

Through Blue and Brown Eyes: Peak Performance

“Over-G, Over-G, Over-G.”

The synthesized voice of her aircraft's inertial monitoring system wailed over the staccato alarm of her AOA alert. The airframe shuddered around her as aerodynamic forces fought the sleek fighter craft's delta-V. Furious flames licked from the tail of her craft, propelling her through the turn. Her triangular ears bent in their mesh housings, straining against the stacking G-force. Her vision clouded. Blue and brown eyes locked onto the mirrors. The Mystique was low and on her six. She could just see the trails. She had to let up... but if she did, she'd slide right into an easy gun kill. The dampness of her skin wicked into her fur. The world clouded. She remained clenched, craning on the stick as consciousness began to flee her mind.

Her radio garbled in her ears, but the huskywoman was gone. Her Torrent rolled deep into the turn before nosing over. A streak of silvery metal swung wide around Nikita's Torrent and caught the Mystique in his left wing root. The missile detonated with such force that the entire wing was sheared away instantly and the cockpit separated from the main fuselage. Fire consumed the falling wreckage.

“Good kill, Star-7,” SkyEye called out. His AWAC's aircraft circled far and above the clashing fighters. The otter aboard shifted brown eyes from screen to radar screen, monitoring the various layers of combat intently.

“Star-8... how copy.” His eyes locked on Nikita's fighter, a green triangle on his screen. She was spiraling into the clouds. “Nikita you there... shit, did you set your immersion too high. NIKITA!”

Nikita could almost feel the wind. She could hear it, her head swimming in the noise. Her brow furrowed as she reached out to touch the slipstream. Where was the wind. She tried to breath it in and was rewarded with a heavy hiss. Air flooded her lungs painfully and pulled her awake. Blue and brown eyes gazed wildly out the canopy of the fighter. “Oh... whoa.. What!?”

“TERRAIN TERRAIN, PULL UP.” The Ground Proximity Warning repeated over and over, screaming at her wide eyed face. The same warning flashed before her eyes upon the integrated HUD in her helmet visor. The huskywoman gripped the controls shakily. Her eyes flicked over her instruments. With fingers flexing on throttle and stick, she brought the fighter back to level flight.

Her helmeted head pressed back into her seat, shoulders slumping. Her hand pulled free the clasp that held the oxygen mask tight to her furred face. Ascending upwards, she broke through the cloud layer and simply stared at the blue skies. She panted softly, catching her breath for a moment.

Brown and blue eyes were pulled toward the agile Peregrine fighter of her wingmate. It edged up to her wing with confident smoothness. Sitting high within its bubble canopy, she could see Star-7, her ratman wing lead. Her radio squawked.

"I hope you don't fly those simulation settings for tournaments. It's not required, you know."

She shook her head and keyed her mic.

"I know. I just think it makes me a better pilot. Knowing where that edge is between me and the airframe." She smiled at her own words, tail wagging uncomfortably in her flight suit's harness. Her ears bent to the chortling laughter of the ratman filling the frequency.

"Really, how did that just work out for you? Cause by my mark you're one behind me... for all that knowing the edge and shit."

"Okay, you two, play nice," Sky Eye called out. He was tracking additional bogies. Team Three or Four, depending on which had prevailed over the other. "Xerxes Element is engaged with the remaining planes from Tangent. I'm tracking three... no, four bogies. All at 073, bearing 229. Three at 115, and the fourth lagging behind and at 063, possibly already damaged."

Nikita's eyes narrowed on the ratman and her hands tightened on the controls. She rolled her Torrent over the top of the ratman's Peregrine, watching him through the bubbles of their canopies. Taking her wing position on his left side, she jettisoned her last remaining external fuel tank. It slipped away from the center mount of her craft. The huskywoman glared through her tinted visor toward her lead.

"Oh jeez," Sky Eye broadcasted, watching the two respective dots converge then separate.

"Fine, you think you're so good, "Gallop"" She held up her fingers, deftly steering the fighter with her knees bent on the stick. She then transitioned her hands, lifting her middle finger at her wingman, "Lead the way, asshole."

The ratman, callsign Gallop, shook his head.

"Idiot, that's what I've been trying to do."

He pitched his fighter into a sweeping turn toward the incoming bogies.

"Maybe if you stay on my wing, we could make quick work of this. OR you can go passing out on me again."

The adjustable exhaust nozzle contracted before expanding. A cone of fire licked from the rear of the Peregrine.

“Fuck you, dude.” Nikita growled and pushed her throttles forward to keep pace.