

The intermittent humming of the faulty air recyclers and the soft groans of the aging hull were constant companions to R063R, though his acoustic sensors barely registered the sounds any longer. Built during the last days of the Confederacy of Independent Systems, hastily assembled out of half-finished parts roughly stamped and welded into shape by men about to lose a war, R063R was not the finest B1 battle droid to ever walk the battlefields of the galaxy. Not by a long shot.

Even when he'd been mint, the left knee-joint had been acting strangely, leaving him with a minute limp as the servos always seemed to react a few nanoseconds slower than the rest. The extra calculations he had to run in order to compensate and maintain balance left a constant drain on his CPU, leaving him with what an organic might call a "headache". That headache had now lasted for nearly 60 years.

R063R knew precisely what he'd been built for. It was in his most basic runtimes, coded into his very being. Unlike organics who sought to find meaning in life through mysticism, philosophy, art or a number of other ways, often sparking conflicts which changed the course of history and lead to untold suffering, his purpose in life was singular and clear. War.

He had been built for war.

Though the paint his body had been sprayed with had been diluted to save on costs and though quality control had been all but eliminated due to mass-desertion, his mind had been flooded with the finest run-times the Confederacy could muster; a pinnacle of their combined knowledge on war against the Republic.

He knew his purpose, had known it from the moment he'd first booted up, more than anything in the galaxy and yet, he had never fired a shot in anger. He'd been packaged up and sent on one of the last transports to some remote planet to await a last stand against the encroaching Clone Armies, but the war had abruptly ended before he'd had a chance to be reactivated.

Lying dormant for years, barely aware of his surroundings as the shipping crate he was stored in was jockeyed around the galaxy in search of an owner and a use, the nagging imperative to fight the Jedi and their Clone minions had never left his operating runtimes for even a picosecond. An organic might live a full life never obtaining knowledge of the purpose of their existence, yet consider their time spent fulfilling and enjoyable. R063R had spent his entire existence with a crystal-clear understanding of his purpose, yet never able to fulfill it. For an organic mind, such an experience would have been maddening. For the droid, it was all he'd ever known.

When the shipping crate had finally been opened, not by intention or design, but when it had fallen from a rusting storage clamp after the hydraulics had failed, R063R had for one glorious moment thought that combat would be upon it and a subroutine emulating joy and satisfaction had for that brief moment flickered on its runtime queue. The constant anticipation he held for war was nothing compared to that agonizing instant where he awaited the previous processes to finish, agonizingly observing his process queue as the blissful subroutine rose up in the hierarchy, nearing the execution terminus.

Yet, his photoreceptors saw no Clones. His acoustic scanners heard no sound of warfare and the C2-link registered only the barely surviving signatures of his fellow battle droids as they unfolded themselves from their storage configurations.

Before the subroutine could reach execution, it was removed from the process queue, whisked away from within an inch of his grasp. He had been OpBlocked. Had he not been installed with failsafes to prevent self-injury, R063R would have beaten in his optics and torn out the acoustic sensors if it had meant he could fool the governing algorithms in his core runtime into allowing that moment of joy for him.

But such was not to be his lot as the constant nagging for war against the Republic continued to plague him, the sense of failure to do the one thing for which he had been assembled slowly chipping away at his code just as rust and corrosion gnawed at his failing body.

He had spent the following years trapped on a patrol loop the squad of surviving B1s had found imprinted upon the Confederation ship's floor. A simple magnetic line-loop that took them down a corridor past five blast doors and two junctions until terminating abruptly in a pile of broken rubble and twisted metal where some form of catastrophe had taken place.

That route had brought him fulfillment, at least partially. Some lingering sense of purpose restored by performing a task which might have served some importance, no matter how infinitesimal, for the benefit of the Confederation.

With his brother beside him, he'd patrolled that route as long as their failing servos could manage, their footsteps slowly wearing a groove into the hard decking until they'd erased the very magnetic coil they were supposed to be following.

Now not many of his squad survived. He had seen his brothers fall, their servos failing without maintenance or breaking from wear and tear. Their power-packs drained prematurely and left to sit where they fell, powerless metal skeletons slowly eaten away by rust while their yet-operational comrades continued their tireless death march in unending cycles along the one hundred and twelve point five-nine-meter loop. He'd counted. Many times.

After the mag-loop had broken down, they'd once again been left taskless and the fleeting respite he'd gleaned from having at least a fraction of a purpose was gone, with only a shallow memory of it ever existing clinging on to his solid-state memory banks until it too was overwritten by inconsequential data and corrupted beyond recovery.

The squad, or what had been left of it, had wandered into the darker corridors of their bleak habitat, blurting out the comforting calls of "Roger-Roger" to maintain a sense of cohesion, hinting at the possibility of a purpose yet to be fulfilled. Many more of his serial brothers had fallen since then, overcome by age, the ravages of acids and corrosion, falling foul of the decrepit traps of the derelict ship or being scavenged for parts by the few remaining organics they encountered.

The relationship R063R had with what passed for a "crew" aboard the ship was conflicted. Sometimes they passed the B1s without incident, while at others they seemed to almost be hunting the droids either for sport or fun. This had led to many conflicts between them and an ever-dwindling number of the venerable B1s surviving, but through perseverance and force of arms, they had managed to survive, for now.

The combat against the crewmen, though fighting, offered only a momentary distraction for R063R in the long and pointless search for the Confederation's enemies; the hated Jedi and their Clone slaves. He had no real understanding of why they were hated, nor why the Clones were slaves, but he did not have to. It was all hard-coded into his basic input-output system on such a fundamental level that

there could be no mistake about it. The Jedi were the enemy and they would be destroyed for the glory of the Confederation of Independent Systems.

R063R stood immobile in the dark maintenance bay somewhere in the lowest levels of the command sphere. The darkness was almost complete, with only a few stray shafts of light piercing the blackness from above where holes in the decking of some upper level corridor had been eaten away by rust. His brethren standing all around him, waiting for the electric charge to flow back into their central batteries from the lazy induction coils like every day.

The degraded batteries barely held any charge and the surviving B1s spent most of their days in near hibernation, the choked trickle of power from the barely functional induction coils nourishing them with barely more energy than they consumed. It had been days since R063R had last been on patrol and what little satisfaction could be gleaned from the activity was like a distant, faded and corrupted memory.

His mechanical form, never intended to survive a year let alone the decades he had endured, was finally failing and as the backlog of error reports from his subsystems mounted and took up ever more space on his internal hard drive, he was forced to contend with the possibility that this would be the end and that he would cease functioning without ever having fulfilled his purpose, his primary directive.

He could not feel depression or sadness, because such things were not possible for a droid to experience. Instead, the deep and profound sense of failure kept lingering in what passed for a mind within his runtimes. It was not an accusing or malicious sensation, but rather a simple and objective truth which could not be denied, and made all the more unbearable for it.

R063R's battery was barely charging, the heightened state of awareness he chose to keep himself in to pick up on something, anything, that might take his mind off the oppressive fact he'd failed in his life's purpose almost perfectly balancing out with the meager charge that was trickling through. Not that it mattered, really. Nothing of note had taken place since that fateful unboxing as his fellow B1s were quick to point out whenever he raised the subject up for discussion.

After 14 attempts, he'd given up on it.

Photoreceptors scanning the area in front of him, R063R was no longer sure if what they saw was even reality any longer. So long had he stared immobile at the same exact picture, nothing ever changing or shifting, that he was starting to suspect the picture was now permanently burned into the photosensitive membrane of his optics. Yet another fault to add to the list of his ailments.

This was to be his end, then.

For a moment, he entertained the thought of just disengaging from the loading socket and heading off on a patrol. With his current battery reserves, he'd maybe make it out of the chamber before shutting down. His self-harm preventing subroutines would not offer resistance against such an action. It was well within his authority to head on a patrol, even a suicidal one. In fact, had he been allowed to experience the thrill of combat, it was what would have been expected of him.

Yet for some reason he stayed. Clinging onto what an organic might call 'hope' that one day, very soon since he did not have many days of operational life left, a Jedi or a Clone would wander in and

he would get to die in glorious battle. An organic would call that 'a fool's hope', he swiftly corrected himself.

Something shifted.

The shaft of light flickered for a moment before a sharp crack and the groan of twisting metal echoed around the chamber. Pieces of debris rained down along with a large lump that fell roughly on top a pile of old cleaning rags. It let out a grunt as it fell; an organic. Still, such an instance was not out of the ordinary for them to encounter. Much stranger things took place aboard this ship and especially these levels.

Around him, his brothers began to cycle up, roused by the sudden sound into a higher state of alertness. R063R continued to observe the organic as it slowly rose to its feet and began to shuffle around unsteadily. Considering the height it had fallen, the organic had to be of sturdy build to survive with only such mild injuries.

One of his brothers, in equally poor state of repair as he, decided to investigate. Disengaging from its charging port, he took a few shaking steps towards the organic only to have another organic rush into the chamber from the opposite side. The sight confused the aging B1 as it tried to identify if the new entrant was a threat or not. Decreeing that it most likely was, it sent out a call to arms to its fellow brethren, who all replied in unison. "Roger-Roger!"

The organics flinched at the sound as R063R and his brothers disengaged from their charging ports and raised their blasters at them, the two shapes dropping into combat stances that seemed... familiar. The next moment a trio of plasma beams flared to life as the two warriors displayed their weapons. Lightsabers. Jedi!

He could not be sure if it was sheer excitement of finally fighting one of the hated Jedi or simply the worn-out fittings of his bearings rattling, but R063R's hands were shaking as it raised its blaster to take aim at one of the two organics, this one armed with a single yellow-bladed lightsaber. The subroutine of combat reward suddenly appeared on his runtime queue and despite his condition, R063R overclocked his CPU to get the programs executed faster to reach this critical subroutine. To finally experience fulfillment and be rewarded for achieving his purpose.

All around him his brethren were shambling forward, some of them managing to fire off a few ill-aimed shots as their gyros and uncalibrated aiming systems did little to help with their accuracy. He too finally managed to squeeze the trigger on his blaster and the weapon spat out a bolt of bright red at his foe, missing the Jedi by several meters.

Adjusting his aim accordingly while fighting against his malfunctioning knee-joint, R063R squeeze off another shot that almost made its mark, striking the mound of rags beneath the Jedi's feet. The subroutine climbing up his process queue, R063R could barely contain himself as he adjusted his aim once more and squeezed the trigger. A flaring warning flashed into life as his knee joint ceased up, the importance pushing his reward algorithm down once more. Frustrated and unbalanced, the shot went wide as he hurriedly tried to push away the warnings can keep fighting.

The bolt of red light crossed the distance between R063R and the Jedi, her yellow blade arcing up to deflect the blaster bolt from striking her and sending it screaming back towards its origin. R063R realized the danger, but could not move. The knee joint had frozen up completely and would not

budge. Frantically pushing aside warnings and repair prompts, he managed to shunt the reward algorithm to the execution terminus.

It engaged.

The red bolt kept closing in, filling R063R's view with a searing red light that fried its optics before it even struck him, but he did not care. The algorithm cycled and one by one all the conditions were checked out as being met. The process flow tree reached its terminus.

For one glorious moment, R063R felt completion. He had done what had been expected of him. He had reached his fulfillment. The euphoria overwhelmed him and in that single instance he knew his life had not been wasted. He was complete.

The next moment the bolt connected with his head, punching through the flimsy metal and frying his central processing unit and memory cores.