
A significantly younger Tom Wreke is sitting in front of Emerson Flynt. Tom is in a pair of military fatigues, dark hair lacking his usual grey and white strands concentrated near the temple. His face is softer, less rugged and squared. Emerson is dressed in a deep blue suit, that shines almost emerald as he adjusts his left cufflink, moving the fabric slightly.

EMERSON FLYNT

You have a decorated past.

Tom winces, unsure if this is meant to be a compliment or not. He nods, cautiously.

TOM WREKE

I do my best to serve, as I can. It's important to give your all, with what you've got.

Emerson steeples his hands together, looking at Tom sideways.

EMERSON FLYNT

With what you're given.

Tom nods, confused. He fidgets slightly, but manages to maintain eye contact.

EMERSON FLYNT

I know a God fearing man when I see one. I think you'd be a good suit for the culture on board the ISS Pathfinder.

He rolls his shoulder, massaging out a knot in it. Tom watches silently, a droplet of sweat beading up at his throat, slipping beneath his collar. It shines off of his dog tags- coincidentally inscribed with a stylized caduceus that looks like the crucifix.

TOM WREKE

It'd be an honour, sir.

EMERSON FLYNT

We need more men like you- to balance out those... Newcomers. Some good old fashioned traditionalism, to ground the trailblazing. Temper it. A man who's served his country- and done a damn fine job of it as well.

Someone who comes from a good family, has a network of friends who are more than happy to dole out glowing reviews... And a lovely fiancée.

Tom startles a little at this, cheeks flushing in embarrassment. He looks like he's about to explain, fingers picking at the silicon band on his hand out of anxiety- but Emerson continues, voice gone sly.

EMERSON FLYNT

There's no need to be shy. I've done my research on you- and the people whose company you keep. Laurel Scoresby is a looker- she turns heads when she walks into the room. She's smart, a PHD candidate- and sexy, with that wild red hair and those long legs. Model-esque.

Tom seems uncomfortable. Emerson laughs, reaches across the table to grab him by the shoulder and shake him lightly, grinning.

EMERSON FLYNT

It's quite alright to loosen up. You're in the company of a fellow man- there's no women around to needle you with their ideals of chivalry and knights in shining armour. Easy, now. There's no harm in just looking- appreciating the female form, as it were.

Emerson settles back into his chair- takes a sip of his scotch. He turns the glass slowly in his hand, holding it above himself- to consider the quality of light that passes through it.

EMERSON FLYNT

Besides, we have a preference for married couples- besides from being easier to find housing accommodations for, we find that they tend to be entirely more cooperative when it isn't only their life on the line. Efficient way to bring them to heel- no one wants to rock the boat, when the career at risk isn't just your own. It's a lifelong dream for many of these people to be up here- and what better work environment than one that really does feel like home?

Tom smiles, a little pained. He bites onto his thumbnail, letting Flynt continue.

EMERSON FLYNT

I imagine that we could make an exception- seeing as it's no trouble at all to summon the chaplain over to expedite the paperwork process, file it internally. You'd be hitched on paper- and if all goes well,

you could invite your coworkers and new friends on board to a 'renewment of your vows' to have the big princess party of her dreams- all women long for the white ball gown, her Prince Charming misty eyed- so don't you worry there. I understand. We'll even cover the expenses, to sweeten the deal- if you both agree to sign on together.

Tom's sweating. He's pale underneath the lights, and nods eagerly- his hands shaking almost imperceptibly as he signs off on the long contract, the swirl of his T and W almost melting into one another. Emerson takes the pages back with satisfaction, winking at Tom.

EMERSON FLYNT

You're welcome to go, now. Enjoy breaking the news to your sweetheart.

Tom gets up on wobbly legs to leave, casting a parting glance at Emerson as he hightails it out of the room.
