

Thursday
August 24th, 2028
09:00 hours (PST)

Schuyler stood patiently in the shuttle bay, awaiting for the arrival of his former CO. It was rare that Admiral Anubis Cruger made a trip all the way to the Earth headquarters of SPD, and judging on the cryptic communication he received from the admiral the day before, it seemed to be a serious situation they needed to discuss.

The shuttle bay was a bit more crowded than unusual. Normally, there was personnel scattered throughout the bay, some engineers doing random shuttle maintenance, but today all hands were on deck for the arrival of the admiral.

“How long has it been since we’ve seen him?” Syd asked, walking up behind her husband and grabbing his hand, locking her fingers in between his playfully.

“It’s been at least 19 months since he was here last. The Theta Quadrant is a long way out. No need to come all the way back to Earth unless it was important,” he told her.

“What do you think it is?”

“When he contacted me yesterday to tell me he was coming, he seemed... vague. Hopefully he can brief me on whatever the situation is.”

“Do you think you screwed up?”

Schuyler turned to her oddly. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, do you think you screwed something up so bad that he’s coming here to relieve you of duty?” Syd asked.

“No... what would make you think that?” he asked.

“It’s just a question, grumpy,” she moaned, hearing the disdain in his voice. Whatever it is, I’m sure you can handle it.”

“Thanks, honey.”

The bay doors opened, and a small shuttle made its descent into the shuttle bay. The shuttle itself looked big enough to transport two or three people at most, as it was one of the smaller

shuttles in the fleet. Schuyler noted the lack of weapons on the shuttle as well, but was convinced that the admiral wouldn't travel so far out without being able to defend himself.

The shuttle landed, and the loading door lowered slowly, allowing Admiral Cruger to step out. He looked, at least to Schuyler, older than he remembered. Then again, it had been close to two years, and they'd seen their fair share of conflict. Serving at SPD, while rewarding, seemed to take a toll on people.

Everyone in the shuttle bay stood at attention, saluting the admiral as he walked over to Schuyler, extending his hand to him.

"Commander Tate," he said plainly.

"Sir," Schuyler said proudly, obliging him.

The admiral turned to Syd. "Mrs. Tate. It's good to see you and the baby are well," he said.

"You, too, sir," Syd said.

"Do you have a due date?"

"The doctor thinks it will be mid January, but if I have my way the sooner they pull this thing out of me, the better," she told him.

"Congratulations to the two of you. I think parenthood will suit you. Ininia and I just gave birth to a liter ourselves. 4 boys and 3 girls," the admiral announced.

"Did you post any pictures of them on Facebook?" Syd asked.

"What is a Facebook?"

Syd chuckled. "Nevermind. Congratulations," she told him.

"What brings you all the way from the Theta Quadrant, sir? Your communication seemed urgent," Schuyler mentioned, switching gears to get back on track.

"Perhaps we should talk in your office," he said.

"Of course, sir."

"I'll leave you boys to your work. I'm going home, my feet are swollen and I'm craving ice chips and raisins," Syd said cheerfully, leaning upwards to kiss her husband on the cheek, then hurried off.

Schuyler and admiral then proceeded towards his office. As they walked, it was amazing to the admiral not only how much things had changed at SPD, but how much they had also managed to remain the same. His command style was different than Schuyler's, but nonetheless he had been impressed with the way Schuyler had handled things in his absence.

They arrived at his office a few moments later, both of them silent the entire walk there. They closed the doors, and on instinct, the admiral started for the desk, only to remember it wasn't *his* desk anymore.

"My apologies, Commander," he said, surrendering the seat behind the desk to Schuyler.

"Sir, please..." he said, motioning for him to take the seat. The admiral begrudgingly accepted, sitting down.

"You changed the settings on my chair," he pointed out.

Schuyler smiled. "Only a bit, sir. Please, make yourself comfortable. Can I get Gabbi to bring you anything? Coffee? Tea?" he offered.

"No thank you, commander. We have much to discuss," he turned around in the chair, taking a look out the window that encompassed the entire wall behind the desk, overlooking the promenade area. "It has come to my attention that you recently promoted a group of cadets to full officers with rank. I came here to get clarification on the matter."

"Yes, sir. The D Squad was promoted to several different ranks, ranging from ensign to Lt. Commander. That decision came from Admiral Myers at Corysis station, and I endorsed it," Schuyler said.

"The B Squad was my most promising crop of officers I ever served with, yet even when you were elevated to active ranger status, you remained simply cadets. Why the need to push them along so quickly?" he asked.

"I have faith in this group, sir. I've been tracking them individually for quite some time, much like when you promoted two street thieves from a market to become rangers," he pointed out.

"Touche, commander, but there are protocols that need to be followed. What sort of message does this send to the other cadets in the academy? Especially when your team consists of members who had rangers as parents. It could be viewed as favoritism."

"I understand that, sir, but to combat that, this isn't an isolated incident. I'd noticed that over the last three years, dropout rates have been at an all time high and graduating classes have been

at an all time low. We only had 17 cadets graduate to full fledge officers last year. That is unacceptable to me,” Schuyler told him.

“So when your candidates can’t live up to expectation you *lower* the expectation? Thats hardly an answer to your problem.”

“The expectation is still as high as it has ever been, if not higher. We are accepting fewer applicants at the beginning of the year, and giving them incentives to continue to work, train and learn. For example, from here on out only first year cadets will be called as such. In your second year, assuming you have passed all courses to the satisfaction of all the instructors, they will be promoted to crewman,” he said.

“What's the difference between a cadet and a crewman?”

“Nothing. Nothing at all, other than a sense of accomplishment. Having them labeled as cadets for four solid years can be discouraging, thus leading to the feeling that they aren’t progressing in their career, which leads to the dropout rates. Now, they feel as though they have accomplished something and are motivated to stay on,” Schuyler explained.

The admiral took a moment, rubbing his chin, then nodded. “That is a brilliant idea, Commander. Well done. Have you implemented this for the entire base?”

“Yes, sir, and I have submitted a proposal to Admiral Collins and Admiral Myers to implement these changes throughout all of SPD.”

“What's to prevent them from simply dropping out in the third or fourth year if they do not see anymore progress?”

“Third year crewmen will be allowed to put in for work/study programs, meaning they can request to serve aboard a ship in this sector and still receive credits towards graduation. I’ve found they the officers learn better in the field, rather than in a classroom with their noses in a text book or staring at a monitor,” he told him.

“Baptism by fire, I see. But this still doesn’t solve the concerns that some may have about you promoting a first year cadet to a full ensign without requiring they graduate from the academy before being promoted. This D Squad of yours may turn out to be a logistics nightmare not just for you, but for all of SPD,” the admiral reminded him.

“I understand your concern, but it's the same nightmare you faced with Admiral Fowler when you promoted Jack and Z a few years ago. I can handle it. Plus, it gives the others in the academy the feeling of if they work hard enough, push themselves to be the best they can be, that they are capable of moving up within SPD based on merit and not just time served,” Schuyler said.

“I have my reservations about this new direction, but I have come to trust you over the years. We have served together, fought together, lost comrades together. You are in command of this station, much like I was, and if I wouldn’t tolerate a stuffy bureaucrat from another quadrant to dictate policy to me, I can’t expect you to. You have my endorsement, commander.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Now, on the same subject, it has come to my attention that some of your newest recruits have civilian powers. I was there for the original experiments in genetic enhancements in 2001 that led to your parents being affected by the radiation that cause their children to have powers, but where did these new recruits acquire their abilities, and is this something we should be concerned about?”

“Ensign Enrile has the ability to sense other people’s emotions, much like her father did.”

“Her father?”

“Yes, sir. Bridge Carson is her father.”

“I see that has finally come back to bite me in the rear end,” he sighed.

“Sir?” Schuyler inquired, confused by the statement.

“How much do you remember about Grumm’s attempt to invade the past?” he asked.

“I remember Kat detected a temporal wormhole, and Grumm used it to go to the past in hopes of invading there, altering history.” Schuyler stated.

“Yes. You and Syd remained behind with Sam to defend the station. The temporal wormhole was unstable, and our team was in the past for approximately six months. In that time, they started lives away from SPD unsure if they would ever be able to return to their own time. Bridge was the only member of the team who found a civilian and settled down with her, convinced that it was going to be his new life.”

“Alyssa Enrile, the white Wild Force ranger,” he added.

“Yes, I believe she was a school teacher at the time. Denying him memories of those six months was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make, but we couldn’t risk altering the timeline. The dino thunder rangers and our team had their memories suppressed, allowing the flow of time to resume. But, Bridge and Ms. Enrile were only hours away from getting married when we returned for him. I allowed her to retain her memories as she was pregnant with his child and I was unsure if the suppressor would have any lasting effects on the child. She promised to keep

it a secret and eventually went on to marry and have a happy life. But now, I see her children have found their way to SPD,” the admiral explained.

“Does Dr. Manx know?”

“Yes, she does.”

“I had her run a full DNA analysis on both ensigns Enrile and Carson to verify their story, but she *knew* the entire time they were telling the truth,” Schuyler sighed.

“Do not blame Dr. Manx for not telling you. She was under orders not to. She was doing her duty.”

“I understand, sir.”

“Now, what of your other recruits? I’m told there is one that has almost half of her body replaced by robotic implants,” he brought up.

“Yes, sir, Lieutenant James. To my understanding her implants are biosynthetic. There was some kind of accident when she was a child, many of her bones and internal organs had to be replaced with these biosynthetic parts, including her eye, which allows her to see beyond the normal spectrum,” he explained.

“Your Xybrian officer has the same abilities of his people?” he asked.

“I don’t know if Lieutenant Pascal has exhibited any traits of the Xybrian race, but he is only half Xybrian, so they may not,” he said.

“I see. And what of Bridge’s son, Ensign Carson?”

“He has no discernible power that we have been able to measure, but he does seem to have a capacity to absorb and retain information he is exposed to. I don’t know if that counts as a civilian power or if he is just a quick study. Either way, he will be valuable to the team,” Schuyler told him.

“Lastly, I am told that a four year cadet, Cadet Ford, was promoted to ensign.”

“Yes sir, our Pantherain officer. KJ,” he added.

“How do you justify promoting cadets who have been in the academy one day to the same rank as a cadet who served for four years?” he inquired.

“That was Admiral Myer’s call, not mine, but I believe it was warranted. Ensign Ford has a temper, and is prone to lash out. I think being in a command structure that rewards good service rather than time served will be good for him,” Schuyler said.

“I agree.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“There is one more matter I wish to discuss with you before I go. Long range scans in the Theta Quadrant have picked up a what appears to be a Vohrsoth vessel,” the admiral said.

Schuyler paused. “The Vohrsoth? The Ancient Ones? I thought they were only a myth to stop travelers from going too far out into unknown space,” he said.

“As did I, commander, but the configuration of the ship we have detected conforms to everything we know about the Vohrsoth. At their current rate of speed for a vessel that size, they are still over 500 light years away. Assuming they were heading for Earth, and we were unable to stop it before it did, they wouldn’t arrive until...” he was interrupted.

“About seven months,” he sighed.

“Correct. How were you able to calculate that so quickly, commander?” the admiral asked.

Schuyler sat on the edge of the desk. “Sir, I have something to tell you, about one of our officers. Lt. Commander Serenity.”

“Your team’s leader. What of her?”

“She is from the future, sir. From what shes told me, about 20 years into the future. SPD had fallen in some sort of war, but she never told me who or what it was. I allowed her on the team because she says she has information and tactics that can prevent this war from even happening, and your long range scans of a Vohrsoth ship fits her time table.”

“SPD High Command should have been informed of this sooner, commander,” he said sternly.

“I understand, sir. But sir, what if it *is* the Vohrsoth?” Schuyler asked him.

“Then we’d better hope that she’s right and she can prevent this. Otherwise, the Earth,” he paused. “The entire quadrant, will be decimated in a matter of hours. The Vohrsoth are unlike anything we have ever faced or will ever face. Even one ship in orbit could spell doom for everyone in this sector,” he stood up. “I will return to my station and continue to monitor their activity. If need be, we will destroy the ship before it ever makes it here,” he said.

“If I get any more information on this, I will transmit it to you on a subspace carrier beacon,” Schuyler told him.

“Very good. There is no need for too much concern yet, but we shouldn’t take this potential threat lightly. Keep up the good work here, commander. You have made me proud,” Admiral Cruger said, extending his hand to him.

Schuyler quickly shook his hand, nodding in agreement.