

## *Teamwork!*

Even though Squadron Commander Kyle Argent had spent most of the night reliving the nightmare of his late wife Reesa's death, and whether or not he could trust the Captain with his 'secret,' he knew he had a duty to perform -- whipping the pilots and mission specialists under his command into shape.

He walked to the entrance of the briefing room exactly on time. *Time to get this show on the road*, he thought as he tried to look as stern as possible as he entered. "Time to get this show on the road..." he repeated to himself again as his eyes swept across those assembled in the briefing room as he slowly made his way to the podium.

He quickly noted that all the pilots, the mission specialists as well as some of the ground personnel -- including Virgil -- were in attendance. He considered this a good sign. He also noted that they more or less came to attention properly, if somewhat leisurely when he walked in. He'd seen worse.

LtCdr Argent proceeded to give the flight personnel -- his 'nuggets' as he liked to call them -- chapter and verse as to what he expected from them. He was sure that his announcement of their intensive training schedule would wipe the smiles from their faces in short order. And he wasn't disappointed. *And now to put the icing on the cake.*

"Does anyone have any questions?" He noted there was none and proceeded. "Good. One last thing before we proceed, some of you may have been hotshots in the Academy or elsewhere -- but to me, for the next 30 days, you are nothing but Nuggets. You are nobodies until I say otherwise. And if any of you feel the urge to prove yourselves a hero in basic flight -- then I would like to invite you to leave now. There are no heroes here -- only a team of flyers. Is this understood?"

"Yes Sir!" came the reply though he noted that disappointment hung around the room especially in one Ensign Mika "Skye" Masterson who had sincerely hoped that the new commander would be a pushover and they'd all have an easy time. Masterson was very quickly dispelled of that notion.

"Before we proceed to the simulator, it now befalls upon me to commission you all into your training unit," he continued. Argent searched the room. He didn't know that many of them by name, so he chose the first person he could attach one to. "Mr. Masterson, would you care to assist me in hoisting the colors?"

"Yessir, Sir!" the response came back -- as loud as a cannon shot.

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*Good. He'll work out.* Commander Argent motioned him to stand at his side and hold the stricken colors of the training unit, while Kyle held the Flag of the Fighter Corps.

"Raise your right hands," Argent commanded as he raised his right hand. Everybody quickly came to attention and raised their right hands.

"Repeat after me. I -- do hereby swear by the honor of my person, the integrity of my position and the responsibility of my duty to obey, observe and honor the rules, standards and directives of the UFP, Starfleet and the Fighter Corps, all of which I pledge my life to protect, defend and serve. So I swear."

Everybody repeated the basic oath dutifully after their Squadron Commander.

"I, Lieutenant Commander Kyle Descoyne Argent, SFFC, by the authority given to be me by the Commander in Chief, Starfleet Fighter Corps, and the President of the United Federation of Planets, hereby commission you into the 618th Training Squadron, currently on location, USS *Stellar Wind*, NCC-1501A. Congratulations."

No cheers went up. They would be reserved for thirty days from now.

"Mr. Masterson, if you please..."

They simultaneously removed the dust covers from the flags and carefully unfolded them. With precise and excellent timing, Masterson came to attention with Argent and they snapped off their crispest salute to the assembled gathering, which in turn returned the salute as best they could.

Argent dismissed Masterson and the rest, informing them that he expected to see them at tomorrow's briefing at 0800. As he walked back to his office, he considered how much worse it could have been -- but most importantly, the show was *now* on the road...

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When 0800 came around the next day, all the pilots were there, alert and ready to tackle any problem Argent would throw at them. The pilots assumed that the sim mission Argent had just given them would be a piece of cake -- such is the hubris of pilots who had never been on a mission. They soon found out differently. They all came back one by one to their lounge, frustrated beyond all belief.

"This is impossible!" yet another frustrated nugget came back from what little sim time they could arrange for.

"Someone needs to talk to the Old Man!" another commented as she grabbed a cup of coffee from the replicator. A chorus of agreement echoed through the lounge.

Suddenly one of them had a great idea. "Skye! You seem to have a rapport with the Old Man -- you go talk to him!"

Skye's ever-present smile suddenly vanished as everyone immediately looked to him.

"Me? C'mon, guys. I only helped him administer the oath. And it isn't as if I brought him his tea this morning!"

"Well, at least he knows your name."

"But... but..." Skye looked around for someone to take up his cause. Eventually he realized despite his protests, he was duly elected. He might as well get it over and go into The Lion's Den.

Ensign Masterson entered the Squadron Commander's office without his usual poise and confidence. He came to attention and saluted. Argent stood, returned the salute, then sat down as Masterson cowered before him. *Lord knows I'd be happy when all these nuggets are through -- saluting never was my cup of tea. Speaking of which -- I'm due for another cup...*

"Speak, Ensign. What's on your mind?" he asked as he poured another cup.

"Uh... Commander... the men have asked me to come to you for... an extension, Sir..."

Kyle noted that there wasn't just a lack of ease in his voice -- it almost sounded like fear. *I must be getting more fearsome as I get older*, he mused.

"An extension on what, Ensign?" he replied calmly while sipping his cup of Darjeeling, even though he knew full well what was coming.

"Well, most of us have been able to log three hours or more of sim time so far -- we worked out a schedule for when to use the simulator, you see?" Masterson handed him a padd with their well-devised schedule. Argent eyed it and put it down.

"And?"

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Skye swallowed hard before he continued. "Well, we have all come to the conclusion that it is impossible to finish the 40 hours of sim time that you want us to complete in the next four days. There just aren't enough hours in the next four day period to do so... and some of the challenges -- well, none of us can figure them out so far..."

"Ah... Well, I'm sorry to tell you... there is a way. You just haven't found it yet. I made it in less then five days, in fact," Argent answered with a coy smile. *Some things just never change.*

"Sir, but... how...?"

"Ensign..." Kyle stood and walked around his desk to 'get in his face' a bit more. "Remember what I said about not wanting any heroes yesterday? How you had to function as a unit -- as a team? Do you remember me saying that?"

"Y-y-yes... Sir...."

Kyle saw how mortified he was now. *Masterson must really want to fly.* "Then think about that for a while..." Kyle finally told him as he walked back around to sit down again.

Masterson's expression changed from fear to puzzlement, then it suddenly segued to a more surprised expression. Suddenly his poise and confidence reappeared.

Kyle sat back in his chair. *Ah, yes. Another generation of Nuggets will reach ascension just about... now.*

"Yes, Sir!" he snapped off with a regained cocky air of confidence.

Kyle noticed Skye hovering around his desk. "Is there anything else, Ensign? I'm a busy man, you know..." *Yeah, and I still would rather be flying myself...*

"Uh... yes, Sir -- there is..." Masterson stated, sans his newly regained cockiness.

"Shoot."

"There is a reception tonight in the Ballroom... and we were wondering if any of us could attend?"

Kyle gave one him of his rare smiles. "Of course you can. I'll be there myself." *Unfortunately.* "However," he continued, "keep in mind that whatever

activity you take upon yourself after your duty is complete comes directly out of your sack time."

Masterson obviously wasn't expecting that answer.

"Uh... Yes, Sir."

"Dismissed."

Argent leaned back in his chair and thought for a moment. Some of his troops would undoubtedly make an appearance at the reception this evening. But then, they best not grumble too loudly at the surprise drill that he had planned for tomorrow morning.

Skye came tripping out of Argent's office and joined the group waiting for him.

"What's the word, Skye?"

Skye Masterson, his smile, present and accounted for, gleefully rubbed his hands together.

"The word is teamwork, gentlemen. *Teamwork!*"

Everyone stared at him with a perplexed look on his or her faces; the Mission Specialists grinned to themselves.

"Allow me to demonstrate..." he told them as he led everyone into the holographic hangar bay.

"Now, everyone man their craft and take off."

Everyone did as he said. Some realized what he was doing and cursed their own stupidity. Of course! It was so simple, after all they all finally realized.

"Red 2, this is Red 5 -- let's take on section 8 together, over."

"Affirmative, Red 5. Let's go!"

Argent leaned back in his chair. He was monitoring their progress via the screen on his computer terminal in his office. He smiled a contented smile between sips of tea.

"Good," he finally said aloud. "Very good indeed." *This was going better than I had thought...*

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Next: *Shall We Dance?*

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