

**WING  
COMMANDER  
ACADEMY**

**"CHAIN OF COMMAND"**

**SCRIPT OUTLINE**

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**Story by:  
Mark Edens**

**Edited by:  
Michael Edens  
and Mark Edens**

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WING COMMANDER ACADEMY  
"Chain of Command"  
(Outline)

ACT ONE

1. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

Powered-down fighters float in space, arrayed around the jump node of a pulsar star. An ambush. MANIAC, ARCHER, HYENA, PAYBACK, GRUNT -- all the CADET PILOTS are there, waiting, except Maverick. We hear Tolwyn in VO, explaining that standard Kilrathi tactics call for scout ships to jump through first, followed by a larger recon force, then the main body of the fleet.

The Tiger's Claw floats some distance away, also powered down. "I intend to destroy the Kilrathi scouts as they emerge from the node," he continues in VO. "We have to keep their main force from learning that they're facing only a single carrier."

DISSOLVE TO:

2. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIDGE

COMMODORE TOLWYN and MAVERICK watch through a viewing port. Tolwyn says that he requested reinforcements from Fleet Command weeks ago because of the unexpected amount of Kilrathi activity they've discovered in their sector.

"Until they arrive -- if they arrive -- we're on our own."

Maverick asks why Tolwyn is keeping him aboard the Tiger's Claw. "I want to be out there, sir."

Tolwyn says that he wants Maverick to learn what it means to be in command. Maverick replies that he believes a

leader should share the dangers of the people under his command.

"Any fool can be brave," Tolwyn tells him. "The hard thing is to be right."

Through the viewing port, they see a flash of light: a ship emerging from the jump node.

CUT TO:

3. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The cadet pilots are watching the flashes of light in the distance as the ships jump through (the ships are too far away to be seen by the naked eye). Archer counts them, one, two three --

CUT TO:

4. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIDGE

"Three flashes," Tolwyn tells Maverick. "Scout ships, just as I expected." He orders the fighters to power up and attack.

CUT TO:

5. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The fighters power up and rocket toward the three blips that appear on their sensor screens. Hitting their afterburners, they rapidly close from behind on a fast Kilrathi corvette escorted by two Grikath heavy fighters. The Kilrathi ships try to turn back for the jump node, but the cadet fighters swarm them. One of the Grikaths is quickly destroyed. Maniac gets on the tail of the other one and hits it with an ion cannon blast, shattering its



shields. Cadet VED "PITCHFORK" PATEL swoops in and hits the Kilrathi ship with a second blast. It explodes.

Meanwhile, Archer leads a methodical attack on the corvette. A swarm of Arrow and Hellcat fighters blast the corvette's five laser turrets, knocking out three of them. Then Archer sends in Hyena at the controls of a Broadsword bomber, flanked by protecting Sabres. A missile from the Broadsword destroys the corvette.

When Hyena exults over his successful attack -- "Man, did you see that shot?! I should do this for a living!" Archer tells him to can the chatter. "Today it was the Kilrathi," she says. "Next time it could be one of us."

Grunt reports more flashes from the jump node -- more ships coming through.

CUT TO:

6. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIDGE

Tolwyn watches the flashes as more ships come through the node. "The recon force shouldn't have jumped through so soon," he says to himself. "It's not how the Kilrathi do it..." Tolwyn turns on a comlink and orders the fighters to engage the enemy immediately. Maverick asks permission to join them in one of the reserve fighters. "It's too late," Tolwyn answers quietly.

CUT TO:

7. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The cadet fighters rocket to intercept the ships that have jumped through the node. Archer tells them that she

has seven ships on her screens -- large ships, not fighters.

"It looks like a carrier task force."

Maniac tells Archer that if the other fighters will cover him by hitting the carrier's laser turrets, he'll fly through the hangar deck and "blast the guts out of it."

Archer tells him to stop trying to show off. They aren't out there to prove anything.

"I can do it!" Maniac insists. "I ran it in a simulator in tactics class!"

"This isn't a simulator!" says Archer.

Suddenly an order comes through from Tolwyn, urgently telling them to break off the attack. Maniac is upset: "No! That cat box was mine!"

"You mean it's *ours*," Archer replies, relieved. "I've got a visual on the carrier. It's Confederation."

We get our first close look at the carrier: the TCS Trafalgar, a carrier of the same class as the Tiger's Claw. (With the carrier are a cruiser, three destroyers, and two light recon ships.)

DISSOLVE TO:

8. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR -- THE TWO CARRIERS

A shuttle flies from the Trafalgar to the Tiger's Claw.

CUT TO:

9. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: HANGAR DECK

Tolwyn and Maverick are waiting to greet the commander of the Trafalgar, REAR-ADMIRAL RHEA BERGSTROM. Tolwyn congratulates Bergstrom on making admiral, but there's a



coolness between them that makes the congratulations ring hollow.

"That's ten credits you owe me," Bergstrom replies. Tolwyn says he doesn't understand. Bergstrom reminds him that when they were at the Academy together, they had a ten credit bet on who would make admiral first.

"That was a long time ago," says Tolwyn.

"Apparently," says Bergstrom. With a glance at Maverick, she leads Tolwyn from the hangar deck, crisply informing him: "We'll talk on the bridge."

WIPE TO:

10. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: TOLWYN'S OFFICE

The middle of an argument: Bergstrom is telling Tolwyn that when the Kilrathi recon force comes through the node, she wants Tolwyn to let them send back the information that the Tiger's Claw is alone. She intends to let the Kilrathi force come through and use the Tiger's Claw as a decoy to lure the Kilrathi into an ambush.

Tolwyn objects that the Kilrathi fleet is too large for Bergstrom's task force and the Tiger's Claw to handle even together: their only hope is to stop it at the jump node. "Besides, we'd be retreating into an unsecured system. There might be more Kilrathi ships here --"

Bergstrom interrupts him, insisting that the Kilrathi won't commit a large fleet to such an "unimportant sector." There's nothing strategic here. "That's why you were sent

here, Tolwyn, you and your cadets: because there's nothing in this sector the Confederation can't afford to lose."

"The last time we met," Tolwyn says, "you still called me Geoffrey."

"We were the same rank then," Bergstrom replies. "You have my orders -- now carry them out."

CUT TO:

11. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: HANGAR DECK

Maverick watches as the cadet fighters land on the hangar deck and the tired cadets climb out of their cockpits. Making sure that Maniac can hear her, Archer tells Maverick that Maniac almost "bagged a carrier."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Maniac grumbles. "Maybe next time I'll stay on the Claw and polish Tolwyn's brass."

Admiral Bergstrom appears in time to overhear what Maniac says. The cadets snap to attention. "I understand you led the recon mission through the jump node that discovered the Kilrathi fleet," Bergstrom says to Maverick. "We'll talk in my shuttle."

WIPE TO:

12. INT. THE ADMIRAL'S SHUTTLE

Bergstrom asks Maverick his opinion of Tolwyn. Maverick replies that cadets aren't supposed to have opinions of commodores.

"Geoffrey Tolwyn is always competent, and often brilliant," Bergstrom says. But the high command doesn't



trust him. The leaders of the Confederation forces have to act as a team. "Tolwyn is fighting his own war."

"Why are you telling me this?" Maverick asks.

Bergstrom says that she needs an officer close to Tolwyn whom she can trust. "I want you to report to me privately if Tolwyn fails to carry out my orders."

Maverick objects that she's asking him to spy on his commanding officer.

"I am your commanding officer now," Bergstrom reminds him. "And I'm not asking you to spy on him -- I'm ordering you to."

We FADE OUT on Maverick's troubled face.

ACT TWO

13. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

Bergstrom's task force fires its engines and moves away from the Tiger's Claw. We hear Bergstrom in VO, telling Maverick that she's ordered Tolwyn to lure the Kilrathi main fleet into an ambush at the first planet in the system.

DISSOLVE TO:

14. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIDGE

Maverick stands on the bridge, watching Bergstrom's task force disappear into space. Bergstrom's VO continues: "If Tolwyn fails to execute that order, inform me immediately."

"What will you do then?" Maverick asks in VO.



"I'll relieve Tolwyn," Bergstrom answers in VO, "and put one of my own officers in command."

DISSOLVE TO:

15. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIEFING ROOM

Tolwyn tells the assembled cadet pilots that Admiral Bergstrom's task force has moved on: "We're on our own again." He tells them to execute their original plan and destroy all Kilrathi recon ships that come through the jump node.

"Sir, Admiral Bergstrom --" begins Maverick. But then he hesitates.

"Since you missed the fun last time," Tolwyn tells Maverick, "I'm putting you in command of the fighters at the node. Any questions?"

"No, sir," Maverick says reluctantly.

DISSOLVE TO:

16. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The cadet fighters wait in ambush, powered down. Maverick waits, thinking. Finally he turns on his comlink - and contacts Tolwyn on his private frequency.

INTERCUT WITH:

17. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIDGE

Tolwyn angrily tells Maverick to maintain power silence. Maverick tells Tolwyn that Admiral Bergstrom has ordered him to report if Tolwyn fails to carry out her orders. "She intends to remove you from command, sir."



Tolwyn accuses Maverick of disloyalty. "She gave me a direct order, sir," Maverick tells him: "I have to obey it."

Tolwyn pounds his fist on the comlink console, once, putting all his anger into a single blow. Then he says coldly but calmly: "The fighters will attack the Kilrathi as they emerge from the jump node -- then fall back to the Tiger's Claw. We'll draw the Kilrathi after us, into Admiral Bergstrom's ambush." Tolwyn switches off the comlink and adds under his breath: "And if she's wrong..."  
CAMERA PANS AWAY, to the viewing port. There's a distant flash of light, then another. Ships jumping through the node.

CUT TO:

18. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The cadet pilots watch from their powered-down fighters as a Kilrathi recon force jumps through the node...

The Kilrathi force consists of two destroyers, two corvettes, and several jump-capable Grikath and Darket fighters.

CUT TO:

19. INT. DESTROYER RAS'NIK'RA: BRIDGE

One of the destroyers is the Ras'Nik'Ra, commanded by GAR AHL NAR HHALLAS. The destroyer's sensors suddenly pick up power sources all around them as the Confederation fighters power up.

Garahl passes the information on to the CAPTAIN of the other destroyer, who is in command of the recon force. The



Kilrathi captain orders the fighters to intercept the Terrans, while the destroyers and the corvettes assume a defensive formation.

CUT TO:

20. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

The Terran fighters engage the Kilrathi fighter screen, destroying a couple of Kilrathi fighters, and a pair of Sabres gets through. The pilot of the lead Sabre is Pitchfork, with Hyena as his wingman. They launch their torpedos at the second destroyer, then try to escape through the criss-crossing laser turret fire from the Kilrathi ships. Hyena's torpedo is hit by defensive fire and destroyed, but Pitchfork's torpedo hits the destroyer. The destroyer explodes. At almost the same time, Pitchfork's ship is hit by several lasers at once and explodes. Hyena's acrobatic flying manages to get him out of the range of the lasers.

CUT TO:

21. INT. DESTROYER RAS'NIK'RA: BRIDGE

Garahl assumes command of the recon force. The leader of the Kilrathi fighters informs Garahl that the Terran fighters are withdrawing. Should they pursue? Garahl is puzzled. "Why withdraw," he asks himself, "when they have the advantage?" He orders the fighters to shadow the Terrans, but not to force a fight. The Terrans could be trying to lure them into a trap.

CUT TO:



22. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR -- THE TIGER'S CLAW

The Claw is moving away from the pulsar at top speed. The faster cadet fighters overtake it and start landing...

DISSOLVE TO:

23. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIEFING ROOM

Tolwyn tells the rather subdued cadets that cadets Patel and Chang "took out" a Kilrathi destroyer, but in the course of the action Cadet Patel was lost. "I'm sure you are all looking forward to a chance to avenge him."

"No joke," mutters Hyena.

Tolwyn says that whatever Kilrathi ships follow the recon force through the jump node will no doubt pursue the Tiger's Claw. When they reach the first planet in the system, Admiral Bergstrom's task force will ambush and destroy the Kilrathi. Tolwyn adds a final order: "Cadet Blair will be confined to quarters until further notice. Dismissed."

Tolwyn leaves. As they get up, cadets glance curiously at Maverick. "Surely he can't blame you for what happened to Ved," Archer says to him. "You were only following his orders."

DISSOLVE TO:

24. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR

With a brilliant flash of light, a huge ship jumps through the node. As it decelerates, we see that it's Prince Thrakhath's flagship, the dreadnought Agon'Ra'Sivar.



Garahl's destroyer moves INTO THE SHOT, approaching the enormous dreadnought.

DISSOLVE TO:

25. INT. AGON'RA'SIVAR: THRAXHATH'S THRONE ROOM

Garahl tells PRINCE THRAXHATH that the carrier has retreated, but he has fighters tracking it. Fighters from the Kilrathi fleet can easily overtake the Terrans once the carriers have jumped through.

Thraxhath tells Garahl that the carriers will not be coming through: he has brought only his flagship and a few escort ships. Garahl warns that the retreating Terran carrier could be leading them into a trap: there may be a larger Terran force lurking in the system.

Thraxhath replies that there will be a trap, but it won't be the Terrans who spring it. "There is another fleet in this system, but it is not Terran. It is Kilrathi."

ACT THREE

26. EXT. SPACE -- THE TIGER'S CLAW

The Tiger's Claw moves through space. In VO, Maverick says: "We're approaching the planet where Admiral Bergstrom is waiting to ambush the Kilrathi." Three Scimitar fighters swoop PAST THE CAMERA AND INTO THE SHOT, heading toward the Claw. One of them is damaged, trailing sparks. "Scout ships have confirmed that Kilrathi fighters are tracking us."

CUT TO:



27. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: MAVERICK'S QUARTERS

Maverick is recording a holo vid letter to his father, speaking into the recorder. "They also detected the Kilrathi ships that came through the node. Only part of their fleet jumped through. It looks like Admiral Bergstrom was right, and Commodore Tolwyn was wrong."

DISSOLVE TO:

28. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: TOLWYN'S OFFICE

Tolwyn sits in the dimly lit office, brooding. Finally he reaches over and turns on an intercom: "I want all the cadet pilots in the briefing room in one hour. That includes Cadet Blair."

DISSOLVE TO:

29. EXT. NEAR A PLANET

A brightly colored ball in the distance, against the blackness of space. The Tiger's Claw flies PAST THE CAMERA AND INTO THE SHOT, heading for the planet. We hear Tolwyn in VO briefing the cadets: "Admiral Bergstrom's task force is concealed in the sensor shadow of the planet's moon."

CUT TO:

30. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: BRIEFING ROOM

Tolwyn briefing the cadets: "The Tiger's Claw will deploy its fighters as we slingshot around the planet. You will join with Admiral Bergstrom's force to attack and destroy the Kilrathi."

An urgent call comes over the intercom from a COM-TECH on the bridge. They've received a message from Admiral



Bergstrom. Tolwyn tells the com-tech to play it over the intercom. Through heavy static, Tolwyn and the shocked cadets hear Bergstrom saying that they are under heavy attack by a large force of Kilrathi fighters and capital ships.

"They couldn't have gotten past us," says Maniac, during a static-filled pause.

"It's another fleet," Maverick realizes. "The Kilrathi have another fleet in this system..."

The message breaks off in the middle of an appeal for help. "That's all there is, sir," the com-tech reports.

"Prepare all fighters for immediate launch," Tolwyn says. He switches off the intercom and looks at the cadets. "You will proceed immediately to the Trafalgar and render whatever assistance you can..." He looks at Maverick. "Cadet Blair will be in command."

WIPE TO:

31. EXT. NEAR A PLANET

Fighters begin taking off from the Tiger's Claw as it draws nearer to the planet.

DISSOLVE TO:

32. EXT. THE PLANET'S MOON

Silhouetted against the enormous disk of the moon, a nightmarish scene of destruction. Bergstrom's task force is being overwhelmed by Kilrathi fighters, destroyers, and cruisers. We glimpse moments of disaster. A Terran destroyer explodes. The Terran cruiser is hit by missiles



from a Kirathi heavy fighter. A Kilrathi cruiser pounds another Terran destroyer with laser fire, blasting huge pieces off it and sending them spinning away into space.

CUT TO:

33. EXT. SPACE -- CADET FIGHTERS

The cadet fighters rocket through space, using their afterburners.

CUT TO:

34. EXT. THE PLANET'S MOON

The Trafalgar is hit by a Kilrathi torpedo and blown in half. The two halves spin away through space, trailing sparks, wisps of flame, and debris.

DISSOLVE TO:

35. EXT. NEAR THE MOON

The cadet fighters approach the moon. Maverick announces that he has ships on his screen. "It looks like Confederation fighters with Kilrathi in pursuit. Prepare to engage."

A half-dozen fighters from the Trafalgar, burdened by fighter ejection pods and "lifeboat" escape pods from capital ships that are as big as the fighters themselves, are being pursued by a dozen Kilrathi fighters. One of the Kilrathi fighters blasts a Terran fighter that has picked up an escape pod from the Trafalgar. The fighter explodes, and the escape pod spins away.

The cadet fighters roar past the fleeing Terrans and attack the Kilrathi head-on. Several of the Kilrathi



fighters are destroyed in the cadets' opening barrage. The Kilrathi break off from the pursuit of the Trafalgar's fighters, and a dogfight begins. Maverick takes a hard hit from a Kilrathi meson cannon.

Hyena destroys a Kilrathi fighter with an ion cannon blast, but then his own fighter is hit and he has to eject before it explodes. Grunt picks up his ejection pod. Maniac and Archer each destroy a Kilrathi fighter.

Maverick docks with the escape pod from the Trafalgar. Over his comlink, he asks if there are any more survivors from the fleet. Bergstrom answers, weakly -- she's aboard the escape pod, seriously injured. "They're all gone," she says, in a daze. "All of them... They should've left me."

The few remaining Kilrathi fighters retreat. Maniac wants to go after them, but Maverick orders the cadets back to the Tiger's Claw.

The cadets rocket away, escorting the five surviving fighters from the Trafalgar.

WIPE TO:

36. EXT. NEAR THE PLANET

The cadet fighters and the fighters from the Trafalgar return to the Tiger's Claw.

DISSOLVE TO:

37. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: SICK BAY

Bergstrom lies in bed, swathed in bandages. Tolwyn sits beside her. "They're going to find us, aren't they?" Bergstrom says weakly. "Catch us."



"No," Tolwyn replies. "We're going to jump through the node, at full speed, without pausing to correct our approach. They won't be able to stop us."

"Where will it take us, Geoffrey?" Bergstrom asks.

"A nearby star," says Tolwyn. "It doesn't really matter which one, does it? We're running for our lives now."

Bergstrom turns away, unable to meet Tolwyn's gaze.

CUT TO:

38. EXT. NEAR THE PULSAR - INTERCUT WITH BRIDGE INTERIORS OF THE SHIPS INVOLVED

Thrakhath's Dreadnought, Garahl's destroyer, and a Kilrathi corvette guard the jump node. Suddenly the Tiger's Claw appears, heading for the node. The Kilrathi ships open fire with lasers, hitting the Claw's shields. Explosions rock the Tiger's Claw. Thrakhath's Dreadnought blocks the entrance to the jump node.

"Sir, do we launch the fighters to clear the way?" asks Maverick, who has gone to the bridge to report to Tolwyn.

"No," Tolwyn says, "we wouldn't have time to get them back aboard, and I won't leave them behind." He orders the Tiger's Claw to proceed at maximum speed -- straight for the Dreadnought. "We'll see how eager Prince Thrakhath is to meet his ancestors."

The Tiger's Claw increases speed, heading straight for the Dreadnought, firing as it comes. The Dreadnought and the other Kilrathi ships fire back furiously, damaging the



Tiger's Claw, which keeps on coming. Aboard the Dreadnought, Thrakhath can't believe that Tolwyn is making a suicidal run at the Dreadnought -- "he fights like a Kilrathi!" Thrakhath says with a mixture of anger and respect. At the last moment, Thrakhath orders the Dreadnought to turn aside, and the Tiger's Claw streaks past, barely missing a collision and disappears through the node in a flash of light.

CUT TO:

39. EXT. JUMP SPACE

The Tiger's Claw shoots through jump space.

CUT TO:

40. INT. TIGER'S CLAW: HANGAR DECK

On the deserted hangar deck, Maverick is checking the damage to his fighter. Tolwyn walks up behind him. He speaks before Maverick knows he's there: "Sometimes I wish I were just a pilot again, and the only life I was responsible for was my own."

"And your wing man, sir," Maverick replies.

Tolwyn tells Maverick that if Bergstrom hadn't changed his plan and tried to lure the Kilrathi into a trap, the second Kilrathi fleet couldn't have ambushed her task force.

Maverick points out that none of them knew there was a Kilrathi fleet already in the system.

"When you give an order," says Tolwyn, "you never know what the outcome will be. How many lives will be lost.



Every decision you make is a link in a great chain, and you carry the weight of it, alone."

Tolwyn starts to walk away. Maverick asks him how he knew the Kilrathi would turn aside and let them through to the jump node. Tolwyn pauses and looks back.

"I didn't know," he says.

Maverick watches as Tolwyn walks off across the empty hangar deck, a lonely figure bearing the burden of command.

THE END