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# Lessons in Leadership

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***Minyith and Lorsenth tire, Yengarth said. Bremnoth's rider should order them down to trade out with Sujath and Tayath.***

*K'syr's the leader this time, Yengarth, T'syr reminded his bronze. You can't do his job for him.* With Layketh listening, Weyrlingsecond Shahara would know if someone was covering for K'syr's inattention.

***Mulleith and Kinelyth are too close! Bremnoth's rider should tell them to spread out more and hold the formation.***

T'syr strained his head around just in time to see green Kinelyth swerve in Mulleith's direction. The blue bellowed and went *between* to avoid the collision. Mulleith reappeared farther back, and flew hard to get himself back in position.

T'syr swore to himself. 'K'syr, *what are you doing?*' But he kept Yengarth in tight formation to the left of and behind Bremnoth. He glanced towards Hassanth and D'rian, the other pair just behind K'syr in the V-shaped formation. D'rian's back was stock straight, and his gloved hands gripped the strap in front of him. T'syr could just imagine what his cotmate was thinking; he'd been at the receiving end of D'rian's bad temper and stickler-for-details attitude often enough.

'I knew it was going to be like this,' T'syr thought, rolling his eyes. It was their first endurance formation flight with K'syr in the Wingleader position. The lazy bastard couldn't be bothered to pay attention and actually *do* what a wingleader was supposed to do.

T'syr couldn't imagine what things would be like in a seven-day or two, when they would be going *between* in formation... or in another seven-day after that, when they would be doing rope drills in formation -- with firestone. A feeling of dread slowly came over him. 'He's gotta start getting this right,' he thought, 'or we're going to have trouble, sooner or later.'

***I will tell Bremnoth--***

*No, don't!* T'syr gritted his teeth. *I'll talk to him when we get on the ground. Weyrlingsecond Shahara will probably give him an earful, too...* They just had to get through this drill. Focus on the drill, and worry about later later.

***Hassanth tells Bremnoth they should let Minyith and Lorsenth rest. Bremnoth tells them to trade out with Sujath and Tayath. Now Kinelyth says she is tired, too. Bremnoth tells her to trade with Shoaliant.***

*It takes someone else to remind K'syr to do his job,* T'syr said bitterly. But he kept it to himself. Let K'syr hang himself by his own rope. Still, it didn't keep his irritation from growing.



They were lucky to have no injuries. The last straw for T'syr came just before the drill ended, as they were landing, and a tired Duhonth ('He should have been traded out ages ago!' T'syr thought) faltered in flight and nearly collided with an equally tired Relth and went *between*. The heart-wrenching seconds Duhonth spent *between* were some of the longest in T'syr's life. When the blue finally reappeared, and S'var with him, T'syr gasped in relief – and promptly lost his long temper at K'syr.

Layketh ordered them to land on the Weyrling Drill Grounds, which they did in formation. The weyrings would be called to form a line in front for Shahara's review, and when Yengarth was solidly on the ground, T'syr unlatched the buckles on his riding straps as quickly as he could and slid down his bronze's side.

As soon as his boots hit the ground, T'syr stomped in Bremnoth and K'syr's direction, angrily pulling at his flight helmet strap to loosen it and yanking his helmet off just in time to corner K'syr against Bremnoth's shoulder.

"What was all that? Were you asleep in the air?"

K'syr shrugged and laughed. "To be honest, I was wondering whether the kitchen would be serving herd-beast, roast wherry, or fish stew tonight."

T'syr surprised himself by growling. K'syr laughed at it, which was even more infuriating.

"You're so uptight, T'syr," K'syr drawled. "You should loosen up."

"Loosen up?" T'syr countered. "One of these days your laziness is going to *kill* someone!"

"Add a few obscenities in there, and you'll sound just like your cotmate," K'syr said, though he lowered his voice and glanced around, as if looking to see if D'rian was close enough to hear.

T'syr grit his teeth. "Come on, K'syr! Can't you even get *this* right? This was a simple endurance drill. You have to take charge, keep track of everyone --"

"When they can take care of themselves?" K'syr shrugged again. "It's their own fault if they can't keep in formation or decide when they're tired."

"I don't think you realize what being a bronzerider means," T'syr said, his voice tight with fury.

"I would have been more happy with a green," K'syr said. "Less work. More sex. But Bremnoth more than makes up for me." He patted his dragon on the forearm.

"A good dragon still needs a good rider on his back," T'syr countered. "You're so lazy, you aren't worth half of any other weyring in this class."

"Didn't realize you thought so highly of me," K'syr said, his voice tight. "But at least my ass isn't so tight I can still wear the breeches I wore when I was ten."

T'syr almost snapped under a surge of fury. He controlled himself enough to turn and start walking forward to where the weyrings were lining up, but he silently fumed

as he stalked away. It was never worth talking to K'syr; he was so infuriating!

***Bremnoth's rider angers you! I will tell him--***

*No!* T'syr mentally shouted – then felt guilty for taking his anger out on Yengarth. *No*, he said in a softer tone. *Don't get after Bremnoth for his rider's failings. We'll let Weyrlingsecond Shahara do that.*



"Bronzeriders, come forward!" Weyrlingsecond Shahara's voice carried an edge that made T'syr wary. Even when he knew it was someone else who was in trouble, the weyrlingsecond never failed to make him nervous with that tone. He stepped forward with B'shan, D'rian, J'lan, and finally K'syr.

Shahara walked down the line, looking at each of them in turn, then centered herself in front of them, shoulders square and feet apart. Addressing no one in particular, she asked, "What happened up there?"

T'syr stayed silent, waiting for K'syr to say something. The other bronzerider held his peace, though; his lazy posture echoed his attitude.

"K'syr didn't hold us in position," T'syr finally said, breaking the silence and shooting a disdainful glance in K'syr's direction. "T'larin and K'senal almost collided. And S'var and H'riro. And he didn't notice when the greens started tiring."

"I see," Shahara said. Then she folded her arms over her chest. "And what *else* was going on up there?"

T'syr stayed silent.

"K'syr wasn't the only bronzerider up there. When you noticed something was wrong, what did you do?"

T'syr fidgeted with uncertainty.

"Nothing. Isn't that right?" Shahara smiled without mirth. Then she started pacing. "Let me tell you something that will save someone's life someday. Being a wingrider is more than following a leader, doing only what you're told, and letting *him* take the fall. What happens when your wingleader has an off day? Or has too much to drink the night before?" Someone snickered, and Shahara's eyes darted that direction. "It happens," she said, "even when it shouldn't." She turned her brown gaze back to the five bronze weyrlings in front of her. "You need to be prepared to pick up the slack, if it will keep someone alive."

"No one rider can be expected to notice *everything* that happens in the Wing. This isn't a one-rider show, every rider for himself. Cooperation is the key to survival – for *everyone*. And the only one who played a supporting role, in this case, was D'rian."

It was like a physical blow. T'syr had, once again, given D'rian the upper hand, an opportunity to gloat that he was the better rider. And it was too late for T'syr to do anything about it.

Shahara went on to discuss procedures of what to do when a wingleader appears to be inattentive – measures to take that do not usurp a wingleader's authority, but still would help to prevent accidents – but T'syr could barely hear what she was saying, with his ears burning from shame. 'Idiot,' he berated himself. Yengarth had been willing, even suggested...

***I am always willing to fill my duty as a bronze,*** Yengarth said gently.

*I should trust you more,* T'syr moaned. He eyed the toes of his boots, half-listening to Shahara quiz the other bronze weyrlings on what they should and shouldn't do. B'shan stammered an answer to her questioning, then J'lan, then K'syr's familiar drawl...

"And T'syr," Shahara said, when her pace brought her to him.

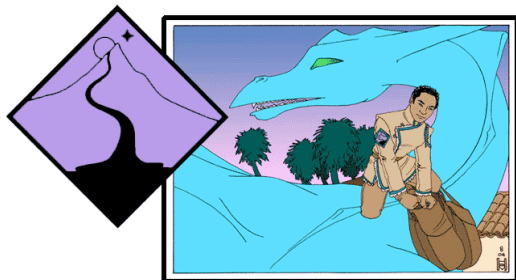
T'syr jerked his head up and looked her in the eyes. Her face was stern and held little sympathy for him.

"Make sure that while you're blaming another weyrling for his failings, you're still doing all you can. Pay more attention to what *you* can do, and less to what everyone else is *supposed* to do."

"Yes, ma'am," he said. His voice rang bitter in his ears.

"K'syr, that doesn't absolve you of responsibility," Shahara said, raising her voice. "Three days middens duty for you, so you can think about what it means to have a leadership role. And T'syr, B'shan and J'lan can share a day with K'syr on middens duty as well, so they can think about what it means to support their wingleader in his role."

T'syr shared a rueful glance with B'shan, and spared another disdainful glance for K'syr – who smirked maddeningly back at him. D'rian also smirked, glancing at them all with an air of superiority, and stood straighter. 'One of these days,' T'syr thought, 'I'll wipe the latrine with both those smirks and enjoy every minute of it.'



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