

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen...

"Mr. Orumoff, the courier has arrived."

"Please send him in," Niles Orumoff replied evenly. Claire was about to leave when he stopped her. "Claire?"

"Yes, Mr. Orumoff?"

"Take the rest of the afternoon off and enjoy some holiday shopping with Steven. Before you go, please see that the courier is given the usual compensation."

"Thank you, Mr. Orumoff! I'll take care of the courier, sir."

"You are quite welcome, Claire."

Orumoff sat back in his chair to await the courier. While waiting, he allowed his eyes to flick across his luxurious office -- an office that had the best view of the Great Mall of *Space Station Nexus*. Every once in a while, some dolt would offer him a great deal of money for his perch but Niles wouldn't budge. He knew a good thing when he had it.

Claire was finally replaced by the courier who simply handed over the package and waited. Niles scanned the package, noted all was in order and dismissed the courier with a nod. Niles put the parcel on the desk and stared at it for what seemed an eternity. He carefully examined it to detect any unauthorized access; finding none, he finally broke the seal and quickly rifled through the contents.

Unlike other men of his stature and acquaintance, Orumoff preferred receiving such material in hard copy. A quick perusal revealed that all the information he requested was here. Each dossier was presented in a folder, complete with hard copy holographs along with the information on real paper. A tree had indeed died in order for him to have this information. But since no one had found a foolproof way to introduce tracing substances into simple woodpulp, the extra security was well worth the cost. He leaned back in his chair then suddenly stood up and walked over to his liquor cabinet. He took out his favorite scotch and poured himself a splash. He unconsciously swirled it around as he considered why he would go through so much trouble.

Ten months ago *Nexus Nightly News* presented a special report that was just much too close for comfort, Niles Orumoff decided that he needed to pay *much* closer attention to the personnel that inhabited the station. Obviously, he'd taken some time to nominally check on the new Station Commander and his wife, the new CMO. However, the news report left him with the distinct feeling

that there were new forces at work here on the Station. Then the attack on his mobile fortress convinced him that his suspicions were slowly turning into fact. While they didn't get lucky during the recent attempt to capture the smugglers - and who thought it was a good idea to smuggle this stuff anyway? -- the methodology showed some cunning on the part of the planners. And apparently, he wasn't the only one who thought so. If they could trace a cloaked ship, then they could trace anything he was likely to bring in as well. This was somewhat distressing, to say the least. True, his craft had military spec cloaking devices that would be much, much harder to detect, but he had set up operations in this sector precisely because of the obvious inefficiency demonstrated by the Starfleet personnel previously posted here. If that was changing...

Niles finished his drink and walked back over to his desk to sit. He picked up the reports and started to read them.

There was nothing new in the detailed dossier on Kyle Argent and his opinion of Argent hadn't changed; though Ormuff found himself in the position of almost admiring his adversary -- anyone who could charm the Regent of Galena would gain some respect from him. However, the information on his wife, the former Arcadia D'Arcy Devlin was quite revealing. Her late husband, Desmond Devlin was an undercover agent whose adventures had him crossing paths with the Romulans. Not only that, but her old ship was invaded by some foolish renegade Romulans and then it was discovered that the ship apparently quartered a long time Romulan agent. *No doubt, some of the upper management of Starfleet Command had a lot of explaining to do*, he mused.

Niles idly tapped her dossier as he considered what he could do with this information. He'd already concluded that Argent was a career military man and worse yet, born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. Despite his divesting his assets into a trust, there was no doubt in Niles' mind that any attempt to bribe or blackmail Argent would result in disaster. If anything, the straightforward kidnapping and torture of a relative were the only option available here, since any ulterior motives could be covered under a shroud of greed. However, it had been decades since the last successful case of ransoming a designated target had been concluded. Investigative methods in use these days made this prospect a daunting one at best. Argent seemed to have an almost uncanny resilience to any sort of unsavory actions though his recent activities indicated that he'd fallen rather comfortably -- though reluctantly -- into the role of the consummate politician. Politicians could always be exploited -- with or without their knowledge. However, Argent's reaction to his wife's serious injuries demonstrated that even this "Ironman" had his weak spot. Niles smiled as he considered how Argent's wife had enough "bones" in her proverbial closet to make her very vulnerable to the very things her husband seemed so impervious to. By extension, Argent himself could be made

vulnerable -- if necessary. If nothing else, Orumoff was sure that the Romulans wouldn't mind making an example out of her for some perceived wrong or the other. He would have to sound out T'Elix about this particular issue next time they conducted business.

On the other hand, he quickly realized Doctor Argent shouldn't be trifled with either. When her husband, who just happened to be the Station Commander, relieved her of duty -- *and anyone who thinks she's getting an easy ride was sadly mistaken* -- she was able to quickly piece it all together. She had smoked out MacMelvin and had purged the last of the former CMO Millicent's people from the Medical Branch. Orumoff leaned back and frowned.

Amateurs -- they were nothing more than rank amateurs. They had a good thing going but they got stupid and, as the old saying goes, things went to hell in short order. *Oh, well, their demise won't affect my drug smuggling one iota. As it was, I thought I was doing them a favor by buying what they had to offer mostly so these idiots wouldn't try and find someone else. Unprofessionals like them fumbling around might have been bad for my business.*

He quickly perused the other Medical Branch dossiers and stopped when he came upon that of the Chief of Staff. Dwight Ivanan, career Marine -- scratch him for anything useful. Career Marines are as bad as Career Pilots -- totally dedicated. Though in this case, there was something else that was somewhat out of place. Ivanan had been at Sagamore Bay. Twice. That most likely meant he had taken the advanced courses at the Starfleet Marine Corps Special Forces Training Facility. Just what was a trained Commando doing as a nurse on a backwater space station? Orumoff frowned then felt a smile form as he ran down the list of casual acquaintances Ivanan had been involved with. *Assuming folks still keep "little black books," his must be as big as the proverbial old-fashioned phone book. It seems that Mister Ivanan isn't interested in any long-term relationships though it seems that he and the Deputy Director of Flight Operations, Lars Lysander, have been together a few months.* He smiled as he made a mental note of this for future reference.

Orumoff went on to the next dossier. Nothing noteworthy here on the Station Executive Officer, Alexandra Romanova. Orumoff wasn't surprised when Argent kept her on as XO. After all, she'd been on *Nexus* for years and it was Niles' understanding that Argent's primary mission was to beef up the fighter presence in this sector. So, why not keep her? She didn't screw up under the old Station Commander Everheartless -- who barely did an adequate job -- Romanova held the place together. No, Argent's decision to keep her around made sense.

Niles scanned the next few dossiers and decided that the remaining Division Chiefs didn't warrant his attention, except for Terrence Blair, Director of the

Flight Branch. He was clearly impressed with what he read though Niles found it puzzling that Terrence would give up a perfectly good job working for the Chief of Staff of the Fighter Corps and take on this job. Probably got tired of either working for the Chief of Staff, which he doubted or he missed being a fighter jock -- that was more likely the case.

However, what did strike Orumoff was the fact that Blair and Argent had a long history together. And that they last served on the *Stellar Wind* together with Blair defending Argent against murder charges.

Stellar Wind? he mused. For some odd coincidence, there are a number of old members of the ship currently stationed here.

"I hate coincidences," he muttered aloud.

But there was also something else that he just read that bothered him. He rifled through Arcadia's dossier again and noted that her former yeoman was none other than Boffin Gateway, the well-known gambler. Orumoff always considered gambling to be a mug's game. At least Gateway was becoming respectable in Orumoff's eyes by opening a posh nightclub in February. Gateway obviously knew how to work the system. He was able to get all the paperwork squared away in no time. Only the hand of the Station Commander could perform such miracles. Niles sat back and frowned. *How useful Mister Gateway will be to me remains yet to be seen.*

Niles determined that Argent's pressuring of Blair to take on one Ayesha Deveraux was done out of kindness, than any real ulterior motives. This Ayesha had been one of the bridesmaid's in his wedding party and also served with both of them on the *Stellar Wind* (*there's that damned ship again*, he grimaced). She was in danger of losing her newly regained pilots wings when Blair had acknowledged her request for assignment. Sentiment at work here? Niles forced his attentions away from Ayesha and towards her companion Gareth Roscoe. He didn't find much though there were gaps in his service record indicating that he might have something in his background worth exploiting.

Other than a few new tiny bits of information, Orumoff didn't discover anything he didn't know. He began to wonder whether the money he'd spent compiling the reports and having them hand carried to him was worth it. Other than the proverbial Old Home Week for former crewmembers of the *USS Stellar Wind*, there just wasn't much here that he couldn't have gotten for less from the local infomercs.

Having finished the more notable members of the *Nexus* Staff, he turned his attention to the Station Commander's personal staff. He carefully picked up the dossier of the Chief of Staff, Jefferson El Jafeer and much to his chagrin, there

was nothing new to be garnered which made Niles even more convinced that El Jafeer was the brains behind his operation being "squeezed" of late. Oh, nothing major. Just a subtle tightening of rules and guidelines -- enough to make his customers nervous and his own people uneasy. But at the same time, it gave Niles a newfound sense of being -- a feeling unfelt in years.

Orumoff finally arrived to the Station Commander's yeoman and as usual, felt a broad smile fill his face. He removed the holographic picture from its sleeve and found that it was.... more than he was used to seeing in an official dossier. Apparently, Ms Melody Marlowe enjoyed displaying all her assets and what charms she had.

Niles smiled as he closed her dossier. It was obvious to him that he'd need a way of keeping tabs on what was going on in the Command and Control Center so why not enjoy himself in the process?

Orumoff's smile continued as he stood up and strolled over to the large picture window that overlooked the courtyard. The smile quickly melted into that of a frown. He would never understand why Terrans insisted on celebrating this end of the year gift giving -- Christmas, it's called. As far as he was concerned, it was just another conspiracy to painfully remind him of the family he would never have. Finally, he began to smile again. Well, if this was indeed the season of giving, then perhaps it was time that he started giving back to the very station that sheltered him. And of course, he would be generous. His bribes would be lavish, to be certain. But unlike these genuinely worthless dossiers he now considered committing to the incinerator, this person would have to yield results.

Somewhere out there, perhaps right out there in the Mall's park, right this very minute was a person who would betray the secrets of the station to him, do his general bidding and at the appropriate time, be discarded. This could very easily be the last Christmas this as yet unknown person would ever know. That thought pleased Orumoff in a strange yet not altogether uncommon way.

"Merry Christmas and God Bless Us Everyone," he dryly toasted the ongoing scene outside his window, where the people of *Nexus* continued to carol and revel in the fake snow that was coming down from the top of the dome.

*

Next: *Space Station Nexus, Year 2: The Finer Things*

This work is copyright [Allyson M.W. Dyar](#) & [Kurt F Roithinger](#) 1999, all rights reserved. Please don't repost this document, make this document publicly

accessible via FTP, mail server, or archive site without my explicit permission. Permission is granted for one hard copy for personal use.