

Dolphinworld

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Summary

Will and Deanna take that vacation to Orlando.

“I can’t believe they got rid of the Stitch ride!” Deanna complained.

“I swear you’re making that up,” said Will. “You must be remembering an old Betazoid theme park.”

“No, it was on Earth!” Deanna insisted. “Right here! There was a little blue creature and he scuttled around... I love old Terran myths like that.”

“*Stitch* is not a Terran myth,” Will said. He caught her eyeing a pop-up stand of combadge-shaped ice creams and steered her away. “Come on. We’re going to miss the dolphins.”

“Oh, Will, we can see dolphins anytime we want,” said Deanna. She dug her heels in, much good that it did her. “We just have to visit stellar cartography.”

“Kimolu and Matt aren’t dolphins, they’re beluga whales,” said Will. There was a slight, miraculous give as Deanna let him push her, but his heart sank when he realized she was just heading for a different booth. Then he realized it was the frozen daiquiris and his heart lifted a little. “Hey, is this real alcohol?” he asked the clerk.

She gave him a sullen teenage shrug and handed him something slushy, technicolor, and garishly glittery to drink.

“Share,” Deanna demanded, stabbing a straw into the ice.

He had to bow nearly in half to share the drink with her. They moved forward at a snail’s pace, the temperature controls set to a cool but sunny climate with humidity just high enough for Orlando’s unique flora and fauna to survive. Will eyed the artificial jungles as they passed, where a pair of Klingon children were squealing with delight as a boa ate their pet targ.

“Poncho?” asked a clerk near Dolphinworld.

“No thanks,” said Will, tossing his arm around Deanna. “We like to fully immerse ourselves in the experience.”

“Speak for yourself,” said Deanna, snatching a poncho. “This dress is an original Garak.”

Outside, the simulated coolness of climate control gave way to hot, unfiltered sun. Deanna held onto Will’s arm for balance as she kicked off her shoes, the rainbow-colored daiquiri held up high. Hot blonde sand blazed at the bottoms of their feet as they stumbled forward, to the stone seats worn smooth by erosion, the exposed sea stars basking in the sun, the shallow rock pools filled with life.

They sat together, ponchos crinkling, and shared another drink. Somewhere beyond that haze of sun, Kestra was serving in her first command as a final-year cadet. And somewhere in those stars was Nepenthe, where Thad lay resting. Will took Deanna’s hand and squeezed it, and she rested her head on his shoulder to watch sunlight sparkle off the waves.

Will closed his eyes. He basked in the gentle breeze, the warm sunlight threading through his hair to kiss his scalp. The sound of the ocean waves, the gentle chattering of dolphins—

He opened his eyes.

“WELCOME TO DOLPHINWORLD I AM YOUR DOLPHIN HOST,” said the dolphin in the surf. “ALLOW ME TO TELL YOU THE HISTORY OF ORLANDO. WE WILL START WITH THE ANCIENT TERRAN MYTH OF EXPERIMENT 626 – STITCH!”

Deanna clapped her hands.

“At least there’s daiquiris,” Will said.

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