

## *Honeysuckle Lips*

Maintenance Technician Ensign Virgil Gordon Taylor peered up from his paperwork to notice that Squadron Commander still furiously working on his Nighthawk. Considering the amount of energy he'd expended on the ship since he came back from the meeting with Captain Devlin, he could have built himself a whole fleet by now. Gareth Roscoe wandered in and interrupted any further musings.

Roscoe frowned at the scene then pursed his lips. "Kid, what's gotten into Kyle?"

"I don't know, but it must have something to do with the meeting with the Captain. He's been working on that 'hawk ever since he came back. Not even taking a break to piss."

Roscoe looked back at Kyle working intensely then back to Virgil. "Not even taking a piss-break? He must be furious..." He rocked back on his heels and smiled. "Or madly in love."

Virgil looked bewildered not realizing that Roscoe was aware of the relationship.

"Look, kid, I've been around this galaxy and I know the signs... I wonder what *did* happened..."

"Well, Sir, I *can* tell you what I heard."

Roscoe pulled up a chair. "Let's hear it."

When Virgil was finished, Roscoe leaned back and rubbed his chin. "Kid, love's a funny thing. As Bill Shakespeare once said, '*The course of true love never did run smooth*'. However, we've got one up on old Bill, we can help it along. Game?"

"Yessir! And... I believe the Captain's Yeoman will help!"

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Boffin Gateway was sitting at his desk wondering what to do. He looked at his chronometer and figured it was time that he had a talk with her. Considering the events of the day, she may want someone to talk to. The door was still open, so he walked in and noted that she was pretending to read the ship reports on her desk.

"Captain, am I interrupting?"

Arcadia smiled at him. "I would like to say you are, but I honestly can't say that. Please come in Mister Gateway." She waited until her yeoman sat down before she asked the obvious question, "And what may I do for you, Mister Gateway?"

"Captain, I was thinkin' that perhaps there wasn't something I could do for you," he replied softly.

She tried to smile but it obviously didn't work. She snapped off her comlink and leaned back in her chair. "What makes you think I have something to talk about?"

She tried to be brave, but he could see through it. "Mam'selle, we've been together quite a few years now. A bloke like me knows when something ain't right and I just thought you might want to talk about it. Especially with the XO paying a visit when Argent was here this morning. I don't think it was a coincidence."

Arcadia leaned back in her chair and looked like she was deep in thought. As she continued the silence, Boffin considered what it meant to be a good yeoman. A good yeoman knows what's going on with the 'boss' from what kind of tea they like to the colour of knickers they prefer.

She spoke at last. "Boffin, I appreciate your offer," she replied in a gentle voice, full of sorrow, "but what I believe I need is time to think."

"Mam'selle, I'm here if you need to talk."

"Thank you, Boffin, I appreciate that."

Since there was nothing more to say, he left her to her thoughts. Boffin sincerely hoped that she and the Pilot made up their minds soon. *It'll be easier on both of 'em... though*, he considered wryly, *they may need some outside help.*

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"About time you blokes showed up." Boffin pointed to the empty chairs at Kelly's that Roscoe and Virgil hurriedly took. As soon as they gave their order, Boffin spoke. "It's up to us to get 'em back together. Any ideas, lads?"

Virgil took a sip of his beer. "Maybe we could forge a love letter from one to another and ask the other to meet them at someplace at sometime."

Roscoe snorted. "Kid, are you out of your mind? A blasted love letter! Who goes in for that sort of crap these days, anyway?"

Boffin also frowned then a smile came over his face. "Hold on, Roscoe. The lad's got a good idea here. It's so outlandish, it just might work." He scratched his chin and considered. "Better yet, let's make it a poem."

"Good thinking!" Virgil nodded enthusiastically.

Boffin's smile continued but melted into a frown. "One problem, lads. Who's gonna write it? The Captain would know my stuff a kilometer away."

Virgil sighed. "And I really haven't had much luck in all things amorous. What we need an expert..." Virgil's voice trailed off and he looked to Boffin. Boffin, in turn, very looked intently at Roscoe.

Roscoe suddenly realized that both sets of eyes are now upon him. "No. Negative. No way! Not in a millenium! Dammit, I am *not* going to write some silly love poem...!"

After furiously working for the last few hours, Roscoe was ready. "OK, so how's this?" Roscoe cleared his throat and began to recite: "*Oh wouldst thee let me taste from the sweetness of thy honeysuckle lips but only once more...*"

Twenty minutes later, Virgil and Boffin stood up and looked to each other. "Beautiful." Virgil croaked. "Perfect...."

"It brings a tear to me eye," observed Boffin with a sob worthy of a crocodile.

"Now, all I have to do is pass this little masterpiece to Mam'selle and, I do believe, she will do the rest," Boffin noted quietly as he recorded the text for posterity. Once the task was completed, they all went their separate ways.

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Captain Arcadia Devlin was furious.

The look on her face indicated that one and all should remove themselves from her path. It took her no time to reach her destination and, fortunately for all, news of her arrival preceded her by a good few minutes. Everyone who knew of her mission on the flight deck discretely placed himself or herself out of harm's way but well within earshot of the conversation that was sure to ensue.

Noting upon her arrival that he was no one to be seen on the deck, she sought out his most likely refuge and stormed uninvited into his office.

"What is the meaning of this Commander? Have you gone out of your bloody mind? Putting a... a *love poem* in the midst of your flight reports is not only out

of line but -- good lord, man, this poem is just utter rubbish." She brandished her datapadd at him like a phaser on overload. "How could even you have committed drivel like this to the databanks?" She quoted from the padd in disbelief. "*I yearn for the burning passion of your bod and bodice...*" and -- now really! I should have you tossed in the brig for mutilating the English language like this!" She finally stopped and demanded an answer from the very bewildered looking Squadron Commander.

Kyle looked up at her with an expression of slight puzzlement. "May I take a look?" he requested.

Arcadia was annoyed by his request, but opted to comply.

Kyle began to scan the suspect literary effort. He got as far as the first four lines before his nose began to noticeably crinkle upward. He got through a tenth of it with as little as a giggle. By the end, however his face was trying hard not to contort into laughter.

Arcadia was having none of it. "This is *not* a laughing matter, Mister Argent!"

Suspecting a crowd forming around his office door, Kyle stood up and over to close it. He then turned his attention back to the still obviously irate woman still in her seat. "My dear Captain Devlin," he began with a soft smile, "I quite wholeheartedly agree with your assessment. This poem is indeed a mutilation of the English language -- of the highest order, I would say. This poem quotes, or plagiarizes, as it were, let's see ... Rod McKuen, Perry Como and... err... Elvis Presley." Kyle felt ashamed for even knowing this.

"And if that wasn't enough..." he paused to look to her, trying hard not to smirk, "Honeysuckle Lips? Well, you just can't get much worse than that... In conclusion, my dear Captain Devlin, I will state officially for the record, once and for all, that I never wrote this and never submitted to you. I would like to distance myself from its execution by all possible means."

"I see," she growled through narrowed eyes.

"However, this subject does bring up an issue I was thinking of raising with you myself. Captain, I think we need to talk -- and talk privately. Not here... Not while we're both on duty."

Arcadia was somewhat taken back by this. She didn't know if this was exactly what she wanted, but had to agree to the fact that she had a ship to run, just as he had a department to run, and this was essentially a private matter between them that best was kept private.

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"Very well, Commander," she replied in a voice tinged with ice. "Would you care to see me in my Ready Room at nineteen hundred hours tonight?" When he nodded in assent, she turned and proceeded to leave his office without as much as looking back.

Kyle felt stung by the coolness he had just encountered, but opted to get back to work.

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When the appointed hour finally arrived, Kyle was more than anxious to see the Captain in her office once more. He was rarely flustered, but this time he was downright nervous, especially after the Captain finally asked him to enter. He hesitated when his hands began to tremble. It took him some effort to steady them, but he hoped he had it under control as he entered her office. Kyle kept thinking just how good it was to see her up close again. He had missed her bright green eyes and her hair, her skin, her perfume, her presence...

"Commander Argent, you wanted to speak to me privately about that atrocity -- well, this is as private as it gets. Do go on," the Captain told him formally as she motioned Kyle to sit down in the chair before her desk.

Kyle sat quietly while he gathered his thoughts. "I have already stated once before that I deny officially sending you the poem in question -- and will categorically deny any complicity in taking part of the execution thereof and am willing to take any test that is required of me prove my innocence," he replied somewhat stiffly. He stared down and away from Arcadia then added softly, "Although, I wouldn't distance myself from its spirit or intention." There - he was warming up.

"I see," she replied formally, obviously still not convinced. "In your opinion, who would do such a thing?"

Kyle sat up more relaxed now and met her eyes across the desk. "Whomever it was, I think their intentions were clear," Kyle began cautiously. He was very afraid of the very thoughts racing through his mind now...

"And they were?" she shot back still somewhat furious at the whole matter.

"Obviously to get the two of us in the same room together once more."

She felt a surge of anger welling up in her when she realised she'd fallen for a very old trick.

"But," Kyle continued, "for what it is worth -- I am grateful for this opportunity. It gives me a chance to express something I've been thinking of late."

"And what would that be..." she replied, somewhat absently. She was still angry over having fallen for that old ploy. *And such an utterly despicable piece of writing to boot.*

"Arcadia."

This one word riveted her attention back onto Kyle. He had *never* called her by her first name since they had known each other.

"Arcadia, I know after our last meeting we separated in somewhat less than favorable terms. And I have come to regret the separation. I very much miss your company. It had come to mean a great deal to me..."

Kyle struggled within himself to find some sort of balance between the feelings he felt surging through him and the protocol he felt he should follow. He could only hope that he hadn't gone too far already. "And I think that whatever differences we might have had -- I do believe we can work them out together. And I would like that chance." Kyle heaved a huge internal sigh. If this didn't work... If he annoyed her... If...

Arcadia could hardly believe what she was hearing. She abruptly stood up from her chair and slowly walked from behind her desk, taking the long way around as she considered what Kyle had said to her. Even though they had only been together a short while, she'd never seen him so... expressive, so wanting, so sincere. And of course, she knew she wanted the same as he did, but simply didn't know how to approach him about it. After all, a starship captain can't be allowed a personal life. It never occurred to her that *he* would make that move for her -- for the both of them. Perched upon her desktop, her eyes met Kyle's at the same level. She could not help but smile at the rakish pilot sitting before her.

"I must admit, reluctantly, you understand...." She stopped and then realised that's not what she really meant at all. "Kyle, I've missed you too. I know missed my favourite partner for tea this morning. I would enjoy it greatly if we could continue as before."

Kyle felt as if a boulder just rolled off of him and out the door. Things would be fine now. He rose to attention and bowed in front of Arcadia as he had done many times before.

"It would be my honor, Milady."

And as she had in times past, Arcadia raised her hand to receive the kiss that Kyle was disgustingly good at giving.

Kyle complied and in so doing, raised his head and met Arcadia's eyes -- for a moment, they connected. It was a moment that one could not measure in time or any other common milestone. For a brief time, their eyes locked and each of them was able to see deeply into the other to see a little bit of themselves within the other. For a brief moment their eyes met and their spirits reached out -- for one another? Somewhere deep down a connection was made. A connection so strong it took both of them by surprise. It summoned forth feelings neither thought they were capable of -- and yet...

For a brief moment, a fire raged through both of them. A flash, but it was enough of a flame to compel them to move closer to one another, to touch, to meet...

And so they did meet. First in a tender embrace, eyes still locked, and then in a kiss -- tender, passionate, warm, different and alien to both. The flame that had come upon them now diminished and their reason started to reassert its stranglehold on their feelings. Both separated, slowly, until the tips of their fingers lost touch of another. And then their eyes met one last time... *Could it be?* were the thoughts that flashed through both their minds? These thoughts -- big ones, short ones, simple ones, complex ones -- all seemed to come forth at once...

"I think I best be going..." Kyle finally said in a whisper.

"I understand," Arcadia murmured softly.

Kyle backed up slowly, never quite looking away from her. He had never quite noticed until this moment just how beautiful he thought his Captain was.

"Pilot?" she spoke up as he almost was out the door.

"Yes?"

"Tea at the usual time?" she asked quietly with a smile.

"I'd be honored, Milady," he said as he finally withdrew from her office.

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