander Riker and Counselor Troi to share.

Lucky, right?

The last-minute hotel room they had to share had...two separate beds, one for each of them, and Riker found himself surprisingly disappointed. He tried to quell that feeling before Counselor Troi picked up on it. He slung his bag onto the bed nearest the door, knowing Troi would prefer the one by the window — trying not to think about how he knew that.

“I’m sorry about this,” he said as he unzipped his bag.

“It’s not your fault, Commander,” she said, smiling a little. “Or is it?”

“If it *were* mine, I would have angled for just one bed,” Riker admitted, knowing it would make her laugh. Her teeth flashed in the light. “But those days are behind me now.”

“More’s the pity.”

Oh, why did she always say things like that? Riker kept his head down and pretended not to hear. It had been a long, grimy, exhausting day, and he was eager to take a shower and get out of these borrowed, ill-fitting hospital scrubs. Troi had to feel the same. Her normally-buoyant hair was limp against her skull, matted by sweat and alien blood.

“You can have the shower first,” Riker said.

“It might be more economical to—”

Troi bit her lip. She didn’t say it. Riker pretended not to know how that sentence was supposed to end. In silence, Troi gathered her pajamas and brushed past him to the bathroom.

She was kindly quick about it. Within ten minutes Riker had taken her place, letting the steam wash over him. He scrubbed the dirt and blood from his skin and watched the water turn gray as it sloshed off him. Suds gathered around his bare feet and swirled down the drain.

He closed his eyes. He pictured the crash again, the angle of the ship, remembered the hiss of static when his communicator failed to connect. Was there anything he could have done differently? Maybe not then, but in the aftermath, carrying all those injured civilians to safety, railing against the broken transporter...

Best not to think about it. His limbs were heavy. He’d done all he could do and now there was nothing but to wait, to help rebuild, to heal. He needed sleep. Riker rinsed the suds from his hair and dried himself off, the new pajamas just as foreign and strange on his skin as the scrubs he’d borrowed when his uniform was too charred and tattered to wear. He stepped out into the hotel room feeling small.

And then he blinked and froze.

In the rush of water and the swirl of dark thoughts, he hadn’t heard anything. But while he was showering, Troi had pushed the two beds together. She was fast asleep in the middle now, with both their blankets piled on top of her, impossible to separate. Her arms were outstretched to his side of the bed, her face peaceful.

She wanted to share.

Riker stared at the beds, unable to move at first, his heart squeezing tight. His face was pinched as he moved forward on silent feet. He crawled into bed, already warm, and nestled down under the covers at Troi's side. In her sleep, she shifted closer to him, slotted her body into his arms, the perfect angle for him to wrap himself around her, to bury his nose in her freshly-cleaned hair and inhale her scent.

He closed his eyes and saw the crash again, heard the screaming. This time it seemed remote and pale. He held her close to his body, soft and fragile but so warm, so alive. And the images in his head grew fainter, quieter.

He fell asleep.

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