

Boots on the Ground

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by [B_Radley](#)

Summary

Marines gonna marine.

Major Declan Starros watches through the viewscreen as the stars return to normal. A small moon fills the screen. His commanding officer, Chandra, who was okay for a fleet-puke in his book, had intimated that he and his marines of the Independent Company (Reinforced) of 45 Commando, could once again save Starfleet's ass on Leelix III, or Forward Operating Base Merlin as it was known to the Border Dogs.

The captain of the *O'Bannon*, Lieutenant Commander Jonathan Fortescue turns to him. They share a look that can best be described as 'contemptuous respect.' "We're here, Jarhead," the Fort says unnecessarily.

"Thanks mate," he replies. "Nice, smooth bus ride."

"Asshole," he hears in Fortescue's Birmingham accent, not dissimilar from his own Cockney. The word is breathed where no other crewmember or marine can hear.

Although every one of them knows of their 'regard' for each other.

That he had started his professional life in a Starfleet Security detachment as an enlisted security operator, and is still a part of the Special Operations Command of Starfleet doesn't enter into his assessment of their worth.

Or lack thereof.

He grits his teeth as he thinks of the man that he'll meet on the surface. James Blackthorne, now known as Major Blackthorne, much to Starros' chagrin at his branch granting him that title. Along with the right to wear the green beret and the delta, anchor, and crossed rifles of the Rapid Deployment Force. Even though the Andorians of the Blue Fire (Guards) Division get to wear a version of the delta at least, and the redshirts get to as well if they would ever deploy as the marines' backup in their own combined division-strength formation. Before the galaxy truly goes to shit and the Federation Command Authority has to call up the 'legs' of the heavy forces from each member world for their ground strength.

The fact that Croft, as he was known, had actually passed the selection course, makes him wonder if the Force needed to re-evaluate the standards.

He nods at Fortescue and moves to the turbolift. Another moment and he is standing with Gunnery Sergeant Hagan and his recon team near the mass transport pad. Hagan, a tall Englishman with an impressive mustache and lugubrious expression, nods at him. His beret is already in its special pocket on his armor and he is wearing his helmet.

As he pulls his own helmet on and engages the data monocle over his eye, Declan smiles at memories of the first time he had met Croft. In a joint command course between the redshirts and the Force, when he had been a member of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, before he had been promoted into 45 Commando. Both units with long traditions, as evidenced by the naming convention from both the US Marines' most decorated unit, and a Royal Marines unit with an equally storied history.

Croft had been firmly in his 'I-don't-know-what-I-want-to-be-when-I-grow-up' phase, serving as an assistant security officer on the *Enterprise-A*, after a better-than-average career as a pilot and navigator.

They had immediately disliked each other, culminating, in a 'sparring session' in a bar after hours, that had nearly gotten both of them busted in rank.

Declan rubs his jaw, remembering the pain. He grins at the memory of Croft trying to stand at attention in front of the class commander while holding his broken ribs.

Something about that damned crooked grin had set Declan off.

His own grin widens as he remembers Chandra's words to him at his grumbling when she had sent him on his way. *Get over yourself, Declan. You'll at least be able to lord it over him that you saved his bacon.*

That a Deltan knows about and appreciates the joys of a hunk of pig sticks in his mind. Not to mention that it is rumored that Chandra enjoys Crofty's sausage on occasion.

He'd be able to lord it over both of them.

Respectfully of course, in Chandra's case.

As the ground forms around his boots, he does admit that Croft would pull his own ass out of the fire without hesitation.

"Come on you, heartbreakers," he yells. "Do you want to live forever?"

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