

“Adamantine”

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Lieutenant Steen Weas fought the urge to grumble aloud as he headed to his quarters. The last half hour had been totally wasted in arguing with his commanding officer, and the worst part was that Weas finally had to concede to his superior even though he knew he was right. The squadron had too many inexperienced flight officers already. They had too little resources and too much time spent in heavy action on the front lines to take on yet another rookie X-wing pilot. It was even worse upon seeing in the paperwork that their newly assigned pilot had never even seen combat before. Weas had done everything he could think of to convince Commander Mackin to refuse the incoming transfer and instead keep pressing for the veteran pilot they'd been begging for for months: accepting this rookie would only put Corona Squadron back at the end of the waiting list for replacement pilots in the understaffed Rebel Alliance.

But Mack hadn't agreed. So now it was Weas's job as the squadron's Executive Officer to come up with an extensive training plan for this brand-new pilot before he arrived. Weas wondered darkly if the rookie would even know which was the business end of a laser cannon.

He punched in the access code for his room a little harder than normal, and the door meekly slid open. Weas didn't have enough pull to have an office that was separate from his quarters like Mackin did, but at least his position in the squadron was high enough that he didn't have to share a room with anyone. Half of his solitary quarters had been converted into his simplistic office. His stewing frustration made Weas turn a dark expression on his living space of purgatory; he was stuck by himself above the rest of the squadron but below his commander, and that made the act of venting dissatisfaction extremely difficult at times.

Weas pulled his comlink from his pocket and entered in the frequency of the only other person on the entire Mon Calamari Cruiser who knew exactly how he felt. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Pless “Sponge” Yatlos, the Executive Officer of the other starfighter squadron on board, didn't answer. Weas sighed. He must be busy.

There was only one other thing that would help calm Weas down while he worked on this training plan for a pilot who was a mistake to bring here to begin with. He grabbed one of the many holodiscs in a small, hidden bin and inserted it into his computer's holoemitter without even looking at it. Then he sat down at his desk and got ready to go to work.

The holodisc started playing automatically, and Weas recognized the holodrama's opening music within the first five measures. He smiled a bit: it was *Corulag Diamonds*, recorded about sixty years ago, which made it one of the youngest holodramas in his collection but still older than his parents. It had been critically-acclaimed back in its day and popular almost to the point of having a cult following, but like all the others in his stashed bin it was today considered cheesy, sappy, trite and even a bit goofy and romanticized.

“Diamonds are survivors of extreme pressure.” Weas spoke the opening narration dialogue at the same time as the lead character, Les Hyntrall, did. “They wouldn't exist without

it, and it makes them tougher and more beautiful than ever before. And nowhere did I find such extreme pressure or such a beautiful diamond as on Corulag.”

Weas buckled down on the training plan while he absently mouthed most of the dialogue along with the characters. He’d skimmed over previous pilots’ training plans by the time Les Hyntrall met Allsie Crin, the shy, pretty lady from Alderaan. He began writing down a list of everything he’d have to include in the training plan by the time Les and Allsie had confessed their undying love to one another. To Weas’s growing irritation, he got interrupted a few times by some of the Coronas comming him to ask questions or to report something, but he had the plan’s general outline figured out when Les rescued Allsie from some roving space pirates.

“Look, Allsie,” Les whispered with a smile while he held her, crying, immediately after her rescue. He was pointing straight up at the sky. “A diamond formation.” Les had enlisted the help of some starfighters from Corulag for the daring rescue, and they flew by overhead in the familiar pattern.

Weas gave his usual half-snort, half-smile at that. The starfighter sequences in all the holos were so badly done and were nothing like real life, but a holodrama wasn’t a good holodrama without a starfighter scene. He turned back to his work.

The Coronas’ XO hit a large scheduling problem in the training plan right when Les’s tense, final confrontation with the pirate leader came. Weas’s frustration mounted as both he and Les looked for ways to right their situations.

“You won’t get away with what you did!” Les shouted to the pirate leader. “I’ll make sure of it!”

“Oh, yeah?” the pirate said with a laugh. “You think I’m scared of you? Go ahead—make sure of it. You can’t touch me, so I’m not concerned. Not even a Jedi Master could mind-trick me into caring about what you do.”

Weas’s comlink beeped yet again. He grumbled to himself, paused the holoemitter and opened the frequency. “Weas,” he replied shortly.

“Sir, it’s Quiver,” came the reply from one of the Coronas. Weas rubbed his temples; Quiver was driving him crazy lately. Hopefully Quiver would focus his energy on his new wingman when he arrived. “Hey, just out of curiosity, sir, do we get our astromechs from the lowest bidder? I have a bet with CC on it.”

Weas narrowed his eyes and said the first thing that popped into his mind. “Not even a Jedi Master could mind-trick me into caring about that. Now stop wasting my time with such stupid, trivial things.”

“Wait, what?” Quiver asked. “What did you say?”

“I said stop wasting my time with trivial things,” Weas repeated.

“No, sir, the Jedi thing. I could’ve sworn I heard that line somewhere before. Something like— Oh! It’s from that old holodrama! *Corulag* something. Ha, my grandparents were always watching that when I was growing up. I didn’t know you’d seen it too, sir.”

Weas hadn’t been expecting Quiver to recognize the line, but then again, he probably was one of the most likely Coronas to have known it. The first instantaneous thought was that here was someone Weas could chat with about one of his favorite holovids, something light and mindless that wasn’t work-related that put him on equal footing with someone else.

The second instantaneous thought caused Weas to immediately retort, “I haven’t seen whatever old holodrama you’re talking about. I don’t waste my time with pointless things like that.” He inexplicably felt guilty as he said the words, but he kept going. “Speaking of which, I’m

going to end this comm now. If you're so bored that you're spending time making silly bets, I can find plenty of productive work to keep you busy."

True to his word, Weas closed the comm frequency. Regardless of what holodramas he'd seen in the past, Quiver was still a subordinate, and getting too chummy with subordinates would just lead to problems with his job. Doing his job well was the important thing here in the Rebellion on the front lines. He had to keep the squadron functioning from day to day for them to survive, and it was not an easy task. But then again, diamonds could only be forged under pressure.

Weas resumed the holodrama's playback and turned back to his work.

The End

Revision A

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